

The Kingdom of the Gods

The first Imperium was finally swept away—by just one poor, crippled, middle-aged priest from the island of Gánga in the gulf south of Jakálla, an inconsequential backwater. This priest, Pavár by name, was originally devoted to Ksárul, but in the course of his meditations he stumbled upon a means of contacting yet others of the race of ‘gods’ and thus altered the flow of history.

The ‘gods’ summoned by Pavár were the Lords of Stability. First came gentle Thúmis; then Hnálla himself, the Supreme Principle of Stability. Later there was Avánthe; then golden Belkhánu, the Lord of the Excellent Dead and lastly Karakán, Master of Heroes. A flood of knowledge poured forth upon the lowly priest: information concerning the two ‘alignments’ and the pantheons, servitors and Cohorts of these new Lords of Stability, the topography of the many Planes, and the secrets of life after death. All this Pavár set down in his cursive script.

The Scrolls of Pavár

The Scrolls of Pavár described the *Tlomitlányal*, the Five Lords of Stability, and the *Tlokiriqáluyal*, the Five Lords of Change. Although he realised these were but mighty entities farther along the scale of existence than mankind, he also stated that for all practical purposes these were indeed ‘Gods’ since man is too limited and transitory to comprehend their vast purposes. Pavár set forth how each ‘god’ must be served, and how life is to be lived—unfortunately, the Scrolls also put an end to man’s certainty that he alone is the highest being in the universe, the quintessential ‘reason for it all’, and thus the Scrolls cut short man’s attempts at analysis of his universe.

Pavár’s doctrines spread far and wide even during his lifetime, mostly touching the hearts of the common folk. Pilgrims came to sit at the feet of the crippled priest, and in time a city arose on his island, and when at last he died and was entombed near his simple home, it became a great metropolis. Temples were erected to Pavár’s new gods, and missionaries propounded the doctrines of Stability with all of the zeal of the newly converted.

The priests of the old faiths waxed wroth, and the kings sent forth soldiers and inquisitions. In what is now Tsolyánu some regions threw aside the Lords of Change almost immediately, while others clove to their familiar deities. Abroad, the Livyáni clung to their Shadow Gods. The folk of Mu’ugalavyá were too steeped in the doctrines of Vimúhla to change. The Mu’ugalavyáni elite evolved another cult, however: the worship of Lord Hrsh, either another ‘god’ or an amalgam of Ksárul and Vimúhla, or perhaps one of the Lords of Stability garbed in the trappings of Change. The Salarvyáni produced an amalgam of Avánthe and Dlamélish, named Shiringgáyi. Smaller nations also did not escape this religious upheaval, and even the nonhuman enclaves were affected.

Eventually, the zealots became plump priestly bureaucrats, and temples of Stability stood side by side with those of Change. Of course certain deities still dominated some areas, but in the interests of peace most of the sects (even those of distant lands) agreed to a great Concordat of the Temples. This prohibited any overt religious hostility; and slowly society was brought under control.

By the third century after Pavár’s death, secular power began to shift away from the weakened kings of Béy Sü to the hierophants of his island of Gánga. In the ninth century the last monarch of the Bednálljans stole away from his decaying capital to the islands north of Yán Kór. The capital of the empire of the Priestkings was shifted from Béy Sü to Pavár’s island, and thus was established éngsvan hla Gánga: ‘the Kingdom of the Gods’.

The Priestkings

éngsvan hla Gánga endured for over ten millenia. The exploration and conquest of most of the great continent was completed. Livyánu capitulated and became only another prefecture, though it held yet to its Shadow Gods. Engsvanyáli legates held court in Dlu’nír in the islands of Tsoléi, in humid Gorulú in Háida Pakála, in cool Nenu’ú in the wild land of Nuru’ún, and in the storm-blown Ai’ís in the Farisé Isles. Of the friendly nonhumans, only the Shén kept their independence, while the inimical races were driven back into preserves.

This was the the greatest flourishing of human culture since before the Time of Darkness. Art, architecture, music, literature, science, and a thousand other crafts and skills all thrived mightily. Social and economic affairs prospered as well. The Sákbe Roads wound across the continent bearing the commerce of nations. Armies evolved first into standing garrisons and then into glorified police forces. Taxes were regularised, temple tithes restricted, merchants protected and laws established.

It is must be remembered, however, that the Priestkings were theocrats; their rule was based upon temple power and the swords of their armies. Those who opposed their laws were executed or resettled. The Tólek Kána Pits, the terrible prison constructed by the Bednálljan emperor Báshdis Mssá I just south of Béy Sü, was refurbished and expanded; armies of slaves toiled to build the Sákbe Roads and to carve a mountain crag into the fortress-palace which later became Avanthár, the capital of modern Tsolyánu. Religious and secular powers were combined into one, and it was a rare individual who attempted to swim against the current. Society flowed on like a broad, somnolent river.

SOURCES

*The library of the Governor of Tumíssa is the best source for materials relating to éngsvan hla Gánga. For a fee, the custodian will display the **Book of Priestkings**, the last copy known to exist. It was calligraphed by Aruchùè, the greatest scribe of his age, illuminated with gold-leaf and colours made of powdered gems, and bound in plates of electrum all set with sparkling jewels. It is also said that if one watches the miniature pictures upon its pages, that these will move and visually display the story written in the accompanying text.*

Dumán Langshá

Shártokoi Guál Dáimi

(A Priest There Was)

in Tsolyáni, the manuscript of which is kept in the Temple of Avánthe in Jakálla, but copies are commonly available

several authors

éngsvan hla Gánga, Kolumébabàrdàlisa

(éngsvan hla Gánga, the Mighty and Powerful Empire)

in Tsolyáni, the original of which is kept in the Temple of Karakán in Béy Sü