

Issue One | Autumn 1992

Jannu

Our travel correspondent Dermot Bolton, He of Wide Journeying, submits the first in a regular series of reports:

Habitation

Most Jannuyáni live in villages and small towns, the capital being Jannu Peidaho with a population of 10,000. Village communities consist of round wattle-and-daub thatched huts, with some wood and stone buildings. The towns are similar, but also have forts belonging to the major clans. These forts are squat stone buildings set upon a motte and bailey arrangement with fire-retardant Nle wood palisades. Some of these are very old. Other buildings include the great hall of the Assembly of Spears, various civic buildings and scattered *hwanhau* (priest-house) temples, usually built as hilltop shrines. There is a large *hwanhau* in Jannu Peidaho which reputedly has shrines to all Pavar's twenty deities (though a visitor from civilized lands might not recognize them as such).

Politics and social organisation

Officially Jannu is ruled by a king (or shau) but this position is little more than a figurehead. The present incumbent is one Menaho Shau Jannu from the ruling family of the Clan of the Unending Peak. This family have been hereditary rulers for some 730 years and were originally a highland clan from near Arbola, where they still own much land. But there is a growing discontent within the Assembly of Spears towards the ruling family, and open hostility is never far away.

The Assembly of Spears itself has no real legislative power and serves mainly in an advisory role, but it does act as a forum for clan heads and politicians to carry on their power broking. The true power in Jannu, though, resides in the clans. These are represented in varying degrees through clan elders, rural councils, urban oligarchies and of course the Assembly of Spears itself. Most land is owned by the six most powerful clans and their income is derived from local taxation. A 3% tax is the basic levy for trade and home produce in this somewhat feudal society. The clans also demand a proportion of able bodied young men to serve in what are called legions, but are a mere shadow compared to the Tsolyáni standard. (It must be said, however, that these warbands can boast very fine quality mountain troops and scouts.) These military units are organised on a derivative of the Engsvanyáli standard.

Outside the centres of habitation, social organization is primitive, showing little stratification. In rural areas a man's status owes as much to his charisma and professional standing as it does to the status of his ancestors.

The priesthoods take little interest in the running of everyday life in Jannu. People tend to make pilgrimages to temples on holy days, the frequency of such depending on piety. The interesting feature of these trips is that they are conducted in total silence no matter what provocation the pilgrims may face. The temples themselves tend to be grouped together as shrines, usually on remote hilltops, and are supported in much the same way as Tsolyáni monasteries—by land, taxes, donations and for services rendered.

Summary

Most Tsolyáni would see the Jannuyáni as rustic, simple, rather stupid and easily angered, which is a rather accurate description of the people of this backward country. If you have the dubious pleasure of visiting Jannu, don't stay too long.