

The Bednálljan Dynasties

The First Imperium began with the inconsequential incursion of a band of nomads from the deserts of the Dry Bay of Ssu’úm into the fertile southland—such caravans are still common. With this one, however, was a 13-year old girl, said by some historians to be the daughter of a clan-chief, by others only a slave. In time the nomads entered great Purdánim, a metropolis now lost but thought to lie beneath the plain east of modern Usenánu. There the wild desert child soon became a courtesan and, passed from hand to hand like a pretty toy, she rose to become the First Concubine and later the Chief Wife of the Clanmaster of Purdánim. But she was not satisfied. She took five years to lay her snares and establish her power: an official here, a priest there, a captain in this legion, and a eunuch in that palace. When all was ready, the pretty toy systematically destroyed her owners one by one. For her innocuous husband she reserved a special fate: he was cast naked and alone into the sealed shrine of the goddess of the Pale Bone in the labyrinths beneath Jakálla.

Seven years transformed Nayári the child-courtesan into Queen Nayári of the Silken Thighs, royal Mistress of Purdánim and Jakálla and the Myriad Jewelled Cities of the South. 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 dead husbands—gave her Fasiltum in the northeast, Tumíssa in the west, and Sokátis in the east. Amalgamating the rag-tag militias of her city-states into one force, she set the model for a systematic modern army.

Within three more years Nayári’s troops had conquered the last quarrelsome heirs to the Dragon Warriors’ empire, the princelings of Mu’ugalavyá. Smaller forces moved along the coast of Yán Kór as far as modern Dháru. Another year saw Nayári’s legions tramping through the narrow streets of Khúm and Koylúga in Salarvyá to the far southeast. In Tsatsayágga, the simpering courtiers showed her generals the corpse of Gámulu’s 55th descendent seated upon the Ebon Throne, transfixed with a hundred slender stilettos. As their reward, they were promised ‘an ocean of treasure’—and all were pitched from the battlements into the sea.

When Fasiltum revolted, she put 10,000 of its inhabitants to the garrote. Her capital of Purdánim rose against her at the instigation of certain nobles of the old dynasty, and a mountain of skulls was built 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.

THE FIRST IMPERIUM

Nayári perished by her own art, kissed with poisoned lips by a young lover. Her children warred briefly, until her son by the murdered lord of Tumíssa ascended the throne under the title of Ssirandár I, renounced his mother’s ruthless policies and spent the next 50 years building and unifying. The beginnings of the Sákbe Road system, the network of mighty fortified highways which spans the continent, are attributed to him. Perhaps haunted by the ghosts of the dreadful past, he removed his capital to Jakálla. Purdánim became the ‘Old City’, and lingered on for half a millenium more, but without its officials, courtiers, soldiers, and artisans it fell into ruin. There is no further record of the city after the visit of the scholar-traveller Turshánmu in the 12th year of Ssirandár IX.

Utékh Mssá, grandson of Ssirandár I, moved the capital a second time a hundred years after Nayári’s death. This new city was meant to be the material manifestation of all men’s dreams, a utopia and a monument for ages to come. Hither were brought the produce and the tribute and the plunder of a thousand lands and a thousand years. This was Béy Sü, whose name means *Soul of the World* in Bednálljan.

The splendour of the First Imperium endured for 3,000 years. There were good kings and bad, conquerors and cravens, sages and fools, but there were no external foes capable of challenging it, and the military and administrative structures built by Nayári and her successors survived any disruption. Trade was initiated with the yet independent nations of Livyánu and eastern Salarvyá. Missionaries went forth to the unknown realms of the far northeast. For the first time men heard the names of Jánnu, Mihállu, Nuru’ún, and other nations.

For the first time in millenia, too, the isolation of the nonhuman enclaves was broken. Men warred briefly with the Shén, but soon there were battalions of the more adventurous Shén serving as mercenaries in the Bednálljan armies, and human traders dwelt in alien Ssorvá. Men grew accustomed to the Ahoggyá, the Pé Chói, the Páchi Léi, the Pygmy Folk and the Tinalíya. Of the inimical races, the Shunned Ones remained aloof within their cities, the Hlutrgú kept to their swamps, and the Hlüss and the Ssú brooded, hated and waited.

Had there been more of certain raw materials, notably iron, and less reliance upon the ‘magic’ of the Planes Beyond, perhaps Tékelmel would have begun the long climb back up the ladder of technology. The certainty of the existence of the ‘gods’ and their immanence in mankind’s affairs stifled intellectual curiosity and hampered the philosophising which might have led to a Renaissance and an Age of Reason. The societies of the planet grew ever more formalised, structured, and conservative, borne down beneath the panoply of imperial glory and the weight of hoary tradition.

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SOURCES

Pagártra Nemándu

**Kolumélan Ssána
hiPathái**

(The Royal Courtesan of Love)

in Tsolyáni, preserved in the Imperial Archives in Béy Sü and also in many other collections

Pagártra Nemándu

Bednállja lel Béy Sü

(Bednállja and Béy Sü)

in Tsolyáni, the original manuscript of which is in the private collection of Sirukél hiTuritláno, the renowned book collector and antiquarian of Béy Sü

Most libraries have shelves of scrolls and books devoted to various aspects of the First Imperium, and the student should seek the aid of a knowledgeable librarian.