

Public Knowledge for the Gupta Simulation

-----The Situation-----

It is September, 365 AD, on the Ganges plains of India. This year's monsoon rains have been better than last year's, which were late and meager. Rumors have been circulating throughout Magadha that the King, Samudra-Gupta, is considering an invasion of the kingdom of Bhilsa, 200 miles southwest of Magadh's capital. Bhilsa's western half is good farmland, but the east is hilly and forested. Though the Gupta Empire has expanded much under Samudra-Gupta, Bhilsa has remained independent. Four days ago, in an uncharacteristic move, the King commanded that representatives of his people present their opinions on the wisdom of invading Bhilsa.

What is generally known about the various groups who must report to the King.

#1 The Buddhist Monastery. There is a well-known Buddhist monastery located in a manicured "forest" a few miles outside the capital. Almost 600 monks live there and the establishment is known by pilgrims from afar. The public teachings are much as have been for centuries. "War only brings suffering now and karmic suffering later." The monastery teaches - as did the Buddha - non-violence toward all living things. Members of the Buddhist community, regardless of the caste they might have been born into, eat and chant together. Visitors and traders are welcome. The monastery has been known to loan money from its adequate funds for trading ventures.

#2 The Generals. The Gupta Empire has a trained, well-equipped army of 20,000. The army has been mostly successful for almost two decades. The generals are ready to fight and anticipate glory, loot, and honor.

#3 The Stone-Carver Guild. This large guild is located in a quarry region about 30 miles from the capital, though some carving is done right in the capital. It produces religious images for a broad market. Hindu temples, monasteries, families, and kings from hundred of miles away order images, carved panels, and inscription stones. The guild's success is based, at least in part, on the particular stone of its quarry. It is strong, easy to work, and does not break much in transport. The guild has been steadily expanding its membership and production over the past decade.

#4 Brahmins of the City. Brahmins serve the Hindu temples and shrines in the capital. Some perform rituals and ceremonies for the King and his family. They check the stars and omens for the best time to start a military campaign. They pray for success, assuring the King that it is his duty as a warrior to enlarge the kingdom and bring nearby states under “one umbrella”.

#5 Royal Sons. These are the sons of the great Gupta family, heirs to the throne when Samudra dies. The Guptas are known far and wide as firm in battle, upholders of their duty, and builders of beautiful palaces, Hindu temples, and Buddhist monasteries.

#6 Ambassadorial Entourage from Bhilsa. The kingdom of Bhilsa has watched the Gupta Empire grow. Bhilsa’s stated policy is that it has no desire for war, but if it comes the Gupta army will perish in the forest of Bhilsa or be blown away like dust on the plains of Bhilsa. The forts are strong and the army is ready.

#7 Traders . They bring the things that people want and need. From the Bhilsa, region, for example, comes cotton cloth, forest products like medicines and honey, and grain when the price warrants it. As a group the traders are wealthy and have financed large trading ventures, as well as donating to Buddhist shrines.

8# The King (and his Advisors). The king has not been on campaign for almost four years. He seems to prefer the pleasures of the palace, the hunt, and listening to philosophers.