

# FACTION BRIEFING: PALMYRA



Herbert G Schmalz (1856 – 1935) – Zenobia's last look on Palmyra (1888)

## **Historic Context**

In 64 BCE, the Roman Republic conquered the Seleucid Kingdom, and the Roman general Pompey established the province of Syria. Palmyra was left independent, trading with both Rome and Parthia. The province of Syria was divided into Syria Coele and Syria Phoenice by Emperor Septimus Severus (r. 193 to 211 CE). The current Emperor, Marcus Iulius Phillipus (Phillip the Arab), is from Syria. The city of Palmyra is a fusion of Arabic, Greek, Roman, and Syrian influences.

Palmyra became part of the Roman Empire when it was conquered and paid tribute early in the reign of Emperor Tiberius, around 14 CE. Roman rule brought great prosperity to the city, which enjoyed a privileged status under the empire – retaining much of its internal autonomy, being ruled by a council, and incorporating many Greek city-state institutions into its government. Palmyra saw extensive construction in the first century, including city walls and the Temple of Bel. Palmyra developed from a minor desert caravan station into a leading trading centre with Palmyrene merchants establishing colonies in nearby trading centres. At its height, Palmyra had more than 200,000 residents.

In the third century, Palmyra transitioned to a monarchy due to increasing militarisation and a deteriorating economic situation caused by wars between Rome and the rising Sassanid dynasty. During the Barracks Emperor period, Palmyra took leadership of the remnants of Roman forces in the Orient, after major Roman defeats to the Sassanid Empire. While maintaining an outward appearance of allegiance to Rome, Palmyra gained control of many Roman provinces in the Orient, creating a short-lived Palmyrene Empire. This splinter empire was crushed by Emperor Aurelian, and Queen Zenobia was paraded in a triumph in Rome, wearing chains of gold.

## **Roman Client State**

At the start of the game, Palmyra is an ally of Rome. Rome and Palmyra can grant each other permission to move through their controlled provinces. Members of the Palmyra faction are eligible for Roman honours and other rewards from the Emperor or Senate.

## **Palmyra Faction**

Up to five player roles may be in play for the Palmyra Faction:

- Exarchos (Lord) Odaenathus, Roman Senator, military and faction leader;
- Queen Zenobia, wife of Odaenathus and his successor if he dies;
- Septimus Zabadas, chief general of the army;
- Septimus Zabbai, general of the army;
- Cassius Longinus, rhetorician, philosopher, and faction diplomat.

## **Character Goals**

In addition to any Secret Ambition you have, your primary character goal is to survive this time of crisis. Your secondary goals are to accumulate wealth and honour.

## **Palmyra Faction Goals**

Palmyra's primary goal is to survive and preserve its autonomy. The following secondary goals also exist:

- Prevent one major power from dominating the Orient region;
- Increase your faction Prestige score to be greater than the other factions in the Orient;

- If you are a client state to one of the major empires, your treaty relationship should be one where Palmyra is treated with dignity, allowed a role in trade, and its leaders are given honour.

### Trade

As a Roman client state, you can invest WP in trade. You lose this privilege if the Romans go to war with you.

Controlling Egypt allows you to control shipments of grain to Rome, which may be a useful bargaining chip in negotiations with Rome. Controlling the overland trade route from India, with its silks and spices, will also give you some influence with Rome.

### Resources at the Start of the Megagame

**Income.** Palmyra has a fixed RP income of 10, and a variable income of **d4**. If the Roman Orient faction mints coins, Palmyra gets one bonus RP.

**Leaders.** Your leaders are skilled and experienced, and generally have better dice than most other leaders at the start of the game.

- Odaenathus: Military **d10**, Political **d8**;
- Zenobia: Military **d4**, Political **d10**;
- Zabadas: Military **d8**, Political **d6**;
- Zabbai, Military **d8**, Political **d6**;
- Longinus, Military **d4**, Political **d10**.

**Territory.** Palmyra controls the provinces of Palmyra and Dura Europos. Both provinces have two Forts, representing a combination of city walls, garrisons, and the logistic difficulties of invading these desert regions.

**Military.** Your military is strong in cavalry, which complements the Roman strength in infantry.

### Strategy Guide

You start the game as a minor power stuck between two mighty empire's – Rome and the Sassanids. Your initial goal should be to build up your armed forces, while avoiding the direct attention of the armies of the empires. Expansion will require careful timing and diplomacy to exploit opportunities created by the wars between Rome and the Sassanids.

