

## éngsvan hla Gánga Ends

éngsvan hla Gánga perished suddenly—the causes are not fully known, although it is clear that vast seismic convulsions were initially to blame. The western end of Pavár’s island tilted up and the eastern end fell beneath the waves, carrying the metropolis of the Priestkings and all its glories with it. At the same time, the shallow inland sea of Yán Kór rose up, spilling its waters north to drown the coastal islands and south to thunder against the Thénu Thendráya Range. In time the upper highlands dried up, and today the sands of the Desert of Sighs sometimes blow aside to reveal the crumbled ruins of Engsvanyáli cities. The Spouting Mountains of the Shén domains erupted to bury that region under volcanic ash, and in the east jagged Dríchte Peak, the ‘Hag of Flame’, vented its fury upon the forestland of Nuru’ún and the Plains of Glass. A whole new continent rose up like a leviathan of the sea south of Ssórmu, remained thus for a hundred years, then sank again, its place now marked only by the dangerous rocks of the White Water Shoals. Lesser cataclysms occurred in a hundred other locations as well.

No region escaped the economic, political, and psychological consequences of the disaster. Commerce faltered, crops failed, the Sákbe Roads fell into disrepair, and the cities emptied as refugees sought safer ground. All unity of purpose and of spirit drowned; local loyalties and hatreds, long suppressed, re-emerged to divide mankind, and war was reborn. Province fought province, city battled city, and devotees of Stability clashed with those of Change. All of the ancient ills which had ever beset Tékumel came forth again at the setting of the sun of éngsvan hla Gánga. The Ssú and the Hlüss made exultant forays into human regions, the Hlutrgú seized much of Káiija and the shores of Msúmtel Bay, and even the friendly races took the opportunity to expand their domains. Within two centuries after that first savage paroxysm, the corpse of the Kingdom of the Gods was picked apart by a thousand greedy scavengers and another Time of Darkness overspread the land.

## The Time of No Kings

Some say that the ‘Time of No Kings’, as the Tsolyáni historians name this period, lasted for six millenia, others claim ten. History becomes a confused babble. At one point over twenty independent principalities ruled in what is Tsolyánu today. Some regions continued to employ a debased form of Engsvanyáli for their inscriptions and monuments; others chose to raise their own local dialects to the status of literary languages, thus giving birth to modern Tsolyáni, Mu’ugalavyáni, and a host of other tongues; in not a few areas the art of writing itself was lost.

It is to the Time of No Kings that many of the folk legends of present-day Tékumel refer. There are innumerable tales—Tsolyani peasants sing yet of the mighty warrior Hagárr of Paránta, who still wanders the world exchanging old wisdom for new; there is the necromancer Nyélmu, condemned by the gods for his arrogance to live forever in the timeless ennui of the Garden of the Weeping Snows beneath old Jakálla; there is Subadím the Sorcerer, whose insatiable curiosity led him to seek the Egg of the World in the dizzy crags of Thénu Thendráya Peak, and who is later said to have visited the Home of the Gods themselves.

There is great Thómar the Ever-Living, whose ensorcelled towers appear in the wastelands to provide weary travellers with hospitality—and the chance to gain wealth and magical power through performance of his quests. One hears of fumbling Turshánmu the Summoner of Demons, whose enchanted ship lies buried beneath the sands of Milumanayá near Pelesár and whose abilities, though great, are marred by occasional absentmindedness. The tale-spinners tell of Qiyór the Many-Tongued and how he duped the demon princes of the Planes Beyond until his cleverness led him to attempt one trick too many. The Mu’ugalavyáni relate the legends of brave Pendárte of Khéiris and his battle with the minions of She Who Cannot Be Named in the Citadel of Ebon Light below the city of Ch’óchi. All of these tales, and many more besides, can be heard round the fires of the clanhouses in almost every town and village in the land.

It is quite possible that some of the wisdom of éngsvan hla Gánga survived in the sanctuaries and hidden retreats of the ancient priesthoods. Such monasteries exist today, although the powers of their sages are certainly less than those of the heroes of the tales. There are many reports of encounters with some of these mythical protagonists. The truth of these legends can only be conjectured.

### SOURCES

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