

IMPERIUM

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CIVILISATION SPOTLIGHTS



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■ ABBASIDS ■

Today on the blog we are covering the Abbasid caliphate, which was founded by Al-Abbas ibn Abd al-Muttalib after the overthrow of the previous caliphate (the Umayyad caliphate) in 750 CE. It ended with the Mongol invasion in 1258. Our focus in *Imperium: Horizons* is mostly the 100 year period from the founding of the caliphate with the Abbasid Revolution through to the rule of Al-Ma'mun and the development of the Grand Library of Baghdad.



The Abbasids offer up a few good openings: one is to play the Abbasid Revolution, which gives you the choice of removing Unrest (you start with plenty) at the cost of losing a region, or taking Unrest to expand – a very thematic choice for a freshly born, yet rapidly expanding nation. As you expand, keep an eye out for regions with rivers, as you're a natural expert at Irrigation (a card you should be familiar with from the *Imperium: Legends* common deck). You'll want to quickly cycle through your nation deck to get your trade routes into play: Maritime Spice Route and Western Silk Road. With the Western Silk Road and the Great Mosque of Damascus, your Unrest problems should be solved, allowing you to keep acquiring cards – a path that your nation card's scoring already incentivises.



One of the least complex trader decks in the game, a key part of playing this nation is when you flip your Merchants card to become a Merchant Empire. Once you become an Empire, represented by the founding of Baghdad as your accession card, your ability to acquire cards merely changes: although you cannot play your Barbarian Advance, you can acquire using your Merchant Empire or by Dredging the Tigris. You can also use your Turkish Mercenaries in a glorious rush to release the garrison from your Merchant Empire so that – uniquely amongst all nations in this game – you can use its ability to gain a second Fame card from it.





In summary the Abbasids are a great nation to start your exploration into the Trade Routes expansion, but flexible enough with their fantastic rate of acquisition for you to try a multitude of strategies around the market cards that appear.

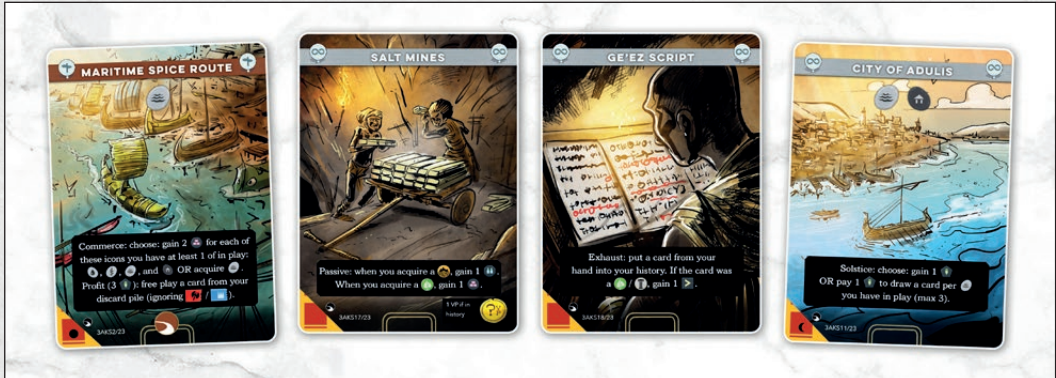




AKSUMITES



We are spotlighting the Aksumite Empire, centred in modern-day Ethiopia, at the peak of its power between the 3rd and 6th centuries CE. A prosperous trading civilisation sitting on the crossroads of trade routes from the East African coast to the interior of Africa, they require the Trade Routes expansion to play them in Horizons. Of all the trader nations, we consider the Aksumites the most straightforward to appreciate, and they are recommended for your first play to explore the expansion.



While this deck has the familiar utility cards (Conquer, Advance, Prosperity and Glory) it also has a trade route: the Maritime Spice Route. As this is your accession card, it will be a while before you can get it up and running, so in the meantime you can collect population and materials with your Salt Mines. Keep an eye on the market for cards with the Ocean icon, as they will boost your City of Adulis, a harbour city. Utilise Ge'ez Script to keep your deck trim, at least until you reach Empire.

You do not need to worry unduly about the unrest your acquisitions will bring, as your Stelae gives you a way to manage it and another way to thin your deck. Once you become an Empire, you have some choices: will you continue to acquire cards with your Exotic Trade, or will you first develop Aksumite Coinage to make conducting this trade easier (and yourself more flush with resources along the way). Maybe instead consider Conversion to Christianity, which gives you the dilemma of dealing with unrest or gaining extra actions, thematically representing the social upheaval the change of state religion brings.



How you approach the Aksumites will depend on the market cards and your opponent's strategies. You may wish to linger acquiring more cards or rush to become an Empire and the powerful developments you can access. Either way, do not overlook your Merchants card: you are at heart a trading nation after all.





CULTISTS



Today on the blog we are featuring the Cultists who, like the Utopians (found in *Imperium: Legends*), are entirely fictional, and have some unique strategies for players to explore. The Cultists are a group of fanatics trying to summon an ancient elder god, with the obvious catastrophic outcome for humanity if they succeed. Thematically, they are inspired by common Lovecraftian lore, by tales of ancient secret societies, and by asking ourselves what the evil opposite of the Utopians would look like.



The first thing to notice with the Cultists is that (like the Utopians) they do not have a nation deck, nor an accession card, nor development cards. All they have is their deck of 17 starting cards, a power card and two double sided Ceremony cards. Before playing the Cultists, you should carefully look through all these cards, since we consider the Cultists the most complex civilisation to play alongside the Utopians.

The big difference to the Utopians (their Journey's evil reverse) is the Cultists' Ceremony cards. As you progress through the steps of summoning your elder being, your nation falls apart in ruin: your state card changes from Empire, to Barbarian, then to Corrupted, and finally – if you succeed – to Summoned. Look out for cards like Summon Aid that can help with advancing the Ceremony.

You have a unique victory condition, to match your unique deck of Unrest cards: the Chaos cards. Some of your abilities will sow these cards to your opponents, and if the game ends in Collapse while your Chaos deck is empty, you win! Your game will always centre on managing Unrest: get too many and your deck will bloat and slow you down, get too few, and your opponents can brush the threat of your Chaos victory aside as the game will stay too far from Collapse.



Your starting deck is your toolbox of utility cards that you need to supplement with market cards. Most of them are situationally powerful but with serious drawbacks, or are only playable at certain points in your progress to complete the Ceremony.

For example you can acquire cards using Frozen Waste and Strange Signs, but only from exile! Exiling is a major aspect of your play and you have cards beyond regions to enable that, such as Cloak and Dagger. Your Cursed Library can remove resources from the market to facilitate unexpected exile opportunities. When playing against the Cultists you need to be careful which cards you exile as the Cultists gain cards from exile quite easily.



Remember, you are on a dark path to either complete your Ceremony or bring Chaos and collapse. Many of your most powerful tools are enabled once you reach your Corrupted state, so definitely have a plan on getting there. But whether you'll be able to complete your unspeakable collection of cards and complete the ceremony, or you're content just to watch the world burn, you will face a puzzle like no other and we leave you to explore the strategies for yourself, assuming you are brave or reckless enough.



■ GUPTAS ■

This time we are featuring the Guptas, the Indian Civilisation flourished between 320 CE and 550 CE. Like the Abbasids discussed last time, the Guptas are another trader deck, meaning you will need to use the Trade Routes expansion to play them. The rules for clean-up are also changed when you play the Guptas, meaning you'll add Goods onto the market rather than Progress.



Although they do not have a Trade Route in their deck, the founder of the Gupta Empire (Siri Gupta) will get you started with one. The Gupta deck is unique in that it has two cards with the new Merchant icon – Shreni (guilds) and Sarthavaha (merchants) – as well as a way to capitalise on these: the Height of Civilisation serves as a one-time “epic Prosperity” card for them, and can reward you for having these merchants in play. If you look closely in the Horizons common deck, you’ll find a few cards there that make the life of the merchants even more effective.



Once you have your steady flow of Goods sorted, you are going to want to flip your Merchants card to become a Merchant Empire to get access to the fame cards, as your Glory card is your accession card (just like it was for the Mauryans, a few centuries earlier, in *Imperium: Legends*), so it will be a while before you get into the fame cards otherwise.



Aside from the trading, you'll also have lots of opportunity to acquire Civilised and Uncivilised cards both while you are on your way to Empire and once you become an Empire. Just like the Greeks (in *Imperium: Classics*) you'll be able to develop Philosophy and Science to help with that. Another of your leaders, Chandragupta I, gives you access to another trade route. Finally, don't overlook the epic Mahabharata which will help with your Unrest management.



INUIT

Today on the blog we are spotlighting the Inuit. We wanted a deck with a unique feel to honour the special circumstances of their life adapted to the harsh conditions of the Arctic. Also, unlike the majority of other civilisations in *Imperium*, the Inuit still exist as a distinct culture rather than being lost to the annals of history, so it was important to us to do them justice.

The Inuit are the descendants of what anthropologists call the Thule people. They emerged from Western Alaska around 1000 CE. In *Imperium: Horizons*, we focus on the Inuit during this early period, as they spread across the northern lands of what is now Canada, and onto the ice of the Arctic Sea.



The Inuit have a unique State card, Winter (Barbarian) and Summer (Empire), which players flip at the end of each Solstice to represent the changing seasons. Players are thus restricted to playing or developing Empire/Barbarian cards on alternate turns. Unlike other civilisations (apart from the Atlanteans, found in *Imperium: Legends*), the Inuit have access to their developments from the start of the game, although playing these will of course be restricted depending on the State card. Furthermore at the end of Summer your hand size is decreased by two, meaning the Winter turns are more challenging with a reduced number of cards to play with.

You will definitely want to take a look at Qulliq (oil lamp) to be able to regain your flexibility during the cold Winter turns, and figure out how hunting on Siku (sea ice) can allow you to save an extra card between turns if you happened to draw one with the wrong symbol at the wrong time. Do not overlook the "Innovate" turn option when playing the Inuit, especially in Winter. After all, surviving and thriving in such an inhospitable environment requires considerable innovation.



Like the Vikings (found in *Imperium: Classics*), the Inuit have no history pile, relying on oral traditions as a record. This means usual one-use cards that would be put in history can be reused by the Inuit, at the cost of some Unrest. One possible strategy is to develop Oral History and Bone Carving to optimise your deck without needing a written history. Another popular approach is to develop Harpoons along with Kayaks and hunt for fame. Eagle-eyed readers will have spotted two new icons, Hunting Grounds and Ocean, both used across the new content of Horizons, but especially important for the Inuit deck.



JAPAN

Today on the blog we are featuring Japan, specifically covering from the Asuka Period (538 CE–710 CE) and Nara Period (710CE–794 CE), when Buddhism was introduced to Japan from Korea, to the rise of the Heian Period (794 CE–1185 CE), the peak of the classic Japanese Imperial court. Don't expect any samurai here, they don't come to the forefront until the following periods. Japan is an island somewhat poor in natural resources – the pressure of which you'll feel if you try to use their special power of gaining extra actions frequently.



Although not a complex deck, you will need to do some planning and timing to create the optimal smooth transition into Empire. An early decision to make is how to use the great reformer Prince Shotoku Taishi: you could get Tendai Buddhism and juggle playing that with your Clans and Shinto, letting the old and the new philosophies clash. Alternatively, if you gain an early pinned white card from the market, then you could start thinning your deck early with Kanji.

Once you become an Empire, you have choices for the order you undertake your developments too. If you want to concentrate on gaining more fame (while utilising both Shinto and Tendai Buddhism) you could build Jingu-Ji (Shrine Temple), which can be particularly effective when you use your Tea Ceremony to exhaust it twice a turn. Another direction is to focus more on the market with Shogun, and break through for white cards – surprisingly the Tea Ceremony is still an excellent addition to this strategy, it being a white card itself!





The image displays four cards from the game, each with a unique illustration and text:

- MAGYARS:** Illustration of a Magyar warrior on horseback holding a bow. Text: "Exhaust: when you play a [Warrior] with exhaust this card and discard 2 cards to force each other player to take a [Warrior]."
- HUNTERS AND NOMADS:** Illustration of hunters and nomads on horseback. Text: "Gain 1 [Horse] per [Warrior] you have in play."
- EMESE:** Illustration of a woman in a green dress holding a bow. Text: "Choose: pay 1 [Coin] to acquire a [Warrior] OR draw a card from your discard pile and gain 2 [Coin]. Put this card into your history."
- ALMOS:** Illustration of a warrior on horseback holding a bow. Text: "Cannot be played unless Emese is in your history. Put a [Warrior] from your hand into your history to acquire a [Warrior]. Each other player reveals a [Warrior]. Put this card into your history."

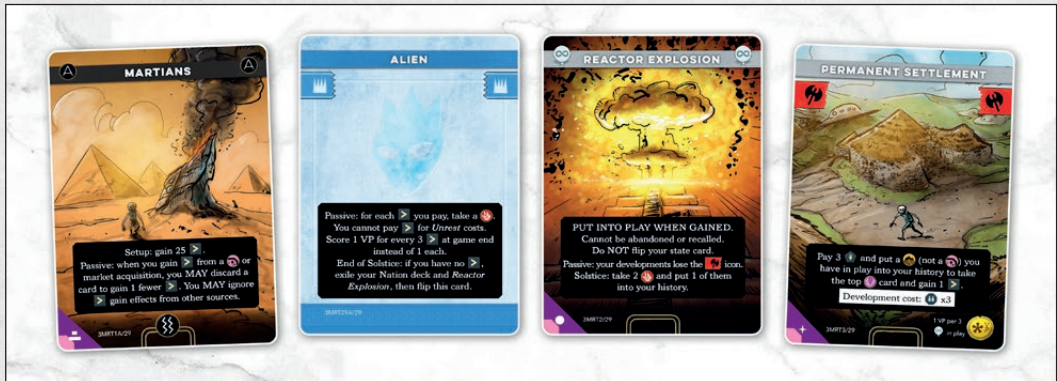
The image displays four cards from the game:

- CONVERSION TO CHRISTIANITY:** Illustration of a man in a red robe being baptized in a river. Text: "Free play. Choose up to 3 times: return a ♠ to gain 1 action. Put this card into your history." Development cost: 2.
- SAINT STEPHEN I:** Illustration of a bearded man with a crown. Text: "Cannot be played unless Agreed is in your history. Put up to 3 cards from your hand and/or discard pile into your history. Take the top ♠ card. Put this card into your history." Development cost: 4.
- BISHPORICS:** Illustration of a man in a long robe standing in front of a church. Text: "Take a ♠. Exhaust, break through for a ♠. Solution: if Conversion to Christianity is in your history, you MAY return a ♠ from your hand, and you MAY return a ♠ from your discard pile." Development cost: 2.
- HOLY RIGHT:** Illustration of a man in a long robe kneeling in prayer. Text: "Cannot be played. Development cost: 2. Solution: if Conversion to Christianity is in your history, you MAY return a ♠ from your hand, and you MAY return a ♠ from your discard pile." Development cost: 2.



MARTIANS

This is our final spotlight for the civilisations in Horizons. We've saved the most unusual to last, this time it is the Martians, our second fictional nation (the other being the Cultists). Our inspiration for this deck's lore drew from many sources: ancient alien conspiracy theories, John Carter of Mars, and even Assassin's Creed. Before we go into some of the details we encourage you to look at the art closely, we've referenced other *Imperium* cards (and some ideas that didn't quite make it into *Imperium*), all with a Martian twist. Will you recognize every returning character from the previous decks?

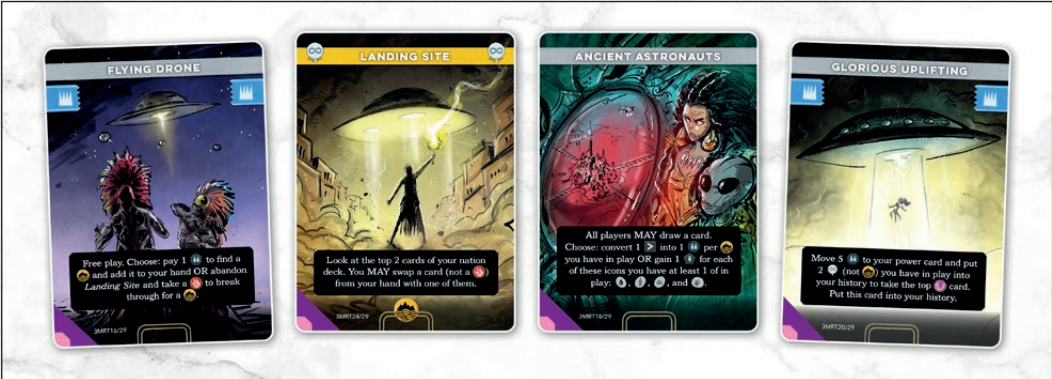


Thematically, the Martians are alien visitors who have two conflicting goals – dominate the earth as an Alien state, or throw off their technological advances and ‘Go Native’ to mix with the human population. Things are complicated by their main power source, the reactor, which is the last card in the Martian nation deck. Like the Arthurians and their Gwaith Camlan, getting to this last card is bad, causing a Reactor Explosion. Your choice is therefore to flip your state card to the Barbarian ‘Going Native’ by removing all your Progress (you start with a lot), or remain an Alien and end the game before you get through your nation deck. The downside of not Going Native is you do not get a chance to develop your powerful Barbarian developments. Yes, the Martians are a civilisation that runs backwards, starting as an Empire and progressing (or regressing) to a Barbarian, at which point you can develop. These Barbarian developments are very powerful, such as the Permanent Settlement.



The strange alien nature of the Martians does not stop here though. You have some powerful extraterrestrial Gadgets such as Crystal Skull, Cloning Vats, and Fracture of Time. You need to remove these from your deck or suffer negative points. Using these powerful tools gains you Progress as a cost, the very thing you are trying desperately to remove. Juggling the use and removal of your Gadgets is one of the many challenges of this deck. Some you can exile, and there is always Sharing Our Secrets to swap a Gadget with a market card. If you do that then these near-magical objects will be very enticing for the earthlings to take for themselves (who will gladly suffer the cost of gaining a Progress).

Like with the other high complexity decks in *Imperium* we recommend players carefully look through the cards before playing – the usual utility cards are implemented very differently. For example there is no Conquer card to get regions, rather there is a Flying Drone and of course a Landing Site to make it more effective. If you want to gain Population, you will need to use your Ancient Astronauts rather than Prosperity. Martians do not really understand the human concept of Glory, instead accessing Fame cards with a Glorious Uplifting.



We hope you have enjoyed these spotlight blogs and we hope you'll enjoy exploring *Imperium: Horizons* when it lands in February!





MAYANS



Today on the blog we are featuring the Maya who, following the footsteps of the earlier Olmec Civilisation (found in *Imperium Legends*), were one of the ancient civilisations from Mesoamerica. Like the Olmecs, we consider the Mayans to be one of the more complicated civilisations to play in *Imperium*.

The Maya in *Imperium* covers the Classic Period (250 CE - 900 CE), and their deck features some unique mechanisms – many building on the concepts the Olmec deck introduced. Masks make another appearance, and along with the familiar Stone Masks seen in the Olmecs you'll find new developments: a Turquoise Mask and three Headpieces. These beautiful, handcrafted headpieces are special: you can develop them before you become an Empire – by of course constructing them with your Fine Featherwork card.



The Mayan deck does not have the usual utility cards (Prosperity, Conquer, and Advance) many decks feature. Instead, it has pin cards that will go into your tableau when played to replace them. You power these cards with Masks to get the missing effects: spend one of your actions, discard mask cards from your hand, and you gain the effect. This allows you greater flexibility: with more pinned utilities in play, you can decide which one to use your masks on. While the basic stone masks can be used, the other masks give more options.

For example, Road Networks are what you use for expanding your territory (acquiring regions), but if you discard a more elaborate mask, you could instead acquire a Tributary.

The Maya are famous for their cities, now magnificent archaeological ruins, and the Mayan deck features four of them – one as a metropolis. These cities are a little different from the usual cities in *Imperium* in that they allow you to retrieve masks from your discard pile. However, you will have to manage the water supply of these cities, using the Chultuns, a clever invention used to collect rainwater.



Finally, some of the elements utilising the Trader expansion are found in the Mayan deck – specifically references to Goods, a new resource. More about those in a later post.





POLYNESIANS



Today on the Blog we are spotlighting the Polynesians, who present the players with a rather different approach to playing the game, as is fitting for the rather different path their historical story tells us. They also provided us with a unique design challenge too: like the Inuit, they exist as a living culture today, rather than just on the pages of history books.

Polynesians trace their prehistoric origins to Oceanic Southeast Asia, and they migrated from there to the Samoan islands between 1500-900 BCE. But there is only so much food one can grow on an island, and by 500 CE they needed to expand outwards across the whole of the Polynesian Triangle, eventually reaching Aotearoa (New Zealand) around 1280 CE.



We generally recommend players look through the cards of a civilisation before playing, and this is vital to play the Polynesians with any degree of success – their challenges are very different from the other civilisations featured in the game. This is deliberate; the Polynesians faced an epic task of navigating and expanding across a wide ocean containing over 1000 islands. Most contemporary cultures never voyaged beyond the sight of land.

The first thing to notice is the Polynesians have a unique State card which represents the phases they went through in their expansion. Island Bound is where they locate and settle new islands, and Voyaging is when they are searching for new land. This State card is flipped back and forth by playing specific cards such as Waka Hourua (Large Canoes). Timing this flip is tricky: all of the Inuit development cards are regions to be discovered, which you can only do while Voyaging, but staying at sea too long can leave you in real danger of running out of cards, as you can only draw cards from your deck while Island Bound.



You'll note the development cost of Rapa Nui is mana. This is another feature of the Polynesian deck. Polynesian mythology has the concept of mana; the possession of the energy or power that permeates the universe, giving its owner great authority. We represent this with the Mana card that starts in play next to your power card, and forces you to temporarily remove cards from your deck to be used as mana. Somewhat similarly to the Atlanteans (found in *Imperium: Legends*) the Polynesians have no history pile (since they did not rely much on written history). They instead have a Legends pile, meaning that usual one-use cards that would be put into history can be reused. Gaining Fame cards is also linked to Mana and the Legends pile, using the Explorers card.





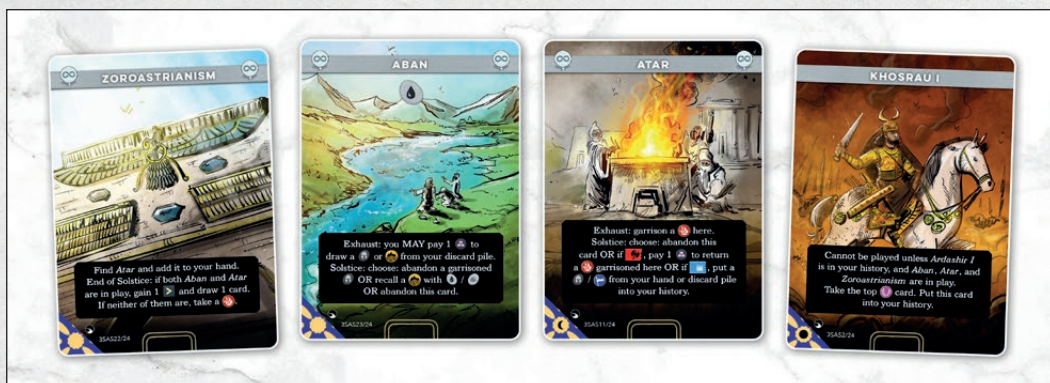
SASSANIDS



This time the spotlight is being shone on the Sassanids. This Iranian empire fought for four centuries (from 224 to 651 CE) against the Roman Empire (after 395 CE, the Byzantine Empire). They controlled a vital section of the Silk Road (represented by the Western Silk Road in their deck), and so the Trade Routes expansion is required to play.



Given the long conflict with the Roman/Byzantine Empire, it is appropriate that the Sassanids are the most aggressive (and most intricate) trader deck. You start with the founder of the Empire, Ardashir I, who you can use to fetch either of your knight cavalry, Aswaran or Clibanarii. Yes, we're bringing knights back in *Imperium Horizons* – their prior use was predominantly in the Arthurian deck.



As well as using knights and your trading merchants, this deck requires you to manage the requisites of Sassanid's state religion: Zoroastrianism. With cards representing water (Aban) and fire (Atar) in your deck, you will have to keep your rivers pure and have some unrest to burn if you want to keep the ceremonies going – and Khosrau I (your Accession card) demands that you do so.





On top of all this, this deck gives you some unique ways to interact with the Fame cards. The region Huuzistan lets you scout the Fame deck, and if you use your knights as a garrison (re-triggering the region's effect), you can sift through the Fame deck to find what you need, then take it with your Clibanarii. On top of that, Khosrau I gains you the top Fame card, and Shah can get another. You also have your own Fame development – the appropriately named Dreaded – which can shorten the game if you are on a Fame rush strategy.



TAINO

This time on the blog we are spotlighting the Taíno. Researchers believe the cultural ancestry of the Taíno comes from the Arawakan-speaking people living in large settled towns in South America, who migrated to the Caribbean by 250 BCE. To better tell their story of expanding their civilization's horizons across the previously sparsely-populated islands, we stepped away from our usual abstraction of "Empire building", instead having them focused on unlocking technologies and supporting their people as they live as free tribes. Even the card at the end of their nation deck – Ayiti (Hispaniola) – focuses on reaching a better land, instead of acceding to any imperial concept of development.



The Taíno are masterful in food production and have a special rule that any resources on their cards are counted for scoring purposes. This is reinforced by many of their cards, such as Fishing and Canoes. Production and fertile regions are the most useful for them, and you will want to concentrate on these to utilise the Taíno version of glory, Migration.

They still have developments, including their famous leader Enriquillo who can gain just the Fame card you need. They are also not shut out from white market cards: a helpful Gift Exchange will see you on your way, and their card Batey (Ball Games) means that the Taíno match the Greeks for their ease of acquisition. But among this card acquisition, do not lose focus on collecting those resources: you'll find them useful and any leftovers are useful for scoring with the Caribbean Sea.



TANG

Today on the blog we are looking at the Tang Dynasty of Imperial China. It ruled from 618 to 907 CE and oversaw expansion, cultural developments and economic growth with blossoming trade along the Silk Road. In Horizons, they are another trader nation and require the Trade Routes expansion to play. Like the other Chinese civilisation, the Qin Dynasty before them, playing the Tang means you put population onto market cards rather than progress.



Two things define the Tang deck more than anything else: cities and Unrest. The largest cities of the world at the time were in China, so naturally the deck comes with plenty of cities, including two metropolises and their bustling Cosmopolitan Culture. The second is the constant instability, represented by the threat of Rebellion even from your own cities and your unusual relation to Unrest. You do not have any in your deck, instead adding 3 copies to the supply, but every solstice you'll take an Unrest!

This is not entirely a drawback, as you can use Taoism to get an action once you have a civilised card. Fortunately, you have two in your starting deck – Imperial Examinations and Scholar Officials. These two cards also give you access to resources on cards in the market and a way to acquire more Civilised cards, with an added bonus that you can continue to use them once you become an Empire. Your unrest management is made far easier once you play Chan Buddhism.



Of course trading is a part of this deck too, with the Eastern Silk Road as a key development, along with the Salt Industry Commission, which (at a steep, but manageable cost) will allow you to benefit from multiple Trade Routes. If your dynasty has the Mandate of Heaven (a card familiar from the Qin deck), it even provides a Goods income! Finally, do not overlook the fun side of life in the Tang cities either, with Tea Drinking and Fireworks, both of which can help you to draw the right card at the right moment.



We have barely scratched the surface of what this deck contains and offers. Like the Qin before, when playing the Tang you will be pulled in multiple directions and the timing of what you do is vital for your success.



WAGADOU

Today on the blog we are featuring our last Trader civilisation: the Wagadou Empire, located in modern day Mauritania and Mali. The origins of this ancient West African civilisation are unclear; it is mentioned in written records from 830 CE but certainly existed well before that date, probably from the third century, or even earlier.

Their civilisation rose up on the banks of the Niger River, spreading north. They became a major power in the region when the trans-Saharan trade routes allowed them to export gold to the Mediterranean and Arabia that they found in and around the river valley. So, appropriately for this mercantile approach, the rules for clean-up are changed when you play the Wagadou: just as for the Carthaginians from *Imperium: Classics*, you'll be adding Material to the market rather than Progress.



You'll want to get started trading immediately, first with the Trans-Saharan Trade Route, which intersects nicely with your end of turn placement of Material onto a market card. After that, if you are up for buying even more cards with your riches, you'll want to use your Gold Merchants too. The Berber Traders and the Salt Merchants will make trading and card acquisition even more profitable for you. Even your "prosperity card", Golden Prosperity encourages you to have Trade Routes and Merchants in play. You shouldn't find the Material costs for increasing your population too much of a problem.



Dinga Cissé is a great way to get another Trade Route, or maybe you'd rather pick up a city. The options are thematically appropriate: he was the legendary founder of the capital of the empire, Koumbi Saleh (which itself appears as your Accession card). Your access to Fame is a little different: you should keep an eye on the market for fertile and river Regions (since as the Sahara grows southwards over the centuries, you don't have a good access to these icons), and keep a stockpile of Goods to play your Pride. However, gaining Regions will take a little bit of effort, as you do not have a conquer card, so expect to place Material on Region cards with this in mind. Once you become an Empire, you may still wish to collect Material to maximise your Great Wealth, or you may be eyeing your power card's scoring condition.

This deck takes a fairly long time to get to its Accession card, so your developments are all expected to immediately help, build and score for your cities, or be totally Controlling the Trade, scoring for each trading opportunity. And, as your empire grows to the world stage, the foreign influence of Islam arrives with the Arab traders, which you can choose to embrace by Adoption of Islam to build the magnificent Great Mosque of Djenne, managing your Unrest.

