

Issue Four | Spring 1995

Incomparable Understanding

Mark Wigoder-Daniels conducts an interview with Professor Barker

The Eye: What authority does the Omnipotent Azure Legion actually have? What could a captain of the Legion do, for example, if he had reason to suppose a temple was harbouring an Imperial criminal? What could he do if a nobleman refused to answer his questions?

MARB: Summon an Omnipotent Azure Legion cohort, or file a case in an Imperial court. A treasonous noble would send for friendly officials, demand a counter-investigation, and try to have the case heard by friends at Avanthar. Failure means he has no protection against the due process of law.

The Eye: Are there any lineages that claim descent from Pavar?

MARB: No. If he had children, they do not appear to have survived.

The Eye: Could you give some more information about the hero Hrugga?

MARB: Hrugga was tricked by Aweth, the Paladin of Skulls, and got lost between the Planes. He had numerous adventures while trying to get home. At the Battle of Dormoron Plain he vanquished MiSsúm but was later slain himself—at least according to the Ksarul rescension of the epic.

The Eye: Can you expand on the Manifesto of Noble Deliverance?

MARB: You must register your challenge before civil magistrates at the Palace of the Realm, so it isn't really affordable by low status clans. Together with your seconds and clan representatives, the magistrates send messengers to Issue the challenge. It is appropriate to challenge persons of similar social status and with a warrior background—for instance, Dra temple guard captains, legionaries of the Twelve Paths of Avanthé, Karakan worshippers, and so on. If the challenged party is inappropriate (a non-warrior, a young lady, an aged scholar, etc) you will become a laughing stock. The Manifesto is thus often not applicable. On the stated day, you go to the Hirilakte and choose your weapons with the help of your seconds. Bravado is possible ("Take my weapons and give me yours!") and can lead to problems if neither party has skill with the other's weapon. Seconds may alternatively have decided the weapons to be used beforehand. There is bragging and chest-beating, then the seconds call for the duel to commence. Spectators get to watch for free.

The Eye: Do the Tsolyáni have a concept of private property (ie, items that you possess as an individual which your family have no right to)?

MARB: To a degree, yes. Clothes and weapons are yours to do with as you like. A magic sword probably would not be confiscated by the clan, but if you tried to sell it they might step in. When you died your relatives would argue over it for years.

The Eye: What shape and size is a Marotlan pitch?

MARB: In large cities the Hirilakte arena can be as big as 50% larger than a UK football pitch. Arenas in minor towns are much smaller. Marotlan games are held every week (on Daunel) in towns and villages. The arena is divided into coloured zones for each team, with an area in the middle which is colourless. At the back of each team's zone is a raised platform with a hole in it: the goal. An intricately carved and gilded sceptre is used.

The player with possession of this cannot be tackled or have the sceptre wrestled from him, although a body blow can cause him to loosen his grip and drop it. The sceptre can be thrown to another player. Secret alliances are made before or during the game with other teams—and open alliances, too. In Yan Kor they use a leather ball instead of a sceptre.

The Eye: Which gods are the most popular in Tsolyánu?

MARB: It varies according to where you are. The war gods are popular in the west, and so on. Across the whole Empire, about 15% of the population worship Hnalla. Avanthé is even more popular. At the other end of the scale, in all of Bey Sü you might find only five hundred adherents of Gruganu.

The Eye: How many people have seen service in a regular legion?

MARB: Maybe 6% of young men. It's particularly high at the moment because of the war with Yan Kor and the internal conflicts.

The Eye: In practice, how often do cities undergo Ditolana?

MARB: For Bey Sü and Jakálla the last time was in the 13th century. Fasiltum had a Ditolana in the 18th century. The city of Sáрку may have had one in the 20th century, but it's not certain because their records are secret. The most recent was Thraya, just two hundred years ago. The custom of Ditolana was more common in the first millenium, when the Emperors were more like all-powerful God Kings and could ignore commercial preSsúres.

The Eye: What was the Rebellion of the Right Hand?

MARB: This was in Engsvanyali times. A province in modern day Mu'ugalavyá felt they were being overtaxed and sent a delegation to Ganga. The Priestking accepted their petition, but signed the subsequent decree with his left hand. This is often taken to mean someone is lying, as the left hand is "unclean". It is not certain whether the Priestking meant it or was simply left-handed, but the upshot was that the province rose in rebellion. Their enemies joined the Priestking's forces in quashing the rebellion.

The Eye: What constitutes an Imperial crime, as opposed to one that just concerns the civil courts?

MARB: Imperial crimes include treason, murder of an Imperial official and harassing Imperial business. (The last can be used broadly by the Emperor whenever he wants to get at someone and there is no other pretext available.) Religious and inter-clan matters are not usually handled by the Imperial courts, but you can always appeal to them for a higher ruling in civil matters if you want.

The Eye: How is *The Lords of Tsamra* novel coming along?

MARB: Twenty-three chapters have been written as of October 1994. Currently it is somewhat bogged down in descriptions of the Livyáni plague which do not really reflect the glory of Téकुmel.

The Eye: And the Mitlanyal book?

MARB: Bob Alberti is working on it, but he has little spare time. So far he has found one hundred and twelve different sects. There are probably more!