

# FACTION BRIEFING: SASSANID EMPIRE



Rock relief carving of Emperor Valerian kneeling before Shapur I and asking for mercy.

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## Historic Context

In 224 CE, Ardashir I was crowned Shahanshah (King of Kings) in Ctesiphon as sole ruler of the Persian Empire. This marked the end of the Parthian dynasty, and the beginning of four centuries of Sassanid rule.

From 230 CE onwards the Sassanids raided the Roman Empire and resisting Roman counter-offensives, with mixed success. In 244 CE, following the defeat and murder of Emperor Gordian III, after a foiled advance down the Euphrates River, Shapur concluded an advantageous peace treaty with the new Roman Emperor, Phillip the Arab.

The Sassanids are heirs to an ancient civilisation, and they are the only civilisation that the Roman Empire regards as its equal in international diplomacy. Shapur tolerated Christianity, sheltering the prophet Mani, and repealed oppressive laws against Jewish communities.

During the Barracks Emperor period, the Sassanids often raided deep into the Roman Empire, capturing Armenia, sacking Antioch, and inflicting several major defeats on the Roman Army. Captured prisoners were impressed into construction projects in the Sassanid Empire. For a time, the real defence of the Roman East was led by the Roman client Kingdom of Palmyra. It was not 298 CE that Rome secured a peace treaty on favourable terms that restored Roman influence in their client states.

## Sassanid Faction

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

- King of Kings Shapur, commander of the army and faction leader;
- Kirdisro, viceroy of the empire;
- Peroz, chief of the cavalry;
- Hormzid, son and heir of Shapur;
- Katir, Zoroastrian priest 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.

## Sassanid Faction Goals

The Sassanid Empire seeks to end Roman domination of the Orient. The following secondary goals also exist:

- Gain control over the Roman client Kingdoms, or force them to switch their allegiance from Rome to Persia;
- Increase your faction Prestige score to be greater than the other factions in the Orient;
- Gain control of the Roman provinces on your border, especially MESOPOTAMIA, and OSROENE.
- At the end of the game, you should have a peace treaty with Rome, where Rome treats the Sassanids as their equals, acknowledges your conquests, promises not to attack you or your client states, and agrees to make regular payments of tribute.

## Trade

If you can gain control of Egypt, you can 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, may also give you some influence with Rome.

## Resources at the Start of the Megagame

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

At the start of the megagame, you are owed 10 WP each game round in tribute payments from the Roman Empire. If you attack Roman tokens inside the borders of the Roman Empire they are no longer bound to pay tribute.

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

- Shapur: Military **d8**, Political **d8**;
- Kidisro: Military **d4**, Political **d8**;
- Peroz: Military **d8**, Political **d4**;
- Hormzid, Military **d6**, Political **d6**;
- Katir, Military **d4**, Political **d8**.

**Territory.** You control ten provinces. The Sassanid Empire stretches further to the east than is shown on the map. This depth of territory makes it impossible for the Roman Empire to wipe you out.

The states of IBERIA and ALBANIA are Sassanid client states at the start of the megagame.

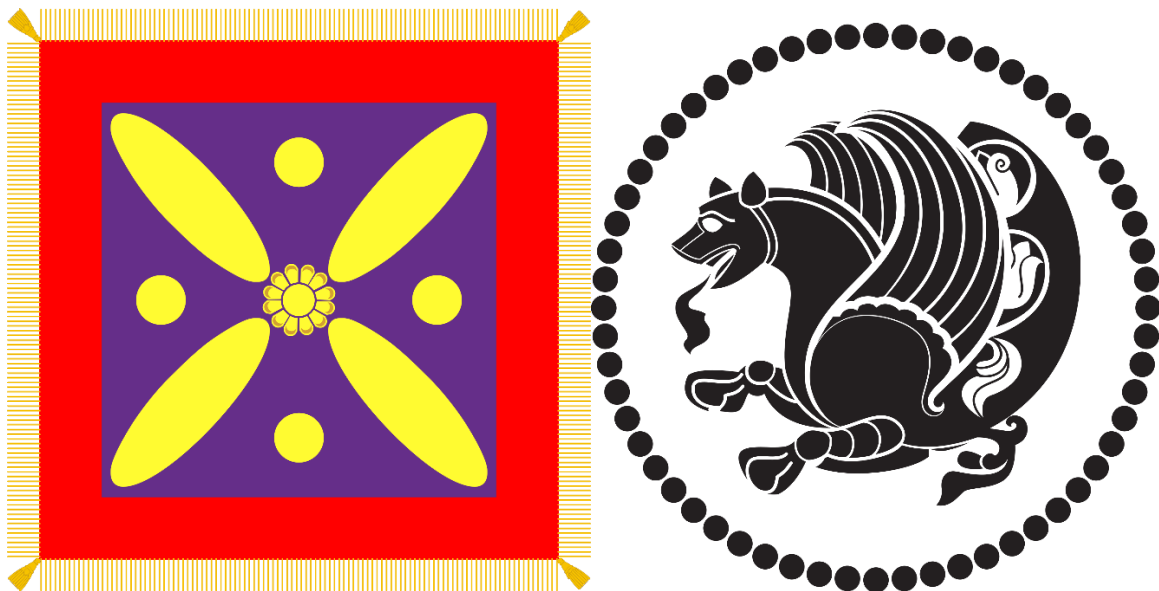
The states of ARMENIA, COLCHIS, and PALMYRA are Roman client states at the start of the megagame.

**Military.** Your military is very strong in cavalry, but weak in infantry. You may not have advantage as often as an infantry heavy force, but when you do win a cavalry victory, Roman casualties will be greater than your losses usually are.

### Strategy Guide

The Roman Empire starts the game with a strong army, and maybe tempted to attack you to restore their prestige. If you are careful with raiding, combined with famine, plague, and the chance of civil war in the Roman empire, then over time you may wear out the Roman defences in the Orient.

If the Romans keep paying you tribute, your early moves should be directed at gaining control over the Roman client states, especially Armenia.



Artists rendition of the Derafsh Kaviana banner of the late Sassanid Empire, and the Senmurv, or Sassanian royal symbol. Public Domain.

