

GATEWAY TO TÉKUMEL



CURTIS SCOTT

Preface to the 2000 Edition

With the advent of the Internet, role-playing in M.A.R. Barker's world of Tékumel has slowly begun to resurface as an exciting and sophisticated gaming option around the world. As a result, new and potential players are looking for a short, inexpensive introduction to acquaint them with Tékumel. Because such a introduction was the heart of the original play-by-mail game written by the late Curtis Scott in 1983 for role-playing in Tékumel, I have decided to resurrect *Gateway to Tékumel: Character Information Booklet* so it can act today as this "player information booklet."

I would like to thank Mary Scott, Curtis Scott's wife, for allowing me to go ahead with the republication of *Gateway to Tékumel*, and Brett Slocum for passing me the files need to make sure "going ahead" would be easy.

Finally, I ask current readers to note:

- 1) Because of changes in the game industry in the last 18 years or so, *NONE* of the companies mentioned in this text, except for Gamescience, exist any more, and Gamescience no longer publishes Tékumel material.
- 2) *NONE* of the addresses in the text have been valid for years, so there is no point to writing to these addresses unless you wish to communicate with the current resident.

Enjoy!

Carl L. Brodt, 2000

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Gateway to Tékumel

Character Information Booklet

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Portions of this work were extracted from:

Swords and Glory: Volume I
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Publisher

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Welcome to Tékumel

Gateway to Tékumel is a play-by-mail role playing game, which takes place on the world of Tékumel. Tékumel was originally developed by Professor M.A.R. Barker as a background world for a series of science-fiction stories. The Professor's attention to the details of the history and societies of this world, however, has made it a fascinating place for role-playing adventures. Professor Barker himself has been a gamer for many years, and game-masters in Minneapolis.

Information about Tékumel was first published in the game "Empire of the Petal Throne, in 1975. In the eight years since, thousands of people have become involved in the ongoing saga of the inhabitants of Tékumel. A monthly magazine has been founded to disseminate information about the world, several supplemental publications have been printed, and Professor Barker has appeared at several gaming conventions to talk about the world of Tékumel.

In the past few months, a new Tékumel role-playing game called "Swords and Glory" has been published by Gamescience Publishing. "Swords and Glory" is far more extensive than the original "Empire of the Petal Throne." It reveals many details of Tékumel, which were glossed over in "Empire of the Petal Throne."

Given the recent publication of "Swords and Glory," I (your humble author) thought that a Tékumel play-by-mail role-playing game would be appreciated by those who are as hungry for adventure in the world of Tékumel as I was. For this reason, *Gateway to Tékumel* was born.

Much of the information about Tékumel in this booklet is condensed from Volume I of "Swords and Glory." I would like to take this opportunity to thank M.A.R. Barker and Gamescience, Inc., for permission to reproduce this information.

In the time I have spent adventuring on Tékumel, I have grown to appreciate the qualities of the world. Intricate detail, dramatic characters, and a flavor of ancient mystery all merge in Tékumel to provide entertainment, excitement, and fascination. I hope I am able to convey these feelings to you, the players, as it is for you that this labor is performed.

Curtis V. Scott, 1983

A Few Guidelines

Gateway to Tékumel, as stated above, is a play-by-mail role-playing game. As such, it is quite different from role playing games played in the privacy of your home. The limitations and freedoms of this type of game require some rules which would not be required if, for example, you came to my house to play (this is not an open invitation).

You and I must communicate through the mail. This makes the time between "turns" much longer than in a "live" role playing game, but it allows more time for you to plan your actions and for me to describe their effects. To make each turn as effective as possible, please follow these simple rules:

- 1) Turns should be mailed to:

Gateway to Tékumel
c/o Curtis Scott
318 Joseph Street Rear Apartment
New Orleans, LA 70115

- 2) Print or type your turn. It is essential that your turn be readable! If I can't read what you send me, I will either guess what you meant (and possibly be wrong) or send it back (wasting your time and mine).
- 3) You are allowed about 3 typewritten double spaced pages, or approximately 1200 words, per turn to specify your actions. If you print, more pages are allowed, but 1200 words is still the limit. Put your name and your character's name at the top of the first page, and your character's name at the top of all other pages. Number the pages.
- 4) Please include \$3.00 payment with each turn. Make checks payable to Curtis Scott. If you wish, you can send me money in advance, and I will send you invoices with each turn showing how much money you have "on account." Under no circumstances will *Gateway to Tékumel* process a turn "on credit." Business is by cash, check, or money order only. (Handling credit cards would only increase what I must charge you for your turn.)
- 5) Try to foresee all possible consequences of your actions, and make allowances for them in your turn. If something happens which you have not allowed for, I will have to stop processing your turn there and send it back to you. This costs you both time and money, so it is in your best interest to describe alternatives as carefully and completely as you can.

It is obvious that I cannot ask you about every blow your character strikes in a fight, exchanging letters once per exchange of blows! I will do my best to portray your character, but I must have some idea of how you wish him/her played. Use the space provided on the back of the

Character Description Sheet to describe your character's opinions, attitudes, beliefs, goals, tactics, and any other information you wish me to consider when processing your turns.

7) *Gateway to Tékumel* is a role playing game. Part of the fun in participating in a role playing game is developing the personality of your character. I intend to provide many opportunities for developing this personality, but since I communicate with you through the mail there is a possibility that I may not play your character the way you wish it to be played. Feel free to write explaining your character, as the more you can tell me about him/her, the more realistic his/her adventures will be.

Tékumel itself has facets which can be exploited in a play-by-mail context. I will keep *Gateway to Tékumel* as close as possible to Professor Barker's original creation. This means that anything you discover through the play-by-mail game can be considered "official" Tékumel material. I keep in close contact with Professor Barker (you should see my phone bill), and I will forward any questions I have rather than send you an incorrect response. In the course of play, you may receive descriptions of places, maps, and other details which will (to the best of my ability) be "real" Tékumel.

Conversely, what you do in the play-by-mail game has meaning on "real" Tékumel. *Gateway to Tékumel* will produce a newsletter called "Poposyál" (Rumors), detailing the more interesting adventures of the players in narratives and Imperial dispatches. All of the adventures occur on the same world. This means what you do may affect not only your character, but every character in the play-by-mail game. Poposyál will be printed monthly (if enough adventures are available) and you will receive a copy of the most recent issue with every turn, if you have not already received it.

Association with the ongoing saga of Tékumel has several fringe benefits outside of the services of *Gateway to Tékumel*. *The Tékumel Journal*, published monthly, carries "official" Tékumel material. I strongly recommend that every player get a subscription. These fine individuals also make lead miniature figures of the inhabitants of Tékumel, and sell other publications about Tékumel. Here is their address:

The Tékumel Journal
c/o Jeff Berry
2428 1st Avenue S.
Minneapolis, MN 55414

Other Tékumel information may be procured through Adventure Games, which has published several Tékumel-related works, including detailed maps ' of some of the terrain, troop lists for the armies, a document on the Tsolyáni language, a set of miniatures rules, and the "Book of Ebon Bindings," a text on the demonology of Tékumel. Their address is:

Adventure Games
1278 Selby Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55104

The World of Tékumel

The planet Tékumel is the third of five planets swinging about a star which the Tsolyáni (inhabitants of one of the major empires) call Tuléng. Tékumel has two moons, Gayél and Káshi. Aside from the planets and moons, there are no objects visible in Tékumel's night sky.

Tékumel is larger and hotter than Earth. The polar icecaps are rather small, and temperatures in the northern sub-polar tundra areas average from -13 to 23 degrees Fahrenheit. In a southerly city such as Tsámra (in Livyánu) they vary between 84 and 116 degrees Fahrenheit, with summer extremes attaining 127 degrees Fahrenheit.

Tékumel was not visited by mankind until long after the Twentieth Century. By this time all of man's modern concerns -- the dreaded atomic Armageddon, the destruction of Europe and much of North America, the rise and fall of later empires, the spreading of mankind out into the stars, the thrill (and fear) of initial contact with non-human races, the wars and invasions, the many establishments of "lasting peace" -- all of these things were more remote to the starfarers who first landed on Tékumel as the pyramid of Chuff is to Twentieth Century man.

The first explorers looked down upon a world uninhabitable by man. Poisonous vegetation covered the land from pole to pole, many-legged monsters splashed in tidal pools of stinking slime, and crumpled mountain peaks raked skies filled with clouds of yellow gas. The planet was also inhabited: the continents by several sub-species of semi-subterranean beings called the Ssú, and the coasts and islands by a related race named the Hlüss. These races were inimical to mankind and possessed enough technology to make any human conquest difficult at best.

Under other circumstances almost any other spacefaring race might have been happy to go their way and leave well enough alone. But Tékumel lay upon an important interstellar trade route, and the rulers of Humanspace were ruthless and efficient. Mighty weapons cut swathes through the jungles and defeated the Ssú' and the Hlüss, driving them back into small enclaves which eventually became "reservations." The atmosphere was cleared, and the deadly flora and fauna were poisoned and replaced with more familiar life. The planet was shifted in its orbit and its day was made to conform to the standards of ancient Terra, now long lost and far away across the galaxy. Tékumel was larger than Earth, but as its core was composed of lighter elements, the gravity had to be adjusted only slightly through the insertion of great eternal engines buried deep within the planet's core. All of this took over a century to achieve, of course, but in the end Tékumel was a place fit for mankind to live. Colonists came and settled, and soon men sang of Tékumel as "home."

As the centuries passed, Tékumel became a residential planet. The wealthy and powerful came from the stars to shed their fatigue beside its lazy seas. Villas and palaces rose in place of the decaying alien cities of the Ssú and the Hlüss. Elegant aristocrats visited one another via a planet-wide network of underground tubeway cars. The skies thundered with the mighty ships of interstellar commerce. Luxuries came from the worlds of Humanspace filling the sprawling estates

with exotic flora and fauna. Tékumel relaxed into being a graceful, somnolent pleasure world, a place to which every lesser man yearned someday to retire. Various alien allies -- and uninvited foes -- of humankind came, brought across unimaginable distances by the interstellar Three-Light Drive.

Thus it remained until the Time of Darkness. No records exist of this catastrophic age. The few fragments of folk memory which do exist lament a time when the hills rose up, the seas walked the land, flame spouted from the mountains, and the stars went out forever. This last is most significant: it must be assumed that Tékumel and its solar system fell -- or were thrust -through a warp in the fabric of space-time itself, a "hole in the sky," into a dimension in which no other matter existed. The reasons for this terrible calamity can only be guessed: natural forces, stresses created by the incessant use of the Three-Light Drive, the actions of a hostile race, interference from mighty beings far beyond man on the evolutionary scale, the vengeance of God upon His arrogant Creation -- ? No one knows.

The sudden cutting of the lines of force which link star to star caused unimaginable strain upon the sun and planets of Tékumel's system. For a time, life itself hung by the slenderest of threads. Dazed and shocked, the survivors looked into the black emptiness of the new night sky and despaired. All communication with other worlds had ceased. The great ships stood idle because there was nowhere for them to go. Cities fell into ruin. New lands rose dripping from the bottom of the ocean, while others sank beneath the waters. Raw materials once brought from the stars became unavailable -particularly iron, which had never been common on Tékumel. The machines of former times became great prizes and gained an air of wonder and sanctity. As centers of education were obliterated by catastrophes and the ravages of time, there were fewer technicians to maintain the machines. One by one the lights went out, bringing about a darkness not only of the skies and of the cities, but also of the mind.

Some machines continued to run, of course, fueled by raw energy from other dimensions. Parts of the subterranean tubeway system survived since its tunnels and cars were powered by these forces. Slowly, Tékumel's survivors began to learn the techniques of agriculture and a less technological way of life. Mankind and his allies eventually prospered once again in spite of all that the elements and an angry Fate could do to them. It is said -- though it is not known for certain -- that the Time of Darkness lasted for more than fifty centuries.

Mankind's enemies on Tékumel initially suffered as much from the cataclysm as mankind himself, but as time passed and the planet stabilized once more they began to see it as a blessing. The weapons and force fields which had restricted them to their reservations ceased to operate. Mankind and his allies retreated here and gave way a little there, while the Old Races exulted and dreamed of reclaiming their world. But they did not reckon with mankind's more rapid birthrate or with his genius for military action. Although they are ferocious fighters, neither the Ssú nor the Hlüss are oriented towards organized military campaigning. Though in the end they found themselves with more land than before the Time of Darkness, mankind and his allies still held the greater part of the planet.

Almost nothing of the world before the Time of Darkness now remains on the surface of Tékumel. The earthquakes, tidal waves, volcanoes, and storms have had their way with the fragile

cities of men, and the gentler forces of erosion, silting, and forest growth have completed the task. Some of the great shuttle ships still stand, perdurable towers of never-rusting metal, half buried in the alluvia and debris of millennia. Also, buried beneath the many strata of later settlements, one finds the remains of the cities of the ancients: metal corridors, twisted and buckled chambers, bits of corroded and unintelligible machines, fragments of plastic and the effluvia of technology, and here and there a skeleton which crumbles into dust at the touch.

Most of these items are both awesome and dangerous to the present inhabitants of Tékumel. Men have died from thinking ladies' perfume to be liquor, from the explosion of a defective power cell, from travelling in a tubeway car to a destination where the safety devices no longer work and the tunnel has collapsed, and from a thousand other simple, silly causes which could have been avoided if only the language of the ancients were still known. But aeons have passed; none living can read the books, the instructions, the signs carefully posted upon the walls.

After the Time of Darkness came the Latter Times. Here the first written records of human civilizations appear. Thanks to the industrious scholars of the Engsvanyáli Empire (see below), portions of a language now known as Llyáni are known. The longest and most complete Llyáni text, the "Tablets of Llyán," speaks of the foundation of a mighty empire by a soldier named Llyán. Most of the place names it mentions are meaningless now since the places to which they refer are themselves long lost in history.

Contemporary with or perhaps just subsequent to the Empire of Llyán, another human state arose in the plains of what is now southern Tsolyánu: the Three States of the Triangle. However, the three capitals of this nation Úrmish in the west, Jakállá in the south, and Thráya in the east -- have been rebuilt many, many times, and almost all of the evidence for the Three States of the Triangle comes from their enemies and conquerors, the Dragon Warriors.

The Dragon Warriors were hardy barbarians, members of scattered tribes who eked out a meager living in the harsh mountains of N'lüss in the far northwest. They were stronger and taller than the Southerners, and where they invaded the south they rode "dragons," steeds described in the epics as "flying upon brazen wings," "armored as though with iron," and "slaying with tongues of flame." Whether these "dragons" were in fact aircars preserved since before the Time of Darkness or living creatures, perhaps related to the great Sró', has been debated for millennia.

Unfortunately, there are no animals suitable for riding known upon Tékumel; man had passed beyond the need for living steeds by the time he reached Tékumel, and the horse of ancient Earth, the Bazháq of Deneb, etc., had all been left behind in man's rush for the stars. Rumors from the west tell of a strange people who ride the Bazháq, and others who ride Sró', but the truth or falsehood of these rumors is as yet undetermined.

Thirty years after their first incursions, the Dragon Warriors had overrun the many city-states of what is now Mu'ugalavyá and sacked the mighty city of Ch'óchi. Within 50 years they had destroyed the Empire of Llyán and hurled themselves upon the fiercely defended frontiers of the Shén states to the south. They made no further progress in that direction. Turning east, they plundered the coasts of the inland sea (now risen) which is now Yán Kór, and within another century were locked in a death struggle with the Three States of the Triangle. When the latter fell,

the Dragon Warriors rolled on eastwards, and by the end of the second century of their great adventure their banners of painted human skin flapped from the towers of Tsatsayágga in Salarvyá.

It was here that their empire reached its greatest extent. Frustrated in the north by the barren peaks of Jánnu and Kilálámmu, blocked in the east by the dreaded Ssú enclave of Ssuyál, and confronted in the south by the rising vitality of the Salarvyáni feudal states, over-extended and too few to maintain their sprawling conquests -- and perhaps simply tired of endless war -- the Dragon Warriors set their borders and swore to go no further.

The motive for the sudden incursion of the N'lüss into the south seems to have been the establishment of the worship of Vimúhla, Lord of Fire. During the latter days of the Empire of Llyán some unknown scholar, perhaps a Llyáni wizard exiled to the wastes of N'lüss, made contact with certain of the mightiest beings of the Planes Beyond. Far transcending mankind, unimaginably powerful, yet willing to aid those who serve their enigmatic goals, these beings are for all intents and purposes "gods." N'lüss culture was (and is) founded upon violence, and the chiefs and shamans of the Dragon Warriors quickly seized upon that "god" who best suited their ethos: mighty Vimúhla, Lord of Fire. His function in the pantheon is violence, catharsis, and rebirth through the cleansing transition of the Flame. The tribal shamans quickly became a red-robed hierarchy, and the squalid log huts of the village of Malcháiran were transformed into the proud towers of the capital of a theocratic empire. Soon, a thousand captives went to their deaths each day in the furnaces atop the truncated pyramids of Lord Vimúhla. The Red Robes sparked the greed of the tribes, united them, and led them out in a mighty wave upon the lands of the south, very much like the raging conflagration they worshipped.

The Empire of the Dragon Warriors maintained its internal cohesion for only some 200 years after their invasion was complete. By the year 500 of their dynasty, a number of remote regions had begun to splinter away. The history of the next 1,500 years then reads like a compendium of petty wars, personal intrigues, rivalries and vengeance, and always endless, pointless, self-serving greed.

During the last centuries of the Empire of the Dragon Warriors, the subject peoples of western Salarvyá were united by a minor lordling from what is now the Chaigári Protectorate in Tsolyánu. This man, Gámulu by name, first obtained the allegiance of the lords of Khúm and Koylúga, then drove the last of the decadent heirs of the Dragon Warriors from the rich metropolises of the western plains of Salarvyá.

The N'lüss were not Gámulu's most deadly foes, however. The nonhuman Ssú had come forth from their time-haunted wastelands to ravage what is now Pecháno. After 25 years of fighting, the foe was driven back into the deep labyrinths below Ssuyál. Gámulu reigned for another decade before dying of a wasting disease contracted in the whispering ruins of old Ssúganar, the original Ssú capital.

After Gámulu's death, his surviving sons struggled for his position. Hó Etéhltu, his 12th son, slew his remaining brothers and lived to seize the throne. He it was who built the navy of small, fast galleys which gave this dynasty the name of "The Fisherman Kings." This empire

rapidly expanded to cover present-day western and central Salarvyá, plus the northern peninsulas of Háida Pakála.

During the reign of the 22nd king of Gámulu's dynasty contact was made with another of the great interdimensional beings who function as Tékumel's "gods." This was Ksárul, Ancient Lord of Secrets. Aside from his role in the pantheon as the Knower and Worker of Transitions, Ksárul is famed as the Rebel of the Gods. The epics sing of a mighty Armageddon, the Battle of Dórmoron Plain, which occurred in some mythic Age of the Gods. Ksárul was defeated, and imprisoned in an other-planar place called the Blue Room, where he is said to lie in eternal sleep.

Two results of the establishment of the faith of Lord Ksárul may be noted: first, the invention of a secret tongue, complete with its own script, by the priests of Ksárul for the transmission of their Inner and Outer Doctrines; second, the gradual spread of the Salarvyáni language (then termed Bednálljan) as the medium of scholarship, literature, and diplomacy.

The surging wave of the Fisherman Kings took a half a millennium to subside. The Red Robes dominated the west and the Black robes the east. Secular power passed from ruler to ruler and dynasty to dynasty. In far Livyánu the temples of Vimúhla gave way to an ancient faith -- the dark cults of the Shadow Gods. In other areas, worship of the other Lords of Change began, but there was no record yet of their opponents, the Lords of Stability, nor does there seem to have been any attempt to codify the gods and fit them all into one pantheon.

The next great empire, the First Imperium, was founded by the daughter of a chief of a nomadic tribe from the Dry Bay of Ssu'úm. In time, she rose to become the First Concubine and later the Chief Wife of the Clanmaster of the (now lost) city of Purdánim. Seven years transformed this child-courtesan into Queen Nayári of the Silken Thighs, Royal Mistress of Purdánim and Jakállá. Beautiful and ruthless, she employed intrigue, war, poison, sorcery, the dagger, and the delights of her body all with consummate skill. A succession of alliances -- and suddenly deceased husbands -- gave her Fasiltum in the northeast, Tumíssa in the west, and Sokátis in the east. By amassing the motley legions and rag-tag militias of her city-states into one force, she laid the foundations for a systematic modern army, a model which has been copied ever since.

Within another five years, the First Imperium covered most of what is now Mu'ugalavyá, Tsolyánu, and Salarvyá. Any revolt against Nayári was punished immediately and viciously. When Purdánim itself rose against her at the instigation of certain nobles of the old dynasty, her troops built a mountain of skulls in the great square. Even today any terrible catastrophe is referred to as, "Nayári's Hill," and her name is used to frighten children into obedience all across the Five Empires.

Nayári eventually perished, kissed with poisoned lips by a young lover who himself died in the act. Her children warred briefly and bloodily, and when it was over her son by the murdered lord of Tumíssa ascended the throne under the title of Ssirandar I. He proceeded to renounce his mother's ruthless policies and spent the next 50 years building, and unifying. He moved the capital of the First Imperium from Purdánim to Jakállá, and the capital was later moved again to a new city, Béy Sü (Bednálljan for "Soul of the World") by his grandson. In time, this dynasty slowly became an edifice of order and stability. The splendor of the First Imperium endured for almost

3,000 years. There were no external foes capable of challenging it, and the military and administrative structures built by Nayári and her successors survived the disruptive forces which rose from time to time within.

The First Imperium was finally swept away, but not by the swords of armies or the machinations of princes: the cause was one poor, crippled priest from the island of Gánga in the gulf south of Jakálla, a backwater so inconsequential that it was ruled by the Master of the-Shellfish-Gatherer's clan! This priest, Pavár by name, was originally devoted to Ksárul, but in the course of his meditations somehow stumbled upon a means of contacting yet others of the race of "gods" and thus altered the flow of history for all time to come.

The "gods" summoned by Pavár were the Lords of Stability. A flood of knowledge poured forth upon the lowly priest: information concerning the two "alignments" and the pantheons, the topography of the many Planes, and the secrets of life after death. All this Pavár set down in the cursive script of his island tongue.

The Scrolls of Pavár described the Five Lords of Stability, and contrasted them with the Five Lords of Change. Pavár set forth the role and the relationships which each of these deities sees for his devotees in the many Planes: how each "god" must be served, and how life is to be lived. Unfortunately, the Scrolls of Pavár also put an end to man's anthropomorphic certainty that he alone is the highest being in the universe, the "reason for it all."

Pavár's doctrines spread far and wide during his lifetime. They mostly touched the hearts of the common folk, those who had been devastated in the wars, who had no part in the glory of the palaces, and who were weary of the rituals and bloody sacrifices of the temples of Change. Temples were erected to Pavár's new gods, and a metropolis sprang from the village where he had lived. Devotees of the old gods waxed wroth, and the land was filled with inquisitions.

Eventually, as all things must, the furor died away. The zealots became plump priestly bureaucrats, and temples of Stability stood side by side with those of Change. In the interest of peace, most of the sects (even those of such distant lands as Livyánu, which still clung to their Shadow Gods) agreed to a great Concordat of the Temples. This prohibited any overt religious hostility: there was to be no fighting, no unfriendly use of "magic," no proselytizing.

By the third century after Pavár's death, secular power began to shift away from the weakened kings of Béy Sū to the hierophants of Gánga. In the ninth century there came a time when the last sad 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 Sū to Gánga, and thus was established Éngsvan hla Gánga: "the Kingdom of the Gods."

Éngsvan hla Gánga endured for over ten millennia. It was the high water mark, the greatest flourishing of human culture since before the Time of Darkness. Art, architecture, music, literature, science (even to the repair of some of the simpler and less-damaged mechanisms of the ancients), and a thousand other crafts and skills all thrived mightily. Social and economic affairs prospered. The great Sákbe-road system begun by the Bednálljans grew into a net of stone which

wound across the continent bearing the commerce of a score of nations. Armies evolved first into standing garrisons and then into glorified police forces.

Éngsvan hla Gánga was not, however, a utopia. The Priestkings were theocrats. Their rule was based upon the power of the temples, the swords of their armies, and the ancient principle of the iron hand in the velvet glove. Those who opposed their laws were executed. The Tólek Kána Pits, the great prison constructed by the Bednálljans, was expanded into the gloomy maze of cells and dungeons still in use today.

Éngsvan hla Gánga perished suddenly. All of the causes are not fully known, although it is clear that vast seismic convulsions of the planet were initially to blame. The western end of Pavár's beloved island tilted up, and the eastern end tilted down 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 bulwarks of the Thénu Thendráya Range.

No region escaped the economic, political, and psychological consequences of the disaster. All unity of purpose and of spirit seems to have been drowned in the tidal waves which had swept over the capital of the Priestkings. Within two centuries after that first savage paroxysm, another Time of Darkness overspread the land, and this was a darkness at least as total and as Stygian as that which had come to Tékumel long ago.

Some say that the "Time of No Kings," as the Tsolyáni historians name this period, lasted for six millennia -- others claim ten. History becomes a confused babble. At one point over twenty independent principalities ruled what is now Tsolyánu.

By the time the histories began to be written again, the foundations of the Empire of the Petal Throne (which rules modern Tsolyánu) had already been laid -- indeed, formalized and crystallized. The peoples of this part of Tékumel have a predilection for elaborate ceremonial, visual display, and the security brought about by knowing exactly where one stands in the social order. The earliest records of the Second Imperium already indicate that most of the apparatus of the modern Tsolyáni state was in existence. It has changed very little since.

The year is now 2361 A.S. The present monarch, Hirkáne Tlakotáni, is sixty-first in his dynasty, and became Emperor after a distinguished career in his grandfather's army. As a young Prince, he served in Yán Kór and the north and was a boon companion of General Kéttukal hiMraktine (commander of the First Legion of Ever-Present Glory and now High General of All the Armies) and also of Baron Áld, the Sa'á Allaqiyáni mercenary who has now become the ruler of Yán Kór. When his father passed away, the Emperor was already in his late middle years. No other candidate came forward to challenge this powerful and clever man, and he ascended the Petal Throne unopposed. He is now 78 years of age, still strong and in good health, but very conscious of his human frailty and thus eager to influence the succession for the good of the Imperium.

The current situation in the Second Imperium is tense. There are many acknowledged children of the current Emperor. Virtually every political faction has its own favorite. The war with Yán Kór and deteriorating relations with the Mu'ugalavyáni have increased the pressure on the

already beleaguered land. The Imperium has found an alliance of sorts with the Livyáni, who are maintaining a large force near Mu'ugalavyá to keep many Mu'ugalavyáni legions tied up near the border. Another important new development is the southern continent, whose western reaches have only recently been opened to travel from the north. The political situation is in a state of flux, and much can be gained by those whom the gods smile upon (and who have the wits to use their opportunities).

The Lands of Tékumel

The nations of Tékumel vary in importance from major empires to minor independent states. Each nation has its own characteristic flavor, and a brief overview of their nature and attitudes.

The major nations of the continent are referred to as the Five Empires. These large countries are the primary political forces on the continent. Most other nations ally themselves with one of the Five Empires, although these allegiances are often fickle and subject to change.

The Five Empires are:

Tsolyánu (the Second Imperium)

Tsolyánu is the most powerful of the Five Empires. Its rich, old culture dates back to the Empire of Éngsvan hla Gánga. Tsolyánu was the central province of Éngsvan hla Gánga, and in some sense still believes itself to be rebuilding that empire. The society is clan-based (as are most in this section of Tékumel), with elaborate status-based interrelationships between clans and individuals. The Tsolyáni are very conscious of their status, and are very concerned that they receive proper respect. Other nations consider Tsolyánu to be somewhat arrogant, officious, and over-refined, a nation always striving to live up to the unattainable standards of its Engsvanyáli ancestors. On the positive side, the Tsolyáni are famed for their dignity energy and adherence to their beliefs. The capital of Tsolyánu is Béy Sü, and the Emperor inhabits a fortress called Avanthár. Other major cities include: Jakállá, Fasiltum, Tumíssa, Thráya, Khirgár, Úrmish, and Sokátis. Tsolyánu is ruled by an Emperor, a semi-hereditary monarch who rules from seclusion in the Golden Tower in Avanthár. Business of the Imperium is administrated through four Palaces, each with its own area of Tsolyáni life to consider. These are: the Palace of the Realm, which is in charge of all domestic affairs; the Palace of Ever-glorious War, which deals with all military matters; the Palace of the Priesthoods of the Gods, which maintains surveillance over relations between the temples and the government; and the Palace of Foreign Lands, which has charge of external relations, including foreign trade and shipping.

The Tsolyáni worship the twenty Gods of Éngsvan hla Gánga. While there are regional differences in the importance of the various temples, overall the temples are roughly equal.

Mu'ugalavyá

Directly to the west of Tsolyánu is Mu'ugalavyá, another great empire. Mu'ugalavyá was also once a province of Éngsvan hla Gánga. The society is also clan-based, and one's status is even more difficult to change than in Tsolyánu. The Mu'ugalavyáni are seen by their neighbors as being humorless blockheads, hopelessly stolid and unimaginative, and set in their bureaucratic ways, but they are also seen as stiffly correct, honest, and "noble."

Mu'ugalavyá is ruled by an oligarchy composed of the Princes of the Four Palaces of Mu'ugalavyá, representatives of the priesthoods of Hrsh and Vimúhla, and certain senior clan-heads. Each Palace controls one section of Mu'ugalavyá and each Palace administers all facets of life within its own geographic area. The capital of Mu'ugalavyá is at Ssa'átis, and there are other major cities: Ch'óchi, Pagús, and Gashchné.

Like the Tsolyáni, the Mu'ugalavyáni worship the Gods of Pavár. They also have another deity: beast-headed Hrsh, an amalgam of Karakán, Vimúhla, and Ksáru. However, unlike the Tsolyáni, most Mu'ugalavyáni worship either Hrsh or Vimúhla.

Yán Kór

Until very recently, Yán Kór was little more than a loosely allied jumble of city-states, clan-matriarchies, and petty principalities. In order to understand Yán Kór, one must know something of its leader, Baron Áld.

Originally a young tribal chieftain from the Jánnu Range in Sa'a Allaquí, Áld traveled south to join the Tsolyáni army as a mercenary. He proved an excellent soldier and rose through the ranks to become General of the Legion of the Scarlet Plume, a legion devoted to General Kéttukal. For political reasons, Áld's unit was betrayed into an indefensible position at Káidrach Field in Yán Kór, where it was decimated. Áld was captured, but instead of sacrificing him as befitted a man of honor, his captors offered him "the peace of the mercenary": gold. Bitter over the chicanery of the Tsolyáni, he accepted and soon rose to become commander of the forces of Yán Kór City.

At that time the north was, in Tsolyáni eyes, fit only as a source of plunder and slaves. Áld's military experience convinced other states to join in an alliance with him against the Tsolyáni, and several Imperial expeditions were summarily repulsed. More allies came forward, and within a few short years, Áld had welded much of Yán Kór into an incipient nation. Eventually, even the king of Sa'a Allaquí did homage to this man who had once been one of his vassals.

Baron Áld hates the Tsolyáni for his betrayal at Káidrach Field, and for the brutal murder of his love, Yilrána. Yilrána was the leader of the High Clan of Ke'ér, and when that city was sacked by the Tsolyáni, she was impaled. Baron Áld has sworn vengeance upon everything southern, and some of his allies are concerned that his single-mindedness on this subject may be a danger to the security of the new nation.

The surrounding countries consider the Yán Koryáni to be rustic imitators of their southern betters, but with a reputation for courage and loyalty.

The Baron is slowly organizing the fragmented administrative groups of his allies into a system similar to that of Tsolyánu. The old regional rulers have been allowed to retain some of their previous status, but all areas now pay their taxes to the coffers of the central government in Yán Kór City. It is hard to imagine the sort of "rule from above" which prevails in Tsolyánu but Baron Áld has laid the foundations, and the barriers of provincialism are slowly giving way before his determination. In addition to the Baron's palace in Yán Kór City, there are powerful political

groups based in the cities of Hlíkkú and Tléku Miriyá, as well as considerable influence from Yán Kór's vassal nations.

The Yán Koryáni primarily worship the Gods of Pavár, but many of the city-states of Yán Kór serve deities unknown elsewhere. Worth mentioning is the Mad One of Hlíkkú, a secretive deity who may be an amalgam of Hrü'ü and Ksárul, a "Great Demon," or even a Pariah God.

Salarvyá

The modern nation of Salarvyá is made up of seven ancient western provinces of Éngsvan hla Gánga which retained much of their stability through the Time of No Kings. Each province slowly evolved into a feudal hierarchy of vassals and liege-lords. More than a millennia ago, these provinces joined together into a single nation to protect themselves from the depredations of their neighbors, much as Yán Kór is doing now. These provinces are still ruled by their traditional feudal overlord lineages, and are essentially independent of the central government, which rests in the hands of one of these clans, the Chruggilléshmu family of Tsatsayágga, by hereditary right. Due to the basic independence of the feudal lords, there are few nationally recognized administrative ranks. The senior offices of each province are held by members of the ruling lineages. Other major cities include Koylúga Chame'él, Herú, and Tsa'avtúlgu.

The provinces are parceled out in smaller fiefs to vassal clans, and these in turn may have clients of their own. Certain traditional clans in each region have charge of records, accounts, tax gathering, and other civil duties. The right to maintain troops, however, is limited to the seven great lineages, and lesser vassals are allowed only a fixed number of retainers and personal bodyguards, depending upon their status.

In theory, the Salarvyáni hold to the divine right of kings, tracing their monarch's pedigree back to Gámulu, the founder of the dynasty of the Fishermen Kings. In actuality, however, the authority of the king is limited, and real power is vested in the Council of Nobles, a body composed of the senior members of the Chruggilléshmu family, delegations from the other six major lineages (and from the more important subsidiary vassal clans), and a few clergy from the temple of Shiringgáyi.

The inhabitants of Salarvyá also worship the Gods of Pavár, with their own local deities. Most significant of these is Shiringgáyi, an amalgam of Avánthe and Dlamélísh, which dominates all others in Salarvyá. The priesthoods of Salarvyá are powerful but perhaps not as all pervasive as those of the other four Empires.

Livyánu

The roots of the theocracy of Livyánu predate Éngsvan hla Gánga and can be found in the histories of the Empire of Llyán and the Empire of the Dragon Warriors. It was conquered by the First Imperium and was part of Éngsvan hla Gánga, but Livyánu has always remained somewhat apart from its neighbors.

The main reason for this is religious: the Livyáni do not worship the Gods of Pavár, but, a pantheon which predates them: the Shadow Gods. These gods are all-important to the Livyáni -- their temples own almost 80 percent of the land, and the clans are inextricably linked with one temple or another. Civil, military, and religious affairs are handled by functionaries detached from temple service, and there is thus no distinction between administrative Circles and priestly ranks. Scribes, clerks, and officials are transferred from the temples to the central government, where they work for a time before being brought back again into their priesthoods.

So far as can be discovered, the highest official in Livyánu is Ásqar Gyárdanaz, whose title is simply "Dumúz," signifying "Brother in the Faith." His likeness first appeared on the Livyáni Shí'idok in 2,345 A.S. "Dumúz" Ásqar presides over the Council of the Priesthoods, which consists of four representatives from each of the twelve temples (excluding the One of Fears, whose devotees wish no part in government). Ten of these representatives are retained by "Dumúz" Ásqar as his advisors; ten are appointed to command the ten "Chároneb" (a term denoting "army") of the military forces; ten more are assigned as Governors of the ten Prefectures; and another ten are each given charge of one of the Ministries. The remaining eight members of the Council are termed the "Duru'úba Shirudánaz" ("The Brothers of the Shadow"), and their functions are not known. The capital of Livyánu is believed to be in the great ancient city of Tsámra, and other major cities include Hráis, Tsúpil Hláya, Farshá, Nuférsh, and Dlášh.

Surrounding the Five Empires are several smaller nations with significant populations. These nations often have treaties and allegiances with one or another of the Five Empires (primarily Yán Kór, which needs their support).

1) Pijéna

Pijéna (pronounced P'jjéna by the natives) is one of the nations "allied" with Yán Kór. Although the Priestking of She Who Is Not Named (the primary ruler before the arrival of the Yán Koryáni) has been left his crumbling palace in Pijnár, his symbols of authority, and his harem of little girls and boys, he has been stripped of any real power. Yán Koryáni troops and tax collectors control the country. The Pijenáni are perceived by their neighbors to be weaklings, greedy, and untruthful.

2) Pecháno

Pecháno is a nation whose very existence is dedicated to warfare. This, however, comes not from any inclination for invasion or hostility, but from their nearness to Ssuyál, a great enclave of the Ssú. The Ssú raid continuously in this land, and the Pecháni have developed into a grimly serious, powerful people, where all are warriors dedicated to the eternal war against the Ssú. Pecháno was once part of Salarvyá', but rebelled some 1300 years ago. Its people are similar in many ways, and the feudal government is virtually identical. Politically, it supports Tsolyánu, but it has little resources to assist them either in the current war or in any future hostilities closer to home. Pecháno's capital, Mechanéno, is the home of its king, and the headquarters of the chief feudal lineages of the land.

3) Ghatón

Ghatón is a loose confederacy of clan-chiefs which has risen to almost national status. Cohesion seems to be based more upon fear of the Yán Koryáni and Mu'ugalavyáni than anything else, and the army is the primary purpose of the government. The Ghatóni are known for their fanatical opinions about women: women in Ghatón are considered property, and a woman caught in the streets may be torn to pieces by an enraged crowd. Women remain in clanhouses all their lives, and if for some reason a woman must travel, she is shipped in a closed wagon. The Ghatóni are considered to be rowdy, brutal, and honorable to a fault, in spite of their attitudes about women (which are not shared by their Yán Koryáni neighbors). Their capital city is also called Ghatón.

4) Sa'á Allaquí

Sa'á Allaquí birthplace of Baron Áld, is the most independent of the "vassal" nations of Yán Kór. The king of Sa'á Allaquí, who resides in the mountain city of Sa'á Allaqiyár, retains most of his temporal power, and is considered to be the important force in the affairs of the empire of Yán Kór.

5) Chayákkú

This eastern land of mountains is inhabited by people considered less "civilized" by those in the Five Empires. The country is ruled by a king, who is the senior elder of one of the most powerful clans. This post is frequently held by a woman, and it is not hereditary. There is a great deal more freedom there than in the Five Empires. The men are considered to be loyal, proud, and interested mainly in hunting and war -- and their women are known as shrewish, passionate, and more inclined to stab a man than reason with him!

6) Jánnu/Kilalámmu

These two mountain nations resemble one another very strongly, and are thus mentioned under one heading here. Jánnu is governed by an advisory council of clan-elders known as the Assembly of Spears, which meets at Jánnu Peidáho, while Kilalámmu lacks even this dim figment of an administrative system: the clans exercise supreme authority in their own territories. They are considered by their neighbors to be rustic, naive, rather stupid, and easily incited.

7) N'lüss

The N'lüss barbarians are the descendants of the Dragon Warriors which invaded from N'lüssa millennia ago. Their size is proverbial: they range from 6' 7" to 7' in height, and are muscularly built. It is understandable how their ancestors were able to wash across the continent during their empire! They now are made up of small, nomadic tribes, governed by a council of tribal chieftains in Malcháiran, their capital. Only ruins of proud palaces and glorious temples to Vimúhla remain to remind them of their proud heritage. Their neighbors consider them rowdy, pugnacious, brutal, and honorable to a fault.

8) Háida Pakála

Háida Pakála is a land of "pirate kings," with the sea belonging to those who can take from it. They are considered to be "urbane robbers," sophisticated, decadent, unprincipled, avaricious, and malicious. The king of the city of Górule is recognized as the supreme suzerain, but in reality his power extends no further than the spears of his ruffians. Each town has its own "king," and indeed there may be several such brigand leaders within the same city, allied to one another by mutual concerns, yet ready to fall upon any of their number who manifests weakness.

Clans

The spike which links the families of the Five Empires together is the clan. Most people are born, live, and die in the same clan, work at the clan occupation (or in the clanhouse), and in return the clan acts as their legal representative, protecting them from lawsuit, bodily harm, and dangers to their professions.

Clans usually perform one type of work. Some clans are manufacturing clans, and make various objects (such as the Black Pinnacle Clan, a clan of armorers and weapon-makers). Others are mercantile clans, who purchase these items for resale. Still others transport goods, provide services, and some are even traditional clans for the priesthoods, military and bureaucracies. Clans frown heavily on "amateurs" starting businesses which fall under their purvey: If a man makes arrows but does not belong to a manufacturing clan, he may sell a few to his friends but cannot "open a shop" — the clans would demand that he cease and desist at once!

Clans often have religious preferences. These vary in strength from mere tendencies (the Golden Sunburst Clan, whose members generally worship the Lords of Stability) to sheer fanaticism (the Domed Tomb clan, which would probably kill any member who attempted to join any temple except that of Sárku). It is difficult (though rarely deadly) to "step out" of these guidelines: the clans apply pressure in various subtle — and not so subtle — ways to "toe the line."

The status of an individual is generally determined by his/her clan. There are, of course, variations in status within a clan, but it would be unheard of for the richest member of the Clan of the Granite Lintel (a clan of cooks and kitchen-workers) to be permitted to socialize with the poorest member of the aristocratic Clan of Sea Blue! Clan-members refer to one another as "clan-cousins," eat together, marry one another, and in general lead the same quality of life as members of a very large "extended family."

An individual who has "risen above" the status of the clan he/she was born in can attempt to get a clan of higher status to permit him/her to join. This usually requires knowing someone who will recommend you to the clan, as well as a substantial donation to the clan to "prove" your ability to live to the new, higher standards.

4) *Avánthe*: Mistress of Heaven, Maid of Beauty

She seeks a smooth-running, well-ordered world in which all things flow gently towards Hnálla's Perfect Light. She stresses a patterned rhythm of cooperation and symbiosis, and her ceremonies commemorate the cycles of nature. Her symbol is a circle with rays descending from it.

5) *Belkhánu*: Lord of the Excellent Dead, Master of the Paradises

His sphere is not of this world but of the life after death: the journey onward to the farther Planes and the eventual goal of Hnálla's Perfect Light. His symbol is a golden "V" resting upon three stylized waves.

The Lords of Change are:

1) *Hrü'ü*: the Supreme Principle of Change, Opponent of Permanence

He seeks the Dark, an end to choate form, a negation of this world of phenomena, and a return to the Nullity which existed when time was not. He glories in Change without cessation, never-ending, random and unpatterned, always roiling and shifting. His emblem is a circle of purple with a scarlet sash running down across it from left to right.

2) *Vimúhla*: Lord of Fire, All-Consuming One

He is the catharsis and the cleanser through the Flame. He would thus annihilate all matter and bring about the Final Conflagration. His usual depiction is a cone-shaped being with stylized flames in place of arms and legs, surrounded by black clouds shot through with orange-red lightning. His symbol is a stylized flame.

3) *Ksáru*: Ancient Lord of Secrets, Master of Magic and Sorcery

Ksáru seeks knowledge, like Thúmis, but for the Doomed Prince wisdom is power, and power is the individual's greatest instinctive goal. Ksáru is shown as a young man of slender build, with a smiling, yet emotionless moon face, dressed in black velvet and carrying a staff topped by an azure beetle. His emblem is the same beetle over a pale, crescent moon.

4) *Dlamélish*: Green-eyed Lady of Fleshly Joys, Mistress of Demons

Dlamélish seeks the existential reality of the Now -- changes as they occur at every moment, and the pleasures and pains of sense perception. Her insignia consists of an emerald-green drop falling into a silver oval.

5) *Sárku*: The Five-Headed Lord of Worms, Master of the Undead

Sárku seeks a slow, cold, winding down into Hrü'ü's final Nullity: the slow and certain transition of life into death. To the Worm-Lord, life is but a brief, orgasmic spasm before the long,

dusty eternity of the tomb. Sárku is represented as a mighty serpentine form having five vermiform heads, each with a gaping, suckered maw. His emblem is a wavy black or copper line with a red circle at one end, signifying the Eternal Victory of the Worm.

Each "god" of the pantheon has many lesser servitors: demons, demigods and others, some greater and some lesser than mankind. Each "god" is always served by one sub-deity who stands at the head as a sort of steward: the Cohort of the God. There is always one Cohort for each of the Gods, never more and never less. There are as many hypotheses concerning the natures and relationships of the Cohorts as there are scholars, and none can say which is true -- if any.

The Cohorts of the Lords of Stability are:

- 1) *Drá the Uncaring*: Singer of the Hymns of the Gods, Cohort of Hnálla

This deity is perhaps the most difficult deity to comprehend. He represents the total disinterest of the Perfect Light in the phenomenal things of this universe. What occurs here, says Drá, has no relevance to Reality, and the true goal must not be obscured by the tawdry veils of sense perception. He has no known aspects or symbol.

- 2) *Chegárta*: the Hero-King, Swordsman of Glory, Cohort of Karakán

He is "Courage Applied": the experienced warrior of many battles, the resourceful ruler, the sagacious statesman, and the patron of armies. He aids warriors in battle, generals who marshal the forces of Stability, those who face the Dark courageously, and those who rule justly and well. His emblem is a double-headed silver axe.

- 3) *Keténgku*: the Many-Eyed, Knower of All, Cohort of Thúmis

He is "Wisdom Applied": the patron of scholars, physicians, apothecaries, scribes, architects, engineers, and all those who use knowledge for the benefit of society. He aids those who study the mysteries, who use technology and the arts for the purposes of Stability, those who learn languages, and those who combat the egotistical doctrines of Ksárul. His emblem is a stylized silver eye.

- 4) *Dilinála*: the Maiden of the Turquoise Crown, Handmaiden of Avánthe

She is "Woman as Woman Alone": femininity without the polarity of male versus female. She is the innocent virgin, the beloved daughter, the loyal sister, and the wise woman of many years. Her emblem is a hand extended, palm down, worked in silver and blue upon a lighter blue field.

- 5) *Qón*: the Guardian of the Gates of Hell, Cohort of Belkhánu

Qón protects the soul against the perils of the Hereafter, and he also aids those who are attacked by the powers of the Dark. His symbol is a stylized mace set vertically to ward off the Dark.

The Cohorts of the Lords of Change are:

- 1) *Wurú*: the Unnamable, Cohort of Hrū'ū

He is the active antagonist of Stability, and he aids those who promote Change and overturn permanency. He aids those who combat the minions of Stability, sending his serpent-like minions to help his devotees or creating darkness to blind the foe. His symbol is a stylized serpent's head with the tongue protruding.

- 2) *Chiténg*: Lord of Red Spouting Flame, Cohort of Vimúhla

This deity spreads death by the Flame, as does his Master, but he is more oriented towards group action: he is the patron of the armies of Change, the besieger of cities, and the overseer of torments. Chiténg aids those who combat Stability, those who besiege, devastate, and plunder, and those who inflict atrocities. His symbol is a stylized two-handed sword.

- 3) *Grugánu*: the Knower of Spells, Cohort of Ksárul

He combs the Planes for knowledge and sorcery which may aid his Lord, and he aids Ksárul's followers in their quests for personal knowledge. He may provide his special devotees with magical devices and spells. His emblem is an open hand with claw-like fingers outspread as if to seize or strike.

- 4) *Hriháyal*: the Dancing Maiden of Temptation, Cohort of Dlamélish

Hriháyal is the patroness of the ancient Mysteries, and members of her Inner Temple may witness -- or join, not always willingly -- performances of her Unspeakable Acts in her secret shrines in certain of the Underworlds. Her emblem is a vertical silver oval with a wavy emerald line drawn horizontally through it.

- 5) *Durritlámish*: the Black Angel of the Putrescent Hand, Cohort of Sárku

He it is who marshals the undead and serves his Master in the places of the Dark. He aids those who serve the undead, those who join with the dwellers of the Dark, those who protect the tombs and necropolises, and those who sacrifice their victims to him in the Orgy of Inimitable Demise. His symbol is a stylized image of the legendary Vessel of the Vision of the World, a bowl from which mist rises in which may be seen the Skeins of Destiny of every creature in the universe throughout all time and space.

Only a brief discussion of the Gods of other lands may be made here. In Salarvyá, worship of Avánthe and Dlamélish (and their Cohorts) has been supplanted with the worship of Shiringgáyi, and this temple is politically important there. Even more so, the temple of beast-headed Hrsh in Mu'ugalavyá dominates the entire theological structure of the temples, and most Mu'ugalavyáni worship this fiery deity. The gods of Yán Kór, Chayákkú, Pecháno, Sa'á Allaqi, Jánnu, Kilálámmu, and Háida Pakála have different names, but they correspond closely with the theological structure

of old Engsvanyálu. The N'lüss worship Vimúhla and Chiténg almost exclusively, and the Ghatóni worship a host of "nature gods" (e.g. the wind, the rain, the sun, etc.) which they sometimes identify with likely counterparts in the Tsolyáni pantheon. Only in Livyáni do the deities differ significantly, and thus their worship (what is known of it) will be expanded upon here.

The Livyáni worship the **Shadow Gods**, a pantheon shrouded in mystery: their attributes are often deliberately misrepresented to foreigners, and their hierarchies are only distantly polite to the priesthoods of other lands. Whether these deities are the same or different from the Gods of Pavár is thus a moot point. All that is certain is that interplanar magic and the summoning of "Demons" make up a large part of their rituals. Only the following Shadow Gods are known:

- 1) *Qame'él*: The chief deity of the pantheon, according to the priests at Tsámra. He is worshipped by the noble classes in and around Tsámra but is not elsewhere in Livyánu. He is said to be an amalgam of Thúmis and Ksáru.
- 2) *The Shadowed One*: He (it?) is revered all over Livyánu and has gigantic temples at Tsámra and Tsúpil Hláya. Fragmentary information indicates that he is a combination of Hnálla and Hrū'ü.
- 3) *Kirrinéb*: This Goddess is the counterpart of both Avánthe and Dlamélis (and is thus very like the Salarvyáni Shiringgáyi). She has a violent side, however, since she favors human sacrifices and is the patroness of several Livyáni army units.
- 4) *Vrusáemaz*: A many-limbed dark being akin to Wurú, he is the wanderer of the many hells of the Livyáni Afterworld, a deity of darkness and sorcery.
- 5) *Guodái*: A martial divinity similar to Chegárta and possibly Chiténg.
- 6) *Ru'ungkáno*: This deity is probably the counterpart of Vimúhla (with aspects of Karakán and Ksáru). His rituals involve fire, and his devotees exhibit tiny burn scars all over their bodies. He is most influential at Sraón and also in the Tláste Heights where his great temple stands.
- 7) *The Horned One of Secrets*: Another variant of Hrū'ü with an admixture of Ksáru, this deity's ceremonies center on sorcery and interplanar travel. His temple at Láigas is extremely powerful, and his priests officiate at the annual New Year's festival in Tsámra (called "the Opening of the Sun").
- 8) *The Lost One of the Sea*: This deity (whose gender is uncertain) combines the attributes of Dlamélis, Avánthe, and Thúmis (!) with a tradition of association with the things of the sea. This divinity also has an extensive temple at Láigas.
- 9) *Quyó*: This Goddess is similar to Sárku. She is the Walker of the Demon Planes and the Mistress of the Grave. Her shrine at Heméktu is very ancient and much revered. The "rituals below" of most Livyáni funerals are celebrated by her clergy.
- 10) *Ndárka*: This God is a combination of Belkhánu and Qón. His powers relate to the Afterlife, rebirth, and also to funerals (where his priests perform the "rituals above"). Ndárka is

also the patron of crop fertility and the "Resurrected One" whose return to life is commemorated each year at harvest time. He is very popular with farmers and peasants, and little clay images of this deity are buried in every field at the time of sowing. He has major temples at Farshá and Hráis.

11) *The Sea-Goddess of Kakársha*: She is possibly related to Avánthe, but has special control over the sea and its creatures. Livyáni ship captains always propitiate her with a sacrifice of wine, blood, and water before setting sail.

12) *Kikumársha*: A close counterpart of Ksárul, this deity's doctrines involve both sorcery and the use of knowledge. He is also the patron of music, art, the dance -- and, strangely enough, archery. Kikumársha is called the "Trickster of the Gods," and his exploits are the subject of innumerable legends. Most of his tricks are anything but humorous, however. There is a large temple to him at Sraón, others at Nuférsh, Fállí, and also at Tsámra.

13) *The One of Fears*: Nothing is known of the attributes of this deity, who is the patron of the forbidden city of Dlásh. It is said that he (she? it?) is akin to both Hrū'ū and Vimúhla.

Temples to deities other than the Shadow Gods are only permitted within the foreigners' quarters in Livyánu. No foreigner is allowed to witness the ceremonies of the Shadow Gods, and no Livyáni enters the shrines in the foreigners' quarter.

Two-handed Maces, Clubs, and Flails: These are not often found as military weapons, although various priesthoods and temple guards do use them. These arms have the same disadvantages as two-handed cutting weapons (above).

Polearms: These are popular all across the continent. Essentially these are combinations of slashing, chopping, and thrusting blades mounted upon a stout (and often reinforced) shaft, the whole ranging from 5 to 6 feet in length. Halberds, bills, glaives, guisarmes, voulges, partisans -- all are found on Tékumel and are preferred by this legion or that. Most have projecting points, barbs, cusps, and hooks to catch and deflect a foe's weapon. Some have cups or crosspieces to serve as hand-guards, and a few have identical blades on both ends. Military forks and tridents, on the other hand, are uncommon.

Short Thrusting Spears: Short spears vary between 6 and 7 feet. Leaf-shaped spearheads are commonest, although barbed and scalloped varieties exist. Most short spears are too heavy to make good throwing weapons.

Bows: Tribesmen, peasants, and light skirmish troops often employ the short self-bow. Made from a stave of Tíu or Ajátl-wood, such a bow may range from 3 to 5 feet in length and have a pull of 50-75 pounds. Much longer self-bows are found in the Chákas and the Tláste Heights of Livyánu. These range from 5.5 to 6 feet in length and have pulls measured at anywhere from 75-110 pounds, depending upon the stature and strength of the bowman and local preferences. Much more common as a military weapon, however, is the composite bow, built up of layers of wood, horn, and sinew glued together. These range from 3.5 to 5.5 feet in length and have draw-weights of 70-120 pounds.

Crossbows: Those who specialize in this weapon are considered a separate troop-type in most of the armies of Tékumel. Although the crossbow has great penetrating power and can be used by anyone with average intelligence and a good eye, it has several disadvantages: it is both expensive and heavy; it requires about a minute to cock and load, whereas a bow can put perhaps six well-aimed arrows into the air in the same period; it is a more complex device, and thus needs greater maintenance -- and expert repairmen cannot just be found anywhere. Nevertheless, the crossbow is a popular military and hunting weapon. Most of the crossbows of Tékumel have composite bows. Steel bows, while much sought after, are rare and forbiddingly high priced.

Slings: Only the Tsolyáni field regular legions of stingers, the best known being the Legion of the Joyful Clan of Noble Vrayáni, from the island of Vrá. Light skirmishers often carry slings also. A sling consists of a leather strap about 3 feet long and 1.5 inches wide, one end of which is attached to the hand, the other end held between the thumb and forefinger, and the missile placed in a pocket in the resulting loop. Sling missiles weigh 1-2 oz. and are usually made from stream-rounded stones, chipped balls of limestone, or pellets of sunbaked clay. Some sling missiles, however, are made of lead, and while these weigh the same, they are both denser and aerodynamically better designed.

Staff-slings: This consists of a sling affixed to the end of a 3-4 foot long pole. It is used to throw much heavier missiles (.8-1.5 pounds), but its effective range is shorter than that attained by the hand-sling.

Javelins, Throwing-spears, and Darts: These short-range missiles are carried by light troops of many nations, and even some medium legions have them. Javelins average 5-6 feet in length and have a range of perhaps 75-90 feet. They are good against other lightly armored troops but are fairly useless against heavier protection. Larger throwing spears are less common, and the short, weighted, throwing darts of the Lorún (a northern ally of Yán Kór) are otherwise rather rare.

Bolas: Bolas consist of a braided leather thong 3-4 feet in length with a bronze or lead ball attached at each end. A shorter (2-2.5 foot long) thong is attached to the center of the longer one, and also has a metal ball attached to its free end. This third ball is held in the hand, and the whole is whirled about the head and let fly to entangle the legs of a foe or possibly stun him. Troops using bolas are placed in the front line, and their objective is to trip, stun, and disorder an advancing enemy formation before contact is made. Basically, however, bolas may be considered to be a hunter's weapon, and they are found spottily distributed all over the continent.

Shields: Not properly a weapon, its use requires additional training. Most heavy and medium legions use shields, as do a few light infantry and stingers. Shields come in varying shapes: round, oval, and the "kite" shield. Shields come in three sizes: bucklers, some 1-1.5 feet in diameter; medium shields 2-4 feet across; and large shields, which may range from 5 to as much as 7 feet along their largest measurement! The last are of less utility than they might appear, as their great weight makes them difficult to move, and they can block an enemy from the view of a warrior who uses them.

Inhabitants of the Five Empires and their subject states may use any of these weapons, but inhabitants of some of the smaller states have styles and preferences which should be considered when selecting weapons.

N'lüss: Bone or metal daggers; great two-handed swords of bronze, iron, or Chlén-hide; short spears; slings; bolas

Háida Pakála: Short cutlass-like chopping swords of metal or chlén-hide; curved stilettos; long one-handed scimitars; one-handed axes (which may be thrown); polearms (mostly halberds but including some tridents); slings; a few crossbows imported from Salarvyá.

Jánnu/Kilalámmu: Broad-bladed daggers of bronze or Chlén-hide; short and long one-handed swords and clubs; short spears; short and long self-bows; slings; bolas; occasionally a few crossbows; quarterstaves

GATEWAY TO TÉKUMEL

