



# CATAPHRACT Developer's Notes



By Alan J. Ray



My official involvement with GMT began as a playtester for *WAR GALLEY*. That experience provided me with the "credentials" that enabled me to land the Great Battles of History Series Editor job that Gene Billingsly posted on the Internet last fall. I've been a wargamer for over 35 years and have actively studied the ancient period nearly as long. I've been a player of the GBoH series since its inception. Perhaps more importantly, my *WAR GALLEY* experience demonstrated to Gene that I could meet one other critical job element—be able to "work with" with the designers. At some point in the development process, I was "promoted" to Developer and it is from that perspective that I'll describe the games that make up the *CATAPHRACT* package.

## CATAPHRACT

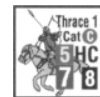
*CATAPHRACT* came first. Mark Herman delivered the core set of rules and the Dara scenario. I caught up with readings in Procopius—fortunately we have a primary source who held an important post, as Belisarius' secretary, and provided a detailed account of the events covered by the game. I passed the most pertinent passages to Mark. He proceeded to design the remainder of the scenarios and I

took on the task of getting the game rules in order. Since *CATAPHRACT* is a series game, my major goal was to retain as many of the core rules as possible from the earlier titles with an emphasis on *CONQUEST OF GAUL*. In addition to the rules themselves, it was important to preserve the style as well. But the sixth century AD is not the first century BC. Military practices changed and so did some of the game's rules.

Most of you will notice that the rulebook is slimmer. There are few unit types and virtually no specialty units. Section 9.0 is significantly shorter than in other games and—perhaps more important to new players—the number of exceptions and special rules peppered throughout the rest of the sections are minimal. The command rules are much simpler than those in prior games. Noticeably absent is any significant difference between the Byzantine command structure and their opponents (though contingent commanders are unique to the Byzantines). Mark's design change here reflects the realities of the period. Both sides had high mercenary content in their armies and a rather loose command structure relative to who was really in charge. Based

upon how these battles unfolded, we dropped the rules for depletion and cavalry pursuit. Column movement came close to the editor's axe, but was needed for the Tricameron scenario. Partially offsetting these reductions, new rules were added to handle army discipline, dismounted cavalry, uncontrolled advance and the champion challenge.

The period required major changes to the existing rules are with missile fire and rally, though the basic mechanics remain much the same. The non-linear nature of the composite bow's range effectiveness prompted a change to reaction fire. Fortunately, a simple fix worked without forcing an elaborate opportunity fire-style rule (Panzer Bush anyone?). Now it is "rally or die" (based on the leader's charisma). The rally table is gone, replaced by cohesion hit assignment based on



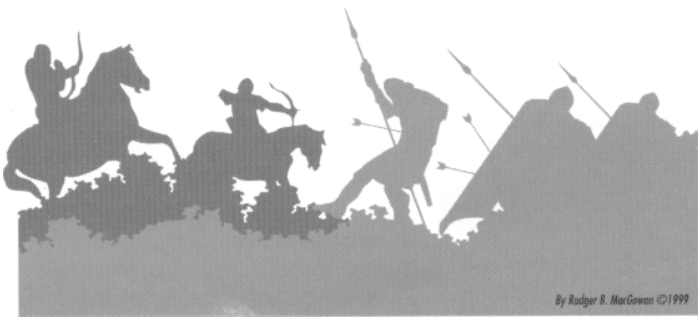
whether the unit is horse or foot. Again, Mark's design change here reflects the realities of the period. The antagonists fielded primarily cavalry armies. Quick action was required to keep them from scattering. The foot, when present, were of poor quality so the likelihood of successfully getting them back into the battle was quite low.

This translates into shorter playing times than those in the previous games. All the battles take place on half maps, because most battles have less than 40 units per side. Smaller armies and simpler rules speed play considerably.



Players will quickly notice the importance of missile fire. Prior titles had relatively few missile units of note that could exert their influence at long range. In *CATAPHRACT*, the composite bow adds a whole new dimension to the game. It has a 50 per cent chance of hitting at a range of five hexes and is deadly

## Developer's Notes: CATAPHRACT/JUSTINIAN



their heavy horse are not bow-armed. Keep them back until your light horse archers have taken their toll. For the

the rules. Richard Berg had designed a game that not only captured the essence of the period at the strategic level, but also a considerable amount of its flavor. The rules were in decent shape and it was fun to test. Most of the kinks in the system were worked within a few weeks, facilitated by the rapid communication capabilities of the internet. The end result is a first-class, insightful game that could have been easily published on its own.

at a range of three or four hexes (80 per cent). Furthermore, the first 20 per cent scores two hits! As stationary foot archers can fire twice, the composite bow is one very potent weapon. These are not rare specialty weapons either. A majority of the Byzantine and Persians units are armed with them. The Ostrogoths, Vandals and Franks are at a distinct disadvantage without them. The range, mobility (many bowmen are cavalry), and ubiquitous presence of composite bow units means rally and recovery are difficult as well. Routed units are easy pickings to long range fire.



As important as missile fire has become, it is still not decisive. The bow units will run out

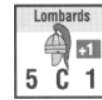
of arrows, and reloads are difficult (at Dara special rules prohibit reloads altogether). The shock attack still remains the best way to break the opponent. The heavy horse is the arm of decision. The Byzantines have the epitome of this type, the cataphracted cavalry—and did I mention that they are armed with composite bows as well! The Persian and Ostrogoth heavies are nearly as good from a shock perspective but lack the firepower. The Vandals have too few to make a real difference, while the Franks have none.

I won't dwell much on tactical details, but will offer some general advice. For the Byzantines and the Persians the watchword is patience. Let your arrows soften up the other guy before you enter shock (by the way, this is how it was done at the time). Timing is critical for the Persians, because

Byzantines with their multipurpose Cataphract timing is less important, though they need to recover as many cohesion hits as possible before launching the charge. For the Vandals and Ostrogoths, you must close quickly or you will become pincushions. The uncontrolled advance, though restrictive, is a nuisance, for a long dalliance means death. As for the Franks, well what can I say. The same advice on haste holds for the wedge—it gives you automatic attack superiority. Hope for the best.

### JUSTINIAN

I was quite enthusiastic when Gene and team decided to add a strategic game to Cataphract to introduce the players to this rather obscure period. Given that this was an add-on feature, I didn't have any great expectations. I was quite presently surprised when I received the playtest version of

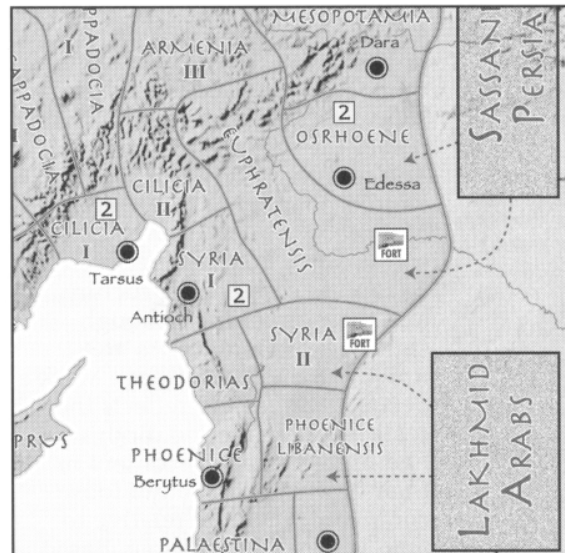


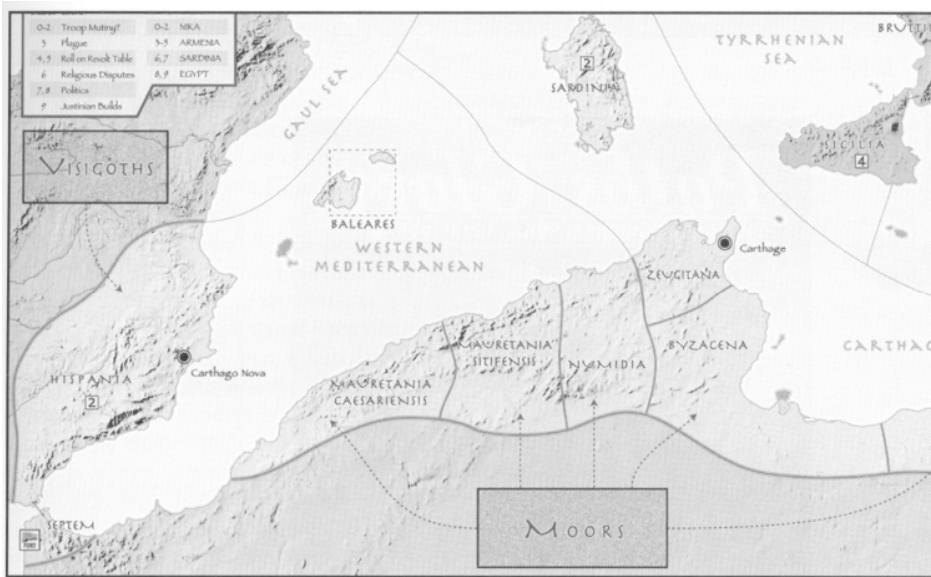
**JUSTINIAN** is a strategic game that puts the player in the sandals of Justinian, Emperor of the Roman

(Byzantine) Empire or an assemblage of "barbarian" nations that occupy the nearby western portions of the old Roman Empire. The goal of the Byzantine player is to emulate the exploits of Justinian's generals—by retaking Italy and Africa while holding the Empire's eastern territories. The Barbarian player, on the other hand, must thwart Justinian's design. To aid in this endeavor, the Barbarian player has, in addition to the Ostrogoths and Vandals (the tenants of Italy and Africa respectively), the services of the powerful Persians and a number of other marauding barbarian types that randomly enter play.

Here I will provide some general advice.

First, read the victory conditions. The game runs a maximum of ten turns, covering the nearly forty-year reign of Justinian, but will end early if the Byzantine player achieves his victory conditions or the Plague (random event) occurs twice. The Byzantine player need not control every province on the map to win. City provinces and provinces with an income of two or more





Byzantine side, however, differs from that of the Barbarian in two significant ways: a) the use of gold and b) the capabilities and limitations of the Byzantine army.

The Byzantine player collects gold from the provinces he controls and uses the funds to pay his army units, build special units, activate his forces, and make bribe attempts. Rarely will you have enough gold to do it all. The Byzantine player must continually balance the need to pay his troops (to prevent desertions) against the need to move armies and bribe Barbarian forces. Activation of armies is crucial, so most

are the keys to victory. They frequently become the battlegrounds. Though it is obvious that the Byzantines must take the offensive to win, the Barbarians must be equally aggressive, particularly with the Persians and his random allies.

#### The Barbarian player



must keep the Byzantine player constantly fighting on multiple fronts. While

the Byzantine player is focused on attacking the Ostrogoths and Vandals in the West, the Barbarian player must use the Persians and the random tribes to keep up the pressure elsewhere. The Persians field two potent armies that will usually force the Byzantine player to keep the armies of the East and Armenia at nearly full strength and led by a topnotch leader (Belisarius or Narses). Due to the Persian attrition rule, it doesn't pay to expand too far from the Persian box, especially given that two city provinces are within the no attrition zone. With the random tribes, take residence in the nearest city province to force the Byzantine player to expend resources to evict them—resources better spent elsewhere. Because the Persians and randomly-activated tribes regenerate, the Barbarian player should play aggressively with

these forces, especially targeting weak Byzantine field armies. Given the restrictions on field army movement, a loss of a few field armies will severely hamper the Byzantine player.

The Ostrogoths and Vandals will bear the brunt of the Byzantine onslaught. The



Barbarian player must use these two forces cautiously. Once eliminated, they don't return. The Byzantine player can gain a big boost by capturing their treasures. The loss of territory is not important; survival is the key. Fortunately, given the Byzantine resource constraints (limited men and money), he usually will concentrate on only one area at a time. This enables the nation that is not the focus of attention to pursue a limited offensive. If the pressure is on the Ostrogoths, a Vandal raid into Aegyptus will Provide prompt relief.

The above discussion of Barbarian play provides insight for the Byzantine player on achieving victory. The play of the

Byzantine players will reserve the gold necessary to move forces in the coming turn. The main dilemma is how much gold to save to influence the coming allegiance rolls. A successful bribe robs the Barbarian player of an activation and could give the Byzantine player an extra force to use against his foe. However, that "influence" comes at the price of not paying his own troops, leading to possible desertions.

The Byzantine player has two types of troops: Field and Frontier. Field troops are grouped into armies and function much like Barbarian forces with one important exception: a particular army must end its activation within a certain area of the map. Significant losses in any one of these armies will have a significant impact on the Byzantine player's fortunes in



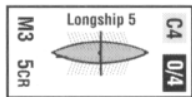


that area. Frontier troops, on the other hand, are immobile and suffer penalties in combat. Frontier

troops, however, are cheaper to maintain. Given their limitations, Frontier troops should be used judiciously to guard Fort and City provinces (to preserve the combat modifiers for the Byzantine side). The successful Byzantine player must strike a balance not only between his Field and Frontier troops, but also must insure that he has the appropriate force level in each army to win battles. Furthermore, the Byzantine must keep a strong central reserve to protect the capital. The loss of the Byzantine treasury is devastating—most likely signaling the end of Justinian's dreams.

### BONUS SCENARIOS

With extra space on the counter sheets and mapsheets, we added a couple of bonus scenarios. The most significant naval battle of the period, Sena Gallica, is given the *WAR GALLEY* treatment (and a half map). As a preview to future developments in the Great Battles of History series, the Vikings row upriver to pillage a



settlement.

This double-game package combines the "tried and true" *CATAPHRACT* and Sena Gallica with the "totally new" *JUSTINIAN* and Viking raid to produce a varied and rewarding development experience for me. I firmly believe that gaming experience will be at least as rewarding for the players that choose to follow in the footsteps of Belisarius and Totilla.



## Feedback Questions and Results

Issue Nr.11, 2000

### How to use the Feedback Response Card:

After you've finished reading this issue, read the Feedback questions below, and send me your answers and comments on the enclosed Feedback Card or on a separate sheet of paper. Please send your Feedback Card/Comments to:

Rodger B. MacGowan, C3i Editor-in-Chief  
26500 W. Agoura Rd., Suite 373,  
Calabasas, CA 91302, USA

### QUESTIONS

Questions 1 through 20 ask you to rate this issue, its articles and graphics (0=no opinion; 1=poor to 5=excellent).

1. Inside GMT
2. **CONQUEST of GAUL** Scenarios: *Germania*
3. How to Employ Your Barbarian Horde
4. **CONQUEST of GAUL** Scenarios: *Aquitania*
5. **Invasion: Norway** - *Operational Tempo*
6. **Victory in the West**: *Built-in Blitzkrieg*
7. INSERT: **DiF Module** - *Kuban Bridgehead*
8. INSERT: **C3i "Ben Hur" Countersheet**
9. INSERT: Player Aid sheets \*
10. **8th Air Force**: *Observations*
11. **Ben Hur - War Galley** Scenario
12. **War Galley** Scenarios: *The Raven*
13. **Cataphract**: Developer's Notes
14. **Saratoga**: Tournament Rules
15. **Down in Flames**: Tournament Rules
16. From the Nightstand
17. **GMT Games Rating Chart**
18. This Issue Overall
19. Graphic Design of this Issue Overall
20. On the basis of this issue only would you be inclined to resubscribe (Y/N)?

Questions 20 through XX ask you to rate the following games, first in terms of game design, second ease of play and third graphic design using a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being best:

21. **Paths of Glory** (Design)
22. **Paths of Glory** (Playability)
23. **Paths of Glory** (Graphics)
24. **Tigers in the Mist** (Design)
25. **Tigers in the Mist** (Playability)
26. **Tigers in the Mist** (Graphics)
27. **River of Death** (Design)
28. **River of Death** (Playability)
29. **River of Death** (Graphics)
30. **Cataphract**: GBoH - Vol. VIII (Design)
31. **Cataphract**: GBoH - Vol. VIII (Playability)
32. **Cataphract**: GBoH - Vol. VIII (Graphics)

33. How much influence do the articles in **C3i** magazine have on your decision making in purchasing the GMT games you decide to buy? (A) major influence; (B) moderate influence; (C) minor influence; (D) no influence at all.

34. The Desert Island Question: In the comments section of your feedback card, please list the "Ten GMT Games" you would most want with you, if you were stranded on a desert island; also, if you like, briefly explain "why" you chose those titles:-)



### Issue Nr.10 - Feedback Results

1. <b>Caesar</b> Scenarios: <i>Sertorian War</i>	4.76
2. <b>DiF</b> Aircraft: <i>Regia Aeronautica</i>	3.33
3. Inside GMT	4.23
4. <b>Operation Shoestring</b> : <i>Naval Variant</i>	3.60
5. <b>DiF</b> Campaign: <i>Operation Pedestal</i>	3.68
6. <b>DiF</b> Variant: <i>The Vic Formation</i>	3.66
7. INSERT: <b>DiF</b> - <i>The Flying Tigers</i>	4.18
8. INSERT: <b>C3i</b> Countersheet	4.66
9. <b>DiF</b> Campaign: <i>Battle of Britain Day</i>	3.81
10. <b>Paths of Glory</b> : <i>Close-Up Feature</i>	4.40
11. <b>SPQR</b> Scenarios: <i>EQUUS Cavalry</i>	4.85
12. <b>Samurai</b> : <i>Warriors and Soldiers</i>	4.19
13. <b>Samurai</b> : <i>The Power of One</i>	4.14
14. Issue Graphic Design Overall	4.80
15. Issue Nr.10 Overall	4.57

### C3i Back Issue Overall Ratings (Nr.1-10)

1. Cover: <b>SPQR</b>	4.45
2. Cover: <b>Arctic Storm</b>	4.16
3. Cover: <b>Crisis: Korea 1995</b>	4.04
4. Cover: <b>Caesar</b>	4.48
5. Cover: <b>Alexander</b>	4.00
6. Cover: <b>8th Air Force</b>	4.02
7. Cover: <b>Invasion: Norway</b>	4.06
8. Cover: <b>Crisis: Sinai 1973</b>	4.45
9. Cover: <b>Typhoon!</b>	4.26
10. Cover: <b>Paths of Glory</b>	4.57

*Note: These ratings are based on results from C3i Feedback cards. The ratings scale is from 1-to-5, 5 being best.*

### Shipping Rates for GMT Games/C3i:

• **US Shipping**: 1st Game: \$5; Each Additional Game: \$2; C3i issues/GBoH modules: \$2 each

• **Canada/Mexico Shipping**: **Surface**: 1st Game: \$5; Each Additional Game: \$4; C3i issues/GBoH modules: \$2 each. **Air**: 1st Game: \$6 Each Additional Game: \$5; C3i issues/GBoH modules: \$3 each

• **Europe Shipping**: **Surface**: 1st Game: \$9; Each Additional Game: \$5; C3i issues/GBoH modules: \$3 each. **Air**: 1st Game: \$15; Each Additional Game: \$10; C3i issues/GBoH modules: \$5 each

• **South America Shipping** (same as Europe) -- see above.

• **Japan/Australia/China/Pacific Rim Shipping**: **Surface**: 1st Game: \$9 Each Additional Game: \$5; C3i issues/GBoH modules: \$3 each; **Air**: 1st Game: \$20; Each Additional Game: \$14