

The Last Romans

This game is set at a crucial time. Justinian's authority as emperor has been asserted, courtesy of the resolve of the Empress Theodora in trying times ('The royal purple is the noblest shroud') and the actions of the general Belisarius in his early years. After quelling the Nika riots, with the alleged deaths of 30,000 Green supporters, then enjoying success against the Sassanids in the east, Belisarius mounted a successful invasion of North Africa and quickly subdued the Vandals. In 535 he is despatched to Italy where the Goths hold sway, in an attempt to reclaim the West as part of a renewal of the Roman Empire, even as barbarians elsewhere threaten the peace.

The Eastern provinces enjoy great prosperity and this finds its way to Constantinople. There, the two main sporting and political factions are the Blues and the Greens, with deadly rivalry between them. Transferring allegiance is met with distrust. Justinian meanwhile continues his re-structuring of the empire, both legal and administrative.

Theological debates continue, with heresy tolerated in varying degrees by Justinian. Most notably the Monophysite Christians, supported by Theodora and prominent in Egypt, grain basket of the empire. Whilst finding a theological solution to please all may be beyond even Justinian's his main focus must be on finding the balance between supporting orthodoxy and stirring up unproductive rebellion.

Player Note: Each turn represents one year, with four seasons. Winter = team time/no player movement It is intended that there will be multiple maps, with the main hall at the St Thomas Centre representing the whole of the Mediterranean.

Emperor Justinian

Coming from relatively humble backgrounds but adopted by a renowned relative, Justinian aided his uncle Justin in taking the throne after the death of Anastasius and in turn he became Emperor in 527. Having worked on reform of the law, his attention has now turned to administering the empire more efficiently. This will occupy a great deal of his attention and he relies on Theodora and other courtiers to bring pressing matters to his attention. A hard worker ('The emperor who never sleeps'), he can be jealous of others' success and whilst technically impartial is a known supporter of the Blue faction.

Player Note: Justinian will spend a good deal of the day the focused on his own priorities and will have limited access to the wider game. He will have his own objectives.

Empress Theodora

Her father, the Green's bear-keeper, was killed when she was young and her family abandoned, a cause of lasting resentment. They were eventually taken in by the Blues and after working as an 'acrobat' as a girl she eventually married Justinian. Having gained the throne she is determined to cling to power and will do all that is necessary to maintain this. She is aware of how close the Nika Riots came to ending Justinian's reign, so it is vital that similar episodes are avoided.

Player Note: Theodora is the power behind the throne. She must be able to promote her own agendas whilst being prepared to compromise where necessary and manage the emperor to her best advantage.

Imperial Governors – North Africa, Egypt, Cappadocia, Armenia, Thessalonika, Thracia, Dalmatia (Up to 7 Teams of ~3)

At the start of the game there will be a number of imperial governors in place, with players to represent the civil administration which is essential to orderly running. Governors will have a number of objectives whilst in post:

- Security and stability
- Trade and Taxes
- Public works

Whilst it is assumed that governors are able to take advantage of the opportunity to become increase their personal wealth whilst in power, it should not be too obvious and the emperor will expect a regular flow of gold and other vital supplies to Constantinople. Investing in defence and anti-piracy patrols, building the most beautiful city in Christendom (after Constantinople, obviously) and deciding how tolerant to be of heresy in the interest of peace is the balancing act these teams must learn how to master, or governors could find themselves replaced.

Player Note: Starting the day as a team could be good for a group of friends, although there is no guarantee that you will stay together. There will be sub-games for security, trade and public works. Governors will have to think carefully about how they manage communications with Constantinople as what Justinian hears may not always be the truth.

Courtiers (10-12)

Senior nobles will represent the Blue and Green factions. They will be in pursuit of both personal honours and positions (including governorships) and success for their faction, which will involve triumphs at the Hippodrome, where chariot-racing, bear-baiting and the performing arts are incredibly popular.

Player Note: Groups booking places would find it easier to be placed in one of the factions. Factions nominate players to take responsibility for the Hippodrome, whilst individuals want positions at court and across the Empire from the Emperor.

Imperial Generals (4-5) Belisarius, Constantianus, Narses. Justin, John Troglita

There are number of established career generals to play in the game who will usually be despatched for a specific purpose after being commissioned by Justinian. Each has a personal bodyguard, the most loyal and effective troops they have. Whilst they have a range of titles, Justinian is keen that none should assume too much power and any successes should of course be attributed to his imperial majesty. Some courtiers may have the opportunity to command an army, but their ability will only be discovered on the battlefield.

Player Note: Some generals have greater renown than others at the start. All should be aware that self-promotion is key to securing a command and the opportunity to advance their career. Major battles will be resolved face to face, whilst campaigns against raiders will be resolved quickly. There will always be the opportunity to grind out successes in the Balkans.

The Ostrogoths: Italy 6-8 Players

For decades the Goths have ruled Italy, ostensibly on behalf of the Emperor, providing military force to support a civil administration and senate run by Romans. Tensions have arisen more recently though and following the execution of the pro-Byzantine regent Queen Amalasantha by the usurper Theodahad Justinian has seized the opportunity to rule in more than name only. The Goths main aim must be to preserve their kingdom through a strong leader as the Franks are becoming an increasing threat.

Player Note: Although possessing large forces, the Goths often struggle against more professional armies under the better Roman generals. The legitimacy of Theodahad and his ability have been questioned from the start and loyalties are divided. Becoming king may shorten your lifespan. This team would not be played by just one group of friends.

The Sassanids: East 3-4 Players

Although The Eternal Peace between Khosrau and Justinian is technically in place after years of border wars its temporary nature is generally accepted. After years of inconclusive trading of provinces and cities both monarchs need to make sure that whoever breaks the peace is in a position to change the status quo in a definitive way.

The Franks: North 3-4 Players

Another group who previously served the Romans, they are making their presence known by spreading into Southern Gaul, threatening the Visigoths and approaching the Alps. Under an able King, they're in search of land as they extend their borders, having moved from the Rhine

The Visigoths: West Optional 3-4 Players

Based in Southern Spain, the Visigoths are considering their options at the moment. A successful invasion of North Africa before the new owners have consolidated would extend the reach without trying to push back the Franks...

Other Barbarians: North-East Optional 3-4 players

Certain groups are likely to be abstracted to a considerable degree, particularly those in Africa and the south-east as they tend to focus on raids rather than occupation. There is the potential to play various groups in the Balkans, who may wish to secure their own futures.

Player Note: The Sassanids and these other groups have physical limitations on where they can interact with the Romans on the map, but are able to utilise diplomatic means to extend their influence and perhaps coordinate activities.