

EA Kalasia - Shiva, The Destroyer



Like a huge tiger lurking in the brush, Kalasia is a serious powerhouse that comes charging out of nowhere and can devour almost anything its gaze falls upon. Shiva come to life, this monster is something most other nations will have a lot of trouble dealing with early, mid and late game. That's...probably not the impression you had of this nation, there's a good chance you thought of this as one of the weaker ones. Let's see how ferocious this tiger can be, and feel sympathy for the body count we're about to rack up as the poor lesser beings can't even reincarnate.

The Divinity of Ass Kicking

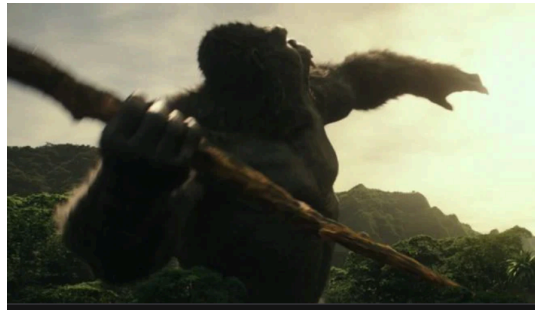
The centerpiece to Kalasia is, of course, their sacreds. There's so many great things going on here I'm not gonna try to cram it all into one section, I'm gonna keep talking about it through this whole guide. These sacreds are modular main battle tanks - they're great out of the box, but the real magic is all the accessories we're gonna strap on them. Before we get into all that though, a key thing to remember is that Kalasia has the uncommon trait of being able to recruit sacreds outside of their cap. The cap only Yavana are a bit better (and what you will be recruiting out of your cap), but the recruit-everywhere Guhyaka are perfectly interchangeable for every strategy we're gonna use, and super conveniently have the same map and combat move, so freely mix them all together as you like. From here on I'll refer to this mix as "sacreds" - just ignore the sacred archers.

As advertised, out of the box these sacreds are pretty good. Awe, with 2 good damage attacks and good hit points - even without a blessing these guys do pretty well in melee. The glaring gap of course is a complete lack of protection, which is a critical weakness indeed in many situations. Time to talk about strapping our first accessory on! I suspect a very common blessing taken for Kalasia is Air Shield, for obvious reasons - but I don't think that's necessary and we can use our design points elsewhere. I think a much better direction is Barkskin, or in a pinch Stygian Flesh. 10 protection with 23hp and a small buckler is fairly resistant to the medium strength shortbow fire you'll have to deal with in the early game - and makes them substantially tougher in melee. Clearly this isn't tower-shielded heavy infantry resistant, but medium strength arrow fire is not going to take you down fast enough to stop you giving a practical demonstration of what happens to archers in melee.

You will have a little bit of a weak spot here to particularly heavy archer fire, so be careful about big horse tribe indies or anybody with just a huge amount of bows. You're also going to have a rough time against some relatively early evos in some matchups - Blade Wind, Magma Bolts,

etc. are gonna sting. Even still, 10 protection and 23hp will generally take a few hits to go down, and your bucklers will catch some of the missiles - in most cases you're not much worse off than if you'd taken arrow fend with no protection. Flaming Arrows is a good bit of yuck with your fire weakness, but it's also important to remember that you do have a roster of non sacred troops! Lets see how we can give the enemy archers and mages something to think about other than hitting our weak spot.

Rise of the Planet of the Apes



Your first thought in fielding chaff is probably the 5 gold Markatas, but for this scenario skip the little guys - what you want here is primarily somebody to pull the agro of enemy mages and archers long enough for close combat murder to occur by your very capable sacreds, and the Bandar Warrior is much better at this. First off - as far as soaking up Blade Winds, etc. despite costing a good bit more gold per unit, they cost less gold per hitpoint than the Markata - giving the enemy spellcasting AI a very juicy pool of hit points to prioritize. They also have a buckler to block a little of it, but not so much as to make them a bad target compared to the 10 protection sacreds. Finally and critically, They've got a 12 morale rather than the 7 of the little monkeys. They can soak up a ton more damage before breaking, particularly if you invest in some morale boosting things. Guhyaka Generals with a Crown of Command and Horn of Valor, in dominion will lead up to 150 Bandar with morale of 16, as well as another 65 sacreds with 18 morale - which is also helpful if they need to hold after some apes have eventually broken. They can also use advanced battle formations, which is very helpful in shaping enemy fire - which is an important bit of finesse in playing Kalasia.

This tiger of destruction's best defense against early massed archers is not an Air Shield blessing, it's more offense. The great thing about the Bandar Warriors is that they are so much more than punching bags to soak up damage - these are badass gorillas skirmishers! Your first research target is Strength of Giants, which is early and easy enough that you should have it up for literally every significant battle for the entire game. Clearly this is another accessory for your battle tanks, but for the moment let's keep our focus on our Mighty Joe Youngs. The Sticks and Stones range attack scales with strength, and these guys were already gorillas. Once enchanted these guys are whipping stones that look more like bullets, and sticks that look more like trees - with a range of 19 and damage of 16, and 2 shots per gorilla per turn. The range is definitely low, but these are good hitpoint guys with small shields, so even with their low protection they're gonna trade favorably with enemy archers once they get in range. More importantly they give enemy archers something to worry about rather than steadily plunking at

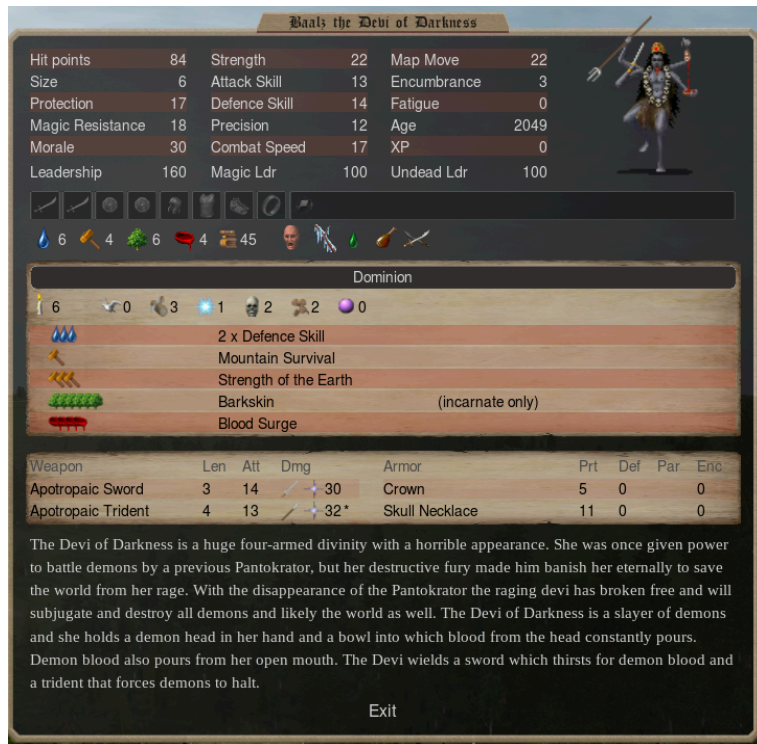
your sacreds. If the enemy is firing at your gorillas they've already done their job. If they're ignoring your gorillas a hail of 16 damage blunt trauma is gonna make pretty short work of most shieldless archers. Either way, with a little cleverness you've got the tools to keep your bark-skinned sacreds from being whittled down over time.

Sticks and stones are blunt damage, not piercing, and they've got 30 ammo. This can be a good thing to remember if your opponent tries to circumvent your awed sacreds with skeletons. Also, if you're struggling with the range of sticks and stones due to your opponent's deployment try using the longbow Bandar. Their damage output is lower (1 attack rather than 2), and they lack shields - but they can out range most other archers so there's definitely a tactical place for them if your opponent is insisting on longer range engagements. Finally, don't forget about the Atavi archers. They're not as good as the Bandar archers in many ways, but they are 7 gold and most importantly stealthy. 80 archers unexpectedly showing up to a battle can be a pretty big tide turner in some circumstances.

It's important to note, I most emphatically am not suggesting a good strategy is to try and throw enough apes out that the enemy runs out of Blade Winds. Clearly, lining up targets for enemy mages to blast without bringing your own spells is rarely going to be a winning strategy. Obviously you've got very capable Blade Wind/Falling Frost casters yourself - which is another good counter to massed archers. Wave Warriors sucks up some of your strength, but effectively doubles your hit points against arrow fire or Blade Wind - definitely a move to consider if that's the big threat. Similarly since they can't be blessed, look to Wooden Warriors to make your apes enormously more resistant to missile fire (though this can make them less appealing to enemy spell casters, so consider that in your play). Arrow Fend is a game changer certainly worth prioritizing in some matchups, we'll talk more about that later. Once you do get that A support don't forget to tack Wind Guide to help with the admittedly pretty low ape accuracy. Once you start stacking on these sorts of support spells the Bandar Warrior barrage can become quite challenging to deal with when backing up intensely strong melee sacreds.

Higher Enlightenment - Next Level Sacreds

Now let's circle back to considering more accessories for those modular battle tanks. We've taken a bit of a weak spot in skipping the Arrow Shield blessing - what is it that we're getting instead? Well, we've snapped on barkskin armor plating, and clipped Strength of Giants onto a hardpoint. +4 strength is working well, so let's do more of that. What goes super well with Awe is higher defense, so let's do more of that too. Also, one of your main mages is a high W mage, so consider swinging to cold dominion - none of your stuff is fire resistant anyway, so heat-3 is not particularly advantageous. After Barkskin you can fiddle with the details to your preference, but let's throw out a wonderfully on theme specific build as an example.



This pretender is a delight on the battlefield, and we'll be having some wicked fun with her, but first let's consider what little vessels of destruction we've just transformed our sacreds into. If we're assuming Strength of Giants is in every significant battle, once blessed and Blood Surge is active our Yavana are hitting twice with a 15 attack skill and a jaw dropping 32/24 damage, with a 19 defense backing up their awe(they also rack up stars pretty quick). Now I think you're starting to see what I mean when I say most other nations are gonna have trouble dealing with this - this is with just our blessing and ench-3 researched, so very early game - and the Guhyaka coming out of every non-cap fort are scarcely much weaker so you'll have a numerical advantage against most other sacreds. You can also probably see why I'm confident they don't need to stand under enemy archer fire too terribly long - from glamourised elves to regenerating giants nobody's gonna stand up to that for very long with gorilla rocks raining down for support.

This is a ferocious opening worthy of Shiva, and with an awake beater of a pretender a blistering expansion is pretty straightforward. We've still got plenty of open hardpoints on our modular tanks left, so let's take a look where we want to head for fighting real opposition.

Opening the Third Eye - Magic Support

There's a few research targets that might be necessary depending on what you're facing, but as soon as you possibly can, Thau-6 is at the top of things to consider a priority. Your battle tanks were already kicking the shit out of everything without the good sense to run away, it's just plain unfair to stack Celestial Music on top. And are you kidding? You even have easy access to Clams of Pearls so you don't have to worry about gem management! Any Guru holding a clam now more than doubles the power of your sacreds - when they were already entirely overwhelming. Toss Haste on for a combat move of 42 and a pretty good impression of flying

units that don't give a shit about Storms, and your accessorized battle tanks look something like this, while attacking a total of 4 times per turn each:

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That's how Shiva rolls - these fuckers are each like a fairly heavily equipped thug, but come by the dozens. I also want to remind you this is just with Ench-3 + Thau-6 researched, with Constr-4 making things easier but not strictly necessary. Once your research really warms up, fill out some more hardpoints with Weapons of Sharpness and Marble Warriors for a force that is almost literally unstoppable in melee. Protip - your pretender can make blood stones so you don't even need to shuffle gems for this either!

Nobody, and I mean nobody is going to want to engage these guys in melee, so the next step is to pre-counter your opponent's last hope - blasting your tanks with magic. After Blade Wind, the next most obvious thing you're going to have thrown at you is fire and lighting evos - but conveniently you've got easy access to Fire Resistance and Lightning Resistance at Alt-5, and Winter Ward at Ench-5. Barkskin does give you fire vulnerability, so in some circumstances consider not blessing your guys - though just leaning into your own offense may be the better move in a lot of cases. Also look to Rain and Mist/Arrow Fend to make it a much more uphill climb to try to bring down your now fully accessorized tanks. This is a situation where you don't need a hard counter, you just need to be resistant enough to dominate in melee for a little bit and tear through everything like an industrial band saw. You can also leverage your high defense and good hitpoints to drop a few earthquakes to pop enemy mages before they get started. Finally, don't overlook that combat move of 42 - most people are not going to be prepared for how fast you can flank with guys able to tear through most bodyguards with ease.

One specific weak point does bear special consideration - Fire Shields are a bit of a problem for this build. Prioritize Marble Warriors as a pretty good counter, but early on it could be a bit of a struggle and you'll probably need to go to plan B if you're facing Abysia or somebody with a fire shield blessing early. Luckily plan B is still pretty good.

You finally really did it. You maniacs! You blew it up!

With Light of the Northern Star up (or light communioneing) you've got a huge pool of Soul Slayers - which is quite likely the first goto move against the sort of Burning Ones/Giants in small numbers that would have fire shields. Conveniently this was unlocked on your way to Celestial Music and should be easily available early. Even better though, also unlocked is

Enslave Mind, which every Guru can spam after Power of the Spheres and LotNS is put up (or a little more communing of course). Pass out some Void Eyes and let those fuckers hit each other's fire shields. Bone Melter can be pretty powerful if you're needing to wipe out size 2 heavies (hell blessed Chud skinshifters, or Marverni Boar Warriors for example).

That's strong, but a bit obvious so let's see what else you can pull out if your opponent came prepared with MR resist stuff. Your cap only mages are quite powerful, and not slow to recruit so you'll have a fair number for their power level. Your pretender can contribute both blood stones and thorn armor giving you access to W5-6 (bracelet, robe), E6-7 (boots, stone, Earthpower) and N5-6 (mace, moonvine bracelet, thorn armor, Strength of Gaia). These are not the obvious heavy artillery big mages like some others, and clearly you're not going to have the numbers available from non-cap mages, but each one can hit pretty damn hard if you use them right. The obvious spells of Blade Wind and Falling Frost can be pretty strong against some types of troops, particularly with Eagle Eyes.

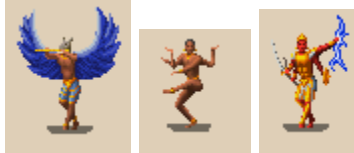
What about the harder targets though? Maws of the Earth is a pretty nasty one that scales with E power, so big ass E7 mages can smackify a horrifying 11 AOE with 19 AP damage that ignores elemental resistances and for lolz also Earth Grips anybody that lives through it so they can sit in the Poison Clouds you're also laying down. Also, a lot of people don't realize how well Frozen Heart scales with W power. A W6 caster is sniping 20AN damage, with 100 precision at a range of 50! Even much more modest W3-4s with no equipment are gonna be absolutely devastating if you've got a half dozen spamming this at that slow moving line of Burning Ones trying to climb through...let's say a couple dozen etherealized clockwork horrors before you freeze them solid.

Let's look at the other likely thing with a fire shield - enemy Pretenders or SCs. You know what SCs really, really don't like? Petrify. That's cute - they equipped a bunch of MR gear to resist your Soul Slays, and have high cold resistance...but Petrify leaves no way to resist and is 100 precision - they're now in timeout and there's no way to prevent it. You do want to be a little careful as you might have just created a very tough statue with a fire shield, but if you pair this with somebody walking up with FR and a Gate Cleaver (or whatever nastiness is appropriate) there's not really anything they can do but...well, nope there's not anything for them to do but die.

Another angle to think about if you're not wanting to charge straight forward with your tanks every fight - Curse of the Desert pairs with Curse of Stones delectably, and remember high level mages like you've got make them extra hard to resist. If you're not worried about fire shields, now is the time to etherealize & luck some 14 defense Markata and let the enemy heavies pass out playing tag with the handful of gold that cost. Consider Rage of the Cornered Rat to make sure they have to catch every last one of those fuckers. Howl and Swarm are fun to bring to that party and potentially even a Grip of Winter/Winter Ward or Foul Vapors/Poison Ward. Since we took a cold dominion Numbness can also be pretty strong here - having a couple guys with Ice Pebble Staffs can numb a surprising amount of enemy units tied up trying to grab ethereal/lucky monkeys.

If the game goes long enough to crack into real high research and you're looking for game closers Niefel Flames is fantastic and all your Yakshini can cast it with a water bracelet. As good as this is, it's a bit of a stretch to call it a target because it's evo-9, and your first high level research goal is in Conjuration. That's a great segue into...

The Celestial Keg Party



Kalaisia has some crazy good national summons. They're so good, they're often even worth it if you have to alchemize gems into pearls to summon them. Don't go crazy burning gems the expensive way, but definitely consider every gem you spend as it might be better put towards getting another divine being down to help you. In a pinch consider summoning the sacred Gandharvas if you absolutely need sacreds with higher protection, but if you can you should lean on your gold recruitable units and save your pearls for the commander summons.

Before diving into the summons I'd be remiss not to point out that your recruitable cap mages are quite capable of thuggin themselves with modest gear. Earthpower, Iron Skin, Person Regen, Temper Flesh, Bless - native awe and go ham on enemy PD with any reasonable gear. The summons do have dramatically more mobility though, so your thug game gets a lot better once they're available.

First up, at Conj-6 and summonable by a Guru with an astral cap: Kinnara are really big upgrades to your capabilities as they give you access to flying A2 support. As already mentioned this is a very welcome addition of Arrow Fend/Mist, and also Wind Guide. They can Cloud Trapeze too, and open up that flying/trapezing thug raiding with awe and mistform. You can also hold a Crystal Shield and 3A gems and cast Mass Flight turn one. You can probably figure out some uses for this with what I laid out above. A lot of utility for 25 pearls. If you are in a serious pinch for Arrow Fend/Mist you can get Kinnara by empowering a Guru. For 45 pearls that may be just the shortcut you need. Conj-6, Ench-6 is the shortest path to getting Arrow Fend up - though you really want to get Constr-6, and likely Thau-6 first, which is why I've put so much effort into showing how to be effective without it. It is a pretty big upgrade once you do though, so consider that shortest path as the priority in some matchups as 45+25 pearls is likely doable by the time you get the research done, and you're still getting the critical Strength of Giants done first.

Next up at Conj-7 is the Siddha - summoned by a Guru with a cap and coin. She has 4 arms and is arguably more of a small SC than a thug. She also has natural teleportation movement so unless you need to move in the magic phase you can send her to anywhere across the map with no gems or lab necessary. She gives you a H3 caster, making it a ton easier to bless bigger armies without your pretender or prophet - and claiming thrones of course with infinite map movement is pretty nice. She's a native S3 letting you leverage up with a cap and coin to

summon the S5 big guys below. That also gives you a teleport capable S5 who can hold a Banner of the Northern Star and cast Power of the Spheres netting a cool S7 which will let you drop some real neat stuff for late game like Solar Brilliance, Arcane Domination, and Astral Tempest. If you manage to snag the Dimensional Rod artifact you can even pull off that super dick move almost entirely reserved for pretenders and teleport in a singlehanded, turn 1 Master Enslave (Crystal Shield, Dimensional Rod, Astral Cap, Crystal Coin, Banner of the Northern Star - 125 gems including the Siddha summon, but damn is that a sweet move at teleport speed. You can even cast Ritual of Returning first to be relatively invincible) . Back to the only slightly ridiculous though, if you can manage to scrape up some Shademail for her she is next to impossible to stop as a raider. Attack, sneak back to a lab on the other side of the world, potentially trade out equipment or teleport or move for free anywhere. A TON of utility for 35S, and Conj-7 is fairly doable unlike the slog up from here.

Conj-8 gives you Devata, who are largely skippable, though they do give you A3 - which is A4 with PotS/Crystal Shield so Fog Warriors is a thing now. Really though, instead of summoning this for 45S you can probably just empower a Kinnara or Siddha for 45A instead (or better yet, trade for a winged helm) and not wait for Conj-8.

Conj-9 gives you Devala, who are...fine. They give you H4 which you can prophetize to H5 if you really want that. That's all I'm gonna say about them, because they're available at the same time, and for the same price as Rudra. Rudra are without question some of the strongest SCs in the game. Soul Vortex + Phoenix Pyre, Mistform, Fear, 4 arms, Fire and Shock immune and Cloud Trapeze. Winds of Death/Wailing Winds. They can do crazy shit like hold a skull/elemental staff, crystal shield, flame/air helm, fire skull/air bag and still have a hand free to flip off the enemy while doing whatever you want with that terrifying mess of magic. Rigor Mortis? Fire Storm? Shimmering Fields? These guys are army killers, SC slayers and they're not even unique - you can summon as many as you can afford. At 55 pearls they're not even that expensive compared to many other high level summons like angels - and as mentioned, consider alchemizing to get more Rudra.

Don't Trust a Smiling Tiger

As promised this is a Kalasia that is a real handful to deal with early, mid and late game. Aggressively strong sacreds coming out of the gate and scaling up steadily to be extremely relevant for the whole game. Huge mages laying beatdowns with a lot of ability to ignore resistances and bring down the toughest stuff in the game. Some of the best summons in the game coming online mid game and culminating in certainly one of the best SCs in the game. I'm not even sure what's more scary - multiple kitted Rudra zooming around, or those recruit everywhere sacreds buffed with Celestial Music, Marble Warriors, Fog Warriors, Weapons of Sharpness, & Mass Flight. I guess it doesn't matter since you'll have both, with a steady progression to that pinnacle as the game goes on.