

Consumer Notice

This text is based on the fantasy setting created and developed by M.A.R. Barker, and draws immensely from the names and languages, characters and creatures, events and histories of the official Tékumel setting. However, it does not claim to represent the "genuine" Pan Cháka or Butrús, nor has it gone out of its way to attempt to do so. This is accordingly entirely non-canonical material and should be considered as being set in an "alternate universe". It has been specifically intended as a creative break from the rigors and mysteries of the official setting and timeline. Only extant in-print and on-line materials have been consulted and included; Professor Barker has not been contacted separately to "discover" what this part of the "real Tékumel" is like. There is no new official Tekumel material here.

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Feedback is *strongly* welcomed from all sources and all points of view. As stated, though, this is intentionally unofficial – so comparisons with unpublished or unpublicized aspects of the "real Tékumel" will be regarded as interesting ideas to consider or reconsider rather than "corrections". That said, this text aimed for congruence with publicly and commonly available "official materials" at the time of writing, and suggested corrections based on *that* canon are another matter. Pointing out inconsistencies, contradictions, omissions, or simple typos or writing errors is *deeply* appreciated. Finally, any overall criticism or suggestions for changes or development are also very much desired.

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This is, with the exception of the title page and PDF format, the second release of the Gazetteer, June 2004.

A Gazetteer of Butrús

Second Edition

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Based on the works of M.A.R. Barker

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

Gazing upwards with trembling and delight upon That Awful Dignity, the One Mayor Eternal and Final, Hero of the Seas and Streets, Esoteric and Puissant, Mauler of Maidens, Hammer of Husbands, Scrambler of the Eggs of the Hateful Hlüss, the Twin Fists of Trouble, and Continued Citizen of Mighty Tsolyánu, the present humble person of S'ak, secretary and attendant upon the same, respectfully submits the following.

*Upon command of Your Formidable Contusion, delivered with sagacious if ungrammatical curses and surely deserved blows, **a precious directive of three points**, to wit, in the first, that a practical guide, handbook, and gazetteer to the city and environs of Butrús and in the second point, of the generality of the Protectorate of Fan Cháka, now blessedly under the enlightened rule of the new-sprung and so glittery dynasty of the Tlakotáni, and in the third point of persons of previous dealings or possible connection to said locales who may be of future concern to Your Utter Irresponsibility, to encompass matters mundane and extraordinary, secular and spiritual, whether common or gracious, furnished with all appertaining points of delight and curiosity, to include geography, institutions, important sites, natural history in utmost liberality, local customs, rites, beliefs, and other barbarities without the exclusion of topics of a practical and tactical nature, nor stopping at common knowledge but delving into matters of hidden import, to be made anew from the inherited wisdom and records of our age, **is to be provided forthwith**, with its fabrication under the direction of this lowly servant of Your Sublime Indiscretion, checked for errors and omissions and prepared in a fair hand and delivered unto Your Widely Lauded Prosecution for consideration at leisure, **and moreover that five bottles** of the datsú which Steward Mreng's older cousins twice-removed fetched from the city last week, **the new scullery maid** with the long legs and other attributes cited at length by Your Perpetual Salacity but customarily redacted from official memoranda such as the present scribbling of this fool, S'ak, scarcely fit to be termed literate, and **a jar of grease** or the like from the pantry **be instantly brought** and presented simultaneously whereupon the doors of Your Towering Instability's private suite are to be **shut and barred**, though this unworthy person in his hateful presumptuousness ventures to speculate this second command in its entirety may be an unhappy utterance misrepresenting the unity of Your Perpetual Unclearity's will, burdened as that great and mysterious force is with the many onerous duties and complexities of office laid upon the position and personage of Your Needless Excess, yet even so the items of the first clause, to wit, those concerning the literary representation of Butrús and its vicinity, have **thenceforth been conducted and completed** in the finest detail with continuous scrupulousness, without fabulation or flatulation, notwithstanding unforeseen interruptions such as the tragic death of the Governor, in which we had no part, and the deplorable business of the High Prelate's aunts, which among other aberrations from civility this S'ak, most bumbling and pathetic upon the earth, has been given to remedy, as always in Your Multiple Indictments' best and highest interests; that is, the items of the aforementioned command have been taken into execution by Your Potent Confusion's unrelenting right-hand man, whom I dare deem myself to be, and inasmuch as the said document is only now fit to be lifted up before Your Exceptional Loftiness for perusal and illumination, if only so that it should please Your Utter Irresponsibility, as it is ever the deep-felt hope of all righteous and virtuous inhabitants of this peaceful mountain town to accomplish, **I so do**.*

Demonic readers of other Planes graced by the mercy and favor of That Extreme Misguidedness, who has elected in benevolent wisdom to spread knowledge of these issues as above enumerated to your alien domains, the person of S'ak urges your attention to the following lines, specially composed under the ever-watchful advisement of your fellow demon and interpreter for comfortable parsing by those of foreign breeding and unknowable character:

The largest provincial division of the Empire of the Petal Throne, Pan Cháka is despite its proximity to the Tsolyáni heartland also one of the more remote territories of the empire. While the Chaigári Protectorate is certainly more inaccessible and the province of Milumársha less controlled, the vast majority of Pan Cháka is rugged highlands, covered in dense forests and populated (if at all) by semi-civilized (at best) tribesmen and the non-human Páchi Lei. The high volcanic mountains of the deep south and the sheer, jagged coastlines are even more removed from imperial surveillance and command. The settled and civilized regions of Pan Cháka, centered around the city of Butrús in its northeastern quadrant, scarcely amount to the entirety of a minor province such as Sritl or Tu'un.

Pan Cháka is an exotic place even to many Tsolyáni. Long occupied by Tsolyánu's western neighbor, the atmosphere of antique Mu'ugalavyá lingers. Despite hundreds of tsan of rugged forests and hundreds of years separating the protectorate from modern Mu'ugalavyáni lands, the pervasive cultural and social influences of the Red Hats are still in evidence. Oddly, Butrús is more Mu'ugalavyáni in atmosphere than is Tumissa, which is closer to that empire; perhaps in its isolation Pan Cháka simply belonged less to Tsolyánu to begin with. Besides Mu'ugalavyáni influence, signs of the non-human Páchi Lei are everywhere in Butrús: they have a major enclave in the city and are economically powerful. And underneath all this, there is the awareness of a much older and less clearly known, yet fundamentally distinct Pan Chákan civilization — older than the satrapy of the Red Hats, older than the Second Empire, perhaps older than the Priest-Kings of Gánga. In the approaching turmoil that will surely envelop the Five Empires, who can say what old forces will arise in this land to contest the new?

SÍ'AK

The Malachite Pyramid

in the Holy City Under the Shaded Depthless Lake

Mlet County, Siné Province

5 Dohála 2361 A.S., Year XV of the Reign of the Stone Upon Which the Universe Rests

TRANSLATOR'S FOREWORD

The present document is an English redaction and translation of a Tsolyáni work, which itself is largely based on a translation of an older Mu'ugalavyáni comprehensive gazetteer and heavily updated through the aid of more recent Tsolyáni writings. The author of the Tsolyáni text, named only SÍ'ak, is presently private secretary to the mayor of Mlétpauk, an isolated town high in the mountains of North Vra. According to SÍ'ak, he compiled this work at the request of his employer toward the end of the reign of Emperor Hirkáne.

SÍ'ak, a native of Nmartúsha who affects to retain much of his savage appearance and behavior, apparently received a Mu'ugalavyáni

education of some quality, though he declined to discuss this. He also refused to allow any access to his primary source document, insisting that he is the only one "able" to read it.¹

Despite his profound reticence on some issues, SÍ'ak cooperated fully with the translator on preparation of the present text. Much, however, has been trimmed from his original Tsolyáni manuscript. Many asides, parenthetical or marginal comments, and footnotes directed at

¹ The translator has observed that this text is written in old-fashioned Mu'ugalavyáni on thick lemon-colored paper of bark-fiber, comprises eight small hardbound volumes stored in a box of dark maroon lacquer decorated with swirls of gold dust (and furnished with some extremely complex and hidden locks), and that at least part of its title runs "... with Curious Sights ... of Glorious Mu'ugalavyá (and the Benighted Lesser Realms)...".

his employer have been removed. In addition the prose itself has been heavily re-written for the sake of readability and accessibility to a modern English-speaking audience. Likewise, the author's preface was completely omitted from the first English edition, as the few passages intelligible to the outside reader consist in their entirety of alarmingly libelous, potentially treasonous, and exceedingly vivid comments on acquaintances and the affairs of the mayor. An abridged version is now included (above), but S'ak's other prefatory materials retain the old legal and ethical liabilities and cannot be incorporated at present.

For typesetting considerations, characters with two superscripts have been avoided; this would occur only in cases where the vowel *ü* bears primary or secondary stress. In such cases, the indication of stress has been omitted, and if there is no other indication of primary stress in the word, the reader should understand that it is borne by the *ü*. Counter to practice in previous Tékumel publications, word stress is only indicated on polysyllabic words, where there is ambiguity as to which syllable bears the stress.

Further contrary to established practice, words in Tsolyáni (or other languages) are not

universally capitalized in the English text. Loanwords and citations from the languages of Tékumel will, like any other loanwords or citations, follow standard English orthographic practices.

As *A Gazetteer of Butrús* will be distributed primarily (if not solely) as an electronic document, the translator has opted not to include an index. The text should be adequately searchable through the reader's viewing software.

The focus of this sourcebook is, self-evidently, on the city of Butrús, but a fair amount of information is also provided about the rest of the Protectorate of Pan Cháka, of which Butrús is the capital. It is hoped that later editions may, with the cooperation of the author, include passages omitted in the initial release.

INTRODUCTION

(Omitted. See above.)

PHYSICAL SETTING

Geography

As a traveler enters the Protectorate of Pan Cháka from the east, the land gradually rises out of the central plains of Tsolyánu. Once across the Turín River, the plateau of Pan Cháka proper climbs swiftly to a tableland some four or five hundred meters above sea level — an elevated karst landscape gradually lifted by tectonic activity ever since the Time of Darkness. Tremors are very frequent but minor; small earthquakes are also common, but very rarely do much, if any, damage.

Especially in the Turín valley but in many areas of the plateau, this surface is heavily weathered and full of sinkholes, rock spires, and deeply cut watercourses whose streams often disappear below the earth or emerge from underground channels. The bedrock is limestone and sandstone, while there are many scattered extrusions of granite and basalt, especially toward the southwest. The heavily forested Chákan Range runs north to south through the west-central part of the protectorate, rising to heights of up to two thousand meters above sea level. In the far south of Pan Cháka, Ngéshtu Head and its surrounding mountains (the region known as Porubél Ta) are volcanic in nature, and rise to over six thousand meters. Almost all mountains and ridges in the region are extremely steep and rugged, posing much greater barriers to travel than their modest heights would suggest.

While Butrús lies on a generally broad, flat plain, there are some noteworthy mountains and hills in the immediate vicinity. To the south of the city, Silver Mountain stands at the south shore of the Turín where it makes a turn to the east. It is named after the unusually thick stands of white-blossomed coral trees growing on its northern and eastern slopes, and not for any mineral deposits in or near it, as many believe. It is traditionally considered in Pan Cháka to be a "sister mountain" to Avanthár in the north. Many devout Tsolyáni in the southwest make pilgrimages to pay their respects to the Seal Emperor at Silver Mountain, if they are unable to travel all the way to Avanthár. There is thus a small "shrine" of the imperial cult and rude huts for accommodating these visitors (who generally

are not interested in its cavernous wonders) at its foot.

Silver Mountain can be climbed from the east, and at the top there are two narrowly linked cavern systems full of miraculous flowstone figures, and one extremely large cavern farther within. There is said to be a further set of caves hidden from mundane sight, which were (or are?) home to the foreign sorcerer Nópru-Námin. The Numinous Spring is below the mountain's western toe, sunk into a low depression. It is the size of a large wagon-wheel and gushes, with a huge roaring noise, some five meters to the west, where there is another vortex amidst the stones into which the water sinks and disappears. The water is full of small green and blue fish and the vicinity is the home to many pittas. Sometimes a light appears from this hollow, and at those times a person praying and offering trays of fish and *hmélu* or *hma* with sacrificial honey liquor in a shady place nearby will have his or her wishes granted.

The Harnessed Crane Hills stand farther north and west, upthrust in a circle; in the middle is a deep, turbulent spring in a pit without an outlet, which is always full even in the deepest droughts. The Market of the Zrne is a low ridge or hill that stands a little way off from the main road to Úrmish, so called due to the large numbers of those predators found there. To the north of Butrús, the Turín River and the *sákbe* road pass through a gorge formed by a cluster of towering, sheer-sided spires of black-brown basalt, which together with several high tors on the far slopes number twenty-three in all. The gorge is thus known as the Narrows of the Black Stones. The striking scenery makes the Narrows a popular tourist destination; the most adventuresome go out on the river among the spires in canoes, manned by locals, in order to see the sights from an even more breathtaking perspective — though the rough waters make this a somewhat dangerous practice. In regional folklore the rock spires are said to be the founding ancestors of the clan of the Black Stone, and while this is not usually believed literally, members of this clan are particularly frequent visitors.

Even further away, almost due west of the city, rises Piebald Deer Mountain, a steep, jagged ridge with a rounded top. While its sharp cliffs and sheer slopes are largely draped in creepers, vines, and moss, its white limestone shows through in many areas, giving rise to its name. One of its termini is the site of an old astronomical observatory and shrine to Avánthe, now rarely visited and ruinous; nestled under another arm is an old fortress from the Time of No Kings, in later days converted into a monastery which has housed a bewildering variety of sects.

There are some famous caves in the limestone throughout the region, comprising huge caverns the size of *hirilákte* arenas, vast networks of dry and water-filled cysts and crevices, clear springs and rushing streams, and fantastic stones and draperies. Tourists come from all over western Tsolyánu and sometimes further abroad to see them. For example, in addition to those within Silver Mountain, the grottoes inside Coiled Serpent Mountain (some ways from the city, in a rugged region) feature albino bats, golden sands, gigantic vermilion-bellied salamanders, and a small river emerging from bottomless recesses (once navigated by a brave explorer).

Thin but rich volcanic soil blankets the southern mountains and parts of the central highlands, while the vast plateau itself is covered in a layer of poor reddish jungle soil of widely varying depth. A much thicker deposit of fertile alluvial soil lines the valley of the Turín River and the eastern lowlands of Pan Cháka.

These flat, low-lying plains east of the Turín are rich farmland, cleared and cultivated for millennia. Many wooded thickets and parklands still remain, but the region is heavily agricultural. Forest cover becomes thicker as one moves west from the river, developing into monsoon jungle not far from Butrús itself. The higher elevations in the southwestern mountains are covered in a distinct type of forest. Above about fifteen hundred meters elevation, the dim and cathedral-like true rainforest begins to give way to fog-wetted cloud forest, dripping perpetually, dense with underbrush and giant rhododendrons, all covered in moss, ferns, epiphytes, gingers, orchids, and lianas.

Except for those short streams emptying into the sea in the far west of the protectorate and on the coast of Porubél Ta, all Pan Chákan waters are part of the Turín watershed. The Turín River is navigable only as far upstream as Butrús; rocky shallows just above the city restrict travel to the lightest boats and canoes even in the wet season. Trade and travel northwards thus must be conducted overland. Just beyond the border of the protectorate, the Berjádu River, cascading down from the easternmost foot of Porubél Ta through deep-cut canyons, joins the Turín River. Far to the southeast, it flows into the Chaigávra River and runs south into the sea at Penóm. There are several noteworthy waterfalls in the protectorate, though many are in remote locations in the highlands and not easily visited by casual tourists or sightseers. Some spectacular falls along the cliff-lined southern coast, for example, can be visited only by sea. One of the more accessible is at the Broken Cascade Lake,² so named for the distinct bend or turn the waterfall makes as it strikes projecting rocks about two-thirds of the way down. It falls approximately 30 *dháiba* (40 m) into a smallish, spume-covered lake; a somewhat turbulent river empties it into the river twenty or more *tsan* above the Narrows of the Black Stones. The lake and waterfall themselves lie forty or fifty *tsan* west of the river, amid thickly forested cliffs and gorges.

The Lúshmun Canal runs through the eastern part of the protectorate, roughly following the course of the Turín. The canal was a poorly conceived but carefully executed plan of the twenty-second century A.S. to connect Tumíssa to Úrmish (and thence the sea) via the Turín. Dredging and channeling the river alone proved to be inadequate, and so were supplemented by the construction of numerous canal segments and sluices, connected by several complicated locks and ponds, which were forever breaking down. It has been rumored in more paranoid circles that this plan was actually intended to drain the caldera lake of Néttu Tlakán in Tumíssa for some dark and secret reason. The canalized sections would have totaled over 300 *tsan* (400 km) in length, with the largest almost

² As it is known in Tsolyáni guidebooks. Locally it has been called the Feathered Worm or the Plunging Serpent, or simply as the Plunge.

90 *tsan* (120 km) long; it was to have been 20 *dháiba* (27 m) wide and lined with tall *ebzá* trees for shade. The canal system is now abandoned, and the pools and ponds are stagnant and filled only by rain. Many segments do still hold water, but are clogged and blocked; if they are used at all it is only for local irrigation, casual aquaculture, or inter-village travel. Still, the Lúshmun Canal has come to be considered a vaguely holy place. At a certain point at its side southeast of Butrús, there is a shrine at which its guardian spirit is prayed to for the protection of travelers and irrigation. "Dragon colts" (harmless, playful, coiling blue snakes; see below), are especially plentiful at the shrine, and are considered children or servants of this demigod.³

Climate

The climate is essentially monsoonal, with prevailing winds from the south and southeast during the wet season, and from the north during the dry. This picture is complicated by the fairly regular typhoon season that blows in moisture-bearing storms from the southwest and southeast during the autumn months. Traditional scholarship divides the year into *four* seasons, however, to match those of long-established Engsvanyáli lore: spring (cool and wet), summer (warm and wet), autumn (warm and dry), and winter (cool and dry). This division is not a particularly good match for Pan Chákan conditions, however. Here, autumn is distinguished from winter primarily as the season of the typhoons rather than by a clear difference in temperature. In addition, local calendrical traditions added a brief fifth, or "central" season, in the middle of summer.

Despite the mountains and highlands blocking some of the winds from the ocean, even the center and east of the protectorate still receive adequate precipitation for agriculture — 90-110 cm per year. The windward slopes of the steep coastal ranges themselves are considerably wetter, receiving more than twice that amount.

³ For more on the waters of Pan Cháka, see the *Comprehensive Understanding of Flowing Waters*, or the *Mu'ugalavyáni Book of Water Control Within the Chákas*. For casual reading or tour planning, consult the *Record of Waterways in the Western Region*.

The western and central jungles fall between these two extremes.

Spring is the wet season: the months of Hasanpór, Shápru, Didóm, and Langála, with the monsoons and humidity climaxing in Shápru. By the middle of Didóm the torrential precipitation has usually tapered off to frequent long drizzles and light fog and mist; because of the brief spell of blackish mildew that initially and briefly springs up in their wake each year, these showers are called the "ink rains".⁴ Initially fairly cool, temperatures quickly rise and the season is generally warm, with average temperatures in the range of 16-27°C.

The drier summer lasts from Fésru through Drénggar, Firasúl, Pardán, and until early Halír, with the hottest period being in Firasúl. While humidity is still fairly high compared to central or northern Tsolyánu and heavy morning mists are common, rainfall is lighter and limited to sudden brief, heavy showers. Summer temperatures are on average 20-35°, with rare heat waves rising to 45°.

Later in the year, in early autumn, typhoons blowing in from the Deeps of Chanayága (either across the Chákan forests from the southwest, or over the Flats of Tsechélnu from the southeast) can be destructive even far inland, though very rarely as far Butrús. Somewhat more immediate weather hazards around the same season and slightly later are tornados drifting in from the flat eastern plains. This time of year (late Halír, Trantór, and early Lésdrim) is generally cool (16-30°) and drier, and enjoyed for its stiff breezes.

The brief winters (in late Lésdrim and Dohála) can become surprisingly cool for this latitude, due to the elevation and prevailing northerly winds. While the average temperatures range 15-22°, cold spells can drop as low as 6° for many days at a time. Humidity is at its annual low point, and precipitation infrequent. During this season, the native coral trees shed their white petals in snow-like drifts, providing local and visiting poets with endless sources of wonderment. Genuine frost and even snow are

⁴ Standard Tsolyáni *banúryal himikár*; Pan Chákan vernacular *sáimlu'en múramùrah*.

not unknown at higher altitudes in the southwestern mountains.

Flora

Besides extensive fields for cereal crops, gardens and orchards are intensively cultivated by permanently settled and swidden farmers alike, and despite its jungly reputation Pan Cháka produces large and varied harvests. Foodstuffs are discussed in the section on cuisine, but some are mentioned in the following paragraphs as well.

Pan Cháka, like most of southern Tsolyánu and Mu'ugalavyá, is home to many different species of banana-like plants. The southwestern domesticated banana proper produces a small, sweet, yellowish fruit speckled with black seeds in a copper-colored casing (*airánu* or *airándu*). The wild ancestral variety looks very similar, but is larger, pulpier, and packed with dark black seeds. A decorative variety is prized for its especially beautiful red flowers, and they are used in ornamental gardens throughout the south — the sound of their leaves in the wind is considered powerfully evocative of autumn winds, and the sound of rainfall on their leaves, of spring rainstorms. The larger, starchier plantain is a common food crop of Tsolyánu's coastal lowlands and offshore islands, and is occasionally cultivated as far inland as eastern Pan Cháka. All these species yield not only fruit, but also fiber from their leaf and stalk, which is fashioned into cheap rope and fabric — and in some locales, cloth of marketable quality. Unlike denizens of more southerly and easterly locales, Pan Chákans prefer to weave their fans (hand-held and ceiling-mounted) out of banana leaves, not palm fronds.

A popular upland fruit in both the Chákas is the plum, and a specialty of the region is a dry reddish preserve made from plums with salt, citron, hibiscus, and cardamom flowers. Pots of this are exported throughout western Tsolyánu and much of Mu'ugalavyá. Relatively inexpensive, it is one of the products that the average (non-elite) Tsolyáni or Mu'ugalavyáni would associate most strongly with the Chákas.

Over the past few generations, Butrús has been becoming famous again for its lacquerware

(*rúktu*), and this is made possible by the good variety of lacquer trees (*rúkkun*) that grow wild and semi-cultivated in the forests nearby. Tribesmen, foresters, and farmers harvest the raw sap and sell it to craftsmen in the city, who work it into finished goods. The kanari tree produces both small olive-like fruits serving as breath fresheners and a lemony turpentine-scented brea exported to the coast to varnish the hulls of seagoing ships. Several varieties of the purple-blossomed paulownia trees grow in Pan Cháka; the "buttery paulownia" is the source of a fast-drying oil that is very valuable to painters, lacquerers, and furniture finishers, while the "spiny paulownia" yields a resin (called "blossom tears") used as a flux for gold and silver soldering, as a treatment for fevers and abdominal swellings, and as a general emetic. The flowers of most varieties are also plucked to be used as offerings to Hrú'ü and Wurú, or as adornments for their devotees. The coral tree, mentioned above, grows best at higher elevations, and such larger specimens yield a heavy, fine-grained purplish-black wood quite valuable to furniture-makers and carvers.

Two trees that are of great symbolic value to Pan Chákans are the cardamom and the cinnamon. The cardamom (*vámayl*) is famed for its bright red flowers as well as its spicy seedpods, in folklore a cure for hangovers. In addition, the trees are associated (purely by unfathomable tradition) with the moons, and whenever both moons are in the sky and full simultaneously (particularly in the summer and autumn), there will be "cardamom moon parties" to view the scene at night.

The cinnamon tree⁵ (properly a type of cassia) is also important, since the region around modern-day Butrús and to the east was once a great cinnamon forest before being cleared for fields, gardens, and paddies. Many stands remain, while more place-names and associations linger even where the trees themselves are gone.

Other essentially wild or only occasionally cultured trees are nonetheless economically important to Pan Chákans, particularly the rural farmers and tribesmen: magnolias, the toddy-

⁵ Known as *omógga* in Tsolyáni, while in Pan Chákan dialect the tree is called *vélínyi* and only the spice is *omúgga*.

rich “wine tree”, dye-producing sapan and brazilwoods, sagwire palms (offering both a starchy flour and a coarse kind of sugar), betelnut-bearing areca trees, leafy palmyras, and also the generous coconut palms of the southern Tsolyáni coast, providing floss, rope, fruit, drink, and even cups and bowls. The great ceiba trees (*ebzá*) of the jungle canopies yield cotton-like kapok, unfit for spinning but useful as padding and stuffing; a type of mimosa is an ornamental tree popular for its showy pink flowers and long silky filaments.

Ebony produces a hard, dense, and very valuable dark wood, often nearly jet-black. Several different species or subspecies exist in the Chákas; one in particular (*mirozjulú*) has an especially fine grain and sable hue and is one of the two most prized materials for making masks for the priestesses of Ksáru. Varieties of ebony producing banded tan-and-black wood are commonly called “calamander”; the Pan Chákan vernacular term covering all types is *satsún*.

White-flowering teak trees (*k^há'a*) grow up to 40 m tall, with shorter variants in the mountains of the Chakan Range and the far south; they are quite common in the monsoon jungle and their (re)growth is actively promoted in many places by long-established logging communities. Teak lumber is yellow-brown in color and resinous, requiring frequent oiling or else it will soon dry out, lose its luster, and develop fine cracks. Nevertheless, teak timbers are extremely resistant to rot and insects, and valued for building exposed structures of all sorts — bridges, piers, pavilions, docks, pillars, loggias, and ships. Mahogany, shorter at about 30 m and yielding a darker reddish-brown timber preferred for carving and jointing, is relatively rare in the Chákas. Rosewood is, however, found almost exclusively in the southern Chákan forests; mature trees are slightly taller than mahogany but less massive in the trunk, and its timber is similar but heavier (denser) and even more reddish in hue. A related species, called goldwood, has pale yellowish-orange wood that is prized by makers of furniture and marquetry, despite its being prone to splintering.

One of the most precious forest products of Pan Cháka comes from a species of tree related to the cassia: camphor (*kapúra*), in the form of an

oily ointment and as a crystalline mass (the latter known as “*mnor* brain”). It is extensively used to scent clothing, or carved into insect shapes (especially cicadas, or as worms by devotees of both Belkhánu and Sárku) to be carried as a sachet. For certain festivals and parties, it is powdered and rolled into paper arrows or darts to be shot at people; it is also used in certain local culinary delicacies. Other forest aromatics are copal, liquidambar, and storax, all from a variety of gum trees; and the dense, black, resin-heavy diseased heartwood of the *Aquilaria*, known as aloeswood. Pan Cháka also exports the Tsolyáni incense *par excellence* — the thick brown bark peeled from the small slender *vres* tree, which is also planted ornamentally so that its drooping dark orange foliage may be enjoyed in autumn. Cloves, called “*káika*-tongue perfume”, are also grown and harvested in Pan Cháka; they are mostly used in incense and as a breath freshener, and clove oil is given to treat toothaches. The only notable culinary use is in a special dish of raw meat “cooked” in liquor of citrus juices flavored with cloves.

Other (specifically Tékumelian) trees include the tall, deciduous *dáichu* (with distinctive three-pointed leaves; the bark is pounded into rope and in Pan Cháka, cloth); tall *mash* trees of western Tsolyánu, producing their famous golden fruit; and small, white-barked, spiky blue-green leaved *séresh* trees (also deciduous, its wood is used for bows). At high altitudes, even the towering, slender, black-barked, black-needled *tíu* is found (the wood serves for building materials and the leaves are pounded and slightly fermented to make tea) and the slender, deep green-needled *balúr* (the bark of which is burned as an insect repellent). The bark of the *mmuokh* tree, meanwhile, is a staple food of the Páchi Lei. Even the *ve'ezhib* of Livyánu and the stumpy bulbous trunks of the *chme* tree are seen in certain parts of Pan Cháka.

Bamboo is, as in many places on Tékumel, ubiquitous, varied, and indispensable. There are different varieties that lend themselves to building, to clothing, and to cooking. Pan Chákan varieties include a “rain-streaked” bamboo that is favored for decorative utensils. The Pan Chákans, along with the Vrayáni and inhabitants of coastal Tsolyánu, also have the

custom of using thin sticks of bamboo to count rounds of wine drunk during parties.

Ornamental or perfumed plants include the oleander (*sáchau*), frangipani (*nandélu*), rosy-colored hibiscus (*gíyu*), the white jasmine (*osrudhá*) of Mu'ugalavyá, and *ngka*, or camellia.⁶ Nearly all of these can be found in the wild as well, of course. The most widespread ornamental plant in the Chákas, however, may be varieties of azalea and rhododendron (collectively, *ngánuke*); local breeders have developed orange, white, yellow, pink, and the especially prized vermilion-red varieties. These flowering shrubs and trees are not much prized elsewhere in Tsolyánu, except in Vra and, it is said, parts of the Chaigári Protectorate. The Chákan Range and the volcanic highlands in particular are home to many types of these plants; the higher cloud forests are largely composed of giant rhododendrons. These forests also are home to giant ferns, cryptomerias, cinnamons, magnolias, champaks, giant camellias, teaks, and bamboos.

Among various types of duckweed and milfoil (some of which are used as food in Pan Cháka) there are larger water plants as well. Most noteworthy are various species of water lilies, some with quite large and strangely shaped pads. One rare type is the sleeping lily, which is sacred to Lord Ksáru for its deep blue hue and because its flower folds into a bluish-black pod and retracts below the water at night.

There are huge quantities of lesser or parasitic plants as well: ferns ranging in size from tiny miniatures no bigger than a coin to giants the size of a house, gingers, orchids, mosses, rattans, and lianas, and all manner of epiphytes. In much of southern Tsolyánu and Mu'ugalavyá, the Islands, and Livyánu, orchids are primarily used medicinally (or sorcerously), but are cultivated as ornamentals by a small number of eccentric aficionados. Butrús is home to a number of such, attracts more as visitors and aesthetic pilgrims, and exports precious seedlings to yet others. A certain Pan Chákan orchid is the source of a vanilla-like spice and aromatic that is quite valuable; it cannot be

grown, and must be gathered in the wild. Another is the small violet orchid called He-Watches-You (*tsa'kél-tlatúsmi*),⁷ which blooms late in the monsoon season, particularly around the time of the summer solstice and the Feast of the Lighted Path. They are quite rare and short-lived, and can only be grown by the most skilled floriculturalists. They are said to be eyes of Grugánu or of Wurú (depending largely upon the religious affiliation of the observer or neighborhood), and when one springs up on its own in a house — dangling from a lintel or amongst mossy eaves, for example — it is a token of imminent change for the person who spots it. Said change is usually good, for devotees of these gods; some particularly devout worshippers of Belkhánu, Vimúhla, Karakán, or their Cohorts, and especially worshippers of Thúmis, consider it an omen of impending danger or ill fortune for themselves.

Several different types of ginger (out of the dozens native to the region) are practically staple food ingredients and medicines. The vine that produces the stiff, bristly *rúshe* fiber is common in Pan Cháka, while rattan is extensively employed in making lightweight furniture and goods; lianas are equally useful as inexpensive binders and ropes. One parasitic vine produces a spiky purplish-dun seedpod that is resorted to as a foodstuff in times of famine. The same seedpods are distilled by secret processes of the tribesmen into a coffee-colored whisky which is prized in the protectorate but has few admirers elsewhere. Wine-producing *nalúm* vines, though, grow comparatively poorly in Pan Cháka, and are not extensively cultivated.

Of the many fungi, molds, mildews, and mushrooms that flourish in the dim and humid Pan Chákan jungles and caverns — to say nothing of algae, lichens, and mosses — only two can be noted here. The first is "Chiténg's Candles", a type of small spike- or horn-shaped fungus around 1-3 cm high, with rare monsters reaching the size of 6-7 cm. They are a nasty tan-yellow-white color in daylight but glow surprisingly bright with an orange hue in darkness. They are rather rare and very slow-growing, and specimens are said to live many

⁶ Only the heavily-bred white and pink varieties of *ngka* are known in Tsolyánu, aside from a few breeders in the South who are developing giant red strains.

⁷ This is the same flower known outside the Chakas as You-Are-Looked-Upon (*túsmi-pagál-guál*).

scores of years if not disturbed. Found mostly in deep forest, they may also grow in caves, sinkholes, and other subterranean environments. They are mildly toxic, and if eaten cause violent vomiting and stomach cramps, often followed by hair loss and discolored patches of skin. The second are the "Brains-of-Delight": a type of bulbous mushroom covered in a delicate stringy membrane, rarely growing larger than fist-sized, and which glows pale green at night. They have a faint sweetish ammonia odor, and often grow in large patches ("rookeries" in the local vernacular) in the damper woodlands. Washed, sun-dried, and pickled in high-proof alcohol, they become a tasty delicacy, though they lose their interesting color and fluorescence. Just as Chiténg's Candles are associated with the Cohort of Vimúhla, these fungi are said to be manifestations of the goddess Dlamélish.

Some other (specifically Téकुmelian) items of flora include the *tsúnu* plant (whose bark is the base for making black eye-shadow, *tsúnure*), the tall *voqú'o* plant whose sap serves as a kind of glue, *hruchán* and *firyá* reeds (the commonest sources of paper and cloth, respectively, outside the Chákas and still widely used even within them), and a number of fruits — most characteristically, the bitter little *tsevu* fruit from the *ngosh* tree, holy in the teachings of both Ksáru and Thúmis, the black *hreqa*, and the *dmoz*, nauseating to humans but a staple food of the Páchi Lei.

Fauna

Only the more interesting or economically significant species will be discussed in this section, due to the limitations of space. Generally known Téकुmelian creatures will likewise not be covered.

"Dragon colts" are apparently found nowhere on Téकुmel except the region of the old Lúshmun Canal. They may not even be native to Téकुmel's universe, but rather hail from some Demon Plane. They are small, harmless, rather friendly coiling snakes of a bright blue color, and according to folk wisdom they are both Tsolyáni loyalists and devotees of Ksáru (presumably due to their color, though many travelers have

wondered why they are not understood to be creatures of Avánthe by the same reasoning).

Other snakes of the region are of practically any color imaginable, often poisonous or constricting, nor as even-tempered; only a few are mentioned here. The "dopey snake" is a smallish and generally mild-mannered serpent with colorful white, green, and pinkish-yellow bands; odd markings on its face give it a sleepily smiling expression. It eats large insects and other small pests, but is also very poisonous to humans and Páchi Lei alike. It rarely bites except when in its nest or when in or near water, but its venom causes loss of muscular control in the limbs, neck, and torso — not dangerous to the heart or lungs, fortunately, merely causing sudden and complete limpness for several hours. As the dopey snake prefers to nest in high tree branches and enjoys hunting in shallow waters, a bitten man can often be severely injured or killed by accidental falling or drowning. The awlmouth, on the other hand, is a fat brown-black viper with a vicious temper. Its massive fangs (about the size of a human index finger) can easily puncture light plate armor, and its bite causes massive swelling around the wound and an ugly yellow-purplish discoloration, followed by necrosis and sloughing off of flesh down to the bone. Gangrene often then spreads outward from the affected area as well. The awlmouth is unfortunately found mostly around human habitations, preferring piles of old bricks, abandoned buildings, old quarries, unfrequented roof beams, disused silos or grain bins, and dry basements for its dens. In the wild it is usually found near piles of scree, talus slopes or in shallow caves. Finally, the calenderer⁸ is a very large constrictor snake, up to 10 m long. It actively stalks solitary prey, and while it avoids groups of larger animals or people it often follows them in hopes of one member separating from the herd or party.

The waters of Pan Cháka are home to a species of small, albino gavia (*chémbim*). Snappish but generally harmless if left alone, their fine supple hides can be made into a valuable white leather. They are found in small pockets and colonies everywhere in the protectorate west of the

⁸ So named after the heavy stone rollers used to finish paper and cloth — the process of "calendering".

Turin; it is supposed that they travel through the underground streams and lakes underlying the karst plateau. On land, one might encounter the so-called “horned tortoises”, a genus of large reptiles (often over 1 m at the shoulder and up to 4 m long) with extremely heavy, banded shells, armored heads and limbs (six in number), and in many species the ability to spray an acidic spittle at the eyes of those who disturb them. The spittle causes blindness (usually temporary) and painful irritation of the eyes, nose, mouth, and in cases even the skin. Those species that are non-toxic are actually more mean-tempered and vicious, and their heavy beaked jaws are just as dangerous (or more so). In the forests, the reptile to beware of is the misleadingly named “stumblemonkey”, which is not a primate at all but an arboreal lizard up to 2 m in body length, with hooked foot-pads and a long prehensile tail. While extremely agile in trees, the tail is rarely used for climbing, but rather for holding prey while the stumblemonkey injects a muscle poison through a bristle of small stingers under its chin. Once the victim is paralyzed, it is swallowed whole. The animal gets its name from its clumsy, tumbling gait on the ground, where it often literally trips over itself; it rarely descends to the jungle floor as it becomes easy prey for other predators.

In addition to these reptiles, there are many varieties and huge quantities of smaller lizards, chameleons, salamanders, newts, and so forth. Two of the latter are actually fairly dangerous: the *tartinja*, or giant predatory hellbender, and the related cave hellbender.⁹ The former is a species of salamander easily reaching the size of a large man. Of a mottled brownish color, lumpy-textured, and usually coated with algae or water-moss, they float like dead logs or branches in stagnant waters, and erupt out in a flurry of claws and gaping rubbery jaws to seize prey upon the banks — typically deer, but just as readily humans. Usually a *tartinja* dispatches its victims by holding them underwater until they drown, or if that fails simply by goring them until they die of blood loss. Vicious and nasty, they are tracked down for extermination when detected near human settlements. The

⁹ The latter is subject to such a variety of local names, due to taboos, euphemism, superstition, poetic license, or outright reverence, that no single Tsoyáni name is universally accepted.

(sub)species in the Tsechélnu Flats are much larger, up to 3 m long, and proportionately more dangerous. The cave hellbender is slightly smaller, smoother-skinned, and pale white with red splotches and pink streaks; they are however equally dangerous and unpleasant. They are found in caves, obviously, but also in still and heavily shadowed cool waters such as in sinkholes, sewers or heavily overgrown irrigation works.

Throughout most of Pan Cháka, the Tsechélnu Flats, and much of the Islands, the role of geckos as domestic insect-eaters is taken by a few varieties of tree frog, adapted for drier life. They tend to be rather drab but innocent little creatures. Frogs in general are unusually abundant, ranging in size from that of a fingernail to that of a large dog, and appear in all the colors of the rainbow. Their croaking, creaking, whirring, and popping are the seasonal music of the highlands and monsoon jungles, and the constant background noise of the swamps and river valleys. Some are quite aggressive; some are poisonous to a greater or lesser degree. Among the latter are “Chiténg’s Spittles”, a species of smooth-bodied, large-eyed tree frog, very small, very bright, and very toxic. Growing to a maximum size of six or seven centimeters, and with skins of swirled orange and red, they tend to cling to the tips of large leaves in the jungle, like lurid raindrops. Their bubbling calls are particularly pleasant and soothing to the human and Páchi Lei ear, exerting an almost hypnotic effect; if they were not so dangerous to handle they would probably make desirable cage pets. The contact poison exuded by their skins and covering them entirely causes almost instant numbness and ringing in the ears, followed swiftly by distorted vision, confusion, and sometimes permanent insanity or brain damage; toxic doses result in convulsions and death.¹⁰ Fortunately, the toxin breaks down very rapidly and cannot effectively be used as a blade or food poison by hunters or assassins.

Another such species is the “spiny frog”, silvery-gray in color and larger (to 10 cm), with a

¹⁰ Páchi Lei are almost unaffected by the toxin (experiencing only mild numbness and a “funny taste”), but Swamp Folk, Shen, Tinaliya and Hláka all suffer similar effects as humans, while the chitin of Pe Choi blisters and flakes where it comes in contact.

somewhat irregular row of spines along their back. They are normally seen only in the wet season and early to mid-summer, and then in large colonies; during the hotter and drier parts of the year they disappear into cysts or crevices and hibernate. These tree frogs are both timid and unobservant, as well as great leapers; intruding upon a colony thus usually causes an explosion of panic flight. This can be dangerous to the person who disturbs them, as the poison in their dorsal spines causes blindness in humans.

Gliders are another grouping of tree frog species, with membranes beneath the front limbs which allow them to soar from branch to branch in the upper canopy of the jungle. They are all non-poisonous despite their bright coloration (blue-green, solid red, green and red, or blue and red), but very quick and wary. The largest grow up to 20 cm, but have relatively long, light bodies.

An annoying but fairly rare amphibian known only in Pan Cháka and southeast Mu'ugalavyá is called the *mótti*. It generally resembles an elongated frog or salamander, and fills a niche somewhere between that of a particularly large and cunning rat and a small, vicious raccoon. They are fond of stealing not only fine foodstuffs, but also jewelry and other shiny objects; their wariness, persistence, and stealth allow them to penetrate the most well-protected homes, and their blinding speed and slippery, surprisingly strong bodies make them hard to catch even once detected. Homeowners who suspect a *mótti* has singled them out have been known to simply close up their houses and go to live elsewhere for a few months, until it moves on.

The *ngevék* is another creature, like the "dragon colts", of possible extra-Planar origin; it is fortunately found only on stream banks in upland Pan Cháka. It is more commonly called — due to superstitious taboo — the "sandy mouth" or "shadow-shooter". It is a small round aquatic reptile, black and hard-shelled like a beetle or turtle, and about the size of a small *káika* egg, with a single four-branched horn on its head and small insect-like wings. It has the unwelcome habit of spitting grains of sand (or some substance very much like sand) upon the

shadows of passersby, which has fatal results. Strangely, one tribe of the headhunters of the inner jungles is immune; the problem is that no two authorities agree on which of the three tribes it is.

A true insect of Pan Cháka is the hopping beetle, a large earth-borer up to 50 cm long, with powerful mandibles and a mildly caustic bite. It can tunnel swiftly through loose soil, but constructs no permanent warrens or passages. Highly territorial, it stakes out a hunting ground and lurks just below the soil surface, waiting to launch itself nearly vertically into the air and seize onto small prey (or the legs and abdomens of larger ones). The *masánkh*¹¹ is a large (up to 25 cm long) and solid red-colored centipede; they are colonial insects that build massive castle-like hives from wood pulp. The warriors have large dark-red mandibles that they carry upright (looking like horns) while traveling. Pan Chákans, like other Tsolyáni, consider them to be intelligent, if alien, "demons" (*sharétlyal*) who owe allegiance to the deity Karakán. Mostly found in scrub jungle, parkland-savanna, and recently cleared and regenerating forest areas, they are thus fairly familiar to slash-and-burn farmers and ranchers in Chakas.

Natives of Pan Cháka are very fond of keeping ornamental freshwater fish, and based on the rich variety of natural species in the streams and pools of the region (as well as imported species) they have bred many varieties of goldfish, loaches, angelfish, koi, and so forth. Farmers customarily raise quantities of different carp and catfish in their paddies and irrigation ditches both for food and to keep down the population of insects with aquatic larval stages — and a large enough carp is a welcome "eeler" to hunt down and destroy any of the vicious eels, destructive freshwater hagfish, and predatory nematodes that left unchecked can make a green and fertile paddy an unhealthy, even dangerous, place. One such type of unwelcome intruder is the "fat eel", a freshwater creature up to 3 m long, found especially in muddy sloughs and pools formed for agriculture. They are thick-bodied, with many rippling fins and

¹¹ They have many local names; *masánkh* is merely the most common in Pan Cháka but not necessarily used or known elsewhere. In neighboring Urudái Province, where they are relatively rare, they are called *nénkham*.

streamers, colored an ugly pink and silver. Their large rectangular mouths are filled with flat blade-like teeth for taking chunks out of whatever cannot be swallowed whole. "Needle eels" are another variety: green-black eels, very thin and long (up to 1 m) and hard to see in the water, as they look like stalks of grass or reeds. They feed by burrowing directly into the flesh of larger animals and eating their way through the body. Both these and the "fat eels" tend to spread into irrigation works and flooded paddies from surrounding waters, and are the biggest, if not most common, of the occupational hazards wetland farmers in the southwest face.

Pan Cháka is graced with great flocks of butterflies: giant, bright, bird-winged, they are called "air flowers" in casual speech. They are an important source of food for the "gobblers" (in local dialect, *khurruhirrúkhú*). These flying mammals are well-known inhabitants of the settled part of Pan Cháka and the lighter forests. They range 15-60 cm in height (depending on age and subspecies), are black-skinned and covered in golden-chocolate fur, and have long muzzles, large pointed ears and huge orange eyes. Their wings are bat-like morphologically, but densely covered with broad feather-shaped hairs. They are social animals, hanging upside down from caves, attics or eaves, and dark tangled groves during the day and flying out in flocks to hunt at night. They are also found living in the city of Butrús itself, and are almost domestic in some neighborhoods. They are omnivorous, and in season gorge on fruit and berries — so are thus a great menace to orcharders, who at times net them and burn their daytime lairs to protect their crops. They also eat large numbers of insects, small rodents, lizards, and frogs. Despite the folk belief that they are escorts of the souls of the recently dead, and hang from the eaves of the bedchambers of the dying waiting to receive their souls, they are not particularly feared or tabooed creatures. In fact, if taken from their nests when infants, they are fairly tamable and may be employed to carry messages or seek out and return with small objects. They are as apt as *küni* birds at this, though they cannot speak — except their hideous, sardonically tittering call.

The Chákan species of *küni* themselves are of the "short-winged" family, and distinguished by their large and heavy claws; most have black and white markings at the wingtips and white rings or stripes around the eyes. As native Chákans are not very partial to falconry, these birds are captured and trained largely for trade or sale to hunters or collectors elsewhere in Tsolyánu — where they can fetch a good price.

On the other hand, another nocturnal avian, the small Pan Chákan owl (*réndu*), is a shunned and ill-omened creature. For some reason they are associated with "broken mirror magic" (q.v.). At the same time, they are sometimes considered to be transfigured ghosts and have the names in taboo and poetry of "wetnurse birds" and "night-strolling girls". Despite these prejudices against them, it is also believed that they prevent house fires from breaking out if they nest in the roof or attic. The "mosquito bats" of the Chákas are not held in such respect; they are small and mostly solitary animals which, like vampire bats, feed on warm blood. Unlike their better-known cousins, however, these have short siphons folded into their mouths that are used to suck the blood directly from their victims' veins. When presented with a human donor, they tend to gorge so much that they bloat up like small furry balls and are unable to fly away; only very rarely are they directly dangerous to larger animals, though they can and do spread virulent diseases. On occasions when they do flock together, however, they can very easily and rapidly drain a human being of blood so that he dies.

The "emerald-armed magpie" found throughout the Chákas is probably actually related to the mynah of old Earth. These birds appear a solid glossy black when perched, but in flight reveal brilliant green feathers lining their wings. Their only other markings are small white or yellow discs around the eyes, giving them a wide-eyed and perpetually surprised appearance. While their song is a pleasant metallic warble, they have a characteristic throaty snigger when pleased or excited. Intelligent, clean, and generally attractive, they are fairly popular pets, though not trusted out of their cages. They are intensely curious and clever, often messily so, and seem uncannily apt at playing pranks on humans or other animals within reach. The

temples of Dlamélísh and Hríháyal often regard them to be the reincarnations of devotees of the Aspect Hes, though this is not formal doctrine. Wild specimens are less interested in humans, but may rapidly learn to shadow them for the opportunity to purloin food and generate amusement.

Other avian life is rich and colorful, too. There are, of course, the domestic *káika*, in both terrestrial (“turkey”) and aquatic (“duck”) species. “Pond clerks” are a variety of black and purple waterfowl, quick on the wing and surprisingly fast even on land. Usually found in small flocks, they are always active and busy-looking, and quite noisy with their odd droning calls. While their flesh and eggs are extremely unpalatable to humans, they are often tolerated around ponds and water-gardens for their amusingly fussy, bustling behavior. They are often compared to priests of Hrü’ü (and by extension, bookish types in general), or vice versa. Páchi Lei find them quite edible but still prefer not to eat them, apparently for “religious” reasons.

Gaudy blue kingfishers are common along the Turín River, the remaining segments of the Lúshmun Canal, and water-filled sinkholes and ponds in the highlands. “Qon’s splashes”¹² winter in southern Livyanu and Shenyú, but migrate into southern Tsolyanu during the summer and early autumn in vast tinkling flocks. These are tiny (5-8 cm) flocking songbirds with very high-pitched calls and songs, a bright solid yellow color overall. They are also popular cage birds throughout this region, though they are somewhat delicate and do poorly if not kept with others of their kind. The most colorful birds, though, are found in the southwestern cloud forests. There one finds the jacamars, motmots, puffbirds, warblers, flycatchers, and sunbirds; todies, trogons, barbets, and pheasants in dozens of varieties; sweet-voiced, moss-colored bulbuls; lustrous, sable fork-tailed drongoes, fluttering scarlet minivets, skulking

polychrome pittas, darting iridescent bee-eaters, and flaming-chested flower-peckers.

Aside from the widespread *nráishu* and *nyar* (the latter uncommon but present in the Chákas) there are two related species of deer in the Pan Chákan forests: the larger sambar and the smaller fang-toothed muntjac. The muntjac is valuable for the leather it provides to make finely crafted and bright-dyed boots. However, there is also an extremely dangerous deer-like creature, perhaps a native of the Demon Planes, which closely resembles the muntjac — the petite, albino, cunning, malicious, and utterly pitiless “vampire deer”. A quaint rustic superstition to the urban dweller, it is a vivid, living terror for the backwoods farmer.

A small and interesting Chákan animal is the *thelúha*, a short-limbed and long-bodied creature about the size of a small cat that, while basically mammalian, is covered in slightly iridescent green-brown scales. It is tamable, trainable, and fully at home in trees and water. The fact that it is immune to most animal venoms and can easily sniff out most vegetal and mineral toxins makes trained specimens in great demand as snake, *chnau*, and *epéng*-killers and as food-testers. These creatures are native only to the Pan Chákan highlands, northern Vra, and possibly the mountains of northeastern Livyánu, but the domestic forms are found farther abroad.

Less desired “domestic” animals include the *banyé*, found throughout the southwest, which is a small, soft, damp creature that infests grain stores. It releases an enzyme onto the grain that breaks it down into a black, stinking, runny liquid, which renders it digestible to the *banyé*. The *mash* orcharders and distillers, and other fruit-growers as well, are plagued by the stinging *epéng*, which particularly seeks out stored and softening fruit. Fortunately the species common around settled areas of Pan Cháka are not the more poisonous varieties, however economically harmful they may be.

There is a certain species of predator that is also found only in Pan Cháka and northern Vra within Tsolyánu, called the “mintleaf *zrne*”. However, it is actually a feline, a distant descendant of the jaguar of old Earth. It is a small, stocky creature

¹² They are properly known in Tsolyanu as *banúryal hitiritkólmuyal hiBelkhánudáldálisha*, “the rains of the Paradise of Lord Belkhánu”, but their Chakan dialectal name, *chempiliyul húPán-dleza*, refers to that deity’s Cohort and specifically to splashes of urine. Speakers of the Chakan dialect rarely see anything offensive in this, but more cultured individuals often do find it objectionable.

with a thick soft pelt of dark brown or black, covered in spearhead-shaped yellow spots; it is equally at home in trees, on land, or in water. While solitary, stealthy, shy, and only moderately territorial, it preys heavily on livestock and is a severe danger to children. It rarely attacks adult humans (or Páchi Lei), but its patience and craftiness make it a dangerous foe.

For centuries visitors have commented that Pan Chákans have no imagination in breeding their pets, for the local strains of domestic cat and domestic dog are nearly identical to one another: both have long-muzzled heads with slightly tufted ears, short limbs, and short reddish-brown fur — sometimes with whitish bellies and black stripes on the face and neck. Even the erudite circles of elderly pet breeders in Butrús can't come up with a good explanation of how both species came to look so similar. Cats are somewhat more common in Butrús than elsewhere in Tsolyánu, perhaps in part due to the ancient local cult of a feline demigod now incorporated into the Temple of Hrüü. Black-colored sports are, not surprisingly, holy to this deity, while albinos or solid white ones are shunned. Feral cats are fairly common in undeveloped areas of the city and its suburbs, as are small packs of feral dogs — the latter potentially posing a threat to the unwary or weak.

HISTORY

Early Period

Remote Antiquity. The earliest known inhabitants of Pan Cháka were apparently related to the people of the Three States of the Triangle. In the agricultural districts of the eastern and northeastern part of the protectorate there have been finds of this culture's characteristic black-on-red pottery, and even occasional fragmentary inscriptions very similar to the undeciphered ones found below Penóm and Úrmish. It is not known whether the region was a part of this archeological culture or whether these artifacts only arrived in Pan Cháka through trade. Dating from a slightly later period, there are also a few Llyáni remains that have been found: red-glazed pottery shards, rare gold coins or medallions, and a couple of

statuettes — but these were almost certainly brought by trade and not manufactured *in situ* by subjects of Llyan's empire.

Many scholars have noted strong similarities in material culture, social organization, and cultural behavior between Pan Cháka, the highlands of northern Vra, the marshy lower basin of the Putuhénu River, and the Flats of Tsechélnu. Some date the presumed cultural substratum shared among these regions to this extremely early period, though more conservative scholars prefer to suggest it did not exist until later, the final period of the Fisherman Kings and early Bednálljan times.

Dragon Warriors. After invading the southwest and conquering these poorly-known native inhabitants, the Dragon Warriors set up their famous boundary steles throughout the protectorate, and also many ritual wardings calling upon the Flame Lord and his servants to defend the cleared land and its new rulers against the unholy and frightful demons they believed dwelt in the dark, wet cisterns and sinkholes. Some surviving examples of both these types of artifacts have since been removed to Butrús for display. Remains of Dragon Warrior-period building foundations exist deep under modern Butrús; an old mound of long-ruined fortifications lies outside town. In effect, the Dragon Warriors were the founders of what is now the city of Butrús.¹³ It was also the Dragon Warriors who established the First Temple of Vimúhla, now located partially on a pocket-plane deep in the jungles of the western part of the protectorate. The history of the worship of the Flame Lord in what is now western Tsolyánu can be traced back to these remote times. However, Tsolyáni scholars are rarely able to distinguish physical remnants of the era of the Dragon Warriors from those of other, later legendary times — the First Empire and the Empire of the Gods.

In this region, the ruling stratum of Dragon Warriors rapidly fractured into a large number of equal lineages, their chiefdoms following suit. The result was a landscape of small competing peer polities rather than the large and relatively

¹³ At least, one can say that the remains of their buildings are the oldest ones known at the site of the modern city, and even in the civilized regions of the protectorate.

centralized “city-states” of Dragon Warrior descendants such as the Vriddis of Fasiltum.

Bednállja. Soon after the deity Ksárul revealed himself to mankind in the reign of the Twenty-Second Fisherman King in what is now western Salarvyá, his priesthood had already constructed an outpost in the form of a fortified monastery in southeastern Pan Cháka (some part of which is said to remain in existence today). This region became one of the main sites of the early religious conflict between the “Red Robes” and the “Black Robes”. Missionizing by the latter was presumably intense, since a strong tradition of worship of the Lord of the Blue Room appeared in Pan Cháka and persists unbroken to the present day. At that time, the town that modern Butrús descends from was known as Álu-Ítkinu.

Later, after the reign of Nayári and the establishment of the Bednálljan Empire, a temple to Sárku was built at Álu-Ítkinu, and large parts of it remain in good condition today deep underground. The grounds and some monuments of the modern City of the Dead date back to the same mid-Bednálljan period. Remains of simple frog-shaped statues and idols are fairly common from this time (if not earlier), but it is hotly debated whether they represent the folk-deity later known as Smoking Toad or another called Frog Maiden or Maiden On the Green Moon. It appears that in these times Cháka continued to be ruled by the Vimúhla-worshipping descendants of the Dragon Warriors, who as a constellation of petty chiefdoms individually swore fealty to the Bednálljan dynasties. However, even early in this same period the lineages and tribes that would later unite as the Íto clan had adopted (and adapted) the worship of Sárku and were prepared to assert their political and religious independence. It is also in this middle Bednálljan period that the toponym of “Cháka” is first attested.

In Butrús there is also an ancient shrine and associated cult of a quiet feline deity which dates back to the late Bednálljan era; it is now incorporated within the city’s Temple of Hrü’ü. In this same era, the city — its name by then metathesized into Lu-Tíknu, or Lu-sa-Tíknu — was designated as the site of one of the Imperial Repositories, a great and ostentatious

warehouse of governmental records and religious texts. Scarcely anything of this survived to the present, despite the claims of the Temple of Ksárul to have preserved it through the millennia.

Some of the technological inventions made during the First Empire found their way here and were incorporated in some small way into local culture. For example, little noisemaking firecrackers are made out of heavy paper or bamboo joints and a weak kind of gunpowder, for use in certain popular festivities; and woodblock printing is commonly used to produce cheap illustrated chapbooks, public notices, blank governmental forms, and the like. Since the traditional scribal clans control this industry, no commercial disputes over the technology have arisen.

Engsvanyálu. Pan Cháka was spared most of the religious and civil turmoil of the age of Pavár’s revelations and the following generations; it was only gradually and somewhat later that the faiths of Evuén and Ba’álk (modern-day Avánthe and Belkhánu, respectively) and their Consorts spread into the eastern fringes of Pan Cháka. However, there are fragmentary records of a few minor, local messianic movements and enthusiastic frenzies associated with local demigods such as Smoking Toad and the aforementioned “God of Cats”, as well as a number of mystical Vimúhlan prophets and preachers. During the period of Bednálljan decline, before the Priest-Kings had re-established a centralized rule over the known world, the real political and cultural center of Pan Cháka was in its far northwest, which together with the rugged southeastern coast of Mu’ugalavyá and the city-state of Heméktu on its green plains formed the uneasy realm of Zru’o, the Land of the Three Kings.¹⁴ In these days, the vicinity of modern Butrús was a relative backwater, at least politically speaking.

It was the fourth Priest-King of the First Epoch, Feleshka’an (r. 1413–1444 A.P.) who divided the Chákas into northern and southern provinces, originally for administrative purposes. However, the prefixes “Do” and “Pan” are not attested

¹⁴ Often confused or conflated with the Three Kings of mythology, Akhoné, Niritlál, and Nimuné (q.v.)

until far later (only reliably from the Time of No Kings). Previous to Feleshka'án's ruling, it seems that the adjacent forested highlands lying in what is now Mu'ugalavyá were also considered part of the nebulous domain known as "Cháka", but gradually developed a political (if not cultural) identity independent of the modern Chákas.

Further changes followed: During the brief reign of Ssirandár VI in the seventeenth century A.P., the old citadel and town were, in the course of *pashátl* (*dítlána*), abandoned and rebuilt several *tsan* further north near Tréklú Süng, a caravanserai-village at a major ford over the Turín River. This site, formally renamed Ti-Tirutléklú (soon Tirutléklú by haplology), but better known as the City of the Nine Walls, served as the capital of Pan Cháka through the rest of the Engsvanyáli period — but not beyond. Nevertheless, even the modern city, back on its original site, still owes a great deal of its underlying fabric to the earliest days of Engsvanyálu. The original construction of the old sewer system, aqueducts, canals, cisterns, and the artificial leveling of the plain on which Butrús stands all took place during this time, before the *dítlána* of Ssirandár VI. By the end of the First Era, the demographic, economic, and cultural balance in the southern Chákas had shifted from its ancient center eastward to the Turín River valley. The western highlands would never again be the center of power and civilization in Pan Cháka.

Engsvanyálu made more refined contributions, too. A statue purportedly fashioned by the great Márya (1315-1376 A.P.) that had long been displayed in the City of the Nine Walls was, so the annals say, abandoned there and recovered only after Engsvan hla Gánga fell. Some volumes of a copy of a catalogue from the early period of the Great Library of Tumíssa, founded by Dhárumesh Mssa I (r. 1501-1543 A.P.), are rumored to exist in the modern library of the Temple of Ksáruł, having been left behind in a nearby monastery during the move to Ti-Tirutléklú and rediscovered millennia later, just after the sinking of Gánga. Even after old Butrús was abandoned, Báshdis Mssa VIII (r. 2190-2232 A.P.) commissioned several important mausoleums to be rebuilt at the old city, along with new constructions at the City of the Nine

Walls — the latter now all lost. Huge stone statues of ancient Engsvanyáli governors (or, at least, they are believed to have been Engsvanyáli governors) that were salvaged from the ruins of the Engsvanyáli city around 800-1100 A.S. have been re-erected at the modern city gates.

With the end of the First Epoch, rapid decentralization of power, and the spread of civil war, Pan Cháka generally fell under the sway of the regime at Tumíssa founded by Teshéngtu Tlekólmü, "the Hammer of the West". It not reconquered until much later, at the beginning of the Third Epoch, when it again joined itself to the Engsvanyáli central government. The Priest-King Ssesmúga III (r. 3357-3402 E.R.C.J.V.) sponsored a program of extensive exploration and charting of the caves and cavern networks Pan Cháka, costly in terms of human life and of dubious value; then Mesunénde (r. 3598-3612 E.R.C.J.V.) ordered what was to be last *dítlána* of the city before the end of the empire. The succeeding centuries saw Tirutléklú fall into decadent obscurity while regional fief-holders and warlords grew in power in the countryside. The Ítos' might ascended in Do Cháka and began spreading beyond its borders, while the semi-barbaric chiefdoms of the southern Chákan Range grew in power and confidence. Pan Cháka and the City of the Nine Walls were devastated in the reign of Amukánatł Vrídđi IV (r. 5400-5459?): during a bloody Páchi Lei insurrection, and again in the epidemic of the Mottled Plague that lingered for years in Pan Cháka and southwestern Tsolyánu.

The cataclysm at the end of the Engsvanyáli age manifested itself in Pan Cháka primarily as earthquakes (minor but apparently near-constant) and volcanic eruptions in the far southern part of the province. Despite their distance, the eruptions spewed ash as far north as Tumíssa, shortening the growing season for years, disrupting the flow of groundwater and surface runoff, and causing widespread famine and depopulation. Páchi Lei, bandits, dangerous beasts, and even Ssu began encroaching on human settlements.

Time of No Kings

Immediately after the cataclysm, Engsvanyáli Butrús, the City of the Nine Walls — battered and neglected for centuries already — was finally abandoned altogether. Its citizens and rulers hastily moved south to the old site of the Bednálljan city, believing that Engsvanyálu and its later traditions were accursed. As even the valuable river crossing at old Tréklü Süng was destroyed in the geological and climactic upheavals, the Engsvanyáli site was left desolate and rapidly fell into complete ruin. Much later, those ruins were totally destroyed in the Great Storm of 1155 A.S. by flash flooding, massive cave-ins, and subsequent lingering floodwaters. Whatever battered fragments survive now lie under many meters of fractured rock and clayey silt.¹⁵

The city-state reconstituted and centered at “Old Butrús” — actually then called Lu-Tikun (or Tikün) — was frequently at war with its neighbors and often the victim of raids. While it often paid tribute to the lords of Tumissa and Úrmish and occasionally relinquished *de jure* independence to them, in fact it retained *de facto* independence almost throughout the period. A long history of skirmishing and competition with the neighboring polity of Úrmish led to genuine subjugation to this ancient enemy on one occasion; the two cities continue to have a traditional loathing for one another. The Páchi Lei, meanwhile, gradually extended their range over much of the modern protectorate, and had variable relations with the human city and its small agricultural hinterland. Over the centuries, with the rising aggressiveness of the Páchi Lei, the city that by now was often known as Butrús practically became a human outpost in a forest of non-humans. The gap between the northern and southern Chákan Ranges, once a long populated and civilized strip of lands lying between the wilds of Pan Cháka and Do Cháka, came to be entirely depopulated and returned to primitive jungle.

¹⁵ Scholars outside the Chákas are occasionally left confused (or even embarrassed) by the continuing use of the Engsvanyáli-era nomenclature for the two cities: “Old Butrús” always means the site of the modern-day city, on its pre-Engsvanyáli site; “New Butrús” refers to the City of the Nine Walls, Tirutlèklü, and never the other way around.

Internal politics were varied and most often unstable, and several regimes rotated through power. The Íto clan invaded and put an end to the effete and cultured reign of Tlyo Zrang, whose dynasty (the House of the Ink-Flower, named after a rare ornamental blossom now believed to be extinct) had itself deposed the short-lived Chalcháí dynasty, which claimed descent from an ancient Engsvanyáli royal house. Rival branches of the Ítos then fought amongst themselves and with other contenders for many generations. Repeated insurgences and resurgences of Vimúhlan clans, legions, and monastic centers complicated the picture further. The Black Theocrat, affiliated in a not entirely clear fashion with Ksáru,¹⁶ appeared suddenly and ruled for several glorious, if strange, decades. He was aided in this by his right-hand man, the Flaying General — so-called for his custom of skinning his fallen foes before battle and of peeling the faces off his living captives. On the dim fringes of recorded history, a few tiny polities seem to have taken up the worship of the Goddess of the Pale Bone. A brief timeline is given below for general interest, with relative dates in the modern Tsolyáni calendar.

-881 to -803	Chalcháí dynasty. Its obsession with Engsvanyáli descent spurred a race among regional polities to acquire the trappings of Engsvanyáli legitimacy.
-803 to -399	Ink-Flower dynasty.
-399 to -207	Kingdom of the Two Chákas. A unified, centralized Chákan kingdom under the Íto clan.
-207 to -198	Ink-Flower Restoration. A pretender who held only the city itself; devoted to Avánthe, unusual for a ruler in this area.
-198 to -52	Kingdom of the Two Chákas reestablished control of Butrús.
-52 to 11	Conquest by the city-state of Úrmish ; occupation by military governors.
11 to 175	Council of Brown and Red. An uneasy alliance of clans dedicated to Sáрку and Vimúhla; backed by the Prince of Khéiris. Tentative steps

¹⁶ Perhaps, given his secular ambitions, a member (or rogue member) of the Ndálu Clan?

175 to 182	<p>followed to (re)establish a regional alliance in terms of the ancient Land of the Three Kings.</p> <p>Council of Pure Red. Ignited in part by fighting over identification and employment of the Rod of the King of the Left, an internal coup took place (again with Khéiris' support and direction), following which the aristocratic "Four Red" clans and the temple of Vimúhla ruled — ultimately without the Rod.</p>	284 to 298	<p>settled by humans, creating a significant agricultural hinterland outside the immediate vicinity of Butrús itself for the first time since the middle Engsvanyáli period.</p> <p>Second Council in Red. A Vimúhlan monastic order seized control from squabbling local magnates and the precarious Íto overlords and ruled ineffectually, without support of Vimúhlan clans, mainstream temples, or legions.</p>
182 to 185	<p>Íto restoration, backed by popular (rural) uprisings; a surviving Íto heir then moved south from Do Cháka and assumed control.</p>	298 to 309	<p>Realm for the Rectification of the Living. A sectarian faction based in the Temple of Sárku in Úrmish fled Tsolyánu and staged a coup in Butrús. Brief theocratic control at great cost to populace; headed by the mysterious but highly public "Son of the Vulture".</p>
185 to 255	<p>Warlords of Brrk. Páchi Lei, agitated by recent decades of Mu'ugalavyáni activity in Pan Cháka (though this is likely an anachronism of modern historical interpretation), deposed the Ítos and established a highly regimented oligarchy that attempted to incorporate both human and Páchi Lei settlements, in a regime or social philosophy they called something like "Brrk". They vehemently rejected the archaicistic schema of the Land of Zru'o then prevalent in the region's politics, and ritually defiled the King of the Center (i.e., the Prince of Khéiris). They were eventually defeated by local Íto forces (backed by the distant Tsolyáni emperor Trákonel II) after a decade of fighting. Trákonel's armies withdrew, and no Tsolyáni claim over the region was established at this time.</p>	309 to 311	<p>Íto clan deposed the theocrats, attempted to reestablish control. Envoys from the powerful temple of the City of Sárku were murdered <i>en route</i> just southeast of Tumissa, allegedly by one of many roving gangs of "Úrmishite bandits and parasite heretics".</p>
		311 to 370s	<p>Third Council in Red. Ítos ousted; an oligarchy of Vimúhlan clans in control, with backing of the orthodox priesthood.</p>
		370s to 488	<p>Local Íto lineage applied crippling economic pressure to Red clans and became <i>de facto</i> rulers by 390s, though they avoided formally taking charge until the early 400s.</p>
		488 to 501	<p>Warlords of Brrk. Another Páchi Lei occupation; well-organized and well-led, but lacking in strategic vision and diplomatic capabilities. It had many human supporters and allies, and generally good inter-species relations.</p>
255 to 284	<p>Íto Dominion of the South. Not long after its re-accession, most of the native Íto ruling family was assassinated (262); vicious feuding (bordering on open warfare) with Northern Ítos ensued. Much of the conquered Páchi Lei lands were</p>	501 to 540	<p>The Black Theocrat appeared, and defeated the Warlords, Four</p>

Reds, Ítos, and all other contenders in short order. The Black Theocrat engaged in gigantic public works projects and strange mass mobilizations of the population; forced adoption (or at least participation in) a new religion apparently of his own devising; engineered a considerable disruption of clan-centered society and economy. He conducted war with neighbors on all fronts; his diplomacy was based on shocking acts of blackmail. The Black Theocrat's right-hand man was a Vimúhla-worshipping soldier; between the two of them, this may have been the most successful reconciliation of "the Red and the Black" the Engsvanyáli hoped for so long ago.

540 to 542 Tsolyáni assaults into Pan Cháka ordered by Emperor Horkhúnen; eventually the Black Theocrat was defeated and the region put under brief military rule, while Tsolyáni armies staged raids deeper into Mu'ugalavyá. Later, formal authority in Pan Cháka was turned over to the Ítos.

542 to 781 **Íto Kingdom of the South.** An independent state, but a tributary of the Petal Throne. Cool and wary relations with Northern Ítos, which was exploited and exacerbated by the Tsolyáni government. Failed to hold or control territory of the Páchi Lei and of many human freeholders. Endemic banditry and small-scale warlordism.

779 to 781 Páchi Lei invasions, again supported by outlying human chiefdoms and settlements (except in the north and east); Mu'ugalavyáni "pacification" threatened; final incorporation into Tsolyánu put end to both.

Second Empire

In 779 A.S., a large force of Páchi Lei moved north and east, seizing great swaths of human-occupied territory and threatening Tsolyánu's borders. Many humans in Pan Cháka sided with the Leaf-Eaters and swelled their armies — all sought to overthrow the Íto ruler, though their ultimate goals varied widely. The Prince of Khéiris, joined by the recently established Mu'ugalavyáni government at Ssa'átis, indicated that they, at least, were preparing to take measures to halt the Páchi Lei and return the region to civilized control.

Imperial troops were quickly dispatched to Pan Cháka, technically at the invitation of the Íto king, and in 780 A.S. the First Battle of Butrús took place. Imperial troops struck at the large Páchi Lei army besieging Butrús and won the day largely through the valor of the Legion of Mirkitáni and the Legion of the Lord of Red Devastation, while both the Legion of Potent Destiny and the Legion of Giriktéshmu were defeated and badly mauled. The Southern Íto king gave up his throne (or his backrest, technically) in gratitude, and Pan Cháka was successfully annexed to the Seal Empire in 781, though as a "protectorate" rather than as a province.

From that point on, the Four Red Clans grew steadily in power, and the Ítos were never again able to overpower them, economically or militarily. The Treaty of Pagús in 968 saw the Mu'ugalavyáni formally recognize the Petal Throne's suzerainty over both the Chákas,¹⁷ and spelled the end of overt Mu'ugalavyáni backing for Íto independence — though the Mu'ugalavyáni had supported, and would later support again, a number of "bandit kings" of the Íto line. The most famous of them was Jnéshu Ka Íto in the first decade or so of the tenth century.¹⁸

It took nearly a hundred years of low-level military campaigning after the conquest before the coast could be subjected to even minimal

¹⁷ Do Cháka and Pan Cháka were thenceforth formally designated as "trucial dominions" (*fátlanyal qámsamogun thammi'itle*), though the common term "protectorate" (*hu'uzhán*) won out in normal usage.

¹⁸ The Treaty of Pagús also ruled out recognition by either the Four Palaces or the Petal Throne of Pe Choi independence within Do Cháka, with which they had recently been faced in the form of the "nation" of Etk-mnúikt-ssá.

Tsolyáni administration, and the deep jungle interior remained *terra incognita* until the end of the tenth century, when Emperor Nríga Gaqchiké's theological interest in the Páchi Lei went far towards cementing a sense of allegiance to the Petal Throne. Nevertheless, even such a relatively famous site as Tnothussa of ancient legend remained out of reach of the Empire.

During the Civil War (1010-26 A.S.) Butrús stayed loyal to the nominal emperor, unlike other western cities such as Tumissa and Chéne Ho. However, barely a generation later (1045), the Íto Revolt broke out, in which most branches of the clan united in an attempt to regain independence for the Chákas. Mercenaries from Pijéna, Yan Kor, Ghatón, N'lússa, Mu'ugalavyá, and even Livyánu bolstered the warriors of the Ítos and their vassal clans. In their initial assault on imperial forces in Butrús, they are said to have butchered a thousand officers of the Omnipotent Azure Legion, but the rebellion was quickly and brutally crushed, with large numbers of Íto children taken away and raised by the Empire. Yet Tsolyánu was fragmenting, and not long afterwards (1056-57) Butrús was absorbed by Targholél Nikúma the Usurper, becoming a favored part of his Tumissa-based "empire". His successor Kanmiyel Nikúma III (r. 1062-1074) granted much land to the temples of Vimúhla in Pan Cháka, including generous grants of agricultural properties around Butrús.

In 1155 the Great Storm struck the Five Empires; the Chákas suffered heavy and prolonged flooding, cave-ins of the limestone bedrock, changes in river courses, and great loss of life. The long-abandoned Engsvanyáli City of the Nine Walls (still locally called "New Butrús", to the confusion of many Tsolyáni) was destroyed, and the temples in modern Butrús were particularly badly damaged. Many viewed the Great Storm's Chákan havoc as divine punishment for diabolism (i.e., worship of the Pariah Deities), which according to rumor had been running rampant throughout Butrús — even (or especially) at the highest levels of society. In any case, the so-called Quick Dítlána was performed from 1158 to 1163 to repair the worst of the damage and cleanse the city of baleful influences. Unfortunately, much of the

workmanship proved to be slipshod, and supernatural disfavor seemed unameliorated. Decades of mild drought throughout the protectorate and constant rumbles of volcanic activity in its south — as well as the Summer of Six Earthquakes in 1232, which inflicted further extensive damage upon Butrús — did little to improve matters, and numerous popular religious movements took further hold of Pan Cháka. Some of these may indeed have been in the service of the Pariah Gods. The Five Bushels and Seven Toes Sect (devoted to the dubious Boneless King) had begun growing and spreading in the 900s, and was dismantled and banned by imperial order in the early 1200s; it was definitely suspected of being affiliated with the Pariah Deities, though nothing was conclusively proven. The cult of the Unlighted Germination (q.v.; a peculiar agricultural offshoot of the Ksárulian faith) was founded at the village of Chejálsha, southwest of Butrús, in the 1140s, though it did not number more than a few score adherents until it relocated to northwestern Tsolyánu c. 1230.

Emperor Tariktáme (r. 1251-79 A.S.) and his court took notice of this history, and so besides the Emperor's funding of the lavish construction of an entire complex of twenty temples in earthquake-ruined Butrús, it was arranged that large numbers of metropolitan temple priests and Omnipotent Azure Legion officers be rotated into Pan Cháka with an eye to rooting out these disorders among the populace. This "Gracious Inquisition", as it is commonly known, lasted almost until the turn of the century and seems to have been remarkably successful overall. Only those local cults judged acceptable by the great priesthoods of Pavár's pantheon were allowed to continue, and the chief folk deities and local demigods were incorporated into the Pavárian temples at this time. Wholesome religious festivals from other parts of Tsolyánu were encouraged in Pan Cháka as well. The following two and a half centuries were quiet and peaceful; the only noted events being the foundation of the Legion of Tangled Root Eaters under Hejjéka II, Hejjéka IV's restoration of greater autonomy to the Chákas and authorization of many local political or organizational liberties (which were accepted joyously and gratefully), and the same ruler's subsequent famous 1476 offer of independence

to the Páchi Lei, who refused it loyally, if rather stiffly.¹⁹

In the reign of his successor Metlunél V, however, the Chákas were seized by the Mu'ugalavyáni, who proceeded to hold them for nearly three hundred years (from 1566 to 1842). Large numbers of Mu'ugalavyáni were encouraged to colonize the new province, significantly changing the demographic makeup of Pan Cháka. The Páchi Lei of Butrús were slaughtered or scattered, and populations in the hinterland were also severely repressed by the new rulers, who sought to punish them for the unthinkable offenses committed against the Principate of Khéiris many centuries before. The Páchi Lei urban diaspora, particularly that in northwestern Livyánu, Vra, and Penóm, dates to this period. The Legion of Tangled Root Eaters quickly reformed in the city of Penóm and played an important role in the re-conquest of Do Cháka in 1711 but did not return to Pan Cháka until much later. Unlike the Tsolyáni, the new masters of the Chákas sought to introduce their civilization to all aspects and areas of life — not only political administration, but also city planning, coinage, taxation, weights and measures, land tenure, law, architecture, music, painting, language, literature, clothing, and food. The stamp of Mu'ugalavyáni culture is thus far stronger today than would be expected from the relatively brief occupation of Pan Cháka.

The Red Hat *dítlána* of Butrús (1659-1668, called “the Genuine *Dítlána*” in Mu'ugalavyáni records) was very thorough and orderly, and set the standard for future renovations even after the eventual Tsolyáni re-conquest. In 1700, the ill-fated Legion of the Sable Lord (9th Heavy Infantry), having supported the unsuccessful Vriggétso Dnash (“Usurper of the South”) in the Tsolyáni succession crisis, was disbanded and permanently struck from the army rolls. Some of these Hrū'ü-worshipping soldiers and officers fled with their families to Mu'ugalavyáni-ruled

Butrús, where they settled mostly as middle-class urban professionals and eventually evolved into a clan of their own. When Tsolyánu recovered the protectorate a few generations later, they were overlooked.

The re-conquest of Pan Cháka in 1842 was planned and spearheaded by Páchi Lei in the Seal Empress's service, though human legions played essential roles — particularly the Givers of Sorrow, but also the Sweet Singers of Nakomé, as well as the Legions of Sérqu, Chegárra, and Giriktéshmu. The contribution of legions other than the Givers of Sorrow and the Tangled Root Eaters tends to be slighted in Pan Chákan popular consciousness, while the relative importance between those two is bitterly contested. The siege and battle at Butrús were fiercely fought and severely depleted the Tsolyáni forces, but the Red Hats — preoccupied with a fiscal crisis and power struggles at home for nearly two decades leading up to this — made little attempt to hold Pan Cháka after their initial defeat at Butrús. In short order they negotiated a peace with Tsolyánu and quickly withdrew their forces across the old Pan Chákan border.

While thousands of Mu'ugalavyáni settlers were forced out of their homes in Pan Cháka and made to relocate back to Mu'ugalavyá proper, many more managed to stay on than is generally acknowledged. There was not the same influx of Tsolyáni settlers into Pan Cháka as there had been when Do Cháka was retaken, but the existing population became fierce enthusiasts for Tsolyáni civilization in the first few decades after the re-conquest. While this slowly faded, it had its lasting effects, and Pan Cháka has probably never been so integrated into the Tsolyáni mainstream than during the last few centuries. It was this openness to cultural influences from the east that allowed Empress Aléya (r. 1872-1931) to have as much success as she did with her missionizing of Páchi Lei for the deities of Stability (particularly in and around Butrús itself). Resultant religious turmoil within the Páchi Lei communities reached such a peak that in the reign of her successor, Ninué Jalésa (r. 1931-58), the persecuted new converts petitioned for and were granted permission to form their own military legion — for their own defense as well as that of the

¹⁹ It should be noted that this was an offer of independence from the tributary relationship that the Páchi Lei of the southern highlands had entered into with the Petal Throne. They were in no sense directly ruled by Tsolyánu in those days (or even today, for that matter). “Urban” Páchi Lei, dwelling closer to and among humans, were particularly set against such “independence” for all Páchi Lei, which would have in a stroke rendered them foreigners and aliens, subject to severe restrictions.

Empire. This gesture of recognition and favor by Petal Throne, perhaps more than the actual military might of the new legion, put an end to the overt disturbances and local-level outbreaks of violence that had been plaguing Pan Cháka wherever Páchi Lei met.

Neglected for decades by long-reigning Emperor Neshkirúma, both of the Chákas were left poorly defended when their chief legions were called away upon his death in 2015 — the Tangled Root Eaters were transferred to support Prince Jaredayu in the succession crisis, and then sent all over the western empire for the early years of Emperor Gyésmu's reign. At the outbreak of the Great War of 2020,²⁰ the archers of the Legion of Giriktéshmu were immediately dispatched north to Do Cháka. But Pan Cháka was the first region to fall, when the Governor betrayed the few remaining defending troops and surrendered Butrús intact to the Red Hats after only a few days' siege. The Legion of the Givers of Sorrow held out in the old citadel until they were wiped out. The following year Pan Cháka was retaken by Tsolyánu and its traditional boundaries reestablished.

The Second Íto Rebellion took place in 2045 A.S., on the millenary anniversary of the first, this time secretly supported by the Mu'ugalavyáni. Páchi Lei troops (along with human forces such as the Legion of the Golden Sunburst) took part in its suppression, and were ultimately successful in hunting down the leadership and key supply camps in the Chákan jungles. While the First Íto Revolt featured extensive conventional warfare (*qadárdàli*) and ritual battle (*qadární*), the Second Revolt was defined by prolonged guerilla fighting. Also unlike the previous rebellion, it was primarily based in Do Cháka where the Íto clan and its clients and the faith of the Lord of Worms were strongest, but fighting did spill south as the conflict progressed. In some respects it was even more fiercely fought in Pan Cháka, perhaps because of the more complicated web of political, localist, religious, ethnic, and "speciesist" interests there. The last guerilla fighters did not give up until well into the 2060s; economic recovery in affected areas took several generations, and the social and cultural effects

of this bitter and lengthy conflict remain evident in many isolated places even today.

Recent History

The last two centuries have been fairly eventful in and around Butrús; a brief chronology follows.

- 2111 A fire spreads through the city over the course of several days, exacerbated by the disorganized response, lack of resources and manpower to fight the blaze, and political opportunism of the elites and wealthy clans. In the end, over a third of the city's buildings are destroyed and nearly three quarters of the population flee the city; as many as five thousand people die. A vast cloud of smoke from the fires blankets the entire city for days and can be seen as far away as Tumíssa. In its wake, the old Mu'ugalavyáni practice of semiprofessional "fire brigades" in each neighborhood is re-instituted.
- 2145-50s Repairs to the city have stagnated, and completed renovations prove unsatisfactory; the possibility of *dítlána* is raised with Avanthár and eventually approved.
- 2159 Reworking of the Lúshmun Canal begins, with the goal of permitting grain barges from central Tsolyánu to reach Butrús directly.
- 2166-79 *Dítlána* is performed for the first time since the mid-1600s. While it goes smoothly enough and all but a tiny minority are highly supportive of the radical new design and grand scope of the city, by the end of the project recriminations break out and secret deals are exposed, revealing both the extent to which the city plan had been overextended and the scale of the priesthood of Thúmis's domination over the entire operation.
- 2191 The revised Lúshmun Canal project is finally cancelled after decades of technical and managerial problems. The decision (by Avanthár) to

²⁰ Which, of course, actually started in 2018w A.S.

	disband the project effectively marks the abandonment of the grandiose plans for Butrús that had been entertained earlier in the century.		
2203	During the ritual battle fought in the Grand Plaza every forty years (the "Chastisement of Birds and Correction of Flowers", q.v.), thieves take advantage of the din and chaos and loot the Temple of Thúmis. Some items are recovered, along with petty thugs and ruffians who are unable to reveal the identity of their ringleaders even under thorough questioning. Many missing relics and valuables have never been seen again even today, despite continuing interest and inquires by the priests of Thúmis.	2215-18	The imperial government intercedes to enforce the Concordat, but not before considerable blood is shed. The Governor of Pan Cháka funds an expedition to locate a group of giant statues reported to exist at an Engsvanyáli ruin in the north-central jungles, with the intent of bringing a set back to be installed in the new walls of Butrús. While the site is found, efforts to haul the huge figures back do not entirely succeed — only one (the smallest) is dragged back, at great expense, another abandoned half-way through the jungle, and the location of the others is lost when the secretive expedition is wiped out in an ambush by unknown foes.
2204	A plague strikes eastern and northern Pan Cháka and spreads through Butrús. The epidemic — of a disease informally dubbed "the puking croup" in the southwest — is so serious that the Governor (a notorious hypochondriac) and his court retreat to the old citadel and seal themselves within. Communicating only through coded bells and signal flags, fairly effective rule is maintained over the protectorate in this manner until 2221, when a special delegation from Avanthár persuades the Governor to open the gates and return to the public — some ten years after the plague had completely abated.	2228	"War of the Tsuru'úm". Beginning in late summer, malign intelligences appear in the under-city — Ssu, it is said — and begin raiding the surface, primarily bent on vandalism and kidnapping. Entering through basements at first, entire households disappear overnight from within bolted gates. Soon they grow bolder, and nighttime street battles break out with the City Guard. The Governor calls upon the garrison legions to assist in sweeping the sewers and accessible tunnels; a cohort of sappers is sent to aid in blocking up suspicious fissures and passages. The intruders disappear after these measures are taken; but over the course of that fall and winter, nearly six thousand citizens disappeared.
2211	An attack upon apparent tomb-robbers by guards of the Temple of Ksárul sparks a brief but all-out temple war, after it is discovered the "tomb-robbers" were actually the Tomb Police, pursuing suspected malefactors — who in turn are eventually revealed to be agents of a secret society dedicated to the god Thúmis. Forces from the temples of Belkhánu, Sárku, Dlamélísh, and Vimúhla (and their cohorts) also become involved in armed clashes in and under the city.	2240	Emperor Arshú'u restores the Legion of the Givers of Sorrow in a huge ceremony at Butrús. Subsequent <i>qadárniyal</i> are successful and produce a large enough crop of sacrifices to soon establish the legion's new skull-rack in the Temple of Chiténg.
		2248-49	Sewer workers and priests visiting buried shrines report the blocked shafts and sealed passages from the War of the Tsuru'úm have been disturbed, suggesting a return of

	the underworld invaders. The newly re-formed Legion of the Givers of Sorrow attempts to scour the entire under-city and simultaneously constructs large ceremonial pyres at their barracks and temples. The high autumn winds spread the flames, and in the unusually dry weather portions of the city are set alight. The fact that there is no further sign of subterranean transgressors is pointed to by supporters of the Flame Lord and the Givers of Sorrow as proof of the intercessory efficacy of the fire.		dwelling in a disused cistern under the palace grounds. While the creature is soon dispatched, nothing definite can be determined of its origins or intent; so rumors fly in the politically divided world of the Pan Chákan ruling class. The Ítos, the Ndálu Clan and the Refulgent Blue Curtain Society, the Temple of Karakán, a faction of the Court of Purple Robes in Avanthár, the Legion of the Mourners in Sable, and the Livyáni are all among the merely <i>human</i> forces rumored to be behind the deed. It is never determined exactly how long the creature had been controlling the two officials' minds.
2253-72	A slave rebellion breaks out, largely comprised of bearers and porters but soon spreading to other groups of non-agricultural laborers in the protectorate (e.g., miners, loggers). The revolt is remarkably successful and long-lived, in part thanks to good luck and good strategy on the part of the rebels, but also due to the remoteness of many affected regions, the disinterest of the frontier farming communities of western Pan Cháka in the business of "big industry" and "foreign traders", and an ongoing investigation into financial improprieties on the part of many of the affected clan-owned enterprises. In fact, after the initial alarm, it appears that the Pan Chákan government is more concerned with prosecuting and punishing a number of major state contractors for fraud and embezzlement than with quelling the revolt of their slave workforce. In the end the revolt gradually peters out: After a few ringleaders are eventually captured and executed the pursuit is effectively called off and the scattered escapees ignored, who fade into obscure humble lives or leave the region entirely.	2283	The "Chastisement of Birds and Correction of Flowers" gets out of control in unforeseen ways; one wing of the Flowers retreat to the Citadel (leaving the ritual battleground) and are pursued by many of the Birds, who proceed to besiege and partially "sack" it — both sides consciously reenacting elements of the "last stand" of the Givers of Sorrow in 2020 A.S. and also their earlier capture of the Mu'ugalvyáni headquarters in 1842. The City Militia as well as the <i>sákbe</i> road patrols and even the Tomb Police are called upon to restore order. Casualties from the battle itself are unusually great, brawling and illegal duels follow, and internal strife and dissension among garrison troops remain high for months or even years afterward.
2276	It is discovered, purely by accident, that the head of the Palace of the Realm as well as the Governor have been under the psychic domination of a strange tentacled monster	2291	There is a rain of frogs in Butrús and its environs late in the year (Lésdrim 12-13th), followed by a similar deluge of sea-crabs nine days later. No explanation has ever been settled upon, though the religious significance, particularly of the first fall, has been intensely debated. (See <i>Religion</i> , below, for more information on the role of frogs in local theology.)
		2320	A peasant revolt breaks out in the eastern prefectures of Pan Cháka; it

spreads rapidly into neighboring provinces but finds little support west of the Turín. Local troops soon succeed in crushing the rebellion; both legion garrisons and elements of the provincial militia are involved. The taste for pillage, looting, and arson of the western “backwoods” militia battalions called up surprises the commanders in Butrús, the rebels, and the hapless bystanders and townsmen of the eastern lowlands.

2323 The most recent “Chastisement of Birds and Correction of Flowers” is properly observed and free of unseemly incidents.

2329 Thousand-year anniversary of the founding of the Legion of Tangled Root Eaters; celebrated with city-wide festivities, marred only by frequent scuffles and small-scale mob violence with supporters of the Givers of Sorrow.

2332 An infestation of small, mite-like insects spreads out from the southern Chákan jungles and plagues the urban and densely populated agricultural areas of Pan Cháka all through the spring and summer. While the little biting insects are not a real threat to humans (their bites are itchy, bloody, but non-poisonous and undiseased) the economic damage is great. A quarantine is quickly thrown up around the protectorate to keep the infestation from spreading (at least along the *sákbēs*) to Tumissa or Urmish. Several fruit crops are completely ruined and many thousands of farm animals are driven mad and must be destroyed. There are many outbreaks of violence against Páchi Lei, who are blamed for the swarms. The pests simply disappear in the cooler weather later in the year, and have not reappeared since. Strict border controls and inspections of fruit and produce in particular continue for twenty years, which is a bane to merchants and

something of a mixed blessing to smugglers.

2339 A huge apparition appears in the skies over Butrús; it is roughly shaped like a wingless and bulbous “dragon”, slow-moving and silent; whether it is a beast or a machine is still a matter of debate in the city. When a human wizard descends from it, seeking provisions and vast quantities of strange chemicals and alchemical ingredients, the city goes into a minor uproar. The slightly foreign-accented wizard — who lets it be known he is called Turshánmü, but not *the* Turshánmü — is cautiously feted by local notables for several days, during which the great silent “dragon” hovers over the city. Little can be learned from the wizard, other than hints that he may dwell in the high mountains of southernmost Pan Cháka, and that he and his “carriage” are en route to the North Pole. They depart within two weeks, before the central government can be apprised, and — according to many gossips and harassed mothers in years to come — carrying off any number of disobedient or naughty little children. The giant flying beast is soon thereafter spotted gliding over the jungles of northern Pan Cháka, but has not been seen since.

2345 The new Governor, having been appraised of the activities of the Great Brotherhood of the Hand of Ink-Stained Knuckles in Hiding (q.v.) in the late 2330s, determined to stamp them out. He began a campaign of persecution and investigation that drove them into the *tsuru’üm* — which proved an impenetrable refuge. In 2344, over the objections of many of his advisors, the Metropolitan Prefect, and even the Temple of Chiténg, the Governor orders the storm drains and sewers stuffed with fuels and set alight, in order to drive the Brotherhood above ground or simply smother them. This results in many

- small fires spreading aboveground into houses, buildings, and wasteland plots in separate parts of the city simultaneously, overwhelming the various wards' fire brigades. In remote and undeveloped areas of the city, smoke damage can still be seen today, though the rest of the city has since been scrubbed clean. In the end, many of the Brotherhood's members escape from the choking drain system and are in fact credited with helping to turn the tide in the fight against the spreading fires. The Governor is dismissed from office the following year and forcibly retired to his villa in the countryside, where he commits suicide in 2351.
- 2346-47 Large-scale Mu'ugalavyáni raids, perhaps preparatory to a planned full invasion. They are routed by General Kéttukal and the Legion of Mirkitáni at the Second Battle of Butrús, early in 2347.
- 2360 The present day.

ECONOMY

Pan Cháka is generally a prosperous region of the empire. The easternmost part of the protectorate is lush, irrigated cropland that produces bountiful grain harvests. Along the river and up the long slope of its western banks one more often finds gardening of vegetables and fruit, as well as vineyards and orchards. The edges of the forest covering the central plateau are used for ranching the great *tsi'll* beasts, and where groundwater pools up on the surface or can be reached through wells or deep-cut ravines, irrigated agriculture is practiced. The deeper jungles to the west, and areas without surface water, are home to many slash-and-burn horticulturalists (mostly subsistence farmers, relying on rainfall and cycling through several traditional village locations as the soil is exhausted every ten to fifteen years) and to harvesters of forest products — aromatic gums and resins, medicines and spices, raw lacquer, timber, bark, *vringálu* leather, flame opals, sun-

bleached white beeswax, colorful feathers, and so forth.

The region produces medicinally valuable mineral waters collected from dripping caverns and springs; a fine talc or steatite is found near Dzi'an Village and also used in medicine, while in a few places quantities of high-grade marble and limestone are quarried for decorative building purposes. There is a fairly large azurite mine on the rugged coast, tended and supplied by sea. Only the relative purity of its copper-bearing ore makes this enterprise economically feasible for its concessionaires of the White Crystal clan. Deposits of cassiterite in the lower-lying alluvial southeast produce small quantities of tin. The ancient hematite pits of Pan Cháka (located some hundred *tsan* southwest of Butrús) have been in decline for generations, however. Today they yield scarcely any iron ore to speak of, and the great smelters and their supporting villages are becoming ghost towns. More productive and significant, however, are the seemingly endless deposits of quicksilver and cinnabar (mercury sulfide) in several regions within the protectorate. Cinnabar, along with minium, is used for red pigment by painters (a black form of mercuric sulfide is also used as a paint) and in potters' glazes, while quicksilver has many industrial applications. Small quantities of mercuric chloride are also produced, a valuable insecticide and fungicide; it is called "castrated niter" by alchemists and chemical dealers.

There are still many lodes of silver- and lead-bearing ore in the protectorate, though individually none of them are large. There are probably a half-dozen refineries producing some 120-180 *pse* (160-240 kg) of silver annually, through a process of cupellation of galena (lead oxide), at a rate of one or two parts silver to nearly four hundred parts lead. There is a fair amount of silverworking in the protectorate itself, but in fact the bulk of its silver is exported as bullion to jewelers and artisans elsewhere in Tsolyánu. One of the chief exceptions is in the local mirror industry, using silver (or silver-gilt) foil placed over cast bronze forms. (In addition, Butrusséne artisans manufacture the new-fangled Mu'ugalavyáni-style mirrors out of "white copper", an alloy of copper and nickel that is otherwise used extensively for

arrowheads). The old alchemical traditions of Pan Cháka have produced several special forms of silver which are valuable commodities: a paste called "silver tallow" (an amalgam of silver and tin with mercury, used as a tonic); the "yellow silver" used in apotropaic talismans; and "black silver" or niello, made by fumigation with sulfur, in vessels of which drugs of immortality may be brewed. The jewelers of the Chákas also hold the secret of "purple gold" (a rosy-purple film left on gold due to heating it with traces of iron), and it is believed that the art of making it originated in Butrús. Lead itself, while not very valuable, is also exported to western and southwestern Tsolyánu in the form of ballast in barges.

In addition, Pan Cháka produces Epsom salts (hydrous magnesium sulfate, called "spiky niter" in the trade cant, distilled from impure mirabilite; it is valued as a purgative and a very pure reagent) and niter ("niter of Hnálla"; potassium nitrate, especially important for pyrotechnics and metallurgical fluxing). Around the volcanic fumaroles in the deep south, sulfur and sal ammoniac (ammonium chloride) are gathered — by the "wild" Páchi Lei, who trade it through middlemen to the chemical dealers of Butrús and through them, to Tsolyánu. Cups are carved out of sulfur ("fluid yellow"), said to help prolong the life of those who drink from them; sulfur is also considered good medicine for skin diseases. While yellow lead (massicot) is produced in Pan Cháka and used as a fairly harmless cosmetic, the similarly hued orpiment (arsenic trisulphide) is also extracted and exported in quantity. Though orpiment is useful to painters, dyers, and tanners, it may also be used to substitute for massicot as makeup, which can injure the skin. Orpiment is called "hen's yellow" in trade cant because it is often found associated with realgar, known as "cock's yellow" (itself a soft orange ore of arsenic sulfide mostly used in tanning, painting, and fireworks), and is known to the alchemists by a number of esoteric names — "blood of the divine lady," "blood of the yellow *feshénga*," or "sperm of gold" — and is exported from Pan Cháka to practitioners of alchemy throughout the Five Empires. The heavy tooth-shaped crystals of litharge (lead oxide) are another product of Pan Cháka found in apothecaries' shops across Tsolyánu.

Jadeite and nephrite are highly prized in the Chákas. They are considered to be crystallized light from the planets: Ülétl for yellow and brown jades, Gayél for green ones. Since Bednálljan times jade has been the gemstone of rulership and governance, symbolizing the virtues of upright conduct and benevolence. (The rarer white jade, however, stands simply for feminine physical beauty.) Traditional cuts are rectangular, and yellow-brown colors are the most favored in Pan Cháka. The Ítos, in particular, are fond of such pieces. Famous jades of antiquity, still treasured by latter-day heirs and collectors, include large carved astronomical disks and tablets of accession; possession of some jades — the Rod of the King of the Left, for example — can change the fate of empires. Jade is also preferred for funerary plugs for the elite.²¹

Pan Chákan finished goods of note include *mash* brandy and some other liquors, carved and finished wooden items and furniture, rope and cordage, incense, perfumes, medicines, and spices, lacquerware, paper, printed fabrics, and trained birds and animals. Nests of yellow citrus ants are produced in excess of local need and exported to citrus-growers throughout Tsolyánu and Mu'ugalavyá; while not as good as the ants of Vra, they are still valued for their ability to control the population of red scale insects that can infest the orchards.

Hlanupén Village, in the farthest southeast corner of the protectorate, is almost entirely devoted to the manufacture of soft toilet tissues, using rice straw from the surrounding agricultural lands; these papers, in several grades, are sold widely across the empire, with the highest qualities in great demand among Jakálla and Bey Sü's elites.

The local style of pottery — large, flat, gently-sloping plates and dishes, spherical, handle-less cups and mugs (some with built-in drinking straws) and tall, conical, long-spouted pitchers, all with smooth surfaces and nothing in the way of relief or carved decoration — is made with a fairly coarse red clay, slipped in a pale ash-tan

²¹ Stoppers or plugs inserted into the body's orifices to keep internal organs and liquids from escaping after burial.

and decorated austere with matte black and dark russet geometrical trim and stylized animals, birds, fish, and people. It was once very fashionable in metropolitan Tsolyánu and exported in large quantities, but is now considered provincial and *déclassé*. Small quantities are still shipped to Livyánu and to Salarvyá. Genuine porcelain is made only on the Mu'ugalavyáni side of the border; despite claims to the contrary the art was never introduced to Pan Cháka nor are the raw materials found there, and buyers should beware of the faked porcelains (sometimes fairly convincing) that unscrupulous locals may try to pass off on them. Kaolin is indeed imported from Mu'ugalavyá, but its role in the production of porcelain is unknown — in Tsolyánu, it is known only as a cure for diarrhea.

Trade and Commerce

A great trade route passes through the protectorate, linking Tumíssa to Úrmish. As Tumíssa is a major entrepôt for goods from Mu'ugalavyá, Do Cháka, northwest Tsolyánu, and the far north, and as Úrmish handles both overland trade from the great central cities of southern Tsolyánu and the seaborne trade up from Penóm, a very considerable amount of cargo passes through Butrús. Compared to this vast flow, the amount Pan Cháka itself contributes and consumes is a trickle. Great merchant caravans pass through Butrús in all but the height of the monsoon season and the peak of the summer heat.

Smaller trade routes within the protectorate lead through the jungles to the rugged, rocky, almost beachless coast, where scattered villages (of wild and exiled tribesmen, human frontiersmen, and some Páchi Lei) support themselves precariously by fishing and exporting precious shells and coral overland to Butrús. These labyrinthine cliff-lined shores are the source of other prized luxury goods, obtained solely through the hands of the gypsy-like Kóitlan, or "Water People": "night-shining pearls" (actually the bioluminescent eyes of certain marine creatures) and "ocean silk", or byssus (a golden-brown or dull cinnamon-colored cloth produced from the pinna mussel). They also sometimes can provide — at astronomical costs — a very

precious pink-tinted white gauze that is impervious to fire.

Heavy taxes on metal ingots and metalwork, certain classes of pottery and finished fabrics, many industrial chemicals, the famous flame opals, and — perhaps most onerous to the middle classes — *ngálu* wine, are all imposed upon Pan Cháka by Avanthár for reasons not always clear. Trade in some goods (flame opals, most prominently) requires purchase of a special license, further increasing costs. Given this, the differences in tariffs and government-set prices between the protectorate and its neighbors, and the porous frontier, smuggling is naturally rampant.

Money, Prices, and Taxation

While Tsolyáni currency is naturally the official standard, there are large quantities of Mu'ugalavyáni small coinage in circulation, particularly in Butrús itself and along the *sákbe* roads. Most merchants and tradesmen will accept a copper *qúra* as the equivalent of six *qirgál* without complaint or discount — as long as no Tsolyáni officials are watching.

While the monetary economy is strong, there is often some shortage of coinage, particularly outside the city of Butrús and the half-dozen or so major prefectural towns. This is in part due to the lack of an Imperial Mint in the protectorate. In rural areas older units of exchange or simple barter are still common and sometimes preferred even when coins are available. Bars of salt, bolts of *güdrü* cloth, two or three types of cowry shell, and small, roughly cast silver ingots (known as "biscuits" in local parlance) are widely used as alternative mediums of exchange. Because of them, Pan Cháka has not experienced as great an inflation in the value of gold coinage as would otherwise be expected.

A significant amount of food for the city of Butrús must be shipped or hauled from considerable distances, a portion of it even from neighboring Turúnkai and Urudái provinces. Because of this, prices for foodstuffs are comparatively high for a city of its size and location, about one-third more than the norm — on par with a major metropolis like Bey Sü or Jakálla, easily as expensive as nearby Tumíssa.

The government of the protectorate monitors the price of grains and other staples, maintains its own granaries, and intervenes in the market (by selling off its stock) to keep prices below certain levels. This is, obviously, extremely unpopular with the grain merchants of central Tsolyánu, but has been defended by the provincial governments and Avanthár as being necessary for Butrús to remain habitable to the lower yet indispensable orders of society.

The expense of staple foods for city residents is only partially compensated by the very low cost of real estate in the city — about 15-25% below the usual range for a city of its size. The government has fairly effectively blocked the attempts of outside real estate speculators or “developers” to buy up land in the city by charging a stiff tax on land and buildings not physically occupied by their owner or an immediate relative, and a yet higher rate on those that are entirely unoccupied (one-fifth of assessed value per annum in the latter case). The Foreigners’ Quarter is exempt from this regulation, and relatively large amounts of it are owned by Butrusáni investors with low standards.

This has had the not entirely foreseen effect that even the relatively poor, lower-class inhabitants of the city will most often own their own dwellings and shops — it is simply unprofitable to be a landlord for the lower end of society, and with a few decades or even mere years of saving, a family group can afford to buy up an existing structure or purchase an undeveloped lot from the city offices. The same regulations and tax codes lead to temporarily disused buildings being simply abandoned, if they cannot be sold off — it is too expensive to keep them unoccupied.²² These constraints have also led to some peculiar legal formalities for members of the upper classes who wish to rent a villa or mansion in the city for a brief period.

MATERIAL CULTURE

²² This in particular has become a standard source of bribes for city officials who must certify the building as being abandoned and ownership negated, lest taxes continue to accrue to the former owner.

Pan Cháka and the city of Butrús have been home to many famous objects and artifacts of ritual significance or crudely “magical” powers — the Rod of the King of the Left, the Hell Cup, the Comfortable Kiosk, the Lens of Surprising Depth, the Ghost Lutes and the Running Bells, the Brush of Lies, the Unseen Lash, the Labret of the Five Tongues, the Three Rings of Curial Sobriety and the Four Rings of Bodily Purity, the Five-Ringed Jewel of the Dispassionate Lord, several different important ceremonial masks, a number of ancient “vizier’s wands”, and so forth. Alas, this section will deal only with mundane and common objects, known to all.

Clothing

The well-dressed Pan Chákan woman will wear a *sünk^{hi}*, or poncho-like tunic, of *dáichu* bark cloth (less frequently of linen-like *firyá*), calf-length and open at the sides, with a belt around the waist into which the clan colors are plaited. Open, decorative lacing up the sides of the garment is at the moment becoming a fashion among the upper-middle and upper classes of the city of Butrús. Men wear a kilt not markedly different in cut from elsewhere in Tsolyánu. The Mu’ugalavyáni short kilt, extending only to mid-thigh, is the target of particular ridicule in Pan Cháka despite the normally close relationship with Mu’ugalavyáni culture. At least among the artisan and merchant clans in Butrús and the major prefectural towns, the preferred color for the cloth itself is tan or off-white for casual, daily, or household wear, and indigo for public or formal wear — almost regardless of sex, age, clan membership or religious affiliation. The chief exception is that among the clans and lineages traditionally worshipping Vimúhla and Karakán, men’s kilts are ideally solid red, though women’s ponchos may be of any color.²³ Despite the low cost of bark cloth in Pan Cháka, many of the poor and rural inhabitants make cloth from bamboo or banana fibers, which is often more readily available (as a byproduct of subsistence agriculture) and even cheaper.

Headgear is highly diverse: turbans in the western Tsolyáni manner, basketcaps with cloth coils (a generally Chákan style, mostly now seen

²³ Note that this does not reflect the religious affiliation of the individual wearer, or even his or her family, but only of their clanhouse or lineage.

in Do Cháka), and the headcloths or fillets common to central Tsolyánu and Mu'ugalavyá. One even sees the *chlen*-hide skullcaps of Pijenáni immigrants on the streets of Butrús, and the great braided and pinned “wheels” of hair of their bareheaded womenfolk. Generally, turbans are a marker of the professional or urban classes, headcloths of recent immigrants and outsiders, and the coifed caps a token of rural origin or old, old Chákan bloodlines. Over the last five hundred years or so, a fashion for wearing an open-topped type of turban, wrapping the sides of the head in a thick coil but leaving the top bare, has grown to be a style that distinguishes an assertively Butrusséne identity. Bark sandals are the most common footwear, and given their cheapness in the protectorate, peasants and even slaves are likely to be shod — if not in proper bark, at least in plaited banana leaves, to maintain their dignity. Outsiders may find their pride in footwear humorous at best, pretentious at worst.

Women wear their hair long (hip-length, if possible), in a single braid with pins and clips, after the common Mu'ugalavyáni style. For men, the “Prince Valiant” style of straight, trimmed bangs, nape-length in back, that is so closely associated with the Chákas is not, in fact, quite universal. An equally common alternative for men is to shave the sides of their heads, not entirely like the Mu'ugalavyáni, but to crop it short on the sides and let it grow out long at the very top and in the back.²⁴ This is mostly the done by members of clans or families that favor the deities of Change (except Sárku); however, one cannot rely on this hairstyle to determine the clan, religious, or sub-regional affiliation of a man of Pan Cháka. In the hinterlands and tribal territories — and many rural settlements where Vimúhla and Chiténg are worshipped — adults wash their hair with a mixture of limewater and charred *hma*-dung, which leaches it to a vivid red color. Among such rural people, women cut their hair extremely short until they are married, after which they will not be bothered by the salacious wicked spirits who would otherwise be attracted by their long tresses and become tangled up in them. Such practices as these last two are disdained by civilized Tsolyáni and even by natives of Butrús, but are so widespread in

Pan Cháka that they are commonly seen in the city, among servants and laborers drawn from the countryside. Some of the urbane and sophisticated people in fact dye their hair with indigo to make it even darker and shinier.

Men in some backwoods communities are given to using dyes or paints on the skin of the face and upper arms — adult (married) men black, and elders and priests blue; travelers and traders who leave their villages dye their feet black with a mixture of gum and ash as well. Women are not permitted this. These practices are most common among followers of Ksáruł and associated deities, but many dedicated to Belkhánu and Avánthe follow the custom as well. Many rural devotees of Vimúhla and Chiténg, on the other hand, tattoo their faces with symbols of the Flame, using a caustic dye that usually produces scarring and keloid ridges. Urban residents do not practice this and consider it irredeemably rustic and crude — albeit pious. The ancient Pan Chákan practice of dyeing the teeth and lips by chewing a certain type of insect is a well-established literary trope, but seems to have been on the wane since before the days of the Black Theocrat, and was no longer seen anywhere in Pan Cháka by the time of the Mu'ugalavyáni occupation.²⁵ Today, the people of the Chákas chew a mixture of cloves and a type of tree gum, in order to freshen the breath; this is said to have been introduced by the god Tírekshen in the quiet years between the Gracious Inquisition and the Mu'ugalavyáni conquest.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that in the older stratum of the Pan Chákan population, whether tribals or conservative urban families, it is the custom that wearing a white scarf, turban, or headband is a privilege reserved for warriors who have taken a foe's head in combat. Those who wear such adornments without having “earned the right” (in local eyes, of course) are often subject to much prejudice, and in backwoods regions, open hostility.

²⁴ A sort of ungainly cross between a mullet and a mohawk.

²⁵ Apparently the wealthy and high-born of the Mu'ugalavyáni city of Pagús still habitually dye their teeth red, but it is not clear whether this is a survival of some macro-regional custom or a conscious archaicism. The southern coast of Mu'ugalavyá, including the city of Khéiris, also had this custom at least until late Engsvanyáli times.

Domestic Furnishings

Thanks to the vast and fast-growing jungles of the protectorate, wood and charcoal are always available and cheap compared to the rest of Tsolyánu, and thus freely used for cooking, heating, lighting, building, and craftwork. Lantern-covers made of colored paper are popular, despite the fire hazard; fireflies and luminescent insects are often kept in cages of milky gauze as a safer, if far dimmer, source of lighting. Incense is cheap and readily available even to the poor (albeit in lower grades of quality). A type of clock that burns powdered incense along a graduated track or groove (taking many fanciful forms) is a local specialty. These are considered exotic in Tsolyánu, but are commonly used in Mu'ugalavyá, too.

Wood is commonly used for intricate marquetry and parquet flooring; internal walls are often faced with mosaics and murals of polished or lacquered wooden pieces, while external walls are more often decorated with stucco bas-reliefs. Because of the humid rainy season and attendant mildews, carpets and tapestries need to be replaced or carefully restored every year. They thus tend to be of cheaper and more utilitarian make than elsewhere, and fancy ones less common. Wall hangings in particular are unpopular, not only because of the mildew (and insect life) but also because local feeling is that they make rooms “stuffy” and “dull”. Floor mats, whether for carpeting or seating, are usually made from bark, while coarser grades of the more familiar *firyá* cloth are reserved for bedding and pillows (the latter stuffed with cotton-like kapok from the *ebzá*, or ceiba, tree).

Generally speaking, the Pan Chákan taste in interior decoration is sparse and simple: rooms cluttered with furniture, or overly large pieces of furniture at all, are considered “heavy” and “messy”, and open, spacious rooms are much preferred. (“You want to be able to see a lot of *floor*”, is an oft-heard phrase in setting up a household.) Plaited and lacquered or painted rattan and bamboo furnish homes with boxes, large baskets, backrests, low tables, stools, and all sorts of lightweight, cool furniture. The same materials are also used to make long low couches that are only used outdoors. The Butrusséne say that it is undignified to sit on chairs or couches inside one's house, but these

chaises longues are pleasantly cool and light elsewhere — verandas, rooftops, courtyards, gardens, and so forth. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the Páchi Lei style of solid, heavy, intricately carved wooden chests, low tables, cupboards, and wardrobes has spread to the human inhabitants, at least in Butrús and in settlements with Páchi Lei populations or contacts. (Their huge carved sleeping chairs have not, though!) Unless they are collectors, humans of Pan Cháka tend not to acquire the beaded basketry of the Páchi Lei that are so popular in Tsolyánu, but are happy to participate in the thriving export business that sells them abroad — particularly overseas.

Pets are fairly common — caged songbirds being the most popular, followed by goldfish of many varieties (kept in large clay basins and rarer glass bowls), crickets and other singing insects, and also cats. Dogs are more popular pets in rural villages than in the city, though they are still common everywhere. The *thelúha* is uncommon by comparison, but favored by families with problems with venomous pests (or enemies). Nesting birds, bats, and wall-frogs are tolerated co-domestics, appreciated for their ability to keep down the insect population.

INHABITANTS AND POPULATION

It may be worth mentioning at this juncture that the natives of Butrús call themselves not *Butrusáni*, as proper Tsolyáni-speakers would expect, but *Butrusséne*, in their local vernacular. The latter term is used throughout this gazetteer.

The city of Butrús is both overpopulated and underpopulated: overpopulated, in that more people live in it than can be supported by the immediate hinterland; underpopulated in that the present city was laid out to accommodate many more residents than actually live in it. The design and failure of the Lúshmun Canal is largely responsible for both situations. The plan, which originated in Avanthár, was to build up Butrús into a major city on the southwestern frontier, a center of Tsolyáni culture and imperial power. It was on this basis that the city was rebuilt after the last *dítlána*, under the

assumption that the canal system would soon be functional and allow a large urban population to be supplied with imported grain. With the engineering and management problems the canal works suffered even before its abandonment, the city never grew to its intended size of 250,000 residents within the walls. Only about 135,000 actually inhabit the city, according to records from the 2320s.

Looking at a map of the protectorate, the densest settlement is to be found in the northeast quadrant, the areas east of the Turin River. The environs of Butrús, on the tableland west of the river, are fairly heavily populated too. The borders of Pan Cháka stretch within sight of the walls of Tumíssa itself; that city is truly a headland of Tsolyáni civilization jutting into the half-alien, half-wilderness lands of the Chákas. There is also a strip of relatively settled lands hacked out of the jungle along the *sákbe* between Tumíssa and Khéiris, mainly to its south; this strip — or perhaps more properly, a chain of settled areas — constitutes the northern border of the protectorate. Outside of these three regions, settlement is sparse — scattered villages of slash-and-burn farmers and loggers in the forest fringes, widely dispersed tribesmen farther within, and to the south, as the Chákan Range rises out of the plateau toward the volcanic peaks of the south, there are only the Páchi Lei. Population along the coast is far too sparse to be demographically significant, though important inasmuch as these settlements control a (potential) western sea outlet for Pan Cháka and Tsolyánu and because of their dubiously piratical habits.

The distinctive physical characteristics of the Chákan peoples are well-known and easily recognized throughout Tsolyánu: broad faces, slight epicanthic folds of the eyes, wide shoulders and long torsos atop narrow hips and proportionately shorter legs, and skin pigmentation tending strongly to the reddish or coppery. Eye coloration is generally lighter in the Chákas, but the famous gray eyes are more common in Do Cháka than in the south — here, one is more likely to find hazel or even dark green eyes. Some of these characteristics — the brachycephaly, thicker and coarser hair, and ruddy skin tones — are distinctive within a

Tsolyáni context, but are shared in common with the people of Mu'ugalavyá as a whole.

Clans

Many of the great empire-wide clans are represented in Butrús, as well as those specific to the western empire and the Chákas. There are many local clans not known outside Pan Cháka proper, and these are even more prominent in the hinterland than in Butrús itself. The following paragraphs describe the clan system by general levels of status.

Very High: In terms of antiquity and prestige, though not necessarily in membership, wealth, or real political power, the single greatest noble clan in Pan Cháka is certainly the Íto. It is worth noting that while Tsolyáni generally consider the Ítos to be the traditional “masters of the Chákas”, in fact they are based primarily in Do Cháka, with strong ties to a number of ancient sites and settlements there. The spread of their power to the south does not appear to date before the Time of No Kings. Additionally, the Pan Chákan wing of the Ítos²⁶ has been distinct from the northern branches since the early Engsvanyáli period, and is furthermore somewhat estranged from it — ever since the turmoil of the Time of No Kings, if not even earlier.²⁷ In most similar cases the clan would have fissured into two distinct clans by this point, but both are strongly bound to the geographical extent of the Chákas, identical and distinctive religion (a somewhat unorthodox version of the worship of Sárku), and a shared

²⁶ Various known as the *Misínin*, *Kláifin*, or *Dubélinggalu Íto* (the Departing, Unripe, or Southernmost Ítos) in official records. In Pan Cháka, of course, they are simply referred to as “the Ítos” and it is the main branches in Do Cháka that call for distinction—usually either as the *Ghádrin Íto* or as the *Tusilinggal Íto* (Northern or Farther Íto). To further complicate matters, the Ítos refer to their internal genealogical divisions as “great roots” (*nichódáli*, or in Chákan vernacular, *nichodlé*) rather than lineages or branches (*dalúm*, *shawáts*).

²⁷ It seems possible that the collapse of Engsvanyáli power removed external constraints from long-simmering internal conflict among the Ítos, and their expansion southwards under one branch of the clan was an alternative to “civil war”. Even today feelings can run high, barring the absence of external opponents to unite the branches: the Massacre of 261, in which the majority of the genealogically seniormost members of the Southern Ítos were killed by synchronized assassinations arranged by their northern cousins, is still an extremely sore point.

experience of and interest in resisting foreign (Mu'ugalavyáni, Tsolyáni) influence or domination.

The eldest member of the Pan Chákan Íto branch holds the title of *Hehéllu*, "Count", reconfirmed late in the reign of Hejjéka IV. (The specific title in question is actually *Chehó'olan*, believed to be the Chákan vernacular development of the same ancient Engsvanyáli root.) The Íto — regardless of genealogical niceties — are today at the head of the hierarchy of precedence within Pan Cháka. Furthermore, despite their internal schisms, regional rivalries, and stiff competition from the worshippers of Thúmis in the north, Ksárul in the south, and Vimúhla everywhere in the west, they are still believed to be powerful, subtle influences behind the scenes in the two Chákas and beyond.

The Jade Diadem clan is also a great economic power in the protectorate, with relatively large numbers of members and bases of influence; several large estates in the eastern lowlands and some famous *mash* fruit orchards are owned by this clan. While major landlords controlling a great deal of wealth, they are deeply conservative and parochial in outlook, and are relatively insignificant in politics and "high society". Disproportionately few of this clan's Chákan members enter the armies, priesthoods, or bureaucracies.

The Sea Blue, Golden Sunburst, Golden Bough, Blade Raised High, and Vriddi clans all have a presence in Butrús too, but in a fairly minor way. Only recently, the Might of Gánga clan chose to establish a clanhouse in the city again; the construction is presently plagued by a number of labor disputes and material shortages, and the mansion and gardens remain unfinished.

One of the Golden Sunburst lineages still represented in Butrús is the Chalcháí, tracing descent from a dynasty of the Engsvanyáli Priest-Kings, and later (briefly) the rulers of an independent kingdom at Butrús during the Time of No Kings. Despite their history and the high status of the Golden Sunburst clan generally, this lineage is not held in high personal regard in the Chákas, as an ancient curse is known to

hang over the line — turning its best and brightest into vacuous ninnies as they pass out of childhood. A scion of the Sea Blue clan of national note who is originally from Butrús is Hrákash hiSsankólum, a member of the High Council of the priesthood of Karakán and an advocate of relatively moderate policies. His family no longer live in Butrús — they have since moved to a villa north of the city — but the clanhouse in Butrús is still occupied by an opportunistic ne'er-do-well of the same lineage and his scheming family.

High: The most important clans in this category are the "Four Reds": the Red Sword, Red Sun, Red Mountain, and Red Stone clans. These comprise the real aristocracy of the city and the protectorate, together wielding considerably more wealth and power than any other single clan. While they have equally strong roots in Tumíssa and Turúmkai Province, they are generally considered old, native Pan Chákan clans. The Red Mountain clan in particular has a more Chákan than Tumíssan base, and its mythological "origination place" is situated in the actual city of Butrús itself. In recent centuries the Four Reds have been better able to cooperate with one another than the "Four Greater Blacks" have, which has contributed to their slight but distinct advantage in filling the top positions in local government. Collectively they organize and perform the "Mission to Thurreqáimo for the Sons of Kádlesh" every five years, a great caravan with ritual, diplomatic, and trading functions to visit the Salarvyáni city of Nrikakchné. Entirely staffed by clanmembers, never by slaves, laborers, or mercantile or teamster clients, participation in the caravan is something of a rite of passage for young clansmen, though it can often be used as a polite form of banishment or punishment — the entire itinerary occupies almost two years.

The Four Greater Blacks consist of the Black Fear, Black Water, Black Moon, and Black Flame clans, all represented in Butrús. These constitute the elites of the Ksárul-worshipping population of the protectorate (though devotees of Hrúü and Sárku, and occasionally Dlamélsh or even Belkhánu are also to be found). However, the number of members of each of these clans is not great, and their mansions in the city are rather small.

The ancient Standing Stone clan, the former masters of Úrmish, have a fine large residence in Butrús and investments in some local businesses, but are treated with polite disdain by the old nobility of Butrús — the two cities are well into their third millennium of lazy feuding. The Standing Stone clanhouse is unusually well protected, as fortified as private dwellings are permitted to be in Tsolyánu, since mobs of zealous Butrusséne have been known to gather and attack it — typically after *marotlán* games, but sometimes on other occasions.

Other high-status clans in Pan Cháka, in rough order of importance, are the High Pinnacle, White Crystal, Iron Helm, Amber Cloak, and Emerald Girdle. The local branch of the White Crystal clan have traditionally had a large number of devotees of Sárku, but those who do worship the Lord of Worms have favored more orthodox and less regional versions of the faith than clans such as the Ítos or the Dark Stone Tomb. None are particularly powerful; all are overshadowed by the Four Reds and the Four Greater Blacks. There are other high clans as well, though they have even more minor presences in Pan Cháka (typically land holdings or small estates) and may not even have clanhouses in Butrús itself. A purely local clan of this type, though nearly extinct, is the Mat of Truth.

Medium: Among the primarily agricultural clans of this stratum, the most important are the Red Sky, Red Star, Ripened Sheaf, Green Bough, Broken Reed, Blue Shadow, and Blue Stream.

Other medium-status clans traditionally given to employment as craftsmen and low-to-mid ranking bureaucrats and priests are the “Four Lesser Blacks” (Black Stone, Black Hood, Black Mountain, and Black Monolith), the “Four Golds” (Golden Dawn, Golden Sphere, Golden Sheaf, and Golden Sapphire), and the Blue Kirtle and Green Kirtle. The Golden Lintel clan, which is not one of the Four Golds and has a wholly separate history, is the sole money-lending and “banking” clan with any inter-provincial (let alone international) reach. Some of the more agriculturally oriented clans listed above have members who work in these fields, too.

In addition there is the Silver Lightning clan of jewelers and fine artisans, spread across Tsolyánu and supporting their own clan-legion, which is currently based in Butrús. The clan itself has only a small representation in the protectorate, however, and its clanhouse in Butrús is frankly far more interested in decorative metalwork than in weapons of war. Note should be made of the Hewers of Glory, the clan that has controlled the ancient iron industry of Pan Cháka for centuries through licensed operation of the pit mines and ownership of the smelteries; they have now fallen on hard times with the gradual exhaustion of the ore veins. The more widely spread Iron Fist and Iron Hand clans are traditionally armorers and metalworkers, and are still strongly represented in Pan Cháka and faring better. The empire-wide Weeping Stone clan, together with the Pan Chákan Golden Sieve clan, dominates the trade in wine and liquor. The Standing Pinnacle clan, of Kurtáni origin, has a clanhouse in Butrús that is largely occupied with long-distance trade in forest products from Pan Cháka into Tsolyánu.

The Shading Leaf clan is the most prestigious and wealthy (though not the largest) of half a dozen clans of forest-fringe farmers and loggers limited to Pan Cháka; they are mostly worshippers of Ksárul and Avánthe. Some of the others are the Flowering Shield, Blue Pebble, Standing Shadow, and Verdant Pinnacle. One of the oldest native clans of eastern Pan Cháka is the Joyous Red Forest clan, primarily rural and agricultural (and not especially well-off), but prestigious and respected.

An old Pan Chákan clan of paper-makers has recently (that is, about three hundred years ago) been absorbed into the larger and more powerful Victorious Globe clan, despite religious differences between the former Frame of Sunset clan and the mostly Thúmis and Hnálla-worshipping Victorious Globe.

Finally, mention should be made of the descendants of the Legion of the Sable Lord, refugees from Tsolyánu in the days of Mu’ugalavyáni overlordship. Cut off from and largely repudiated by their native clans and even lineages, these exiles took their shared legion history as the basis for a new communal

organization, now named the Rising Cloud clan. There are no clanhouses outside Pan Cháka, and few even outside its main towns. Within Butrús there is not a single clanhouse, but about half a dozen smaller establishments.

Low: Of the dozens of such clans in Pan Cháka, only a few truly stand out. The Eye of Flame clan, devoted to Vimúhla and Chiténg, are well known in Butrús for hiring out as bodyguards and caravan guards, and the clan also provides troopers to many of the lesser-status military and guard forces of the protectorate. The Black Hand clan provides most of the workers and artisans for the mining and quarrying industries of Pan Cháka. The Topaz Elixir is a small local clan of distillers devoted to Sárku, and has over the centuries produced some of the most famous brandies the Five Empires have seen. The Black Stone Tomb clan, while numerically and economically insignificant, is worth mentioning for its continued devotion to the Íto clan; its members in Butrús make up most of the Tomb Police and many of the laborers and attendants in the City of the Dead. A clan based in Mu'ugalavyá, the Balanced Stone, has a clanhouse in Butrús, where it trains judges of *tsáhlten* and various sports, as well as providing major-domos to the households of the rich.

A number of local clans of agricultural devotees of Vimúhla fall into this category (or lower), such as the Bough of Sunrise, Carved Stone, Splendid Sheaf, Roseate Shield of Iron, and Weeping Hand clans. Some, such as the Vermillion Lightning and Blazing Breeze clans, are of Mu'ugalavyáni origin. There are several more forest-dwelling clans of low or very low status, mostly worshippers of Ksárul and Sárku (the latter especially in the north of Pan Cháka) — e.g., the Amber Bird, Copper Sun, Black Ridge, Water of the Copper, High Clearing, Flowing Cavern, Jade Bulwark, and Dusky Mantle clans. Finally, there are a few lower-status clans of peasants and petty craftsmen found mostly in the eastern lowlands and beyond into Tsolyánu proper: the Fragrant Crescent Moon, Glass Plume, Silver Tiles, Tilted Arch, Turquoise Mask, and White Dust clans, for example.

Very Low: The most important clan in this stratum is the Artificers of Iron, locally quite

numerous and relatively wealthy despite their low social status. Others of note are the clans of the Red Moon, Bright Sword, and Scarlet Planet of Knives, and the Scarlet Sash clan of arena operators. Many of the Chákan-specific agricultural, logging, and forestry clans mentioned above could be counted among these humblest clans. One such local clan is the Ochre Shuttle, of Durritlámish-worshipping weavers. The Muddy Print is another, made up of *chlen*-wranglers and animal trainers and other such vulgar types, whose great claim to honor is that the (locally) famous culture-hero Nug was a member of this clan. Three clans of laborers, canal-workers, and boatmen (for the most part) ultimately from Tsechélnu are found in Pan Cháka: the Lintel of the Sea, Green Reed, and Braided Cane clans. The Company of the Edification of the Soul, the clan of professional torturers and executioners, has one of their largest and wealthiest clanhouses in Butrús, and its members are among the most devoted and vocal worshippers of Chiténg in the city. The clans of the Collar of Bronze (slavers) and the Hand of Compassion (prison guards) are also among the necessary but vulgar cogs of Butrús society. One of the puppeteer clans of the Five Empires has a small, slightly shabby clanhouse in Butrús: the Striding Incantation clan. Finally, the tribesmen of the Pan Chákan jungles and the inhabitants of the scattered fishing villages on the coast could all be considered to be of “very low” clan-status, though it is not always clear to what their relationship to the clans of Tsolyánu proper may be.

Other clan-like and clan-related issues

One of the assassins' clans is present in Butrús: the Black Y Society. It is relatively small, as the old traditions of Pan Cháka (particularly in the countryside) strongly value personal retribution and clan feuding over hiring third parties for cash. Thus the Black Y Society's business is mostly with the more cosmopolitan clans and recent immigrant families in the city of Butrús. It also may be involved in the struggle for power within the Temple of Ksárul between the Ndálu Clan and its rivals (on the side of the former). For many generations now the family constituting the Butrús house has specialized in the extremely rare “Tender Companion”, the trained *alásh* snake from the arid mountains of

Milumanayá. This has possibly encouraged the adoption of the *thelúha* as a house pet among the wealthy.

Unusually for the Five Empires, there is an organized criminal group active and relatively powerful in and around Butrús (but with little clout elsewhere in the protectorate), based on a familial organization but apparently sometimes open to recruitment. This “Great Brotherhood of the Hand of Ink-Stained Knuckles in Hiding” claims descent from the secret police of the Black Theocrat. Its members are nowadays variously followers of Karakán and Wurú (!) and all belong to the lowest-status clans. Their motives and loyalties are not always clear, and despite a reasonable expectation of affinity or commonality with the Ndálu Clan, they seem essentially to be an independent gang of criminals and occasional terrorists in frequent conflict with ecclesiastic and governmental institutions. Their chief sources of revenue are believed to be a mixture of extortion, smuggling, coining, illegal gambling, and occasional flamboyant acts of highway robbery, blackmail, burglary, or kidnapping.

On the side of traditional law and order, Butrús is also home to a few members of the Companions of Holy Thunder, a southern clique of rambunctious young aristocrats mostly worshipping Hnálla, Thúmis, and Karakán, under the loose direction of the temples of the latter deity, with poorly thought out and often conflicting political ideals — and referred to behind their backs as Our Confused Young Sirs et Mesdames.

Tribesmen

The tribesmen of the inner jungles are distinct from the “civilized” men of Pan Cháka — and even more so from metropolitan Tsolyáni and Mu’ugalavyáni. While rarely seen in Butrús, they are frequent visitors to villages in the western forests, where their warriors can be seen going about with curved throwing-clubs and feather-decorated longbows. Their womenfolk are famous poisoners, and the men use poisoned arrows in both hunting and warfare. Most horrifying, perhaps, to civilized folk are their teeth, which they file into sharp points as soon as a child can walk. They generally avoid both

the coast and the southern mountains, and so are restricted to the jungled heights of the plateau proper.

Their religious beliefs are unclear; if asked, they will profess their dedication to both Vimúhla and Ksárul, or rather to whatever Aspects of these deities they may recognize in the religious practices of civilized peoples. A few groups, in the northernmost areas, appear to be devotees of Sárku, in his more peculiar and obscure Chákan forms. Nevertheless, in warfare all are dedicated headhunters to an even greater degree than the Pan Chákan priests and warriors of Chiténg.

They live in longhouses that can be disassembled and moved from site to site; besides hunting and gathering, they practice intermittent and casual horticulture in the jungles. The tribes do occasionally pay tribute (not regular imperial *taxes*, as citizens would) and more frequently they trade with settled Pan Cháka, exchanging their rattans, honey, furs, skins, feathers, meat, fabric, kapok, whisky, spices, perfumes, drugs, and incenses for grain, salt, pottery, tools, wine, cloth, and so forth. They also extract “tolls” in kind from the scrappy merchant caravans to and from the coast; at other times, they simply plunder them.

In earlier times — at least since the end of the First Era of Engsvanyálu up until the Tsolyáni conquest of Pan Cháka — there was a more complex political structure to the human societies of the deep forests, consisting of at least a dozen chiefdoms based around central ceremonial centers where redistribution of staple and luxury goods was controlled by hereditary chiefs.²⁸ The intrusion of the Tsolyáni imperium undermined this system and led to its fragmentation into a more egalitarian, less centralized society. Today three main tribes are the Ngottóng, Mlatséi, and Tláwek. Tsolyáni usually refer to these groupings with the same word used to describe the clans of Engsvanyáli-

²⁸ It seems likely that these tribal peoples are the descendants of the settled and civilized people of the Land of the Three Kings of pre-Engsvanyáli times, when there were towns and cities where today there is only deep jungle. Despite occasional attempts by outside powers to appeal to the modern tribespeople on these historical grounds, they seem totally indifferent to the issue.

derived society (*dlánmü*), but most Chákans and some Mu'ugalavyáni officials, at least, have an understanding that they are not the same thing.

Foreigners

There are quite large numbers of Mu'ugalavyáni citizens in Butrús, mostly merchants, but with a fair number of pilgrims and a few priests and scholars as well. A few Hegléthyal, or "Swamp Folk", are found among them, but given Butrús' landlocked position they are not very common. In the hinterland there are a number of agricultural villages settled over the last few centuries by immigrants and refugees from Mu'ugalavyá, or likely as not remaining from the days of Mu'ugalavyáni occupation some five centuries ago. While they maintain much Mu'ugalavyáni language and culture, they are considered to be solidly loyal to the Petal Throne — in some ways, more than their "native" Pan Chákan neighbors, for whom the dream of Chákan independence may have a deeper resonance and by whom the Tsolyáni are seen as foreigners. Mu'ugalavyá is officially represented in Pan Cháka by the Envoy of the Prince of the Second (Scarlet) Palace in Khéiris. Besides this noble officer, the consular suite also presently includes a high-ranking priest of Hrsh (and his daughter, a noted wizard) to oversee the spiritual needs of well-born Mu'ugalavyáni in Pan Cháka, and a military attaché — who happens to be the brother of the Prince-General of the Second Palace. The Bronze Oblong clan, a merchant clan of Khéiris, maintains a well-appointed compound here due to its large and ancient trading routes in Pan Cháka. While its tenants continually come and go, they remain possibly the most influential *unofficial* Mu'ugalavyáni in Pan Cháka.

Perhaps as much as a quarter of Butrús' populace knows at least a little of the Mu'ugalavyáni language, and quite large numbers of the farmers and foresters in the central and western parts of the protectorate do as well. Despite a long history of military conflict and the present looming threat of another invasion, there is remarkably little anti-Mu'ugalavyáni sentiment among most human Pan Chákans. (Among the Páchi Lei, of course, things are quite different.) The average native of the protectorate is actually more disposed to

make rude comments and assessments of his rivals and foes from time immemorial, the Úrmishites — or even his neighbors in Do Cháka — than of the Red Hats, all other things being equal. Mu'ugalavyáni soldiers and officials, it is true, are more likely to be greeted coldly when traveling in Pan Cháka.

Páchi Lei are perhaps not technically foreign, though the exact political relationship of their enclaves to the Seal Emperor is even cloudier than that of the protectorate to Avanthár. They are more common in Butrús than even the Mu'ugalavyáni, and the grave antipathy between the two groups is a constant source of incidents and problems, often requiring the intervention of the militia. Those Páchi Lei that dwell with humanity are often involved with timber and woodworking industries, including construction and engineering projects; others are merchants, taking advantage of the Páchi Lei coastal settlements in Pan Cháka and the sizeable enclaves in Penóm, western Vra, and northeastern Livyánu to ply their trade internationally. The overland portages from Butrús to the Pan Chákan coast are almost always overseen by Páchi Lei, even when human merchants and caravans pass along them. The alternative is to trust the unpredictable tribesmen for guidance and safe passage, which the wise merchant will decline when possible. At the present time the only significant banditry or disorder involving the Páchi Lei in human lands is occurring some one hundred and fifty *tsan* farther down the right bank of the Turín river, outside Pan Cháka proper.²⁹

Quite large numbers of Pe Choi are found in Butrús, and sometimes in the hinterland as well. Despite the presence of a large and loyal legion of Pe Choi garrisoning Butrús, the generally excellent relations between the Pe Choi and Páchi Lei, and the fact that most Pe Choi are politically inclined toward Tsolyánu rather than Mu'ugalavyá, there is a certain vague suspicion of them among many human Pan Chákans. Worshipers of Sárku and supporters of the Íto

²⁹ These problems are centered around the large fief of Firusanra, held by the Giridra lineage despite mounting imperial disfavor. This far northwestern corner of Tsechélnu province is culturally and historically part of Pan Cháka, but has been administratively separate since the Mu'ugalavyáni conquest of the sixteenth century.

traditions (who are not necessarily the same individuals) are all too aware of the Pe Choi history of brutally suppressing both the faith and the Íto cause. Moreover, the coincidental prominence of Mu'ugalavyáni Pe Choi legions in raids and defeats of Pan Chákan soldiery over the generations has also left a sour taste. The "Mandibles of Iron", Legion XII of the First Palace, have been operating on the Pan Chákan frontier recently, while the "Slayers of Chket", Legion XIV of the Second Palace, are age-old foes. While people of Butrús are unfailingly polite and tolerant of visiting Pe Choi, they are also often slightly reserved and watchful of their guests. A prejudice exists, however irrationally, that they are not disposed to be friends of Pan Cháka. That being said, there is a handful of Pe Choi families in Butrús, originally from southern Do Cháka, who worship the Black Old One; most have been adopted into the Black Stone Tomb clan and serve in the Tomb Police.

Smaller numbers of foreigners from further abroad can also be found here: Livyáni (among them the occasional Tinaliya), Shen, and Salarvyáni, for the most part traders. There are also Pijénáni in Butrús, a good number drawn every year to the shrine of the Cat God in the Temple of Hrū'ū (particularly for New Year's and also in early summer), which apparently is known as a holy place to these dwellers by the far-off northern ocean.³⁰ A small number have remained behind, and operate a hostel for their fellow countrymen — as well as providing other, less reputable services, it is widely believed. There may be a few Yan Koryáni, Saá Allaqiyáni, or Pecháni as well, but these will mostly be scattered individuals and travelers, not regular inhabitants.

Definitely not foreign, Úrmish nevertheless deserves a note of its own in this section. This city is the ancient rival of Butrús, in the minds of

Butrusséne and most Pan Chákans displacing much closer and mightier Tumíssa as "most important neighbor". Indeed, Tumíssa is more economically significant and probably a source of more migration and cultural influence, since Butrusséne do not have the same ingrained hostility towards it as they do toward Úrmish. Both Butrús and Úrmish have a long tradition of worship of Ksárul and Sárku, though Úrmish is by far the more ancient city; Úrmish, though, is regarded in Butrús as being boring and stuffy, as well as dirty, run-down, and smelly. Even the most chauvinistic Butrusséne, though, respects the good weapons and armor produced in the armories of Úrmish; they merely think they're wasted in Úrmish, far from the frontier where real fighting and soldiering takes place.

Language and Writing

The Chákas were once home to a number of autochthonous languages, all of non-Khishan stock and perhaps not even all of a single linguistic family. These languages clearly adopted significant amounts of vocabulary from Bednálljan Salarvyáni and early Engsvanyáli, but later underwent a long period of retrenchment as consciously separate idioms, in which loanwords were rigorously kept out. However, Engsvanyáli grammar and syntax continued to influence the local languages throughout the long ages, and the original structures of the languages had become blurred or totally obscured by the end of Éngsvan hla Gánga. By that time, the native tongues of Do Cháka were almost completely out of daily use, and in Pan Cháka they were preserved only in the more remote and culturally conservative areas. Despite a brief resurgence during the Time of No Kings — a few local regimes toyed with the idea of bringing back one or another Chákan dialect as a "court language", often with a new revision of some half-understood native writing system — they continued to lose ground to the early Tsolyáni and Mu'ugalavyáni languages and their later developments.

The only fully surviving member of this group of languages is the one now used as the esoteric language of the priests of Sárku. The history of its spread from the ancient Íto-supported cults into the orthodox temples of metropolitan Tsolyánu is too long and complicated to recount

³⁰ As a region, Pijéna was invaded and occupied by the Tsolyáni under Metlunél II (1202-51), and it may be during this occupation that knowledge of the cult of the Cat God in Butrús reached that country. Otherwise, it is not at all clear how the custom of pilgrimage to Butrús became established. Some would claim that as a centralized state, Pijéna was created recently and by the machinations of the temple of Hrū'ū. Whether there is any connection between this historical possibility and the presence of a shrine in the temple of Hrū'ū at Butrús that draws many pilgrims from Pijéna is open to speculation.

here. Today it is rarely spoken outside of high rituals, but is more frequently seen in manuscripts, despite knowledge of it being very carefully restricted to the “Inner Circles” of the senior priests of Sárku and Durritlámish. Its vertically-written, largely logographic script (or perhaps more precisely, morphemographic, with an inventory of 2120 graphemes) is based on an indigenous Chákan writing system, though extensively regularized and graphically elaborated during and after its transmission into the mainstream of Engsvanyáli-based civilization.

Nevertheless, the influence of these extinct languages is very strong in the vocabulary of Chákan Tsolyáni. A great many words found in Pan Chákan speech are unknown in Tsolyánu proper, and often not even in Do Cháka; the reverse is equally true. While this is more the case in remote and rural settlements than in urban centers, even the common Butrusséne speech is full of words and expressions deriving from the aboriginal languages of the region. The speech of the tribesmen of the inner jungles and hills is almost incomprehensible to a metropolitan Tsolyáni, hardly less so to a Do Chákan, and still extremely difficult for a native of Butrús to follow.

In addition to these influences from the substratum, as a somewhat remote and relatively backwater part of the Empire of the Petal Throne Pan Cháka has retained a great number of archaic features in its version of Tsolyáni. This includes not just pronunciation (and spelling), but vocabulary and phraseology as well. Along with the rest of western Tsolyánu, the Chákas are strongly “ü-speaking”; in fact, in some words an *i* in standard Tsolyáni is rounded to *ü*. This is actually the more conservative pronunciation of a phoneme that shifted to an unrounded pronunciation and merged with *i* in modern Tsolyáni. Certain grammatical markers retain archaic (Classical Tsolyáni-like) pronunciations: *-yol*, *-yul*, or *-you/-yow* for *-yal*; *-k* or *-h* for *-ikh* (in consonant-final noun stems); *hü-* for *hi-*. There is also a unique regional survival from Engsvanyáli: the affix used to derive abstractions from noun stems (Engsv. *üro-*) survives in the form *ore-*.

Furthermore, Mu’ugalavyáni has influenced Pan Chákan language for several millennia, and most strongly during the recent centuries of direct Mu’ugalavyáni rule. There are quite a number of villages or village sections in the hinterland where Mu’ugalavyáni is still the mother tongue. Among the features attributed to this western influence are the presence of the phoneme *kʰ* (contrasting with *k*, *g*, *q*, and *kh*) and of long glottal vowels (e.g., *a’a*, *u’u*) — which can even creep into Tsolyáni words where they definitely do not belong. Loanwords from Mu’ugalavyáni, if nouns, almost invariably preserve the original number-gender markers (*-ish* masculine, *-a* feminine, *-el* plural, *-e’el* total plurality). The Mu’ugalavyáni plural in *-el* has spread to many other noun stems, edging out the reflexes of Classical Tsolyáni *-yalu*.

This complex history has rendered even the origins of the name “Butrús” dubious. To most natives, it doesn’t “sound Chákan”, and they may well be correct. Certainly none of the autochthonous languages has provided any plausible etymology (though it must be said, they are only poorly known). Some hold that it is a borrowing from the language of the non-human Páchi Lei, which hypothesis has at least some circumstantial evidence — the name “Butrús” (or alternate spellings) does not appear in the historical record until the second century A.S., when organized forces of these non-humans were unusually active and began taking control of much of the modern protectorate. A bronze plaque of the early 180s refers to the site of the Southern Íto court as *Brrk-Ptuu-Hyühr*, the “future pride of Brrk” — though it is not known whether the latter phase is meant to be a translation of the alien name or a second appellation, and even then the full meaning of “Brrk” is uncertain. Others, perhaps more plausibly, argue that “Butrús” is ultimately a loanword from a western dialect of Terminal Engsvanyáli that later became Classical Mu’ugalavyáni — pointing to the stem *mbu’urtá* (meaning roughly “to clear forest and flatten ground for cultivation”) and its derivatives.³¹ The similarity of endings with the Mu’ugalavyáni city of Pagús has been noted and is likely significant

³¹ It has also been suggested that “Butrús” is a Mu’ugalavyáni-style normalization of the Páchi Lei word “Brrk” (above), i.e. with the Mu’ugalavyáni masculine singular noun ending *-ish*.

— but the etymology of “Pagús” is still unknown itself. The mystery is likely to remain unsolved.

The normal “accent” or dialect of Pan Cháka contains the following features as well:

- 1) The velar nasal consonant *ng* is reduced to zero (or at least strongly under-articulated), with nasalization of the preceding vowel, when it occurs word-finally. Word-internally, before a consonant, it usually shifts to *m* (before bilabial or labial consonants, i.e. *b, p, m, v, f*) or *n* (before dental or alveolar consonants (e.g., *t, d, th, dz, tl*)).
- 2) The laterals *l* and *hl* are frequently palatalized before front vowels: e.g., standard Tsolyáni *li, le* becomes *ʎi, ʎe*.
- 3) The vowel *o* cannot follow *u* in the same word (though it can follow the diphthong *au*); it will be replaced with *u*. Thus standard Tsolyáni *autsúlto* “peasant” is pronounced as *autsúltu* in Pan Cháka (though in the real Pan Chákan vernacular, this stem is not even present).
- 4) Retroflex *ss* before the palatal *y* shifts to *sh*, and a following vowel is de-rounded if applicable. Thus standard Tsolyáni *ssyu* “sword” is pronounced *shyi* or simply *shi*.
- 5) The stress accent sometimes shifts, usually to the first syllable; this is a habit common to both the Chákas and easternmost Mu’ugalavyá.
- 6) Laryngialization, or “creaky voice”, is a very common intonational feature. In addition, the common Tsolyáni absolutive nominal marker *-ikh* in vowel-final stems is expressed solely by laryngialization of the final syllable(s).
- 7) In the urban dialect (that of Butrús, its immediate environs, and the largest regional towns), nasalization is very prevalent. Any syllable ending in a nasal consonant (*m, n, ng, hm, hn, hng*) is nasalized, with the nasal consonant itself often weakening or wholly eliding.

The typical Pan Chákan is soft-spoken, with much less pitch and volume intonation than in more “expressive” Tsolyánu. Country people are noted for speaking somewhat slowly, in a drawl, with many pauses; they also have a very

distinctive falling sentence intonation. City people speak faster, more like most of Tsolyánu, but are still “quiet” by Tsolyáni standards. As the Tumíssans say, “A howling argument fought in Butrús sounds like a boring story told in Bey Sü”.

Grammatically, the local dialects are not too far removed from standard Tsolyáni. There is some preference for using separate adjectives and demonstrative modifiers over bound personal attitude and demonstrative affixes, where many Tsolyáni would use the latter. Demonstrative pronouns are also sometimes used in place of first and second person pronouns; it is suggested that this helps with the Chákan taste for understated sarcasm, without being blatant or overly offensive. It may actually be due to contact influence from the Mu’ugalavyáni language.

That said, vocabulary more than grammar is the barrier to easy intelligibility with other dialects of Tsolyáni. There are many loanwords from Mu’ugalavyáni — particularly dealing with bureaucracy, estate administration, and business and commerce, but found in all domains of the lexicon. There are also many archaic (Classical Tsolyáni) forms that are still in use in Pan Cháka and particularly in Butrús. Finally, there is the large body of vocabulary that is simply alien to Tsolyáni and Mu’ugalavyáni alike, and that is particular to the vernacular of the Chákas, of Pan Cháka alone, or even of a given speaker’s home district. Aside from those mentioned elsewhere in the text and footnotes, a few more will be described below.

Pan Cháka has a number of “counting series”, in which the normal words for the numbers are replaced by numbers taken from older languages. The most widely known dialectal counting series contains only the numbers up to eight (*nsut, nju, sóji, zóchi, társang, gémsang, pran, tlan*), though with the addition of some variable extra terms it can be modified into a full rhyming octal numeral system. This series is used, for example, in the “school-names” given to a single generation within a clanhouse. It is also commonly used to number groups or teams of people, chapters or volumes of books, sequences of fields or paddies, or rooms in a house. It is also very widely encountered in

nursery rhymes, children's play-songs, and lullabies. At the same time, certain types of exchanges and certain entire professions or trades require that the ordinal or cardinal series of Mu'ugalavyáni or Classical Tsolyáni be used. Loggers, among others, use the Classical Tsolyáni numbers in speech; but when counting pieces of timber or planks they use their own private argot.

The normal Tsolyáni word for "year" (*nalün*, but also heard as *nilün* or simply *lün* in these parts) is used in Pan Chákan speech only when specifying durations of time (e.g., "three years from now", "last year"). When counting the years in a calendar or chronology or giving someone's age, other terms are normally used: Tsolyáni or local terms for "rains" or "monsoon" are most common, followed by "harvest" or "burning" — i.e., to prepare swidden fields for planting.

Some Tsolyáni words have different meanings in the Pan Chákan dialect. For example, in standard modern Tsolyáni, *siunél* means "to sing (non-religious music)" while *terú* means "to recite poetry"; in Pan Cháka, though, *siyunél* means "to chant, to recite poetry" and *terú* "to chant (religious texts)" or "to sing (in general)".

Another oddity in vocabulary is the widespread avoidance of speaking the (current) emperor's name aloud. Pan Chákans prefer to use the ruler's regnal title (e.g., "the Stone On Which the Universe Rests"). Among officials and public servants in Pan Cháka, uttering even the word "emperor" (*kólumel*) is tabooed when speaking about one as a person, living or dead; instead the ancient Chákan euphemism for ruler is employed: "the orphan" (*tsávang*, *tsúgang*, *sábgang*, etc. depending on local dialect and level of speech).

A final quirk is based on another taboo, this one with specific historical origins. Due to one of the more bizarre edicts of a particularly crazed ruler during the Time of No Kings, it was forbidden to utter or write the pronoun *tlúmi* (second person plural low-status) in reference to individuals over the age of 64 (including the dead), and also for individuals over that age to use the word at all.

Instead, the word *lisháng* was to be substituted.³²

For reasons not gone into in this short overview, the prohibition survived and adapted, with the term *tlúmi* now being permissible to write and again used in addressing the dead, while the ban on speaking it has survived and even spread to the word *tlúmiyel* (second person plural medium-status). Folk etymology considers *tlúmiyel* to be a pluralization of *tlúmi*; accordingly, the modern taboo-replacement for *tlúmiyel* is *lishángyòu* (usually transcribed in writing as the standardized Tsolyáni *lishangyal*). Nowadays these two are widely used as general terms of address to any elderly person not of aristocratic or noble status ("Lishángyòu, how are you? Isn't it hot today?").

Written language also has a few local peculiarities. The local cursive form of the Classical Tsolyáni script is now called the "priests' script", as it has been preserved in the temple schools and scriptoria. It is also still used by some conservative families, both within the city and elsewhere in the protectorate. The canonical form of the Classical Tsolyáni script (in its strict sense) is found only in inscriptions. With the (marginal) exception noted above, none of the autochthonous writing systems of the pre-Engsvanyáli Chákas are still understood, let alone used; very little of them is even preserved.

The modern Tsolyáni script is still called "the Secretariat's script", as it was first forcibly introduced to Pan Cháka through that government office. As described further on, the calligraphy found in government service in Pan Cháka is of execrable quality; this is an aesthetic judgment rather than a practical one, as it is generally readable — merely crude and uncultivated, to a more discerning eye. Numerals are still written using the older convention (like the Mu'ugalavyáni), in which the series is read right-to-left (in the same direction as the text proper) and the decimal number is written after each digit (e.g., 781 is written as "7 100 8 10 1"). Some still use the Mu'ugalavyáni numeral symbols (mostly

³² The etymology of this term has been hotly debated in Pan Cháka for centuries, but seems no closer to a definitive solution than ever.

artisans, shopkeepers and small merchants), while the Classical Tsolyáni numerals continue to be employed by many others (particularly artists, writers, and members of the literati classes). Also likely inspired by Mu'ugalavyáni practice is the use of shorthand symbols for many of the most common suffixes (*-koi*, *-kh*, *-ya*), prefixes (*hi-*, *tla-*), and auxiliaries (*gual*, *muni*, *mal ul gual*).

ELEMENTS OF CULTURE

Mu'ugalavyáni and Tsolyáni customs are frankly often similar, and in intermediate Butrús there are only a few differences from the Tsolyáni norm that can be attributed to the Red Hats. But there are some local peculiarities that are strange to metropolitan Mu'ugalavyáni and Tsolyáni alike. For example, while births and marriages are usually private events, observed only within the family, funerals as well as birthday celebrations are held relatively publicly in the central and southern Chákas. Some of these will be described below, particularly customs involving the lifecycle.

Naming

Many Chákans have two (and more rarely three) personal names, which are passed on from generation to generation in an overlapping pattern: A B -> B C -> C D, etc. As the second name is generally only taken after the child has been given the name, this should actually be considered an example of teknonymy, in which parents are named after children.³³

Chákans also have more complicated customs for pre-adult naming than the rest of Tsolyánu. Immediately at birth, an infant is given a "milk-name", a nonsense word or fragment of baby-talk. It is not until the child is six months old that this is replaced by a regular childhood name

(almost universally called the "school-name", even if the family is not of the educated classes). Often the school-names given within a clanhouse during a single generation are based on one or another of the old numbering series in the ancient Chákan vernacular. It should also be noted that one's school-name might continue to be used as an adult between members of the literati stratum (e.g., priests, lay-priests, officials, physicians, scholars, poets and essayists, and so forth), so long as they are of the same generation.

An adult name is given to boys and *aridáni* girls between the ages of twelve to sixteen, possibly somewhat later than is usual in Tsolyánu; non-*aridáni* women do not receive their adult name until they are married. As with school-names, there is an intra-generational pattern within given clanhouses. In this case, all given names in a generation share one element (usually a single syllable), which when added together over many generations spell out a couplet. To further complicate matters, there is a limited custom of avoidance of personal names of three syllables, based on a prohibition of such names during the Time of No Kings. Legend has it that the grandfather of the last king of the House of the Ink-Flower received a prophecy that a man with a three-syllable personal name would ultimately bring about the downfall of his dynasty, and so he banned such names everywhere in his domain. (Several of the leaders of the Íto coup that toppled the Ink-Flowers indeed had such names, including all the first Quincumvirs that headed the resulting new government.) Most Pan Chákans today are still cognizant of this ban and attempt to observe it, though it is not considered to be applicable to people (or families) that immigrated to Pan Cháka after the fall of the Ink-Flower dynasty (399 B.S.). Particularly conservative or superstitious Pan Chákans, in fact, have been known to inquire anxiously about the family history of those they meet who have three-syllable personal names. Perhaps predictably, the avoidance of using such names has become a minor hallmark and point of pride for families to demonstrate their ancient roots in the region.

Finally, the higher strata of society are given to adding additional special names and sobriquets

³³ For example, the High Priest of Dra in Butrús was originally named Thagádi hiSsolén; after the birth and naming-ceremony of his daughter, Ra'át, he became Thagádi Ra'át hiSsolén. Ra'át (herself a priestess of Lord Hnálla) has since become Ra'át Nu'úme, after her son. Unusually, Ra'át is a member of a different lineage than her father (the Nyókka), having inherited into her mother's more powerful family; nevertheless, the choice to add her name to his own was still her father's to make.

for specific functions or spheres: literary names (often a single writer may have several such *noms-de-plume*), official names (added when attaining high rank in the government, or upon retiring), or religious names (adopted upon entering the priesthood; or in some cases, bestowed upon particularly devout members of the laity).

Such naming customs are not unknown outside the Chákas, of course; but in addition, Pan Chákans have two additional types of these extra names. The first is “house names”, or “studio names”, which are acquired based on one’s occupancy of a specific dwelling, wing, suite, or office space to which a conventional name is attached. These may be handed down from owner to owner for many years, regardless of family relationship or even friendship. The second is the “ancestral hall name”, sometimes called a “posthumous name”. In those regions and clanhouses that practice ancestor worship, every member of the lineage that participates in the cult practices³⁴ is given a special, secret name upon coming of age. While living, this name is used only within the physical confines of the ancestral temple, during sacrifices and prayers, and only in speaking to the ancestral spirits (never to one’s living family members). It may also never be written down except in the sacred genealogy kept in the lineage shrine. After death it may be used publicly, and it is the name used in tomb inscriptions and monuments, burial rituals and commemorative rites, and even unofficial (literary or personal) biographies and encomia.

A further point of interest is that the idiom in Pan Cháka has traditionally been to give one’s name as being “from” such-and-such a lineage, rather than “of” such-and-such a lineage, as is the Tsolyáni norm. (I.e. *mik-* instead of *hi-*; though in old writings one also finds the more archaic regional variant *mok-*.) Today this custom has almost faded away except in a few remote villages, among exceptionally

conservative (or actually, neo-traditionalist) families, and as a wry mock-archaism among the cognoscenti; but one can still often find it in normal use in documents, literature, inscriptions, and other written records that originated in Pan Cháka as late as the seventeenth century. Given that many lineages in the area are unknown outside Pan Cháka, this can cause confusion to an uninformed Tsolyáni reader or listener, who may think that he is being told that the person comes from some obscure village or district. Also, as in some other parts of Tsolyánu, the preposition is frequently altogether deleted when speaking or writing about someone deceased.

Life-Cycle Observances

Birth and puberty parties. Generally these are not that different from elsewhere in Tsolyánu (see Appendix A for details on some of the latter), though one local birth custom is that the new parents exchange red-painted *káika* eggs with each other and their families, and again when the child goes through puberty rites. Newborns are always swaddled in red cloth (or ruddy-colored bark, if the family is poor); using other colors is believed to risk warping the child’s character and health in later life. In Butrús and a few smaller towns dominated by the Ítos and their clients, a type of windsock called a “worm” is hung on a flagstaff above the clanhouse the first night after a male child is born, and left to blow in the wind for 108 nights thereafter; they are also raised en masse every night of Dohála 12 and left up through the long New Year’s season, being taken down only between Hasanpór 10 and 14. These “worms” are simple tubes of cloth or paper, open at one end and half-closed at the other; they are usually of plain white or tan color, sometimes with undulating or jagged repeating designs in black or ochre paint. This certainly derives from practices of Sárku-worshippers, but is now common to followers of all religions — though many devotees of the Lords of Stability prefer to call these kites “snakes” or “cloud-flags”.

Weddings. In the morning, the families of the bride and groom perform a brief but formal ritual of touching together long sashes of blue cloth (often plaited with silver threads) while the bride and groom themselves, garbed all in black

³⁴ I.e. Adult men and *aridáni* women born into the lineage, as well as any men or *aridáni* women who are adopted into it and give up their birth ancestors. Non-*aridáni* women can only participate in some of the rituals of ancestor worship for the lineage they were born into, which in the vast majority of cases is different from that which they marry into and live with as adults.

or darkest indigo clothes, exchange sashes of this type. At a banquet later the same day, the wedding is finalized when they drink ginger-flavored liquor together from a cup made of a two-lobed calabash cut lengthwise. At this dinner-party their parents may yet again exchange red-painted eggs, this time with the new in-laws; these eggs are often further decorated with glued-on designs of metal foil or colored paper. The bride and groom must not lay eye on ropes or cords during the eve or day of the wedding, or the entire event must be postponed until another auspicious date.

Funerals: Pan Cháka has some funerary practices that would seem odd to visitors from elsewhere in Tsolyánu, and some of the beliefs and customs around burial and grieving seem particularly strange. The most immediately obvious point is that funerals (or at least major portions of them) are fairly public events, to which people outside the family — even neighbors and strangers — are welcomed and invited as a matter of course. The rich and powerful treat them as festival-days or feasts are observed elsewhere, with the doors thrown open to any who wish to come.

Infants, that is, babies who die before receiving their school-name, are always buried within their clanhouses, often under the main courtyard or kitchen-yard. This is done because their spirits are considered too young and dependent to know where else to go, and it is considered best to keep them around the house where they will be most comfortable.

As in the rest of Tsolyánu, the family of the deceased holds a feast forty days after the funeral³⁵ as a kind of “wake” to celebrate the soul (*báletl*) of the deceased’s arrival at the Isles of Teretané (a voyage which takes exactly forty days). Folklore is confusing on this matter, though, as it is also widely believed that at the first dusk after a person has died, the deity called “the Grandfather” (q.v.) appears to take the soul and conduct it into the afterlife — by wing rather than boat, as this entity is distinctly aerial and not nautical. This latter belief has caused no small amount of controversy and

accusations of heresy over the centuries.³⁶ The learned argue that this second belief refers only to the *hlákme*, or “intellectual spirit”, of the deceased, which is normally considered to remain in proximity to the tomb or physical corpse for eternity, in what is conventionally referred to as “the dreamless sleep”. Over the last few centuries this solution has gained acceptance in the few Tsolyáni circles concerned with the matter, and has been gradually spreading into Pan Chákan popular beliefs as well. Many now believe that one’s “soul” goes off into the Isles of Teretané under Belkhánu’s remit, while one’s “spirit” goes to Sárku’s dominion, said to lie directly below the Chákas: the dim, perfectly still, empty open country outside of Time.

A further element in funeral beliefs is that the following autumn, during the harvest festivals, the soul of the dead person can return home in the form of a spirit-bird. These revenants are always malicious and evil, even if the deceased was saintly; they are said to be the wicked or angry aspect that every person has.

Those who commit suicide by hanging are collected by the demigod Hmwú’ukha (q.v.), who whisks not only the soul (*báletl*) but also the mind (*hlákme*) and “shadow” (*chusétl*) away to a special afterlife, leaving only the physical body behind. Accordingly, the dead in such cases receive the simplest funerary rites, with almost no ritual or religious content — they are already gone out of all reach. Those who drown themselves, on the other hand, are usually immediately cast out of their clan and lineage registers (and the bodies hurled into garbage pits), but by then it is usually too late to avoid the shame and divine disfavor they have called down upon their relatives.

In Pan Cháka, as in Mu’ugalavyá and until recently Do Cháka, there are legal restrictions on the type and scale of memorials permitted in the Cities of the Dead. In addition to specifications of the allowed ground area, height of construction, number of pylons or columns, etc. (all dependent upon the status of the clan

³⁵ n.b., not forty days after the *death*.

³⁶ Chákan plays and dramas still rely on the comic figures of absurdly pedantic and abstruse academics and priests split into two warring factions of the “Floaters” versus the “Fliers”; there are also proverbs referring to them.

and the public or official rank of the deceased, of course), there are sumptuary laws restricting the display of long epitaphs or memorial inscriptions on the outside of the tombs. In Pan Cháka, at least, the need that the wealthy and aristocratic feel to compose lengthy funerary biographies and encomia is accommodated by placing them on the interior of the tomb (or burying them directly with the body), with a copy placed in the ancestral-hall temple.³⁷ In some clans and districts, only the copy in the ancestral hall is prepared, and the deceased are put to rest in almost entirely un-inscribed tombs. This can make identification of older tombs difficult, if the name of its inhabitant has been destroyed in the few exposed places it may have been written or carved. The Pan Chákan response to this has been on one hand to visit one's family graves more often than most Tsolyáni do, in order to perform maintenance as well as pay respects, and on the other hand to put more emphasis on the ancestral shrine in the clanhouse as the most important locus of the spirits of the departed. The lower and middle classes rarely make any effort at an enduring physical tomb-marker, and in fact purposely construct them of wood, often with the posthumous name and qualifications painted on. Worshipers of Sárku, of course, place far more importance on the preservation and endurance of their physical remains and tombs.

Food and Drink

An old Tsolyáni saying has it that a man's home is in his mouth twice over — that is, one's accent or dialect and one's diet or taste in food are the two things chiefly responsible for making the inhabitants of different regions *different*. Objectively, cooking is perhaps actually the more distinctive; it is also the element that inspires the most pride of place, regardless of the overwhelming cultural prestige of the central metropolises. A man from remote and rustic Kerunán may feel that the sartorial fashions and literary works of his home town are inferior and embarrassing compared to those of Jakálla or Bey Sü, to say nothing of his accent, but will likely defend his native cuisine against its detractors in either city. Wealthy or even

middle-class Tsolyáni who travel any distance at all invariably take a cook with them from home, so they will not be wholly dependent on “foreign fare”.

The gourmands of the Five Empires — and anyone who travels outside his or her native place — are accordingly well aware of a vast array of regional cuisines. That of the Chákas is generally characterized by roasting and broiling meats and vegetables, often with scented woods or the addition of leaves, bark, or flowers to the fire to create strongly flavored smoke. Pan Cháka in turn has its own particular styles of cooking and serving food, and in Butrús it often is specially contrasted with the cuisine of Úrmish: the Pan Chákan use of sour or salty marinades where the despised Úrmishites use sugary glazes, for example, or even the Butrusséne preference to de-bone meat and poultry and slice it into strips or chunks before serving, compared to the large, whole pieces served at tables in Úrmish. Among more general prejudices, Chákans tend to think of the food of central Tsolyánu as literally being cooked with feces, as the dung of *chlen*, *hma*, and *hmélu* is a widely used fuel in these more deforested regions.³⁸ The use of mincemeat in stuffing whole birds, cuts of meat, or fish, quite normal in Urudái province and much of Tsolyánu, is rare in Pan Cháka, and even meat stuffing in dumplings or pies is considered a bit outlandish; yet certain vegetable, grain, or fruit stuffings are quite normal. The famously elaborate and spicy food of Jakálla, so popular in much of the empire, is looked upon in Butrús as an exotic specialty, not really desirable except for special occasions: Butrusséne complain that they like to be able to taste their *food*, and not just the hot peppers.

The main meal is dinner, just after sunset. In Pan Cháka one eats on a mat with individual plates, often of wood or lacquerware rather than pottery — which is used primarily for large serving platters and tureens. Such vessels, if used to hold soup, stews, sauces, or other liquid

³⁷ The most common term for these texts in western Tsolyánu is “records of merit”, and the euphemisms and terminology used elsewhere in the empire are hardly known.

³⁸ In fact, of course, even so food is not cooked directly in dung fires, but other cooking methods are resorted to—boiling and steaming, or baking in sealed ovens or griddles. The partisan of Chákan cuisine would counter that this renders food mushy and tasteless, not crisp and sizzling like it should be.

condiments, are customarily placed on low tables or stands just above the floor; the other serving trays and plates are placed directly upon the dining mats. Spoons and hard flat breadsticks are the main utensils.

Dna is the staple grain, though several strains of rice are widely grown in dry fields throughout the protectorate and in wet paddies in a few locales in the eastern part (particularly in the far southeast). A native Chákan grain (*rējür*) resembles Terran buckwheat in flavor and appearance and may be directly descended from it. It is less productive and less nutritious than *dna* or rice; nevertheless, its hardness and undemanding nature make it an important crop of the tribal peoples and even some outlying civilized villages. In modish Butrús society, porridges or noodles made from its triangular seeds are considered “quaint” and fashionably exotic or rustic; everywhere else, the grain is looked down upon as the food of paupers and savages.

Other food cultigens include *tsü* and *hlütán*, whose seeds and leaves, respectively, produce cooking oils; sweet greenish-yellow *ukó* melons, yellow *kao* and large, yellow-shelled, orange-fleshed *dzíya* squashes, bottle-shaped, greenish *choqún* and chestnut-flavored *shiryá* tubers, and *dmi* and *mnósa* roots (which are processed into sugar, or in the case of *mnósa*, consumed directly). There are many more, of course.

Freshwater fish and reptiles are an important food source, and are domesticated along with *káika*, *hmélu*, and *hma* — though the latter two fare poorly in the western region’s dense forests. Neither the climate, forage, nor predatory neighbors there are conducive to large or healthy flocks of these animals. Many Pan Chákans outside Butrús do not have much of a taste for the meat of either beast. *Tsí’íl*, on the other hand, is raised in quantity in vast, “free-range” ranches of scrub forest in some regions of the tableland. While the meat of the *tsí’íl* is not considered as good as *hma* or *hmélu* to Tsolyáni, it is certainly more available and familiar to the average Pan Chákan. Venison from various types of forest deer are the most prized red meat in the protectorate; except for city-dwellers with daintier and more sophisticated palates, most native-born Pan

Chákans would even prefer the gamy meat of the *nyar* to that of a *hmélu*.

A number of recipe-books for Butrús exist, as they do for every city and major town in the empire (even for Penóm, as incredible and unpalatable as it might sound).³⁹ The delicacies of Pan Cháka include melon pickled in rice mash, dried and pounded snake flesh, raw venison sliced paper-thin and half-cooked in a powerful marinade of cloves and acidic citrus juice, smoked and peppered whole loaches, carp marinated in cider lees with anise and steam-broiled in leaf wrappers, smoked deer tongues, crystallized honeyed ginger root, dry-roasted bamboo shoots, salted dry plum preserves, black-fried fritters of a type of *choqún* tuber mashed together with heavy seasoning of chili pepper and garlic, tiny baked “dumplings” filled with honey and dusted with nutmeg, and salted rinds of the thorny lime. A dish of the imperial *haute cuisine* that is served in Avanthár, made from pure white rice, milk, and camphor, chilled in ice, was originally a Pan Chákan summer delicacy.

Locally made red *ngálu* wines are rather poor, though the *mash* brandies are famous — Pan Cháka is widely accepted to be the source of the finest in the Five Empires, and presumably beyond. These brandies are exported in large quantity, and are customarily served throughout the empire as a postprandial liqueur. However, Pan Chákan etiquette reserves *mash* (or any other sweet or fruity liqueur) strictly as an apéritif, and regards its misuse as a grave lapse. Particularly upright provincials, or those especially devoted to the appreciation of this beverage, may consider the Tsolyáni use of it disrespectful, possibly even an insult. At parties and banquets, or even informal gatherings, the Pan Chákans share with the Islands and the Flats of Tsechélnu the custom of counting rounds of drinks with little bamboo sticks, often polished, painted, or otherwise decorated; they have the further regional peculiarity (shared only with northern Vra) of drinking their wine or beer through reed straws.

³⁹ See *The Wake-Up-the-Courtyard Stove*, *Master Nikórva’s System of Dining*, *The Two Chákas Recipe Manual*, or the large but somewhat inferior “Far Western” volume of the *Heshtú’at! Reign Encyclopedia of Foods and Kitchenry*.

Mash (and its various cousin-species of citrus-like fruits) is also the basis for several local varieties of *tsuhóridu*, with the addition of secret jungle herbs and substances. None are particularly famous, or even good — the genus of marsh plants that lend *tsuhóridu* its characteristic flavors (and neuropathies) is absent from Pan Cháka. Beer is widely drunk by the lower classes, and there are various further special liquors not known outside the province — distilled grain alcohols (generically *a'ásh*, but in Pan Chákan dialect more often known as *snésib* or *sné'ib*) flavored with forest drugs such as vanilla (used ceremonially during celebrations for the new year), ginger (drunk at weddings and funerals), and cinnamon (a seasonal specialty of the early summer months); sugar toddies from the coconut-flower palm (*mümül*), "wines" from tree sap and bark (*zádhanj*), and so forth. Mead (*saumk^hét*) is made by the foresters and farmers of the west, as well as the tribesmen of the inner jungles. It is sometimes made from wild honey, which is itself a powerful (often frighteningly hallucinogenic) intoxicant. While the savages are said to drink it for recreational purposes, in the rest of Pan Cháka it is reserved almost exclusively for use in ritual libations and religious offerings. These same tribesmen also manufacture a distilled alcohol that is similar in flavor to sour mash whiskey, but based mostly on a type of seedpod that grows in the jungle. The Páchi Lei, on the other hand, shun all but the weakest alcohols, and in their place drink only fruit juices that have been slightly fermented.

The lower classes in the city and country — particularly farther west, and into southeast Mu'ugalavyá — also smoke a kind of dried leaf (*sáttsa*) twisted and rolled into cigars of various sizes, which is a quite powerful stimulant. This habit has gradually spread to a few members of the urban middle classes whose clans are based in Pan Cháka; in order to add a veneer of decorum and tastefulness, they prefer to inhale the smoke through baroquely wrought hookahs imported from Salarvyá. The far more widespread and socially acceptable practice of chewing reddish-brown blades of narcotic *hnéqu*, a type of grass, is often lumped together with the use of *sáttsa*, though their pharmacological effects are quite opposite. The Pijenáni are infamous throughout the Five

Empires as heavy consumers of such drugs, and as there is a small population of them in Butrús, they are customarily associated with the use, abuse, and purveyance of these and other drugs.

Extramural dining and entertainment is more widespread than in most parts of the Five Empires. The imperial government has encouraged this for centuries, believing that in this hotbed of Mu'ugalavyáni espionage, religious antagonism, clan feuding, and Íto and Chákan secessionism, it is an advantage to have more private affairs conducted in public, thus hopefully discouraging secret meetings and plotting. Private dinners in a clanhouse between individuals or families who are not old friends are considered, in Butrús, to be slightly queer. It follows that the premises of local winemaking clans have extensive facilities for rental and catering. While normally only private rooms are available, the light construction of these facilities, often using folding or sliding screens or even just hanging blinds, makes for a relatively public and exposed setting — uncomfortable and vaguely scandalous or at least undignified to Tsolyáni. The major examples of such establishments, in descending prestige, are those of the Weeping Stone, Topaz Elixir, Granite Lintel, Arch of Heaven, and Bright Sword clanhouses. There are many others, though they are more obscure and in many cases distinctly proletarian. All of these also prepare meals "to go", usually of certain house specialties and other complicated dishes that one's own clanhouse kitchen cannot prepare on the spot, or cannot be troubled to prepare. These are delivered anywhere in the city by runners carrying distinctive towering bamboo frame-packs loaded with lidded round lacquer trays.

Entertainments

Games include *tsáhlten*, of course — originally Mu'ugalavyáni, legend has it that this game was introduced to Tsolyánu through Pan Cháka, and it is still hugely popular and has many expert players hereabouts. The lower classes, particularly in farming villages in the north, also play what might be simplified variants of this game, basically like the game of "pick-up-sticks" and also introducing some religious or

mythological components.⁴⁰ Beyond this, people are especially fond of the old-fashioned *ovánsh* game of Mu'ugalavyá and the Chákas (similar to dominoes, or a simple form of mahjong), and also play board games like *daqú* and *dénden*, dice (*kévuk*), cards (*nárku*, and various local variants, mostly still using the antique lozenge-shaped cards of the west). Even some humans play the Páchi Lei games of checkers (*kahmü-bau*, in Pan Chákan dialect; perhaps an attempted loanword from Páchi Lei) or *treng*, ferociously difficult memory-concentration puzzles made of wooden blocks.

The great popular sport is *marotlán* and also *me'éra*, a Mu'ugalavyáni form of the game using a large leather ball (kicked with the feet and legs) instead of a scepter. The standard game requires twenty players, in four simultaneously competing teams of five players each. In the countryside, many youths play *me'éra* in fallow fields and village squares, who would never think of attending (let alone playing in) a game of *marotlán* — the game of big-city easterners and foreigners. For some rustic communities, the sport has ritual or even religious connotations, as it does in Pijéna (though losing teams or players are never sacrificed, as may happen in that country). Tree-climbing or pole-scaling is another popular competitive sport, of obvious backwoods origins but now invested with a tradition of worthiness even in the city; foot-racing is the other common athletic sport, with competitive games such as wrestling, archery, and club-throwing mostly restricted to certain festivals or fairs and to young men of a military bent.

As recreation (rather than as subsistence), hunting is popular only among the high aristocracy, and then most often those of non-Chákan origin; there is also not much hawking

to be had in the protectorate. Hunting is too closely associated with the uncivilized and savage inhabitants of the forest and frontier to be an acceptable pastime for the cream of society — especially those who are conscious of being looked down upon by the sophisticates of central Tsolyánu. The irony that those same Tsolyáni sophisticates consider hunting to be a decidedly aristocratic hobby apparently is lost on their Pan Chákan counterparts — who if anything, take the rare opportunity to look down their noses at the “tribalistic” tastes of Tsolyáni who come to the southwest for hunting. That being said, the old custom of “hunting” human beings on special lands is still practiced in Pan Cháka by a few wealthy aristocrats who are (for the most part) devoted to Vimúhla and Chiténg. The Legion of the Givers of Sorrow has nonetheless vehemently objected to the channeling of prisoners of war to this frivolous and effete pastime, and other factions in the capital of the protectorate have gradually made it increasingly difficult to skim off convicted criminals from the prisons for these purposes. Nevertheless, the inmates of the Sixteen Fields in Butrús are further discouraged from attempting to escape by dark and lurid rumors of prowling procurers for these huntsmen.

The *hirilákte* arenas are not so light and harmless as on Vra, but neither are they as bloody and grim as in some other cities. The one in Butrús is particularly used for athletic competitions (footraces, pole climbing, club-throwing), and especially *marotlán* or *me'éra* — sometimes against teams from Mu'ugalavyá. While these games can become quite heated, passions run at least as high when Úrmish teams visit. Armed units of the City Militia and occasionally garrison troops are needed to protect a visiting side — and sometimes the home teams — after particularly tense games. There is an “official” match every week (on Daunél), and additional games are often held as well — either special matches, or exercise and practice games. The duels and armed combats most often associated with the arenas are also common and well attended in Butrús, but generally do not instill the same mass fervor in their fans and viewers.

Gambling is popular in Pan Cháka, as elsewhere in the Five Empires; the Butrusséne in particular

⁴⁰ For example, some of the rural villages where Sárku and Durritlámish are worshipped call the sticks “bones” and “worms”, while some of the farmers to the south, in the forest fringe where the Ksárulian forest-god Mentutéka is worshipped, call them “trees”. In the former versions, there are two types of stick: the “bones” representing specific heroes, literary characters, demigods, or famous personages, and the “worms” representing nameless valets, scribes, bearers, messengers, and so forth; each type has a specific point value. The latter version does not introduce these characters, but instead varies the thickness and length of the sticks.

are perhaps more than usually fond of wagers, though on the outcomes of competitions more than on indoor games. Weekly *marotlán* matches, gladiatorial combats and other arena games, incidental *qadárni* battles, athletic competitions at certain civic festivals, and the annual Kite Festival all see large quantities of money change hands; there are even unofficial (and technically illegal) miniature arenas where humans or trained animals are pitted against one another, despite the constant attempts of the government and their lawful licensees to forbid such gambling. While the Swamp Folk of Mu'ugalavyá are famous as the most dedicated and compulsive gamblers in the world, most of this orderly and law-abiding species who visit Butrús rapidly find they prefer to stay within the sanctioned franchises and venues — the criminal element in the “informal sector” is more than they care to deal with.

There are several local circles of poets, literary critics, wine connoisseurs, gourmands, sculptors, flower gardeners, butterfly fanciers, songbird breeders, and other enthusiasts and collectors. By old local tradition, the members of these clubs, cliques, or circles all take pen names (typically of ancient Chákans of the Bednálljan era) by which they refer to each other in their role as connoisseurs — thus Zhántlo hiShesánu is known only as “Snéship” within the local clique of enological snobs of which he is the controversial leader at the moment.

Art has taken on distinctive local forms in the isolated protectorate, and is further influenced by local materials — such as in woodwork (sculpture, mosaic, and especially parquet flooring), lacquerware, and paper crafts. Calligraphy is a cultured pastime, as in the rest of the Five Empires,⁴¹ but in the Chákas so is watercolor painting, while lurid woodblock prints appeal to the vulgar masses of the cities. Pan Cháka is well known (and perhaps stigmatized, among the cognoscenti of the Five Empires) for sometimes using bark as a writing material — a fundamentally crude habit, no matter how elegantly practiced.⁴² Despite this reputation,

good paper scrolls and loose sheets are made hereabouts, with a wide variety of raw materials being employed — *hruchán* reed, hemp, kudzu, mulberry, bark of cryptomeria and several other trees, bamboo, and rosewood. A variety of grades and styles are produced, including tissues and cardboards. A whitish-green “needle-stamped” variety is especially prized, as well as several colored, tinted, and perfumed varieties. Pan Cháka also manufactures block-printed fabrics and papers.

The paper industry in Pan Cháka has contributed to sports and games as well: kites are a distinctive local tradition. They are not mere playthings of the young, but used in many local festivities and sporting competitions, and are also exported. Shadow puppets and magic lanterns are manufactured in Butrús and a few neighboring towns, and performances are popular throughout the region; a few performers even take these provincial peculiarities on the road to other parts of the Empire.

Performing Arts

Epic poetry is highly respected and practiced at a good level of polish; there are a number of other schools and genres of performance art, largely of a local character and somewhat lesser prestige, if more popularity. Most are associated with specific forms of music, and so these various art forms are treated together here.

By ancient Pan Chákan prejudice, women are not permitted to sing, while men are barred from playing instruments with plucked strings. These near-taboos are still powerful, and many teachers will refuse to instruct students of the inappropriate gender, while other Pan Chákans will shun performances and performers that break this custom. As western Tsolyáni and Mu'ugalavyáni tradition is that poems are sung or chanted rather than recited, this has meant that in extremely conservative and status-conscious Pan Chákan families, women have been forbidden to perform poetry themselves (though certainly not to compose or write it). This has in turn led to the custom of having female poets choose or designate certain men

⁴¹ Though note the poor level of calligraphy that is prevalent, perhaps even expected, in government service in the protectorate.

⁴² In thoroughly civilized parts of the Five Empires, writing-paper is always, and only, made from reed strips; pulp-

based papers are reserved for envelopes, wrappers, tissues, and decorative purposes only.

— often siblings or cousins — as “second throats” (as the local idiom has it) for any public performances of their compositions. The prohibition of female singers also led to the development of traditions of countertenors and of castrati singers, in order to reach the higher vocal ranges.

There is also a similar prejudice against men performing in the popular (secular) stage plays; this is weakened in recent generations but can still be seen to be in effect in several companies, including the hereditary theater troupe of the Governor’s Court. Its influence is strong in most established theatrical schools and repertoires, and the general consensus remains that men simply aren’t constitutionally equipped for the stage.

Together these two traditions have led to outsiders viewing all performers from Pan Cháka as likely to be sexual deviants of one sort or another. Pan Chákans themselves don’t consider this to be the case at all, despite their own prejudices about such matters, and resent the condescension of depraved Tsolyáni who themselves have no sense of propriety.

There are many different musical notations and tablatures used in Pan Cháka, depending upon the school or tradition, genre of music, specific repertoire, type of instrument, and period of origin. As in other parts of the Five Empires, several are based on alphabetic (or syllabic) notation, which allows for coding text into tunes. This is complicated by the fact that many of the scripts used for this kind of notation are either archaic or foreign, and often both.⁴³ Unique to the two Chákas are a family of more or less related notations for percussion ensembles; they are often said to be of Pe Choi origin, but this is actually very doubtful — it appears to be a thorough reworking of a short-lived and fairly obscure tradition of choral notation that originated ultimately in northwest Salarvyá and southeast Tsolyánu.

The musical scales are all diatonic, as in most of the Five Empires; among Pan Chákan musicians there is some specialized vocabulary and

⁴³ E.g., the main tablature used by the schools of Music of the Palm in Pan Cháka is based on characters drawn from the Dúru’ob script of medieval Livyánu.

symbolism surrounding them that may be worth noting. Among other semi-mystical “correspondences”, each of the five tones is associated with one of the seasons: Rains, Spring, Summer, Winter, and Autumn, while the two semitones are associated with the intercalary days and with a so-called “central season”, a period of one or two weeks in late summer of importance to the old Chákan phenological almanacs and folk-calendars. Furthermore, each has a special literary or esoteric name, depending on whether the scale is ascending or descending.⁴⁴

Almost regardless of the genre of music being performed, Pan Cháka’s style of singing is quite distinctive — in the words of one urbane Tsolyáni traveler in the reign of Hejjéka III, “the lament of a congested *tsi’i’*”; his commentator later glossed this as “a nasal wail whose character is fundamentally baritone, but cannot be relied upon as such; it is displeasing to the proper ear”.⁴⁵ Little has changed in the intervening millennium. The singing of Butrús and most of the protectorate runs to a rather mournful tone (to metropolitan ears), with a wide reach in pitch but generally located in the lower registers (in part due to the traditional prohibition on female singers), and sharing the characteristic nasal quality and breathy overtones of local speech.

With percussion instruments ranging from tiny hand-drums to giant split-log hanging drums of the forest peoples, Pan Cháka also shares in the regional use of sets of tuned xylophones to produce complicated harmonies over syncopated rhythms. While this is currently considered characteristic of the Pe Choi, many partisan Chákan scholars argue that the syncopated beat is originally of human Chákan origin, which was adopted by the Pe Choi only during the Time of No Kings even as it fell out of fashion elsewhere. Here in the south many of the wooden

⁴⁴ For the curious, those for the major tones are as follows: “The Tall Spring”, “The Double Pipe”, “The Middle Spine”, “The Southern Spine”, and “The Responsive Pipe” for ascending scales. For descending scales the symbolic name of the first tone, corresponding to the rainy season, is disputed, but the other four are “The Lady Is Bathing”, “The Well-to-Do Guest”, “The Laws Are Equal”, and “The Unwearied”. The names of the semitones vary according to one’s source and are often ignored in this scheme.

⁴⁵ Sources not cited in ms.; author has not yet clarified.

instrument sets known in Do Cháka are replaced with stone and some bronze instruments, which creates a quite different quality of sound — sharper, harsher, and more vibrant. Up to five players, each with at least one “set” of this type, supported by as many as four players of single drums and gongs, may together form one consort.

The transverse flute is extremely rare in Pan Cháka, and found only in foreign households and in certain pieces of Engsvanyáli ritual music that call for it. Butrusséne consider the transverse flutes too outlandish, “silly” and “undignified” to be fit even for vulgar, popular music. Contemporary popular songs from elsewhere in Tsolyánu or Mu’ugalavyá are always quickly adapted for more suitable instruments, and even classical epic music has been re-scored for the native equivalents. Instead, vertical flutes are employed in Pan Cháka.⁴⁶ They are normally made of bamboo, but are almost invariably wrapped in the inner bark of certain trees to prevent splitting, and thus look as though they are wooden; some may also be lacquered. There are always seven finger holes, and there is a codified set of nine different sizes of flute (from 24 *chóptse* to 39 *chóptse* in length, or approximately 32-52 cm) to allow for harmonization with the pitch of other instruments or the vocal performance. There are only two exceptions to this set of nine. One is the *tákhtiu*, a thicker, six-holed, extremely long flute (either 48 or 51 *chóptse* in length, 64 or 68 cm, depending upon which of two traditions is followed) with a deep hollow breathy tone. It requires powerful lungs to play, and is used only in certain pieces of ceremonial music. The *tákhtiu* is always made of plain, unlacquered bamboo with only thin bands of bark shrunk around each tip to prevent splitting. The other exception is the *ninári*, also six-holed, thinner, fixed at a length of 20 *chóptse* (27 cm), with a piercing high pitch, and used only in a (different) type of court music of Livyáni origin.

The *sra’úr*, a bowed six-string “lute” of the Five Empires, is distinctly less popular than in the rest of Tsolyánu, and is mostly favored by immigrants, self-consciously cosmopolitan

aficionados, visitors, and also in the performance of current popular airs just recently arrived in Pan Cháka from elsewhere. Such imported “popular music”, if it catches on for any length of time, is usually soon re-scored for more locally familiar instruments.

A local variant of the *sra’úr*, probably belonging to the same lineage, is an instrument called *sepánukhan* or *di’án* in the local vernaculars. It is smaller than the *sra’úr*, with a much narrower body and an elongated shape (similar to the medieval-renaissance rebec of Earth, but slightly larger); it is carved and molded from a single piece of wood with a smooth taper of body into neck. It has three strings as opposed to six, and uses a disproportionately long bow. It is high-pitched, bright-toned, nasal, very forceful, and surprisingly loud. This makes it excellent for public or outdoor performances, though its piercing quality makes it unsuited to accompany other instruments or vocals and so it is often used in interludes or bridges between narrative or dialogue pieces. In modern times (e.g., the last few centuries) it has been used to try to imitate (or at least suggest) human voices in the background or accompaniment to narrative performances.

The “twin moon lutes” are short-necked, circular-bodied instruments with four strings of twisted gut. They are plucked with the pads of the bare fingers, which is almost unheard of in the Five Empires and considered distinctly vulgar, almost brutish; on the other hand, it allows their players more expressiveness and nuance than the use of plectrums. Even in Pan Cháka they are very much instruments of the lower classes. One is larger than the other with a deeper pitch and more frets, while the other is smaller and higher-pitched; they are always played in pairs, never individually. Because of their shape and sizes, they are associated with the two moons, and the faces of the bodies are often painted or dyed green and red, respectively. The larger is called *múikkil*, and the smaller *munkága*. While they might look to a contemporary Terran like sawed-off banjos, they have a sound quality closer to that of a European Renaissance lute or orpharion (in the case of the *múikkil*) and a mandolin (in the case of the *munkága*). This is the one plucked string instrument that, among traditionalist Pan

⁴⁶ Note that these are flutes, not recorders, in that they have a simple open mouthpiece with no “lip” to produce the whistle of a genuine recorder.

Chákans, it is acceptable for men to play in mixed company — according to some apologists, because “feminine” plectrums are not used.

In Pan Cháka, the classical instrument is the *ténturen*. It even has its own patron deity in Butrús, Menwási (an Aspect of Wurú). The *ténturen* is 18 *hoi* (2.4 m) long, and has two separate resonance chambers and twelve plucked strings; different models have nine or thirteen drone strings.⁴⁷ The strings, all of the same length and spun from a type of *güdru* silk, are attached parallel from end to end, with movable bridges (usually either of rosewood or ivory) about 6 cm in height placed under them for tuning selection. One player, sitting to the right, presses the fret-points (which, it should be noted, are not marked or ridged on the instrument in any way) and manipulates the strings manually, while the strings are actually plucked by a second player (seated to the left) who wears special metal finger-caps, thimble-like with ridges or catches.⁴⁸ The body itself is carved from a hollowed-out log of paulownia, with the head and tail made of ebony, coral-tree, or rosewood, and the six feet and the two fixed bridges at either end fashioned of the same material. The *ténturen* has a quite flat face, except for the version with thirteen drones, which has a distinctly domed face and requires special practice in order to play. Usually a solo instrument, the *ténturen* is very rarely (if ever) played with more than one in consort, but is often used with other instruments in ensembles. The instrument is taught in schools of music under the patronage of the temples of both Avánthe and Wurú; the latter is strongly associated with the performance of certain epic pieces that employ the *ténturen* extensively. The standard general *ténturen* repertoire consists of about 340 pieces, not counting those that are considered private property of certain temples.

Another peculiarly local development that has gone in and out of fashion over the centuries is

the group of instruments going under the heading of “demi-*ténturen*” (*esháténturen* in Tsolyáni); in the Chákan vernacular, they are known as *kembirdi*, *képürri*, or *sábadeqèl*. As the Tsolyáni name suggests, they are essentially scaled down models of the larger instrument. These instruments were preserved for several centuries as the cheaper, easier alternative to the *ténturen*, favored by the girls and ladies of middle and upper-middle class merchant or artisan families in Butrús and the major prefectural towns. Several schools of music exist for this instrument, each with different styles, ornamentation, standard repertoires, and reputations; some of these grew entirely out of the merchant classes, particularly those scored for groups of these instruments playing in consort. These “house” schools continue to be intimately associated with or even restricted to specific clans. There are also a few “old classical” schools, generally tiny, fragmented, and fiercely xenophobic, and one or two “contemporary” schools that have built a repertory and following around adaptations of more modern tunes taken either from other regions or from other instruments. The most prestigious, however, is the “new classical” school, founded somewhat over four hundred years ago by Téssure Sráhlán, a priestess of Wurú (d. 1971 A.S.). Téssure collected a vast number of scores and selected 289 of them, which along with her annotations on style and ornamentation became the basis of the neo-classical tradition (and also deeply influenced the other schools). In all, the instruments have a total repertoire of about six hundred pieces, not counting those kept secret by certain “house” schools.

Regardless of the name, these instruments are all very similar in construction. They are smaller than the *ténturen*, between 10 *hoi* 5 *chóptse* to 14 *hoi* (1.4-1.87 m) in length and 17-19 *chóptse* (22.7-25.3 cm) wide. Their top is slightly more rounded or arched than the full *ténturen*. The *kembirdi* has fourteen strings (seven plucked and seven drone, though sometimes two of the drone strings are removed), the *képürri* either the same or with sixteen (eight plucked and eight drone), and the *sábadeqèl* only ten (six plucked and four drone). Strings are of silk or metal, and those of a given material are all of the same length. Movable bridges for tuning are

⁴⁷ Roughly speaking, nine in the schools of Yan Kor, most of Mu’ugalavyá, and Tsolyánu west of the Mssúma River, and thirteen in northwestern Mu’ugalavyá, eastern Tsolyánu, and Salarvyá; Livyánu preserves both traditions, though the thirteen-stringed version is currently the more prestigious and considered more ancient (incorrectly, as it happens).

⁴⁸ Some of these can be quite valuable in their own right for their histories and famous owners, as much as for their workmanship.

smaller and lower than for the *ténturen*, and there are very fine small frets placed on the board of the instrument itself. One hand of the musician touches the strings (pressing frets and bridges to change pitch, dampening or cutting off notes, or shaking strings for extra vibrato) while the other hand plucks. Players of the *kembírdi* et al. use a flat, large plectrum rather than the thimbles of the *ténturen* proper; different schools or traditions vary the shape of these. There are also two performance lineages, overlapping the boundaries of school and tradition, which are distinguished by the use of vibrato: the “narrow” and the “long” (roughly, a more buzzing versus a more twangy style, respectively). In general, these instruments sound a little like a metal-strung slide guitar, ranging into banjo quality (though played slower than either of those instruments typically are). The *demi-ténturen*'s rich timbre and subtle articulatory potential makes it even more popular than the *ténturen* with some music connoisseurs of Pan Cháka; it is certainly becoming preferred over the *ténturen* proper by performance virtuosos.

The *alshúrran* is a hammered string instrument, very similar to an ancient Terran dulcimer, which apparently developed as a fusion of Do Chákan-style xylophones and the *demi-ténturen*. It has only five strings that are played, plus five more drone strings, and it is even smaller than the *demi-ténturen*. Thanks to its portability, it is closely associated with the performance of puppet plays (both shadow-puppets and enchanted puppets) and other itinerant or seasonal storytellers.

Regarding the genres and types of music performed on these instruments, Pan Cháka is quite *provincial* but not *conservative*. Its musicians continually innovate, but prefer to do so based on their own local stock of styles and musical history. Musical influences from metropolitan Tsolyánu are somewhat resisted and infiltrate only slowly; Tumissa and Bey Sü are the main points of reference for the elites, but at the popular level influences can come from almost anywhere. Of course, the classical repertoire of Engsvanyáli music is common to all civilized nations — it is merely the instrumentation and ornamentation that are distinctively local.

For the music accompanying the epic poems, Butrús fairly closely follows the standard set of scores, which are mostly of (putative) Bednálljan, or at least antique, origin. A few epics or sections thereof have variant traditions (whether textual, musical, or performance-related), particularly those kept by the temples of Wurú and Vimúhla and those maintained in certain clan traditions (Íto, Red Mountain, etc.). Instrumentation can be a bit unusual too, as Chákan-style percussion instruments (and their more complex rhythms) have replaced the traditional simple drum section. Many epics, and at least portions of all of them, have been re-scored for the *demi-ténturen*, and these bastardized pieces are sometimes even performed in public.

The “Music of the Palm” (that is, of the palm of the hand) is supposedly the music composed for the entertainment of the kings of the Ink-Flower House during the Time of No Kings. It has always been meant to accompany dances, but there is considerable controversy among various schools about which dance goes with which piece of music, and whether certain dances are in fact “authentic” at all. This music was originally gay and sprightly, and many of its tunes were apparently of foreign origin; they have since been re-orchestrated and arranged to be slower and more solemn, as befits the modern conception of “court music”. Ironically, many of these songs had been re-scored for the lithophones and “percussion consorts” by the Ink-Flowers, but then during the Second Empire were re-re-scored to more “classical” instruments with strings and winds. This has contributed to their strangeness; however, serious scholars have traced down some ancient Livyáni popular airs in this court music. All music of this genre is purely instrumental, though there is an entire specialized vocabulary for the performance of this art (both the dance and the music), which uses a large number of foreign and ancient words, and practically constitutes a secret trade cant. Special instruments are used in this genre, such as mouth organs, certain reeded woodwinds, a non-standard type of flute (above), as well as the *ténturen* or *demi-ténturen*. It is still a living tradition, with new compositions imitating the style and form of the

old repertoire still being added — though exceedingly slowly.

The “Music of the Back of the Hand”, also known as “the Southern Music”, refers specifically to the style of syncopated percussion music of the Chákas that is orchestrated in the Pan Chákan (i.e., southern) fashion, using metal or stone gongs and drums as well as wooden or bamboo ones. The Ítos were traditionally the patrons of this music; nevertheless, the repertoire is all ultimately based on folk music of the backwoods farmers and peasants. It is now considered “classical” only because of its antiquity, lack of telltale lyrics or vocal accompaniment, and its long history of noble patronage. During the periods of Pan Chákan independence under the southern branch of the Ítos, this was in fact the official court music. The original lyrics have long since been dropped, and in the majority of cases are completely unknown except for the title of the piece (typically the first line of the lyrics). Even more than the other indigenous “classical” or court tradition (the Music of the Palm) this is still a living repertoire, with new compositions being steadily added. A common form is based around the constraint of a set number of beats or notes in a piece — usually 125. A similar practice is also found in literature for the *ténturen*, but is not considered so fundamental.

“Revenant plays” are dramatic performances of a highly conventionalized, formulaic structure. The dialogue (and frequent long monologues) is of course all in verse, but is delivered in both sung and spoken sections, each quite short, that alternate rapidly and rather unpredictably. There is a distinct musical genre to accompany this, possibly the most up-tempo and “cheerful” to the Tsolyáni ear, and thus relatively popular with non-natives. Its orchestra includes three flutes, a *ténturen* and a *sepánukhan* or *di’án* (or two demi-*ténturen* in some pieces), something similar to a snare drum, one wooden and one metal gong, and a high-pitched metal chime. With the exception of the *ténturen*, all the instruments’ scores are played fast; very fast by Pan Chákan standards. The fixed plot of these plays is that a traveler (usually aristocratic or at least well-educated) visits a historically significant place and encounters a troubled or distraught commoner there, who reveals an

unusual degree of knowledge of the place’s history. The traveler tactfully suggests the commoner is in fact *dead*, a ghost or spirit of someone connected with the locale’s history, at which point the suspect breaks down. After an intermission, the character of the ghost presents a monologue narrating the key event at the place, while other performers act it out in pantomime. The *character* of the traveler from the first act is always absent from the second, but that *actor* either plays the ghost in the second half (“indoor staging”) or the chief character in the pantomime (“outdoor staging”). The main character of the pantomime may be the same “person” as the ghost of the framing narrative, of course; in such cases, the same person is present on the stage in the form of two actors simultaneously. Only some of these plays deal with nearby places and histories; many are tales from elsewhere, even foreign countries. As might be expected, the genre is closely associated with the worshippers of Sárku, and probably originates in didactic performances by priests on holy days. Due to their peculiar cultural policies, the Ítos (and to a lesser degree their clients) look down on these performances, though it is rumored that several have in fact been written by members of the Íto clan under assumed names.

The Pan Chákan tradition of plays performed by shadow-puppets has also developed its particular form of narrative song and supporting music, even though it has not really acquired an independent body of dramatic pieces or scripts. The “puppet music” has since spread, at least in Pan Cháka, to any performance that uses puppets (including the magical kind) and in some cases even to pantomimes. As the companies performing shadow-puppet plays are normally itinerant, the instruments are all small and portable. It requires a small consort of an *alshúrran* to produce the main melody, a *sepánukhan* or *di’án* for a drone sound and harmony, and one or more hand drums and rattles. Vocal style is the “standard” Pan Chákan one (*vide supra*) for sung performances; some shadow-puppet plays are entirely recited, or even, most peculiarly, partially spoken in ordinary prose.

“Lectern tales” are a genre of drama that developed from public readings of devotional

texts by priests (specifically, of the temples of Hnálla, Thúmis, and Belkhánu). These public recitations were encouraged during the Gracious Inquisition, and as their popularity grew, the content of the texts became increasingly less related to purely doctrinal and catechistic subjects. Nowadays this genre is mostly concerned with tales of adventure, martial exploits, swashbuckling, and even the deeds of criminal “heroes” — famous smugglers, for example; peculiar, given its origins. Despite their dubiously improving content, popularity with the masses, and rather austere style, “lectern tales” are now considered a relatively prestigious form of entertainment by the elites of Butrús; some even hire better-known performers to entertain at private parties. There is only one vocal part, delivered by a narrator sitting behind a low desk with a scroll-stand (originally used to hold the scripture), who recites the story in a distinctive style, alternating swiftly between slow, drawled sections and rapid-fire quick delivery. The texts are always in verse, though of a very lax and casual sort; rather than being based on meter, the form relies on line-initial alliteration and internal rhyme. Musical accompaniment is minimal — hand drums and wooden clappers and a few metallophones, which are used only to fill gaps in narration.

It may also be observed that religious plays in general in the Chákas, regardless of temple or tradition, are always extremely solemn and serious on a superficial level (though perhaps somewhat bizarre to those not familiar with them), but many times conceal humorous elements. These lighter moments are usually missed or misunderstood by outsiders, due to the Chákan taste for dry, low-key, poker-faced humor. Central Tsolyáni are often disappointed or shocked to find the Gods bursting into currently popular street songs at thematically appropriate intervals.

The genre most often referred to as “new city-music” takes its inspiration from on the painfully sentimental, overblown, sugary lyric songs of a certain age in Jakálla (themselves previously adopted from an older wave of Vrayáni love songs), but sets them to Chákan instruments — particularly the twinned moon lutes — and singing styles, conferring a jarringly mournful tone. More cultivated persons look down on this

style as a disgusting bastard music, as well as being simple-minded and shallow, but it's still popular, and a pleasure — guilty or not — for many. Despite the Chákan reputation for understated sarcasm, it seems likely that many actually enjoy the rampant emotionalism more than appreciating the irony of performing saccharine love songs in almost dirge-like style. Unlike the other genres described here, this is almost purely an urban phenomenon, limited to Butrús; Pan Chákans from rural or small-town backgrounds are no more likely to be familiar with this music, let alone enjoy it, than people from Tsolyánu proper.

Originating in the slow, stylized chant used in the *hiriláktes* to announce gladiators, duelists, special events, and their noble sponsors, “arena singing” has since spread to become a lower-class tradition in the city. In it, the words are enunciated so slowly and drawn out to such a degree that they are practically unrecognizable. “Arena songs” are accompanied only by long wooden clapper-blocks (wielded by the singer) and are always performed solo; they are as close to a purely *a cappella* genre as one finds in the Five Empires. Particularly famous performers of arena singing can be highly esteemed, whether they are actual announcers at the *hiriláktes* or are pure amateurs. During the heyday of Kékkunu Chu'úra (d. 2318) it was not uncommon for people to go to the arena simply in order to hear his performance of the schedule and major announcements; they would leave for refreshments during the events.

Staying close to its roots, pretty much any list of things or objects can be turned into one of these “songs”. The subject can be practically anything — members of *marotlán* teams from famous historical matches, the names of check-stations along the *sákbe* road to Tumissa, names of famous folk-preachers and wandering monks, varieties of *mash* fruit, a famous courtesan's lovers, etc. The oldest composition of this genre outside the arenas proper is simply a long, extremely slowly-intoned inventory of the various tools used in fighting house-fires; it is considered the “property” of the semi-professional fire brigades of the city, who object

strenuously to others performing it in public.⁴⁹ The most recent song of this type is a list of “desert words” — geographical features, types of sand and gravel, weather patterns, special tools and clothing, and so forth — all copied from a popular folk-play of two generations ago that dealt with the tribulations of a poor caravaneer of the Desert of Eyági. (The original play is now best preserved by the Dark Flame clan and largely forgotten by the rest of Tsolyánu.)

“Work group songs” are derived from songs and chants used by laboring and work parties, especially *corvée* labor teams; their tempo has since slowed greatly but they preserve much of the rhythmic regularity and leader-chorus structure. As with “arena songs”, the words are stylized, and each syllable is drawn out to such lengths that the original meaning is hard to follow. “Arena singing” is difficult to understand; “work group songs” are almost impossible. They are also less prestigious than the arena songs; only the lower classes of society (urban society, at least) would admit to listening to this music, let alone performing it. The oldest seem to be based on the songs of loggers and timber-haulers; the style later spread to the songs of miners, and most recently the work-songs of other regions of Tsolyánu have been adopted into it. For example, a song of the bargemen of southeast Tsolyánu (a “canal shanty”?) which was popular in its own right forty or fifty years ago has been modified to fit this style. There is always one leader or soloist, and a chorus of no more than nine others (often as few as one additional singer). Oddly, drums are never used to accompany this music; sometimes one of the bowed instruments is used.

Scholastic Learning

There are three major temple schools in Butrús. The Crucible of Glowing-Hot Skulls is the most conservative; for example, it still teaches the Classical Tsolyáni script as part of the standard curriculum — although the language itself is no longer used as the medium of instruction, as it

was until about a century ago. It is attended by devotees of the two gods of fire and by a few others who disapprove of the Thúmisite and Ksáruilian schools. The Pavilion of Vision in the Pearly Clouds is the former of these, and educates most followers of Stability (with the exception of a few worshippers of Karakán who send their children to the Crucible); the Tower of Indigo Thought is its counterpart for the followers of Change. The other temples have only priestly colleges, which do not conduct primary-level education (with very rare exceptions). Some of the larger and wealthier clans have established private academies for their children; the most notable of these is the Colonnade of Ancestral Teachings in the Íto clan compound. While there are very few Ítos in Butrús, the clan not only draws in Íto children from the estates and manors of the countryside, but has opened enrollment in its family school to worthy members of their old clients — such as the Black Domed Tomb, the secretive Striding Incantation clan of puppeteers, and even some humble and rather obscure rural clans.

The quality of medicine is about average for Tsolyánu, though it is worth noting that dentistry is a specialty of the local temple of Keténgku. Until recently, retarded and malformed infants were usually sacrificed (per the Mu’ugalavyáni custom), but nowadays the temples of Avánthe and Keténgku, respectively, take more of them in. Many ailments are tied to local beliefs that would be alien even to other Tsolyáni, e.g., that fevers are caused by a particular family of nocturnal spirits. Exactly one thousand of these ghosts are birthed each morning by mysterious specter called a “fever-auntie”, who then devours them when they return home each night.⁵⁰ A number of local pharmacopeia exist, but it should be noted that in the Five Empires a “local pharmacopeia” deals with local diseases, not with locally produced herbs or medicines. As it is believed that sickness is caused by demons or spirits, these are considered to have their local and regional peculiarities — just as animals or people do — and thus require treatment that is specific to

⁴⁹ The temple of Chiténg has begun to perform it in “unofficial”, non-ceremonial circumstances, which has met with sharp criticism and a lawsuit may be impending—assuming the volatile firemen don’t take matters into their own itchy and brawling-prone hands.

⁵⁰ For the record, a pharmacopoeia written in the 1400s and preserved in the temple of Thúmis at Butrús notes that a “fever auntie” is about the size and shape of the wheel of a *chlen*-cart, but is never clearly seen—only heard rustling through the deepest thickets of the forest.

their native place. Thus, the guides to “local medicine” for Pan Cháka completely ignore many native plant and animal preparations that are highly esteemed elsewhere, and contain recipes full of exotic medicines that must be imported from abroad.⁵¹

The city boasts some reputable scholars and collections on military history, Mu’ugalavyáni affairs, the Dragon Warriors, and Chákan regional history. A notable academic feud has been carried on across many generations (and centuries) between two schools of regional historians of the Engsvanyáli age: that of Tumíssa on one hand and that of Pagús and Butrús on the other. While the latter school originated in Pagús and its most famous proponents have been based there, its adherents in Butrús have been diligent, highly argumentative and even more productive, and are generally better known to a Tsolyáni audience.

Outside of the official writings of the modern government and temples, the native private historiographical tradition has been limited to annalistic formats, where events and individuals are presented in a rigid chronological framework, with no topical arrangement — even biographies of important individuals are almost unknown in, for example, the various Íto clan historical compilations. Archeology is fairly advanced, and over the centuries the city’s academies have produced a fair number of noted “antiquarians with shovels”, as the disparaging Tsolyáni idiom puts it.

Flower and bird fanciers have reasonably sophisticated taxonomies of their interests; they tend to be loosely under the patronage of the temple of Avánthe and of Ksárul. The fairly well known illustrated handbook for bird breeders, *Master Mulákna’s Annotated Portfolio of the Little Gentlemen and Ladies of the Rattan Palaces*, was written by a Butrusséne, and his descendants preserve his aviary-studio to this

day.⁵² In a more economically vital field, the most famous agronomic manual for the region is the ninth-century Mu’ugalavyáni Jáishe Fiú’s *Handbook of Techniques Essential for the Subsistence of the Commonality*; it is considered authoritative for both the Chákas and much of eastern Mu’ugalavyá, and has spawned a long line of commentators and imitators. Mineralogy and speleology are very advanced, in no small part due to the plethora of limestone caves and sinkholes as well as the importance of iron and cinnabar mining in the region. The extensive collected works of a Thúmisite spelunker and poet (Tólungget Dhihrún, 2306-2349) are preserved in the city and perhaps worthy of perusal. The Black Theocrat is believed to have employed gunpowder in his bid for power, but the secrets of its use are long forgotten — though accounts of his rockets, mines, and bombs survive well enough, and antiquarians preserve a few strange muskets. The little noisemaking and flash- or spark-generating firecrackers manufactured locally for use in certain festivals of the folk religion are not even recognized as being related to these other, more malign, uses of gunpowder.

Cartography is slightly more advanced in Butrús than in the rest of Tsolyánu, thanks in large part to lingering Mu’ugalavyáni influence. The building of three-dimensional models is particularly popular — not limited to the sand tables of military generals, but also used in engineering, water conservancy, and urban planning. The giant scale model of the city of Butrús, housed in the offices of the Metropolitan Prefect, is perhaps the most famous, elaborate, and largest, and is also the most realistic and “lifelike”. It was originally built in the early 2150s by the cabal behind the planning of the *ditlána* and since updated and improved. It is at the scale of 1:400, so the city walls of the diorama barely fit within the building and suburbs such as the City of the Dead had to be excluded. To clean and adjust the model, artisan-clerks are lowered on slings or bamboo platforms from the ceiling rafters; though it draws a fair number of curiosity-seekers as well, they are rarely permitted to do the same, and

⁵¹ See *Prescriptions Worth a Thousand in Gold* or possibly *The ABCs of Circuit Listening*. Perhaps consulted for entertainment as much as medical wisdom is *Mu’ónikh de Parshál Tlakichéngguyal HiButrús par Churé* (“How to Tell the Butrús Ailments, ‘Get Out!’”), treating with the sickness-demons particular to Butrús.

⁵² No birds remain, but his collection of hand-made cages (the “rattan palaces” of his book’s title) are intact; they are all fantastically elaborate and ingenious, often quite large, and according to some, enchanted.

must content themselves with gazing at the huge model from its outskirts. While the city planners who built this model donated it to the prefectural government, the temples of Thúmis and Keténgku (of which they were members) have continuously sought to have it “returned” to their custody, through legal and political channels. The “suburbs” of the original model were broken up when it was moved to its current location, and their current disposition is unknown. As the model was first built primarily as an aid in surveying and engineering, rather than the minutely detailed and beautifully crafted representational accuracy of its current state, these older elements are probably relatively nondescript and uninteresting except to a collector or scholar. A similar map-model of the surrounding area, using the “Myriad Condensator” scale (1:10,000), was built to assist in constructing new drainage and water supply systems, but has also fallen into obscurity.

Compass bearings and topographic surveying are widely used and applied to a square grid for mapping; a standard symbol set is used for nonrepresentational maps (a box is a prefectural or district town, a circle a village, a triangle a fortified point, and so forth); modern names are written in black ink and historical or foreign names in red; additional symbols note population, land quality, relative elevation, administrative hierarchy, and so forth. On the other hand, cartography in the Chákas is genuinely hampered by strict adherence to one of only two scales of representation: the Myriad Condensator (1:10,000) and the Three-Tsan Perspective (1:400). Rigid application and teaching of only these two scales has not only made the production of useful maps difficult, but has discouraged flexibility and freedom in applying geometrical and arithmetical principles to practical problems in this field.

As astrological predictions and justifications have been repeatedly used by rebels and heretics in the Chákas over the past thousand and more years, the practice of astronomy is unusually regulated in both protectorates, with a statutory sentence of two years penal labor for unlicensed teaching of astronomy, the ownership of restricted books or instruments, or for publishing calendars or almanacs without

government imprimatur. (If the *content* of such teaching or publication is found to be seditious in itself, of course, the astrologer will face much more severe charges in addition.) The erudite of Butrús may have a Copernican idea of the solar system, influenced by the doctrines of Hrsh. However, among most of the common folk of Pan Cháka, the Vimúhlan conception of the universe as a “leaf falling into the flames” is the accepted one, even if they do not follow the faith of Vimúhla themselves.

Timekeeping is a particularly complicated business in the city of Butrús, so mention should be made of the tools used to calculate the passage of time. Sundials and gnomons are restricted to professional astronomers and a few priests of Hnálla and are not available for common use. The main chronometrical instruments in use (both in official life and in the temples) are clepsydra, or waterclocks. The government offices of the protectorate use single-chamber outflow designs, in which a floating measuring rod inserted through a hole in the lid of the main tank drops as the water level falls (hence the colloquial name of “drowning man vats” or, more technically, “sinking rod clocks”).⁵³ For those using the old-fashioned Bednálljan horology with the length of daytime and nighttime *ténmre* and *kirén* varying during the course of the year, a set of rods of different lengths are required; the more accurate the clock, the more rods must be in the set. Official time for the city is kept on such a clock using sixty rods, switching them each week. The most accurate such clock in the city has a set of 36 rods — each one used for only one day of the year.⁵⁴ (Note that any given waterclock of the standard type can keep either “eight-the-same” or “four-and-four” time, simply by switching the graduated rods in use.) For private or domestic use, a few wealthy households may have their own waterclocks, but most individuals who feel the need to keep track

⁵³ Mu’ugalavyá, along with Livyánu, uses more accurate inflow designs of clepsydra, but in this case Pan Cháka follows Tsolyánu and the rest of the Five Empires. Aside from the Mu’ugalavyáni consulate, there are certainly a few examples of the standard Mu’ugalavyáni two-chamber inflow waterclock in private hands in Butrús. Because in this design the measuring rod rises with the water level rather than sinking, they are vulgarly known as “erection clocks”.

⁵⁴ The intercalary days, of course, exist outside of time, and so there are not 365 rods.

of the exact time do so with various hourglasses filled with sand or graduated incense-burners.

The old Chákan calendar is still known, and is followed by some peasants, remote frontier settlements, and traditionalist urban residents. It is radically different from the basically solar calendar of Tsolyánu and the other Engsvanyáli calendrical systems; it is based on “turns” of 73 days. It is known that this unit represents the orbital period of the planet Ülétl, and it is believed by some scholars that this is a survival (and later development) of an ancient calendar used by the Sárku-worshipping peoples of the central and northern Chákas.

In further perverseness, each of the 73 days of the “turn” is named, not numbered. A full list is not given here, but they include topographical features (Pond, Sinkhole, Mountain, Savanna, Ravine, Burnt Clearing, Slope, Cliff, Spire), specific place names in the two Chákas and neighboring areas, names of trees, plants, or food crops (Bamboo, Rice, Buckwheat), domestic and wild animals (*Khéshchal*, Dog, Toad, Beetle, *Khurruhirrúkhú*, Snake, *Vringálu*, Deer, *Rényu*, *Zrne*, Carp, Eel), tools or material implements (Flint, Terra Cotta, Axe, Blade, Bronze, Mallet, Hoe), meteorological phenomena (Wind, Cloud, Rainbow, Rain), the planets (both their visible “light” aspects and their “dark” counter-orbitals), stages of life, etc. Even that is not complicated enough: some days have multiple names, such as the one known as Fire or Cardamom Flower in alternating “facings”, or the one called Metal (at night) or Mirror (during the day).

A numbered sequence of 26 turns constitutes one “facing” of the calendar (1898 days, or 5.2 years); two “facings” make up a “unity”, the largest period in the traditional calendar. A bookkeeping convention, to aid in correlation with the Engsvanyáli calendars while avoiding the use of fractions, was a “binding” of ten facings, or 52 normal Tsolyáni years. For mythological and cosmological uses in certain texts and oral traditions kept by the Ítos and local sects, much larger multiple periods are also cited — a “thrill” of nine unities, a “silence” of seventy thrills, a “patience” of one hundred and nine silences, and a “childhood” of twelve

patiences — the lattermost being a period of 8,560,016 years.⁵⁵

Adjustments need to be inserted on a regular basis in order to keep this calendar reflecting the astronomical movement of Ülétl, but this has not been done since the end of the seventh century — once the last Íto-ruled kingdom fell, the calendar lost its only official sponsor, as it has never been accepted by the priesthoods of Sárku proper. Modern discussion amongst the Íto branches and their supporters about the possibility of correcting the calendar have always broken down in bitter disputes over record-keeping, arithmetic, observational methodology, and other, underlying, familial disagreements.

There is no generally accepted or even widespread starting date for count of years using this calendar. In Pan Cháka, the last widely used one was that of the final Íto client state, which was officially closed in 782 A.S., sometime in its Eighth Turn during the Second Facing of the Seventeenth Unity. By that count, the New Year of 2260 A.S. should fall in the Sixteenth Turn around the Second Facing of the 175th Unity; however, no one in their right mind — not even Íto separatists — would suggest using such a date. In event of a Chákan secession under an Íto, or any ruler who chose to re-institute the calendar, the count would be restarted from a new beginning. Those who continue to use the calendar at all simply track the passage of days, starting over after each turn. The day-names in the calendar are often used for selecting names to children born on particular days and for simple prognostic astrology.

Even the standard Tsolyáni calendar, derived from that of Kazhilo’ób I of Éngsvan hla Gánga, has some local accretions. One is that the names of the days of the week are different in Pan Cháka: though the normal ones are also known almost universally, they are simply not used except in writing, in formal situations, or in dealing with foreigners who don’t know any

⁵⁵ The “day”, “turn”, “facing”, and “unity” of this calendar are *hági*, *daunár*, *lauzhú*, and *prúdali* (literally “a great 1”) in Tsolyáni; *kágü*, *má’u*, *no’ojun* and *ú’epre* in the local vernacular.

better.⁵⁶ Another is that each of the sixty weeks of the year is classified as either a “nodal” or a “modal” week, according to ancient regional phenological tradition.⁵⁷ Nodal weeks are those that occur at major transitions (e.g., arrival of the monsoons, beginning of the ebb in the water table, solstices, equinoxes, and so forth) while the rest are modal weeks. Each nodal week has a descriptive name based on the significant climactic, agricultural, or ecological event that is supposed to take place during those six days; these names still appear in almanacs out of tradition but are generally ignored. Modal weeks are numbered rather than named. The overall nodal-modal distinction is slightly better known than the specific phenological week-names, and some astrologers as well as archconservative farmers and townsfolk take it into consideration when casting horoscopes.

The intercalary days occur between the twelfth month of one year and the first month of the next. Until the Mu’ugalavyáni conquest, however, Pan Cháka observed these days in the middle of the year (mid-Fésru), included in the “central season” of the ancient five- or six-season annual cycle. In those times New Year’s observances were limited to the first ten days of the first month. The Mu’ugalavyáni put a stop to this practice where the Tsolyáni had failed, and forced through calendrical reforms that finally took hold. Rather than cut short the ancient ten-day New Year’s celebrations when the intercalary days were moved, Pan Cháka simply extended them — the five intercalary days *plus* the native ten-day festival. This is only important today insofar as days of the week and month given in Pan Chákan texts written before 1577 A.S. do not coincide with those of the standard Tsolyáni (or Mu’ugalavyáni) chronicles.

GOVERNMENT

⁵⁶ In place of Surúnra, Mugún, Zaqé, Rū’üsá, Tlakál, and Daunél, one hears Sarégeng, Arbéjeng, Zhe’únqeng, Lúttugeng, Áhlujeng, and Chógeng (also written Ch’ogeng and Chougeng in earlier texts).

⁵⁷ The intercalary days are always considered as five (or six) separate entities and never as a week of their own.

The highest authority in the protectorate is the Governor’s Court, which blends the traditions of Tsolyáni imperial administration, Mu’ugalavyáni colonial bureaucracy, and the ancient protocols of indigenous kingdoms and chiefdoms. The Governor of Pan Cháka has greater powers and privileges than governors of the central Tsolyáni provinces, but at the same time is bound up in a delicately balanced web of local and national politics and custom that is even more complex than what they are faced with. The work of the Governor is further rendered awkward by the never quite clear legal and ritual relationship of the protectorate to Avanthár. Pan Cháka is not a province, but neither is it any longer a client state or tributary kingdom. While now subject to Tsolyáni law, there are a number of minor variations and exceptions that are permitted by imperial edicts and treaties dating back as far as the eighth century. For example, impalement is replaced by simple beheading for almost all capital punishments; only a few crimes against the empire itself may still be answered with the “high ride”. Nor is it to be forgotten that the chief *sákbe* highway in the region is a fortified wall on the *eastern* border, not protecting Pan Cháka from the Mu’ugalavyáni, but guarding the heartlands of Tsolyánu from the half-alien frontier of which the protectorate still remains a part.

Bureaucracy

The customary “Four Palaces” of the Tsolyáni civil service exist in Pan Cháka, answering both to the Governor and to the national headquarters of their respective Palaces. While a confused, corrupt shambles by the standards of neighboring Mu’ugalavyá, the regional and urban administration of Pan Cháka and Butrús is a tightly-run ship, strikingly efficient, staffed by officials both diligent and committed to real ideals of good governance — at least compared to most of Tsolyánu. As this has been so for many generations, it seems likely that it is due not to the mettle of the current office-holders but to the influence of the neighboring nation, and perhaps a desire to compete with their way of doing things, in their own terms.

It is worth noting that the bureaucracy as a whole, particularly in Mu’ugalavyá but also in Tsolyánu, is actually made up of two distinct

groups. The first is the formal civil service, whose members hold ranks in the system of “circles” (*kartu’únya*); the other consists of the unofficial, unranked servants of the government. These latter are often cleaners, cooks, body-servants, runners and messengers, and the like, but may be specialized artisans, technical experts, or educated and skilled advisors and assistants. The ranked civil servants are referred to in bureaucratic jargon as those “in the current”, and the unofficial governmental staff as those “outside the current”.⁵⁸ The salaries and upkeep of those “outside the current” are frequently not covered by the government, even though their positions are mandated by the administrative codes. The incumbent in office over them is thus responsible for meeting the costs out of his or her own pocket. These private secretariats are colloquially or poetically known as “lily-pad tents”, suggesting the temporary and informal nature of much of their patronage, and the lack of solid foundations supporting them.

In Pan Cháka, one must be “nominated” in order to enter the formal bureaucracy, and these nominations must come from outside the protectorate’s central government, yet still from within the borders of Pan Cháka. Nomination is a special privilege of certain noble families or lineages, certain temples (that is, specific temple establishments, not a sect as a whole), and of the prefect of each prefecture in Pan Cháka.⁵⁹ An annual quota is fixed for each bearer of the privilege of nomination, and if they cannot put enough candidates forward in a given year to meet their quota they must provide an acceptable written explanation of why no suitable individuals can be found or else face a significant fine. Repeated failure to provide nominations for service constitutes an imperial crime. Officials from Tsolyánu proper who wish to take up posts in Pan Cháka must also obtain a nomination from within the protectorate, regardless of their current rank — though of course, in cases where a high-ranking Tsolyáni official seeks a “sponsor”, the normal relationship of power and patronage may be entirely reversed. The class of person who may

be nominated — that is, someone of the appropriate clan, lineage, and economic background — is often called by terms such as “headdress and plaque houses” or “collar and pen people” in the Chákas.

The intent behind this cumbersome system, first established in the ninth century and only occasionally adjusted since, was to prevent “outsiders” (i.e., Tsolyáni carpetbaggers, in the eyes of Pan Chákans) from gaining disproportionate influence in the bureaucracy, and ensuring that outlying areas of Pan Cháka have some chance of getting their people into government service. The central Tsolyáni government is not fond of this arrangement, but it has been a key element in demonstrating imperial benevolence and the expected degree of devolution, and thus helping keep Pan Cháka docile under imperial sway. The fact that once accepted into the service of the protectorate, Pan Chákan officials may move to posts within Tsolyánu proper without any special approval, but not vice versa, continues to rankle their metropolitan peers.

After a new recruit has been nominated, examined, and accepted for service, he or she is given the semiofficial title of Court Gentleman. These are further divided into three groups: the Outer Gentlemen, accepted for service in one of the four Palaces, usually to be assigned to a branch or local office outside the city; the Inner Gentlemen, with higher personal status or qualifications, accepted for service in the Governor’s Court itself or in one of the Palace headquarters in the city; and finally, the Standby Gentlemen. The latter category contains all Court Gentlemen who have been assigned a substantive post but have not yet taken office; it is also the title is also given to any more senior official who is between posts. The Court Gentlemen thus serve as a reservoir of potential talent and skilled labor, or as a parasitical horde of unproductive wastrels, depending on one’s point of view. (A Court Gentleman receives one-fifth pay for his nominal rank.)

The thirty Circles of rank, inherited from the Engsvanyáli age, are in the Chákas and southern and eastern Mu’ugalavyá divided into ten groups of three Circles each. These are called Tiers, and

⁵⁸ *Bruvafái* and *tsirebafái*, respectively. In Chákan dialect, *vruvamái* and *sírvamái*.

⁵⁹ With the exception of the Metropolitan Prefecture of Butrús itself.

used where individual details of seniority and status are less important — e.g., in setting the necessary range of ranks for different postings, or in assigning sumptuary privileges and arranging court protocols. Confusingly, they are ordered in reverse sequence to Circles, with Tier I referring to the highest ranks (Circles 28-30) and Tier X corresponding to the lowest (Circles 1-3).

By old Pan Chákan tradition, each of the major organs of government is associated with one of the seasons or cosmic forces. Thus the Palace of the Realm is the “Palace of Spring”, the Palace of Ever-Glorious War is the “Palace of Winter”, the Palace of the Priesthoods of the Gods is the “Palace of Summer”, and the Palace of Foreign Lands is the “Palace of Autumn”, while the Governor’s Court is the “Mansion of the Earth” and Avanthár or Bey Sü (the central government and its envoys, in any case) is the “Mansion of the Sky”.

Thanks to Mu’ugalavyáni habits of rationalized organization and tidiness, the structural units making up the institutions of Chákan government can be characterized as follows. At the highest level are the Palaces, with their chief divisions being the Bureaus. Immediately below them are, in order of size and autonomy, Directorates, Divisions, and Departments. Departments are the most “routine” and are always directly responsible to a higher-level office, while Divisions are often ad-hoc groupings with little substantive power beyond that of their component parts. Directorates, on the other hand, may be extremely powerful and autonomous, and some may even cut across provincial boundaries. The next tier of organization below these is that of the Offices, which go by a number of different titles and sub-gradations; below them in turn are Sections and finally Services. While these three levels (Office, Section, and Service) are almost invariably subordinated to a Department, they may also report directly to a higher level of authority, such as a Directorate or Bureau. There are many variations and adaptations of this general schema; the Governor’s Court is particularly divergent, as it preserves elements of the independent pre-Tsolyáni kingdoms of Pan Cháka, as well as archaic Tsolyáni

institutions from before the Mu’ugalavyáni occupation.

In Pan Cháka, like neighboring Mu’ugalavyá, the quantity and quality of bureaucratic paperwork is greater than that of the empire of Tsolyánu, and far more elaborately developed. For example, just for items issued from the emperor, there are distinct and specific formats, handling and routing protocols, and terminology for proclamations or edicts, for secret edicts, for personally-drafted edicts (those directly from the emperor), for commands, for documents of appointment and investment, and for imperial rescripts (“azure annotations”, as they are written in the blue ink reserved for the emperor’s words). Communications passing up to the ruler or local heads of government are generally termed “memorials” in a variety of types: the *ngárshinchkù’u* to express gratitude, a *júrtlaqubu* to make an impeachment or report an investigation, a *qúninchkù’u* to express feelings, a *tláktek* to express dissent or contrary opinion, or a *súllante* as a policy proposal. Once in Pan Cháka, anyone (even a non-official) could, in theory, submit a “personal memorial” to the ruler. This dropped out of practice when the region became part of Tsolyánu, but such “personal memorials” may still be submitted to the Governor. (Submitting one to the Ítos is considered a treasonous act.)

A senior official giving instructions to a subordinate issues an “order plaque” but in addressing the public or a wider audience uses an “roll of annunciation”; more informal communications to inferiors or subordinates are “tablets” or “notes”. Lateral communications between officials are termed “conveyances” or “transmittals”, and communications between parallel offices or officials at higher levels, “consultations” or “dispatches”. Everyday documents between offices are “collected information”, but the Grand Councilors instead use “conjoint tickets”. Diplomatic documents and treaties or covenants between clans are all termed “cards” due to the special heavyweight stiff paper they are presented upon. The general Tsolyáni term for a letter, whether public or private, is *fáshdri*, though in Pan Cháka it strongly implies a public document — a private

letter is a *sórintlqunte*, or “writing-the-belly”⁶⁰ (i.e., the seat of the emotions and feelings).

Even the size of paper used is closely regulated in Pan Cháka. A sheet is stipulated as being two *hoi* (26.7 cm) on a side, with letters and correspondence written on single sheets, legal and court documents on pages made of three sheets glued side-to-side (2 x 6 *hoi*, or 26.7 x 80 cm), and all other government documents on pages made of two sheets glued side-to-side (2 x 4 *hoi*, or 26.7 x 53.3 cm). To manufacture or own written materials of these dimensions that are not governmental documents is a criminal act, punishable by six to eighteen months’ hard labor per half-*pse* (375 g) of material.

With all this wealth of documentation, the archives of the protectorate’s government are enormous, and are kept manageable only by classifying each document as either “ephemeral” or “eternal” — the former are destroyed after three years in the archives (though often not before being abstracted for permanent records); the latter are kept indefinitely.⁶¹ With changes in government, the old archives are often partially dismantled and discarded — though tax rolls, etc., are usually kept — and some parts may find their ways into private hands. For example, portions of the official archives during the Mu’ugalavyáni occupation now are property of the Temple of Karakán in Butrús, and smaller pieces are in various clan libraries of the “Four Red” clans; the Íto clan, of course, still holds extensive original records of an official nature from its pre-Tsolyáni rule over the region.

A final note on paperwork: In Tsolyánu, the excellence of a document’s calligraphy is of as great concern as its contents. Clerks and scribes are evaluated on this more than any other factor, and even higher-level officials may owe their careers to having a good hand. In Pan Cháka, unfortunately, the quality of office calligraphy is almost uniformly poor. Working documents are usually scrawled in quick and

stark penmanship with no attention to form, and even formal copies and final issues are of mediocre quality at best. While most of the officials who are Chákan born-and-bred could care less about this shortcoming — or may even perversely take pride in it — those who seek employment outside the protectorate rapidly discover it is a matter of intense shame, to say nothing of being an impediment to advancement. Bureaucrats from outside Pan Cháka, or other individuals having contact with government papers, are usually appalled at the casual handwriting in use, and are even more disgusted at the cavalier attitude toward it. (The acceptance of low-quality calligraphy in government service does not extend to other spheres, though, and the most illegible and sloppy drafter in the civil service may well be a noted calligrapher of poetry or religious texts in his private life.)

Unlike in Tsolyánu proper, the Four Palaces in Butrús and the Governor’s Court are open every day of the week, with the exception of major festival days; government also closes down on the five intercalary days. In smaller towns and the prefectural and district seats, too, the office-holders are technically expected to work every day not specially designated as a civic holiday. However, in these smaller establishments there is more scope for laxity and shirking duty. Currently the protectorate sets a total maximum of 35 days per year for officials’ holidays and personal vacations, with a maximum of one week (six days) in any given instance. This is more generous than the Mu’ugalavyáni code, but shockingly restrictive to officials used to the slacker and more flexible Tsolyáni practices. Normal hours of work for the government offices are very early: the official day starts several hours before dawn (approximately 3 a.m.) and runs until early afternoon (about 1-2 p.m.), with only a brief mid-morning pause for food and drink. When necessary, individuals will return to work after a break or siesta of about four *kirén* (two hours) and continue until nightfall; entire offices may reconvene in this manner. Given the competitive element in Pan Chákan bureaucratic culture, it is often necessary to be seen in one’s office in the evening, or one’s reputation and prestige will fall. Accordingly, Pan Chákan officials put in long hours — 50-60 hours per week is considered the

⁶⁰ The equivalent phrase in standard Tsolyáni would be *súrim tlaqúni*.

⁶¹ It is said that in the Chákas, scholars and librarians don’t count the size of their collections or the length of books by the number of pages or volumes, but by *weight*. This is true, as a matter of fact, though Butrusséne may resent the implication that they’re any less literati because of it.

minimum! As banquets, receptions, and formal feasts are held in the evening and often well into the night, it is quite common for officials to go directly from social events to their office in the early morning and begin work — regardless of their state of rest or inebriation.

One regular event of some importance within the bureaucracy is the Quintuplicate Collocation of Court Officers, now held five times during the year. All officials of the Tenth Circle and above (or technically, Tiers I through VII), regardless of their substantive post, meet with the Governor *en masse* in the Broad Hall of Devotion to the State and by turns submit verbal summaries and reports on current developments and affairs in their area of responsibility. This is followed by a banquet, by tradition always held off official premises — usually at one of the winemakers' and food-preparers' clans, but sometimes set up as a "picnic" at some suitable location. Under many recent governors, the banqueting has assumed priority over the personal reports.

Law and the Courts

As in all the Five Empires, the legal code is based on the Engsvanyáli-era *Book of Golden Signs*, by one Mikotlángme of Purdánim. However, as noted above, there are instances in which local laws supersede the standard Tsolyáni legal codes. As in Mu'ugalavyá (and to a degree in Livyánu), there is a sharp distinction between criminal law codes, administrative legal codes, and the implementation of "customary law". What we would recognize as civil and economic law is covered in part under each of these three categories. To further complicate matters, the court system in Tsolyánu does not correspond perfectly to these "Two Main and One Residual" codes of law, but is divided into "Imperial Courts" vs. "Civil Courts".

Criminal law is set out in "Codes" that prescribe an action and punishment for each infringement of the law. These codes are modified and supplemented by "Regulations", while their implementation is defined in "Ordinances". They are further altered, expanded, and applied in light of "Precedents" or "Substatutes" that accrue to the general headings of the Codes or to the Regulations. The huge number of

precedents and substatutes are collected in compilations for each emperor, called the *Itemized Substatutes of the Reign of...* An important compilation specifically on criminal cases is the casebook of precedents called the *Conspectus on Penal Cases*. Finally, there are occasional compilations of specifically Pan Chákan precedent that any magistrate will need to consult: "Provincial Substatutes", "Local Case Histories", "Supplementary Regulations", or "Itemized Substatutes". The category of criminal law covers, in Tsolyáni terms, not only cases of the imperial courts (with the comparatively wider scope for including criminal cases that they have in Pan Cháka), but also areas such as the proper administration of *shámtila*, the dueling code, and higher-level precepts regarding military and ecclesiastic law.

Administrative law is listed as "Statutes" (or "Commands") at the most general level. As with criminal law, they are also elaborated and specified by Regulations, Ordinances, and Precedents. It mainly deals with the regulations and rules of government and the bureaucratic apparatus, and is rarely relevant to the public. Texts and codices of administrative law are generally organized to mirror the organization of the bureaucracy itself; there are thus separate volumes for each Palace, with individual chapters for the bureaus, and so on. This body of texts in Pan Cháka thus not only sets out the common administrative precepts and bureaucratic practices of the Tsolyáni empire, but also describes and codifies the particular arrangement and establishment of the offices of government in the protectorate. The former component is based on the *Todukái Négo Statutes* (formally, the *Compendium of Administrative Statutes of the Reign of Todukái Négo Arranged by Category*); the latter, local elements have been written up by Tsolyáni and local officialdom into regulations and ordinances and inserted into the *(New) Statutes of Payássa the Viceroy*.⁶² The combined result is the hefty tome entitled *Digest of Regulations of the Government Offices of the New Western Protectorate*. The specifically Pan Chákan legal codes (but not information on bureaucratic

⁶² So named after the Governor of Pan Cháka 1402-1423, Payássa Thashúr, who presided over the compilation; it was necessarily revised late in the nineteenth century but kept the original name with the prefix "New".

establishments) can also be found, separated out, in a number of compilations under the general titles of “Established Regulations” or “Supplementary Precedents”.

Customary law consists of those aspects of civil and commercial law that are not covered in the penal Codes or administrative Statutes but which still come before a magistrate for resolution; they also include precepts on peculiarly Pan Chákan institutions such as feuding, Páchi Lei relations (such as the handling of damage, death, or injuries caused by *biyúrh*), the application of justice to tribal persons, requirements of the ancestral cults, etc., which have not been officially recognized by the imperial government and incorporated as “provincial substatutes” or the like.

All three legal systems are set out in practical, didactic terms in a handbook prepared for junior magistrates in Pan Cháka: the *Collection of Lucid Decisions and Parallel Cases by Celebrated Judges*.

Palace of the Realm

The “Palace of Spring” is the largest single governmental institution in Pan Cháka, containing some five hundred ranked bureaucrats plus their servants, slaves, attendants, and other workers “outside the current”. In many respects it is also the most important and powerful; certainly so from the point of view of the average peasant or villager.

The Bureau of Justice and Punishments is regarded as the most prestigious and “honorable” of the four branches of the Palace. Its head is called the “Kingfisher Gleaner”, due to an old Chákan legend about the origins of the post during Bednálljan times in which a lowly gatherer of kingfisher feathers becomes the first incumbent. Such feathers are still used in the halcyon-blue ceremonial cape of this official and on his regular baton of office.

In Pan Cháka, following an outdated Mu’ugalavyáni practice, each court has three officials with legal power — the magistrate, the vice-magistrate, and the procurator — as well as a small staff of other officials (a clerk, a secretary, etc.) and numerous unranked

servants. The procurator is the investigator or detective for the court system, gathering information on crimes or disputes and assisting the judge in evaluating the truthfulness and completeness of witnesses, testimonials, and evidence presented. The vice-magistrate is usually slightly senior to the procurator and is the magistrate’s direct “understudy”, assisting in the courtroom side of things — legal research, investigation of precedent, and so forth. In practice, the two junior members’ duties overlap considerably, and the magistrate proper will likely also participate in these matters. In principle an official is supposed to have served as both procurator and vice-magistrate before being eligible for the position of magistrate, but in many cases has only held one of the two posts. Regarding the investigative role of the court, it should be noted that private investigations by clans and temples into criminal cases are frowned upon, especially in Pan Cháka, and are rarely admissible in themselves in court. While such parties certainly do involve themselves, they must be cautious and subtle in going about it. Tampering with a court investigation is, technically, a species of treason and punished as an imperial crime.

The Division of Imperial Courts is a grouping of the four courts of law that handle imperial cases. The seniormost judge from among them is simultaneously appointed the head of the division. The Court of the Realm is a generalist court, and despite being badly overburdened and backlogged, it constantly fights for jurisdiction over cases with the two specialist courts. The first of these is the Court of Crimes Against the Public — broadly speaking, intended to handle offenses against the common interest but which do not involve single specific clans, temples, or the state itself as the plaintiff (e.g., arson or rioting). The other is the Court of Crimes Against the Seal Emperor, which was set up specifically to investigate and prosecute crimes against the government of Tsolyánu and its representatives in Pan Cháka; it handles cases such as espionage and treason. The Court of Imperial Appeal in the Protectorate of Pan Cháka is the appellate court for cases that have been either referred either from one of the other imperial courts in Butrús or handed up from local or civil courts in the protectorate. The Division of Imperial Courts also contains the

Office for the Conferral of Imperial Citizenship (with a Detached Vice-Magistrate presiding over these naturalizations) and the Office for the Registry of Criminals, which is a fairly complete listing of convictions, though not necessarily of criminals — it has trouble tracking them once they leave the court and enter the prisons or public life. It at least keeps record of their origins and immediate family.

The Division of the Civil Courts is counterpart to the preceding group. It is made up of the Court of the Left and the Court of the Right, two separate chambers that handle general civil cases, with no functional distinction between them; the Court of the Chancery, which specializes in commercial and business disputes; the Court of Conflicts Among the Filial, specializing in personal disputes across clan boundaries and the assignment of *shámtla* payments. An arrangement of “blood-money” for murder (and any other offenses that are subject to the penal code) which has not been presented to and approved by a court is itself a felony. The recipient of such illicit *shámtla* in theory should receive the same criminal punishment as the original malefactor would be subject to.⁶³ There is also a fifth court in this group, the Court of Cassation. This last is unusual, in that appeals to higher courts are normally sent to an Imperial court in the rest of Tsolyánu.

This division also contains the Office of the Aridáni Registry, the Office of the Registry of Persons of Court Attention (a partial list of suspected or known criminals, witnesses, plaintiffs, former convicts, etc., kept current for a period of the last twenty years, with outline records kept for at least eighty); and the Office for Recognition of the Manifesto of Noble Deliverance, at which all duels must be registered. The fee for doing so is not insignificant and helps discourage casual recourse to dueling. Failure to register a duel makes its conduct a felony (i.e., a crime against the empire), in many cases resulting in capital sentences being handed down to family members of the duelists, or even of the duelists’ seconds).

⁶³ When Pan Chákan judges and officials fulminate against “furtive dealings and lewd exchanges”, as they often do, they usually mean secret payments of blood-money.

The Trellis-Floored Hall is the court jail, used for holding prisoners undergoing trial before any of the Bureau’s judges. The name comes from the fact that the cells are recessed into the ground and accessed through their ceilings, while the building itself is elevated and its floor largely constructed of elaborate lattices. The Office of Interrogation likewise serves both divisions of the courts, and can even be called upon by other branches of the bureaucracy when needed. It is the home office of the *mríyal* of the Company of the Edification of the Soul.

The Department of Punishments handles those individuals referred to them by the imperial and civil courts, as well as ecclesiastic and sometimes even military tribunals. Its constituent units are the Office for Review and Confirmation of Sentencing, the Office for Exile and Banishment, the Office of Degradations and Humiliations, the Office of Brandings and Mutilations, and the Office of Executions. The latter includes the infamously inept Imperial Capital Sentences Section, which handles — or mishandles — all impalements in Pan Cháka. The Office of Demonstration attempts to ensure adequate publicity for all legal punishments, issuing announcements and explanations, and arranges for deterrent examples to be made out of the condemned or of their remains, as the case may be.

The Department of the Imperial Prison is strictly concerned with operating the Prison of the Sixteen Fields in Butrús, and is made up of the Warden and his personal staff, the support and supply personnel, and the Pan Chákan garrison of the Legion of Ketl, 4th Medium Infantry.

The Department of Confinements, on the other hand, has a broader authority. It runs the Office of Convict Labor, the Office of Prisoner Transportation and Distribution, the Office of Supervision of Prefectural and District Jails, and the Office of Bodily Debt Reclamation — which holds persons guilty of bankruptcy or unpaid debts referred by a court of law, until they are either redeemed by their clan or sold off to slavers. It also contains the Office of the Royal Prison (i.e., of the protectorate), but as Pan Cháka uses the imperial prison facility

mentioned above, this is a purely administrative unit.

The Bureau of Revenue is probably more powerful than the Bureau of Justice and Punishments, but is less prestigious and respectable. It is made up of five departments and two directorates, plus the usual headquarters and support units.

The duties of the Department of Taxation are largely self-evident; it is broken into three main subunits: the Office for the Assessment of Wealth, the Office of Tax Collection, and the Office of Revenue Reporting and Archiving. It is the second of these offices that organizes, contracts, and bonds the semi-feral "tax captains" who perform the actual extraction of taxes in the various prefectures and districts, with the assistance of certain neighborhood-level appointees. In Pan Cháka, at least, the Surveyors of the first office are just as hated and feared as the actual collectors of the second — they are, if anything, even more diligent, without even the understandable motivation of immediate, legitimate personal profit from their efforts.

The Department of the Marketplaces is likewise self-explanatory; it includes the Office of Magistrates of Commerce (a large and important unit, with at almost a hundred market magistrates on the rolls for the protectorate), the Office of Approvals (which issues or sells permits for trading and vending in public markets), and the Office of Maintenance (which handles the cleaning and repairs to major public markets in the protectorate).

The Department of Imperial Monopolies controls certain industries over which the state has claimed exclusive authority; traditionally the most important of these is the mining and smelting of iron. Other metallurgical and mineralogical industries are also (nominally) controlled by the state, as are certain goods harvested from the jungles and various types of manufactories of luxury goods. Clans must purchase licenses from this department in order to participate in these industries or for their artisans to manufacture such goods; in return, the state undertakes to limit their competition,

and also their stiff tariffs on imports help ensure high local prices for many of these goods.

The Department of Trade and Travel is, generally, in charge of commerce and regulating the merchant classes. Its Office of Standards ensures the weights and measures for use in the marketplace are accurate, and the Office of Stamps and Seals validates and notarizes legal documents of a mercantile nature. The Office for Tolls and Fees collects transit fees at gates, bridges, canal locks, and so forth, while the Office for Commercial Taxation levies sumptuary taxes on exchanges within the protectorate of certain classes of goods (mostly but not exclusively of a "luxury" nature) and on all inter-clan transactions over a certain threshold value (depending on the item in question, the location, and even the season). It is equally incorruptible and strict as its sister-office, the Office for the Assurance of Rightly Observed Exchange. This unit inspects every merchant shipment (and even private traveling parties when suspicious enough) that passes in or out of Pan Cháka into Tsolyánu proper.⁶⁴ When duty-bearing goods are found, it then levies the appropriate tariffs, or confiscates the goods if the amount cannot be paid. It is thus the chief anti-smuggling agency. It is infamously honest and incorruptible, bordering on ruthlessness; it is also powerful, but spread too thin. While regarded as "honorable", it is widely despised and hated, even by some other officials. The golden era when the larger-than-life Túnu Homénda headed this office and directed an official body of "Tariff Police" is past but still fondly remembered by present incumbents; oddly, smugglers also look back to this period as the "heroic age" of their trade.

The Directorate of Provincial Finance is little understood and somewhat mysterious to the average citizen. Basically, its purpose is to ensure a stable and prosperous economy for the protectorate by intervening, as needed, in its public financial affairs and markets. It has a huge role to play and a considerable amount of practical power, but little theoretical (let alone methodological) apparatus by which to figure out how to go about its business. Technically, it

⁶⁴ Note that it does not have any authority over foreign trade (e.g., with Mu'ugalavýa or by sea from Livýánu).

sets fiscal policy and implements it in coordination with senior Palace officers and the Governor's Court, but in reality there are few checks on its activity other than its own great caution and quietly simmering internal disputes. Nevertheless, its constituent offices are individually busy and vital to the Pan Chákan economy. The Treasury of the Protectorate is a part of it, as are the Ever-the-Same Granaries of the Protectorate. These latter are primarily intended to buy up and sell off grain as directed by the Stabilization Fund Cabinet to maintain even grain prices; they also serve as a reserve in case of famine. These granaries are quite large, and after a series of impeachments and harsh sentences a decade or so ago, relatively honest and cleanly run. They also stubbornly use Mu'ugalavyáni measures and terminology, as this institution was originally a creation of the Red Hats. The Storehouses of the Protectorate are similar but less important; they warehouse quantities of certain raw or partially finished goods (timber, raw fabric, metal ingots, preserved foods, etc.) for emergency use or possible market intervention.

The Stabilization Fund Cabinet, ranking as a department-level agency, is the brain, if not quite the heart, of the Directorate. Its members are charged with analyzing the data provided by their subordinates and recommending fiscal policy to the Director of Provincial Finance. It is thus advisory, and has no executive role. Three sub-units support the Cabinet's activity. The Office for Coinage assays and inspects coins randomly drawn from the markets and treasury, checking for counterfeiting or clipping; it also attempts to monitor the volume and flow of cash in the region. The Office of Price Compilations and Surveillance collects reports on the selling prices of various staple commodities in different regions of the protectorate (in theory; usually only those in the Butrús Circuit are complete enough to be usable). Designated local officials and market magistrates report grain prices every six days; this office makes monthly summaries for use at the level of the protectorate, and submits semiannual reports to Avanthár as well. The Office for the Control and Inspection of Financial Speculators is an obscure group charged with monitoring moneylenders and "bankers"; their real role, though, is to liaise

with these businesses to ensure cooperation in case of fiscal crisis.

A further unit of the directorate is the Office of the Census, which maintains (or at least attempts to maintain) comprehensive registries for each birth, death, and even marriage within the protectorate. While this is quite accurate for the city of Butrús, its environs, the other major towns, and a few of the more densely-settled agricultural districts along major thoroughfares, the results are patchy or simply nonexistent long before one reaches the western coast or the Páchi Lei in the deep south.

The Directorate of the Bursary-General is, in a sense, the most crucial element in the daily operation of Pan Chákan government: it is this agency that issues funds to each departmental-level or higher unit within the Four Palaces and to the Governor's Court.⁶⁵ Three separate departments handle budget coordination, payroll disbursements, and operational expenses. In addition, it handles the internal accounting and bookkeeping of almost the entire bureaucracy. Its chief auditing arm is the Department for Deficit Monitoring, which in reality is just as mild as its name — it has little real auditing capability, but merely tracks and reminds various units of their overdrafts. Serious deficits or peculations must be handled by other means.

The Bureau of Civic Personnel handles appointments, promotions, demotions, merit ratings, honors, and titles for all members of the Palaces of the Realm, Foreign Lands, and the Priesthoods. The Palace of War and the Governor's Court have independent personnel offices, but coordinate as best they can with the Bureau. Note also that payroll for the bureaucracy is handled by a department within the Bureau of Revenue. Due to severe understaffing, the senior officers of the Bureau have little time to deliberate on or judge the dossiers and petitions put forward for their decision, as they are properly expected to do. The top level of staff has thus evolved in recent decades into a sort of giant rubber-stamping mill, acting almost automatically on the recommendations of its component offices. This

⁶⁵ Though in Pan Cháka, the Governor's office also has some direct sources of official income not normally available in Tsolyánu proper.

causes a certain amount of ill will and lowered morale in Pan Chákan officialdom, and the Governor's Court has begun to issue some veiled criticisms of the situation as well.

The Department of Minor Commissions handles promotions and demotions of official positions rated Tiers VIII through X of rank (that is, First to Ninth Circles), while the Department of Major Commissions handles those posts rated from Tier VII (Tenth Circle) on up. The Department of Evaluations conducts, for every official "in the current" serving in Pan Cháka, an Annual Evaluation and the Triennial Scrutiny. Once he or she has completed three scrutiny periods (nine years) in a given post, the Twelvefold Inspection Office makes a recommendation for reassignment or recognition based on a further evaluation of these reports (three "scrutinies" and nine "evaluations"). If not already reassigned within this period, the official will almost certainly be moved to another post after nine years — or at least to the same position in a different prefecture or town. The Department of Merit Ratings deals with promotions and demotions in rank (i.e. "Circles" or *kartu'ún*) among officials "in the current". The Department of Honor Awards handles petitions and recommendations for honors and titles to be given to officials of the protectorate (for length of service, good reviews, noteworthy conduct, etc.), and issues them as directed.

Two smaller groups support these units of the Bureau of Personnel. The larger is the Office of Personnel Records, which maintains an enormous and supposedly confidential archive of complete files on all officials currently serving in Pan Cháka and those retired there, and partial records on those who formerly served there and have since transferred to other parts of the empire. The other is the Appointment Verification Service, which provides official identification documents and seals for each new appointment, demotion, or replacement, tracks the location of each of these important items, and ensures their retrieval and checks their condition when the incumbent vacates the relevant post or rank.

The Bureau of Works is traditionally considered the least prestigious of the four bureaus, due to its association with manual labor; but is also

said to be the oldest and seniormost of them all. It consists of five departments, a directorate, four offices, and a private school, as well as the usual headquarters and support staff.

The Department of Bridges and the Department of Road Maintenance speak for themselves; the Department of Meritorious Service is the euphemistically named agency that organizes and enforces labor *corvées*. The Department of Irrigation Maintenance is directly involved in construction, upkeep, cleaning, and emergency responses; it is less supervisory or advisory than its "elder sister" organization, the Directorate of Waterways.

The Directorate of Waterways oversees regional and local governments in their operation and maintenance of irrigation networks, cisterns, wells, canals, locks, flood control measures, and aqueducts. It contains an Office for the Registration of Boats and Boatmen, an Office of Rivers and Canals (traffic control, dredging, operation of locks, towage), an Office of Hydrometry (measuring and attempting to predict rainfall, monitoring of water levels in rivers, lakes, and certain wells), and an Office of Conduits (i.e., the aqueducts and other arrangements to provide Butrús, specifically, with water). The Section of the Vice-Director of Hydraulic Workings and Devices is also worth noting, as this official and his staff are specially in charge any hydraulic machinery in the protectorate — locks, waterwheels, pumps, and even waterclocks.

Ranking below the departments and the directorate in the Bureau are the Office of Monuments and Memorials, responsible for erecting and repairing official steles, statues, and the like; the Office of Slaves, in charge of registering all slaves passing through the slave markets of the protectorate, and at the same time controlling the pool of state slaves, who are used particularly for construction and maintenance projects; the Office of Benevolence, which issues contracts to private clans for work on civic projects of any kind; the Office of State Resources, which controls and leases land, properties, and other resources owned by the state in Pan Cháka; and the Office of the Welfare Granaries, keeping reserves of grain in the city and a few other major towns,

which is disbursed to the needy (orphans, widows, beggars, refugees, the clanless) on a regular basis. These granaries are significantly smaller than the other state granaries, judged as less important in practical terms, and are much more corrupt.

Finally, the Bureau operates the Lumber-and-Stone Park, which despite its name⁶⁶ is actually a small school that trains clerks and scribes in measurement, arithmetic, accounting, basic surveying, and all the other technical skills necessary to obtain the qualification of “Estimator”. This position exists in considerable numbers in the Bureau of Works (obviously), but is also found in the other branches of the Palace of the Realm and even in the other organs of provincial government. While a decidedly humble school (ranked as a mere Office), not fitting for anyone of even middle-class background, it is thus nevertheless an important stepping stone for more lowly but capable officials, and equally important to the state in providing a body of reliably trained and quantitatively educated clerks.

The Palace of Ever-Glorious War

The “Palace of Winter” is the second largest of the Four Palaces in Pan Cháka, and rivals the size of the Governor’s Court itself. It is powerful and busy, being responsible for coordinating and supporting the activities of the legions that make up the armies of the Petal Throne: recruitment, logistics and supply, troop movements, and all operational and strategic issues. It also handles military intelligence and inspects the legions’ training standards, morale, loyalty, equipment, and overall combat-readiness. It is further responsible for the operation of the imperial courier service in the protectorate. Its staff are not under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Personnel in the Palace of the Realm, but are instead treated as an almost “paramilitary” service whose primary difference from soldiers proper is that they have no legion affiliation. (Besides which, of course, they receive no training, equipment, or deployment in combat per se.)

In regular provinces of the empire, the militia forces are maintained by the Palace of the Realm, which turn over operational command of them to the Governor when needed. In the protectorates of Tsolyánu, however, the Palace of War oversees them. The militias of Pan Cháka are in theory quite large — far outnumbering the “regulars” of the legions — but in reality they would scarcely be adequate to defend its huge area, even if many units were not of dubious character and loyalties. Simultaneously, the *sákbe* road guard forces of Pan Cháka are also part of the Palace of War (due to the protectorate’s frontier location and “semi-pacified” status), and they are quite numerous and well-trained. They see frequent action against bandits, wild beasts, and even occasional minor Mu’ugalavyáni probes; in time of war they would be called up to serve as a regular, full-strength legion. Their peacetime patrols and garrisons are, however, limited to the Tumíssa-Úrmish *sákbe* that passes through Butrús.

The Palace of War is divided into six bureaus and a number of other smaller offices. In addition, there are several special directorates set up to handle more sensitive and less easily routinized affairs. The most important of these is the Directorate of Military Finance, which keeps the War Treasury of the Protectorate and also runs the Office of Military Accounts and Audits, much-feared by other components of the Palace of War and a special terror to the legion commandants in the area. Some directorates run across provincial lines, such as the Directorate for the Defense of the Western Frontier (headquartered in Tumíssa, with both its Southern Division and High Coast Division being based in Butrús).

The Bureau of Military Personnel is made up of eight sub-units: the Department of Recruitment (which operates the recruitment halls for soldiers of the legions) and the Department of Appointments (for the officers of the Palace itself, not for field soldiers); the Department for the Supervision of Legion Personnel (overseeing personnel issues within the legions based in or posted to Pan Cháka); the Department of Commendations and Decorations; the Department of Discipline and Punishment (handling all Palace officials as well as

⁶⁶ Coming from the original location of the school, a storeyard for raw construction materials.

supervising punishments issued to soldiers by their legions); the Department of Military Payroll; the Department of Veterans and Reserves (keeping track of individuals either retired from or put on detached service by their legions); and the Department of Domestic Guardians (overseeing and coordinating the private employment of personal bodyguards, clan and caravan guards, etc.).

The Bureau for the Provincial Militia consists of a skeleton staff, organized into a Department of the Militia Register, a Department of Equipment and Provision (suspected of gross corruption), a Department of Levy and Training, and a Department for Operations and Exercises. The lattermost is in charge of an annual "field exercise" in some part of the protectorate, in which the local militiamen are obliged to participate. On several occasions when this has been done in more remote areas, the militia has resisted its officers, formed into a warband, and gone raiding.

The Bureau of Operations supports the deployment of troops in the field and the preparation of strategic plans by the regional command. It consists of a Department of Fortifications, a Department of Locations (e.g., maps and terrain), and the much despised but critical Department of Espionage. This last department is loathed even by other members of the bureau, who resent having to be associated with it.

While individual legions are responsible for their own armor, weapons, and uniforms, the *Bureau of Equipment* monitors them, assists in certain aspects, and serves to supervise the overall industry in military hardware. The Department of Acquisitions and Purchasing ensures that the legions, as well as the units directly maintained by the provincial government (e.g., the militias or the *sákbe* road police), are provided with necessary arms, armor, gear, and tack; the Department for Logistical Support arranges for the transport of these items, including spares and expendables (arrows, javelins, etc.) to garrisons, camps, and the battle lines. (Legions in their own barracks are responsible for handling this individually.) The Department for Armories and Warehousing stores and keeps inventories of such supplies until they are

needed. Finally, the Department for Trade and Commerce in Tools of War supervises the manufacture and pricing of all weapons and armor in the protectorate. In the interest of keeping stolen or misrouted hardware out of the hands of rebels, bandits, smugglers, foreigners, or other undesirables, the transport of weapons or armor through Pan Cháka requires a bond and a license from this department. It also licenses armories, among other things, and sets quotas for their purchase of *chlen* hide and iron. In short, this department exercises significant commercial power in the protectorate.

The Bureau of Provisions is less glamorous but probably more critical; it assures the supply of food and water to troops in Pan Cháka. Its Department of Carriage organizes supply trains, whether by cart, porter, or barge, and also builds aqueducts, cisterns, and wells as needed. The Department of Grain Purchases and Levies obtains the actual foodstuffs from suppliers, always attempting to avoid central granaries with long supply trains out to the field. As provisions cannot always be obtained in this way, either by purchase on the market or by authorized levies, the Department of Foraging has been set up to attempt to regulate the appropriation of foodstuffs and supplies from the countryside.

The Bureau of Communications is fairly small and often overlooked, but vital. Few realize that the *sákbe* road guards are only a minor part of this agency, under the Department of Highway Guardians (along with the labor sections that do the necessary cleaning and repair work). Upkeep and supervision of all other roadways in the protectorate are the responsibility of the Department of Roads in the Bureau of Works of the Palace of the Realm. The other subunits are the Department of Signals (regulating the use of drums, flags, and beacon fires to send quick messages over short distances); the Department of Couriers (making regular runs between designated stations, carrying a standard frame-pack of official correspondence and small packages) and the Department of Messengers (handling dispatches to specific individuals or special locations, as needed; more responsible and senior runners are chosen for this service); and the Department of Secret Messages, in charge of cryptography and the code-books

issued by Avanthár, and which is also presumed to maintain its own small secret network of couriers or messengers (perhaps employing trained birds, heliographs, kites, and who knows what else).

The Detached Department of Diplomacy organizes communication with counterparts in Mu'ugalavyá (and more rarely, other countries) on matters of military concern. Its most important function is in fact to arrange for *qadárni* ritual battles. It furthermore helps smooth over border incursions, coordinates occasional cross-border anti-bandit campaigns, negotiates the exchange of prisoners of war, and even sets up *marotlán* or *me'éra* matches involving international teams. Its diplomatic agents and men in the field are designated as "Ushers", regardless of actual function. This department is greatly resented by the Palace of Foreign Lands, which works to undermine it whenever possible.

Palace of the Priesthoods of the Gods

Due to Pan Chákan tradition, in the "Palace of Summer" the usual bureaus, directorates, and departments are replaced by "colleges", each with an antique (and at this point quaintly irrelevant) title. A further feature is that from among its ranks the Palace appoints Commissioners of Merit and Virtue, a pool of officials who are approved and authorized to conduct inspections of temple grounds, accounts, or activities. Usually these individuals are vetted informally by the sects in question; the practice is a compromise between imperial insistence on access to the potentially threatening temple institutions and the reluctance of those same powerful bodies to risk undue outside control or disclosure.

The College for Making the Heart Sincere dates back to the Gracious Inquisition of the later thirteenth century. After unwisely criticizing the sect of Hrsh in the late 1600s, it was curtailed and under-funded by the Mu'ugalavyáni and has never quite recovered its former stature. It consists for the most part of an Office for Inquisition into Alleged Heterodoxies (the investigative and deliberative branch) and an Office for the Suppression of Heterodoxies and Diabolism (the operational branch, carrying out

arrests, interrogations, seizures of property, corrective education and promulgation of orthodox teachings, and so forth.)

The College for Guiding Human Nature organizes, supervises, and underwrites all public religious festivals; it is not responsible for those with military or purely political or civic focus. In addition, it has three technical subunits. The Section of the Court of the Watchers is the official timekeeping agency for the bureaucracy of the protectorate; it operates the devices necessary to accurately track the passage of time, and must regularly report the time to all other officials and public representatives. They thus order the working day of officialdom and much of the military. However, they do not set the official "time of day" for the temples, whose internal lives each run on their own schedules; nor do they set "public time" in Butrús, that is, the pace of life for the regular inhabitants of the city.⁶⁷ The Section for the Calendrical Arts formulates and promulgates the official calendar and almanac for Pan Cháka. This publication contains a listing of all official or approved holidays, ceremonies, observances, standard numerological prognostications, phenological patterns, astronomical events, important historical anniversaries, and a slew of moral aphorisms and exhortations. The Section for the Observatory Grounds is in charge of upkeep and maintenance of the observatory park (q.v.) and also, in theory, of regulating access and use by the various temples and lay priests. It is so regularly appealed and overridden on these scheduling issues that it barely bothers any longer.

The College for Moral Rectification contains the legal arm of the Palace. The Hall of the Observation of the Concordat of the Temples is modeled as a court of law and is the mechanism by which inter-temple disputes are resolved, whether by mediation or imperial fiat. Usually the Palace head is its sitting magistrate, though there is also a regularly appointed court staff. This bureau-level organization also operates the Office for the Surveillance of the Ecclesiastical Courts, which conducts judicial review of the

⁶⁷ This is instead handled by a small office under the Metropolitan Prefect; it and the Court of the Watchers have disagreed over correct "time of day" for some decades, and bitterly feud over it.

staffing, operation, trial procedures, and sentencing of each temple's courts. In theory it has considerable power, but it is given little access to the actual workings of these courts and has even less ability to intervene effectively. Moreover, it is badly understaffed.

The College for Cultivating the Noble Path handles the extraction of wealth from the temples, and generally attempts to regulate the economic power of these institutions. The Office for the Assessment of Temple Wealth is the body that conducts general surveys of temple lands, revenues, and investments in order to set tax requirements; it also has a small audit group, called in as necessary to inspect temple bookkeeping. The Office for the Collection of Temple Tithes is, obviously, the agency responsible for the gathering of those taxes due to the Petal Throne from ecclesiastical estates. Unlike its secular equivalents, the collectors are all ranked officials of the Palace, and the contractual "tax captain" system is not used. The Office for the Warriors of the Gods coordinates between those temples which fund their own legions and the Palace of Glorious War (where they are actually deployed); a primary concern is assuring an adequate bond or cash flow to keep the temple legions solvent, so that the empire is not caught having to make up any shortfall. The Office for the Assurance of Morally Necessary Materials issues licenses and subcontracts to various minor workshops and artisans that manufacture and retail religious goods, particularly sacrificial offerings and funerary or memorial objects. The office is thus quite economically important.

The College for Venerating the Completed Things is in charge of the City of the Dead; it consists of the Construction Office (handling the allocation of land within the necropolis and the design and building of tombs, mausoleums, and monuments; it also must approve all epitaphs and inscriptions on the public facings of such structures); the Office of Respect (arranging for cleaning, sweeping, gardening, and maintenance, as well as keeping order and standards among the professional mourners, embalmers, decorators, and other professionals in the necropolis), and perhaps most importantly, the Office of the Tomb Police.

The College for the Extension of Academic Arts supervises education within the protectorate, at virtually every level. The Office for the Supervision of the Holy Colleges oversees the activities of the three major temple academies and the lesser priestly colleges in Butrús and the rest of Pan Cháka. This office keeps registers of the teachers, students, and their progress through the academic ranks, serving as a secular or public validator of temple degrees and graduations. Among other duties, it ensures that seditious or separatist sentiments are not expressed. The Office for the Surveillance of Familial Academies monitors the teachings and staffing of tutors and clan schools; it is understaffed and has little effective regulatory power, and primarily acts as an "employment agency" to match available scholars with clans in need of teachers. The Office for the Accreditation and Correction of Wandering Sages supposedly monitors, examines, and certifies the capabilities of marketplace tutors and teachers, sets their acceptable fees, and handles complaints about them. In fact, it is entirely toothless and notoriously corrupt. Finally, the Office for the Regularization of Calligraphy is a small unit established to enforce the adoption of the new Tsolyáni script after the re-conquest from Mu'ugalavyá in the nineteenth century; up until that point, Pan Cháka had continued using the Classical Tsolyáni script.

Palace of Foreign Lands

The "Palace of Autumn" is surprisingly small, given the protectorate's location on the Mu'ugalavyáni frontier. One reason is the lack of a major canal, road, or sea route to Butrús from foreign centers; another is that many issues of foreign trade and commerce are overseen by the Governor's Court and the Palace of the Realm.

The Department for Recognitions is directed at foreigners; it issues visas (in person or through the consulates) and inspects passports. It does not handle issues of naturalization or acquisition of Tsolyáni citizenship; the Palace of the Realm is responsible for that. The Department for Passports and Departures is its counterpart for Pan Chákans and other Tsolyáni citizens; it issues passports for foreign travel and also

permits for passage from the protectorate into Tsolyánu proper.

The Department for Boundaries has three subunits concerned with traffic and commerce. The Office of Borders and Checkpoints operates the various stations at which passports, visas, and travel permits are checked and logged; the Office of Tracking and Searching compiles and inspects the data thus collected. The Office for the Regulation of Foreign Goods is charged with inspecting and certifying all shipments of goods into and out of the protectorate from abroad, and levying the appropriate tariffs thereupon. Together with the Palace of the Realm, it thus represents half of the anti-smuggling efforts in the protectorate; accordingly it is both large and powerful.

The Department for Hospitality handles the practical aspects of foreigners' travel in Pan Cháka. Its Office of Highway Lodgings inspects the hostels and waystations designated for the use of foreigners along the *sákbe* roads and elsewhere in Pan Cháka, while the chief task of the Office for the Foreigners' Quarter is the inspection of the operation of the hostels for foreigners and outsiders in Butrús. In theory, it keeps a record of all lodgers in these hostels, but this aim is rarely attained, and even the data it does have is probably not to be greatly relied upon.

The Department for the Affairs of the Friends in the High South deals with Páchi Lei issues, while the Department for Guiding and Soothing Those Suffering From Remoteness handles affairs involving the human tribes of the deep forest and mountains. The Department for Maritime Affairs is in charge of all coastal traffic and trade issues, but is woefully ineffective given the distance to the coast and difficult intervening terrain, its sparse settlement, and the unhelpful natives.

A final unit is the Department of Liaison, which acts to assist, monitor, and control the activities of the various foreign legations and consulates in Butrús. Its most prominent branch is, obviously, the Office for the Four Palaces, specially tasked to the Mu'ugalavyáni consulate. It also operates a Cabinet for Foreign Laws, advising in disputes involving foreign agencies

or institutions, or important foreigners, and is consulted on issues relating to the relationship between the protectorate and Tsolyánu proper. The department also runs a Commission of Accompaniment, an *ad hoc* unit that organizes and furnishes escorts for foreign dignitaries within Pan Cháka; its commissioners have the title of "Escort" (rather than the "Ushers" of the Palace of War). Finally, there is the Translators' and Interpreters' Agency, at times used by all branches of government, and the Receptions Service, which assists in arranging formal welcomes for visiting foreign dignitaries.

Local Administration

In Tsolyánu, the largest unit of government below the level of province or protectorate is the "prefecture", which is administered by a Prefect. Every prefecture is made up of several "districts", each under a Magistrate. However, in the various protectorates of Tsolyánu certain district-sized regions are instead organized into "commanderies", under militarized jurisdiction, so as to aid in frontier defense. In Pan Cháka, most of the western forests and coast are organized into commanderies of huge area and scanty population; the Páchi Lei regions of the far south are organized likewise (in the minds and manuals of human officials in Butrús and Avanthár, at least). Only the permanently settled agricultural regions are organized into the familiar districts.

Each prefecture and district is classified as belonging to one of four grades, reflecting its population, wealth, and general significance (minor, medial, major, or "important"). Certain rural districts or commanderies are further designated as "artisanal", due to a special concentration of manufacturing or industry in the local economy, or as "urban", if it is the center of a major town or city. The city of Butrús itself is officially designated an "important urban prefecture", for example.

Below the district level, Pan Cháka organizes its settlements into yet further ranks, retained from the days of Mu'ugalavyáni occupation. This system is becoming increasingly uneven and chaotic as the more lax and feudalistic practices of the Tsolyáni empire spread back into Pan Cháka. The system is based on multiples of four

and five, counting neither the clanhouse nor the family as a kinship group, but rather the “minimal household”, or the family as a residential group.⁶⁸ They are given below in descending order of size, with their nominal count of households:

Township: 400 households (4 wards)
Ward: 100 households (5 precincts)
Precinct: 20 households (4 villages)
Village: 5 households⁶⁹

A district or commandery is ideally made up of five townships, or (nominally) two thousand households. This would probably amount to some 30,000-50,000 individuals.

The townships are headed by a triumvirate of locally appointed “officials” — though they are “outside the current” (i.e. they have no bureaucratic rank) and are unpaid positions. A Headman or Elder is in overall charge of the populace in question, particularly in regard to laws, rites, and public morality, assists ranked officials in the exercise of their duties, and arranges lodging and hospitality for travelers.⁷⁰ The Headman is aided by a Husbander (charged with assisting tax assessors and collectors) and a Patroller (responsible for aiding in law enforcement, anti-banditry surveillance, and in participation in the militia system).

A thorough administrative geography of Pan Cháka must wait for a future publication. However, a brief outline can be given here. The lowlands east of the Turín River are divided into seven prefectures, with a total of forty-eight districts. Roughly, from north to south, they are Órmagai, Etíthi and Archalá, Utléut, Kirékku, Vadhiyi directly across the river from Butrús, and Chamú’e. West of the river, on the cleared farmlands of the Chákan tableland, one finds eight prefectures plus that of Butrús itself; these comprise fifty-seven districts and commanderies. Again running from north to south, these are Cheyárpor, Pógudan, Kagjeyánu, Tló’ome and Si’insu to the north of Butrús; Chéreshen in the

area around the city; Cheyúmpor and Kágsamar to the south. Farther west one enters the jungle belt and more rugged land; districts here cover far more terrain and are sparsely settled compared to those in the east. There are five prefectures here, with thirty six commanderies among them: the vast old domain of Upákhe behind Butrús; Pámhan to the south, bordering on the Páchi Lei enclaves and riddled with abandoned iron mines; secretly prosperous Gíshu to the north, also claiming considerable areas of fully cleared agricultural land; and the two narrow bands of settlement south of the Khéiris-Tumissa *sákbe* highway: Ch’úkháne just beyond Gíshu, and then remote Jáwati, stretching out as far as the Mu’ugalavyáni frontier. The vast majority of Pan Cháka, however, falls outside these twenty one prefectures named here: all of Porubél Ta, the Páchi Lei enclaves, the central Chákan Range and the highlands surrounding it, and the distant coastline.

The Governor’s Court

While nominally the senior imperial administrators in the protectorate, in practice the governors of Pan Cháka tend to be more preoccupied with broader political and policy issues — especially concerning the Mu’ugalavyáni, the Páchi Lei enclaves, Íto and Four Red separatists, tribesmen, and other reluctant back-of-beyond subjects of the Seal Emperor — than with managing the operation of the imperial bureaucracy of the Four Palaces. Nevertheless, they have in principle considerable power to intercede in local governance, and enjoy far greater authority and respect among the common people than the Four Palaces do.

The governors of Pan Cháka are appointed independently of the usual civil service staffing procedures — as are all rulers of provinces or protectorates in Tsolyánu. In Pan Cháka, the appointment is considered “for life” — the appointee is no longer eligible for lateral or upward promotions (which are in any case scarce at this high level). Governors only vacate their office by death, retirement, or (more rarely) impeachment and removal by the Imperial Censorate.⁷¹ In reality, several

⁶⁸ A “lintel” is the retained Mu’ugalavyáni term for this; “roof” is what a Tsolyáni might call it, if pressed.

⁶⁹ A village is called a “lane” in urban districts.

⁷⁰ This position corresponds to two different village officers in Tsolyánu proper: the *laithtúrunkoi*, or chief clan-elder, and the *tsoróko*, a clan-elder appointed as a host for travelers.

⁷¹ While the Seal Emperor could directly order a Pan Chákan governor removed from office, this has never happened in

governors have “resigned” and gone into “retirement” only to immediately re-apply for a commission in the bureaucracy within Tsolyánu proper, thus avoiding the “lifetime” tenure of their post and not ending their careers.

During the first era of direct Tsolyáni rule (781–1566), the protectorate was ruled by a “viceroy” (*karmizhán*), rather than a “governor” (*jaithulén*). After recovering Pan Cháka from the Mu’ugalavyáni in 1842, Avanthár redefined the position as a governorship — at least in theory, as most of the special privileges, limitations, and peculiarities of the post in Pan Cháka were in reality carried over.

In addition to his authority over the Four Palaces — limited though it may be in some important respects — the emperor’s representative in Pan Cháka also has several organs of government directly under his own control. These consist of the Grand Councilors, the Chancellery, the Seven Courts, the Five Directorates, the Four Commissions, the Metropolitan Prefecture of Butrús, and the Militia of the City of Butrús. He is also in direct contact with the Bureau of Remonstrance. In addition, of course, the Governor has private and clan-based advisors, retainers, servants, and agents as well.

Grand Councilors: Senior officers, four to ten in number, who supervise the provincial government and serve the Governor directly in an advisory, planning, and policy-setting capacity. They meet regularly with the Governor in the Administration Chamber of the Center, inside the palace grounds, which gives them considerable personal influence with the Governor. The Grand Councilors have a minimal staff of document-handlers seconded from the Chancellery (the Outer Drafters) and Institute of Academicians. Note that this body is not referred to as “the Grand Council”, but rather as “the Administration Chamber of the Center” after their designated meeting-place.

Almost all Grand Councilors have dual or joint appointments in other high-ranking posts, whether in the Governor’s Court (often the Chancellery) or in one of the provincial Four

Palaces. A few are drawn from outside the official bureaucracy, normally through prior service as Academicians.

Titles of provincial councilors throughout Tsolyánu (and their equivalents in the central government) are cumbersome and often irrelevant, and Pan Cháka is no exception. The only difference is the distinctive form of the titles, based on Mu’ugalavyáni models — the nomenclature tends toward the dry and bureaucratic, rather than the poetic and grandiose. Titles as primary posts of the Grand Councilors are limited to the following four: “Director of the Department of Princely Affairs”, “Vice Director of the Vanguard of the Department of Princely Affairs”, “Vice Director of the Train of the Department of Princely Affairs”, and “Executive Official Participating in Determining Matters of the Protectorate”. Any Grand Councilors over this number must make do with their adjunct titles alone and an *unofficial* designation of “Grand Councilor”. Typically such adjunct titles will include one of the following appendages which indicate holding appointment as a Grand Councilor: “... and Jointly Manager of Affairs With the Secretariat-Chancellery”, “... Cooperating With Tier VII Officials of the Secretariat-Chancellery”, “... and Concurrently Participant in Determining Matters of Government”, or “... and Concurrently Participant in Deliberations on Advantages and Disadvantages of Policy”.

Chancellery: In broadest terms, this organization handles the flow of paperwork in and out of the Governor’s Court: sorting, prioritizing, routing, copying, and filing documents. It is responsible for reviewing, revising, and polishing draft documents. It also has the duties of advising the Governor on the practical aspects and implementation of proposals or orders put forward by higher and lower organs of government. It is the channel through which new laws, regulations, and edicts are finalized and then promulgated and transmitted to the Four Palaces to be carried out.

It is also the agency that issues and controls all the “registered documents”⁷² in the protectorate. These are blank papers used for

practice. Instead, such executive dismissals have always (to date) been arranged through the Censorate.

⁷² Pan Chákan vernacular: *qankhü*

verified internal communication, each sheet numbered and stamped with a half-seal; they are issued from a stub-book containing the other half of the stamped seal, the number, and a notation regarding the date and destination of issue. This is a Mu'ugalavyáni device introduced during their rule over the protectorate, which has been retained in local administration despite official Tsolyáni disapproval.

The Chancellery has a very small staff, considering that it is responsible for supervising and coordinating the movement of all paperwork in and out of the Governor's Court, both up to Avanthár and down to the heads of the provincial Four Palaces. It is headquartered in a building known due to tradition as the Pavilion of the Gatekeeper's Songbirds. It is headed by two Directors (literally, "Submitters of Statements") and two Vice-Directors; some or all of these officers are usually also Grand Councilors. They have a senior staff of six Secretariat Drafters and four Supervising Secretaries, and a junior staff (in descending rank) of Palace Secretaries, Gentleman Secretaries, Chancellery Drafters, Rectifiers of Omissions, Palace Diarists, and Palace Gatekeepers. Officials and occasional civilians called in to serve in the Chancellery on an occasional or *ad hoc* basis are given the concurrent title of "... Participant in the Drafting of Proclamations". The outsider should also be aware that the term "Inner Drafters" refers to the Secretariat Drafters or Chancellery Drafters serving in the Chancellery proper, in contrast to those seconded to support the Grand Councilors as "Outer Drafters".

Subunits within the Chancellery are limited to a Desk for the Palace of Winter, a Desk for the Palace of Spring, a Desk for the Palace of Summer, and a Desk for the Palace of Autumn (each headed by a Supervising Secretary), a Desk for the Compilation of the Governor's Correspondence (under one of the Secretariat Drafters, usually), and the Archive of the Secretariat-Chancellery.

Formerly there was a separate Secretariat, which was largely duplicative of the Chancellery but focused more on recommendations of policy and drafting of documents. It was abolished in recent times and some of its personnel

consolidated into the Chancellery. For a time the amalgamated body was called the Secretariat-Chancellery, but this has now been contracted to simply "the Chancellery". At the same time, the Rear Office of the Secretariat was split off into an independent organization and elevated in status: the Remonstrance Bureau.

The Courts of the Seven Chamberlains. Each Chamberlain was a high official responsible for one aspect of the operation of the king's and later the viceroy's offices and entourage; their offices have been preserved to the present day. They are assisted by at least one Aide-of-Court apiece, and may have complex subordinate organizations answering to them.

The Court of State Ceremonials is in charge of the great governmental ceremonies and public political rituals. Its head, the Chamberlain of the Great Banner, is assisted by an Aide (known in traditional Pan Chákan bureaucratese as the Lower Shouter) and many Directors, each with specialized ceremonial duties and titles: Initial Supplicator, Great Sacrificial Butcher, Grand Director of Ritual Music, Court Prognosticator, First Astrologer of the Southwestern Octant, etc. It works closely with the Palace of the Priesthood of the Gods on these matters; its focus is on those events or aspects of events which involve the Governor himself, or the Governor in his role as direct representative of the Emperor in Pan Cháka.

The Chamberlain of the Court for Dependencies and Visitations, officially titled the Grand Maintainer of Orderliness, orders the conduct of all officials and visitors for audiences with the Governor and organizes receptions of local nobility and chiefs. The Court also keeps genealogical records of the aristocratic clans and lineages of the protectorate. Its subordinate units include a Private Messenger Office, a Director of Interpreters, and a Supervisorate of Liaison Hostelry (ensuring housing for noble foreign travelers in the protectorate, and housing of guests of the Governor).

The Court of Attendants is headed by the Chamberlain for the Gentlemen (formerly the Higher Shouter, though this old title has now lapsed). This unit is in charge of all Inner Gentlemen, a title designating the general pool

of individuals both entitled and qualified to serve in the Governor's Court. It is also responsible for the Governor's private bodyguard and attendants, for the monitoring of traffic or activities in public areas of the palace, and for providing doormen and greeters (the latter service directed by the Grand Master of Splendid Happiness). Most importantly, though, it examines the candidates "nominated" for office by local officials and worthies each year. This examination takes place in the Pavilion of Fidgets and Anxieties, so named for the open hall in which the new cadets await to hear the results. The Court of Attendants also contains two small professional academies for lower-level officials: the School of Calligraphy (originally instituted to get the bureaucracy to switch to the modern Tsolyáni script, after the reconquest in the nineteenth century; it is now merely a prestigious sinecure and degree-mill) and the School of Mathematics (a stopgap measure to train and improve arithmetical skills, assignment to which is considered a minor but grueling punishment).

The Court of Shining Banquets is headed by the Chamberlain for Palace Entertainments. It conducts all catering for the Governor's palace and court, including the practical organization of official receptions and dinners. As the Four Palaces are not permitted to host official banquets or state dinners, this is a special privilege of the Governor. It has a huge staff of cooks, butlers, cleaners, musicians, and so forth, including four subordinate offices specially responsible for different types of foodstuff (the Offices of Sweets, Roasts, the Bakery, and Beverages; service in the Wine Stewards' Section of the lattermost is particularly prestigious). The Court also includes the Bureau of Joyful Music (the "light" counterpart to the ritual musicians in the Court of State Ceremonials) and the Bureau of the Court Players. For many centuries, the governorship of Pan Cháka has maintained a large body of hereditary (or slave) theatrical performers to entertain at private and public functions — called the Disciples of the Banana Grove, after the garden long ago assigned for use as their stage. There is a growing demand by moralists and economizers to do away with this group, but traditionalists have objected in forceful terms.

The Chamberlain for the Palace Stores and Granaries is essentially the financial officer of the Governor's Court, with control over its revenues and budgeting, and charged with providing for the Governor and court's needs. His office does not have any role in the fiscal operation of protectorate-level government. This Court has a number of offices under it, each responsible for some aspect of the Governor's entourage and facilities — library, archives, treasury, disbursements, etc. One office of note is responsible for not only the palace granaries but also supervising the Palace of the Realm's granary maintenance system, particularly the charitable relief granaries.

The Chamberlain at the head of the Court of Palace Protection is responsible for policing and guarding the palace. The Court's three main branches are the Document Control Offices at each gate, where passes and permits are checked and logged; the Court Escorts, assigned to accompany officers of the Governor's Court outside its walls or select individuals within them; and the Patrolling Guardsmen, within the palace grounds. Beyond this, it is in charge of procurement, maintenance, and storage of military regalia for use in state ceremonies. The Chamberlain is the commander of the Hundred Frosted Plumes (q.v.) and as such has the title of "Foremost Aigrette".

The Chamberlain for Judicial Review recommends decisions in questionable or appealed cases, and monitors the conduct of major trials at the protectorate level. The Chamberlain is aided by a Supervisor, two Inspectors, and several Clerks and Arbiters, all normally trained litigants and former officials in courts of law.⁷³ The group is divided into a Case Review Desk and a Sentencing Evaluation Desk, each under one of the Inspectors. This Court does not have field agents or investigators; instead, it works closely with the Governor's Surveillance Commission to gather information from local courts. It also runs the School of Law, with about twenty students at any given time,

⁷³ The Chamberlain and the Supervisor are also designated the Grand Evocator and the Petty Evocator, respectively, for their right to summarily transfer up to six cases per year (one per season, in theory) to higher courts for review or appeal. The Inspectors have no such arbitrary powers.

aimed at teaching the Tsolyáni and Engsvanyáli legal codes to young bureaucrats and functionaries — especially rural headmen and the like.

The Five Directorates are somewhat junior to the Seven Courts, and are generally responsible for more mundane and practical aspects of the operation of the Governor's offices. Each is headed by a Director, with the assistance of a Vice-Director, and in most cases, a number of Administrators who each run an Office.

The Directorate for Court Manufactories is an umbrella organization that coordinates and supervises the activities of a number of artisans and workshops which produce goods directly for the Governor's Court (and through it, for high officials of the Four Palaces). These enterprises are each grouped into separate offices: the Fabrics Office (producing or procuring raw cloth), the Dyeing Office (controlling the appropriate coloration of court clothes and adornments), the Office of Brocades and Pins (the tailoring service and wardrobe facility of the court), the Office of Plumes and Feathers, the Ornaments Office (specifying allowed jewelry and accessories), the Foundry Office (producing metal items for the court), the Office of Tributary Trade (controlling and managing procurement of "exotic" goods for use in the Governor's Court, both from within the protectorate and from foreign countries, and wielding considerable influence in matters of foreign trade and commerce), and the Office for Distributables (manufacturing specialized foodstuffs or small tokens given away in quantity during certain ceremonies and public events).

The Directorate for Palace Buildings handles the construction and maintenance of all structures belonging to the Governor's palace and grounds. Among its constituent units are the Office of Verdant Propagation (gardening and arboriculture), the Office of Symmetric and Radiant Sprays (fountains and waterworks), and the Service for Restraint of Denizens of the Azure (bird-catchers).⁷⁴

⁷⁴ The name of the lattermost has been under frequent criticism from many sources due to its suggestion of disrespect toward the deity and temples of Ksárul, and at

The Directorate for Court Service is the office of personnel for non-official, "outside the current", servants in the Governor's Court (i.e. those not qualifying as Court Gentlemen). It recruits, trains, pays, disciplines, and discharges the service staff for the entire system of the Governor's Court; moreover, it directs and manages the slaves owned by the Court.

The Directorate for the Governor's Livery is responsible for managing the Governor's excursions and appearances outside the palace itself. The Director must organize the necessary porters, footmen, standard-bearers, etc. as well as oversee the procurement, storage, and maintenance of official palanquins and carriages for the Governor's Court.

The Directorate for the Academicians is more often known as the Institute of Academicians. This non-administrative agency is made up of special appointees, from within or without the bureaucracy, who have been called in for special counsel, assistance in drafting documents or pronouncements, or aid in particular compilations or publications. For someone not a regular member of the Tsolyáni civil service, selection and duty as an Academician can lead to appointment as a Grand Councilor, though this is not all that common. The seniormost member is the Academician Recipient of Edicts, followed by Academician Readers-in-Waiting and Academician Lecturers-in-Waiting; below them are the Erudites of the Institute.

The Four Commissions. Given the vast extent and rugged terrain of Pan Cháka, as well as the intervening layers of bureaucracy (specifically, the Palace of the Realm), the Governor is often hard-pressed to know what is going on in the outlying areas, much less exercise effective control over them. Thus special, direct control over prefectural and district administration is maintained through the use of roving "commissioners". They are selected and appointed directly by the Governor, and serve at his or her discretion — though the Bureau of Personnel, the Remonstrance Bureau, and Imperial Censors all may have a say in the

times also of Avánthe or even toward the Tsolyani imperial heraldry itself.

matter as well. While provincial-level commissions do not have direct impeachment authority, they serve as a sort of provincial-level equivalent to the Imperial Censorate (q.v.).

Each commissioner is assigned to a “circuit” of varying geographic extent, and is responsible for overseeing the conduct of government there and reporting back on the situation directly to the Governor. There are several types of circuits with specialized scopes of inquiry, grouped into four general commissions. Active commissioners will have different titles depending upon which commission they belong to and the nature of their current duty assignment.

The Military Commission consists of Military Commissioners or, in the case of frontier or “aboriginal” issues, Pacification Commissioners. In Pan Cháka, there are five Military Defense Circuits, as well as one Troop Purification Circuit and one Courier Service Circuit, each of which covers the entire protectorate.

The Fiscal Commission is led by the Fiscal Commissioners. This group is specifically concerned with the operation of tax collection and grain transports; they also conduct audits of local government offices. They are grouped into six Record-Checking Circuits.

The Surveillance Commission is composed of Judicial Commissioners, more commonly known as Intendants; they supervise the orderliness and proper organization of local courts, oversee the general conduct of judges and trials, and the management of prisoners. They work closely with the Court of Judicial Review. In addition, they are responsible for reporting on the general level of local unrest, banditry, economic conditions, and so forth. There are nine Surveillance Circuits in Pan Cháka.⁷⁵

The Supply Commission is staffed by Transport Commissioners or Supply Commissioners. They supervise the local-level management of grain storage and transport and the relief granaries; they also oversee external trade, the state monopolies, state-supported industries and agricultural development efforts. Their lack of

⁷⁵ Pan Chákan bureaucrats know them as the Non-Evocators, as they cannot personally transfer cases from lower courts to higher ones for review or appeal.

cooperation with the Stabilization Fund Cabinet is notorious. Together with the Fiscal Commissioners, they monitor the forwarding of tax revenues and grain levies. There are three Agricultural Circuits, two Irrigation Circuits, one Waterway Circuit, one State Resources Circuit, and one Roadways Circuit.

The City Militia consists of about eight hundred troops, organized into eight companies (*karéng*), with one company permanently responsible for a certain one-*ténmre* (roughly three hour) watch period and “in support” for two others (rotating), during which time they also patrol or man the city gates and watchtowers, as needed; finally, they are required to be in barracks, on call, for one further *ténmre* per day.⁷⁶ The individual companies are thus known by the numeral corresponding to their assigned watch period, and are often referred to by the corresponding time of day.⁷⁷ The night patrols are easily identified by their rattles (used to announce which of the six *kirén* it is within the *ténmre*) and their who-goes-there challenge of “*hárri-hárri-hárri*!”⁷⁸ They are under the direct command of the Governor, and their duties include guarding the walls and gates of the city as well as maintaining order and peace on its streets. Their headquarters is physically located in the Palace of Realm, though the company commanders report directly to the Governor’s Court; there are also fortified outstations in the city quarters, where most of the troops themselves are based. The guardsmen also have access to barracks, storerooms, and boltholes within the city walls and gatehouses.

Within the City Militia there are several sections that have specific duties and fields of responsibility, each of which is represented in all eight companies — e.g., the Stolen Properties Recovery Service, the Missing Servants and Slaves Recovery Service, the Undeveloped and Wasteland Lot Inspection Service, or the Rapid Pursuit and Collection Service (specially selected

⁷⁶ The City Militia, unlike every other unit of the bureaucracy, operates on “city time”, in which the length of daytime and nighttime *ténmre* and *kirén* vary from season to season.

⁷⁷ Sundown, Evening, Night, and Dawn (the four “nighttime” *ténmre*) and Sunrise, Morning, Afternoon, and Dusk (the four “daytime” *ténmre*). Note that the day, according to “city time”, starts at sunset, rather than at noon as per “officials’ time”.

⁷⁸ Literally, “who, who, who?”

athletes chosen to run down and arrest malefactors who attempt to flee). Unlike “policemen” in the Western sense, they do not investigate crimes — that is the duty of the courts. They may be called upon by officers of the courts to assist in apprehending suspects, protecting witnesses, securing crime scenes, and so forth.

The Remonstrance Bureau scans all documents passing between the Governor’s Court and Avanthár in order to criticize proposals, policy decisions, edicts, reports and requests, recommendations, and guidances. Unlike the editors in the Chancellery who must check documents for correct style, protocol, technical feasibility, accuracy of information and calculations, administrative acceptability, and overall propriety, this office is responsible for editorializing based on the documents’ political merit, or even on their moral and ethical correctness.

Obviously, this level of policy critique can be a dangerous job. Staff for this bureau are largely drawn from outside Pan Cháka (though many will have had a previous term of service in Pan Chákan government, often in the Chancellery or the Institute of Academicians) in order to provide a check on the Governor, who is normally a local person. They are funded and supported out of the budget of the Governor’s Court, but are appointed and monitored by a sub-agency of the Court of Purple Robes itself, in Avanthár. The Governor (let alone any lower ranking official in the protectorate) thus has no power to remove a remonstrator from office, and only limited authority to discipline them. The Bureau is headed by a Grand Master of Remonstrance, who has a small staff of Remonstrators, Exhorters, and Reminders (in decreasing level of prestige and scope).

This unit was formerly part of the Secretariat, but has since been detached and established as an independent organization directly serving the Governor. Before the reorganization, it was housed in a wooden building called the Tiu Pavilion, and the modern-day bureau is still casually known by that name.

The Metropolitan Prefect (*Saválharéto*, also translated as “Mayor”) is an office in the city of

Butrús whose unusual scope of authority is largely a residuary of the city’s recent *dítlána*. This official handles almost all aspects of strictly civic administration and is answerable directly to the Governor — not to the Directors of the Four Palaces. This is an unusual situation, especially given that the position technically derives from the city’s recognition as a regular unit of local administration. In effect, this arrangement allows the Governor exceptional authority and a degree of direct control over the main city and seat of government of the protectorate. (Note also that the Governor retains personal control over the City Militia, and does not delegate it to the city administration.)

Many of the sub-units of the prefectural government are concerned with the material infrastructure of the city: the Office of Aqueducts and Storm Drains, the Office of Offal Removal and the Sewers, the Office of Streets (responsible both for ensuring the streets are swept regularly and for maintaining the avenues of trees lining the main thoroughfares), the Office for Civic Ceremonials (assisting in the organization, orderliness, and clean-up afterwards of all the various public festivals, parades, and rituals in the city), and the Office for the Enclosure of the King, which handles the gardening, landscaping, and general upkeep of the Garden of Tlyo Zrang (q.v.), as well as guarding its gates and collecting fees and donations. Particularly important is the Office of Walls and Gates, handling the repairs and maintenance of the city’s defensive boundaries.

Reporting directly to the Prefect are the representatives of the city’s neighborhoods, responsible for ensuring the orderliness and proper conduct of their residents, cooperation with the City Militia and other organs of government, and even assisting in the collection of taxes. In theory, the four quarters of the city were to be designated as Townships, with their own “Vice-Mayors”, under each of whom would be about twenty Wardens, each one in turn responsible for and representing one of the giant “city blocks” making up Butrús. Given the realities of post-*dítlána* Butrús, this scheme was dropped, and instead there is a Warden in charge of each of the (major) city blocks and sometimes its neighboring areas across the dividing avenues; these are designated as

“wards”. The undeveloped and underpopulated regions of the city are also grouped into wards, though they may be much larger (and more irregularly shaped) than those in the more built-up areas. Wardens are supposedly elected by the residents of a given ward, subject to approval and discipline of the Metropolitan Prefect; in effect, of course, these “out-of-the-current” officials are appointed by the dominant clan in the ward, and are usually a reliable and industrious clan-elder but not a clan-head in person.

The Office of the Fire Brigades is a supervisory rather than an operational unit; it inspects the various neighborhood fire-fighting gangs, issues authorizing documents and insignia, disburses funding and equipment, and recommends punishment in case of dereliction of duty or failure to cope when fires do break out. The actual work of looking out for fires and extinguishing them before they spread is entirely left to local neighborhood groups, made up of volunteers. Over the centuries these bands have developed a fierce and competitive *esprit de corps*; often rowdy and macho and given to financial crises due to mispending their equipment and uniform dispensations, they are nearly on the level of street gangs.

The Market Police of Butrús, on the other hand, are famous for their diligence, deference, and probity, and are widely respected and trusted. Unusually, they are administratively separate from the City Militia, and are under the authority of the Metropolitan Prefect. (Note that the Prefect does not control the market magistrates themselves.) Nearly a hundred of them are on the rolls.

A final duty of the Metropolitan Prefect is to ensure that the curfew is kept. A small timekeeping section is the basis of this, and its official reckoning of the time has been in disagreement with that of the “officials’ time” kept in the Palace of the Priesthoods of the Gods for many decades. A petty but heartfelt feud over this issue is in progress. At night (40 *yom*, or one hour, after sunset) the Prefect beats a long tattoo in the central drum tower of the city, which is then picked up and repeated at the outstations of the City Militia. At this signal, everyone must return to their own wards in

which they are registered as residents. In the morning (20 *yom*, or half an hour, before sunrise) the signal is repeated, using a shorter and faster drum roll, indicating that the city’s residents are now permitted to leave their wards. In effect, the curfew is observed more in the breach than in adherence; especially given the fact that almost none of the wards are actually walled, it is nearly impossible for the night watchmen to prevent people from traveling as they please. The watchful patrols do generally keep people off the main avenues at night; it has been pointed out that this simply makes curfew-violators and even more vicious criminals keep to the darker, numerous, even less easily patrolled back lanes.

Avanthár and Other Imperial Representatives

The Omnipotent Azure Legion is officially represented in Pan Cháka by a handful of junior officials, led by a captain (*kás*) of its military arm, supported by a small number of clerks and bureaucrats, with an unknown number of spies and field agents reporting back to him. In general, much of the espionage and counter-espionage for Pan Cháka is handled by elements of the regular Palace apparatus and the Governor’s Court, while the Omnipotent Azure Legion monitors and attempts to coordinate their activities. Here in Pan Cháka, the Legion is most often found functioning as investigators and prosecutors for the imperial court system. As usual, their focus is on high crimes such as treason, sedition, conspiracy against the Petal Throne or its government, *lèse-majesté*, and the illegal trade in *zu’úr*. They also support the Palace of the Priesthoods of the Gods’ ongoing surveillance and eradication of diabolism, i.e., worship of the Pariah Deities and other proscribed cults.

The Censorate. Not part of the Omnipotent Azure Legion, but rather a non-intelligence, non-military agency run directly from Avanthár and reporting to the High Chancery and the Emperor himself. Its function is to investigate imperial bureaucrats to ensure their honesty, discipline, loyalty, and diligence, and when necessary, impeach them; it also checks their records and accounts and receives public complaints about officials and official activities. This group is run

by the Censor-in-Chief, one of the most feared and powerful officials in the empire — that is, within the empire's bureaucracy! However, the Censorate is vastly under-manned and unable to regularly and systematically monitor the empire's bureaucracy, much less conduct its own special investigations on top of that — it must be selective about its targets.

The office itself is made up of a Headquarters Bureau, an Imperial Court Bureau and a Capital Bureau (at Avanthár and Bey Sü, respectively, handling the concentrations of top-level imperial government in those places), and an Investigation Bureau (consisting of one department for each of the Four Palaces). The entire staff of the Censorate is limited to the Censor-in-Chief and the Palace Aide to the Censor-in-Chief, two Secretarial Censors, twelve Palace Censors, eight Attendant Censors, sixteen Investigating Censors, a Recorder and a Deputy Recorder, and a single Manager of the Censorial Offices.

The central government (Avanthár) also dispatches numbers of commissioners to the provinces, to inspect local conditions, see that new policies are implemented, and act as ad hoc troubleshooters. These are in addition to the censors, and while separate from the Censorate they are usually assigned a nominal status in it to give them impeachment privileges, though usually just short of the level of censors proper (who can, and occasionally do, have provincial governors removed from office and arrested). The commissioners are usually given a limited geographic and temporal scope (e.g., “provinces X, Y, and Z for the period up until the completion of the next grain tax collection”). Depending on their status, assignment, and desired publicity effect, there are various titles — Touring Commissioner, Pacification Commissioner, Relief Commissioner, Personnel Evaluation Commissioner, Punishing and Scourging Commissioner, Enlightenment Commissioner, Investigation Commissioner, Military Commissioner, Soothing and Calming Commissioner, etc.

RELIGION & TEMPLES

While the faiths of Vimúhla and Ksárul are strong, even dominant, in Pan Cháka, the protectorate still presents a varied and interesting religious environment. Pilgrims flock to sites holy to Vimúhla, Ksárul, Hrū'ü, Avánthe, and their Consorts, while curious practices and mysterious local deities populate not only rural folklore but also formal religious observances in the city of Butrús. Even the names of the gods and goddesses of Pavár have strange forms in the vernacular speech.⁷⁹

This section will describe the orthodox (Tsolyáni) religions and those parts of folk beliefs they have incorporated, the heterodox (local) cults, and some forms of sorcery — or at least superstition — peculiar to Pan Cháka. The reader is also referred to Appendix A for more on religious rites in Butrús.

The Orthodox Pantheon

There are presently three major powers in Pan Chákan religious life: the temples of Vimúhla, Ksárul, and Sárku.

Mythologically, Vimúhla and Ksárul were the first of the Gods to part ways at Dórmoron Field, and in secular time, an ancient rivalry between the two faiths dates back to the time of the Fishermen Kings. The Black and Red met and clashed particularly in this borderland between their regions of control in the East and West. Even today there are expressions (somewhat

⁷⁹ In the general Pan Chákan dialect, the Tlomítlanyal are Hnállá and Tráru (Hnállá and Dra), Kérkan and Chekárru (Karakán and Chegárra), Támírü, Támüresh, or Támresh and Katénu (Thúmis and Keténgku), Owüne and Da'éla (Avánthe and Dilinála; in very old sources, the latter is also seen as Andíle or Ndí'ile, etc.), and Bolkáru and Pan (Belkhánu and Qon; despite superficial appearances the latter is derived directly from Engsvanyáli: Khúan > Kúan > *Kuán > *Kwan > Pan). The Tlokiriqáluyal are Hréhri and Erü (Hrū'ü and Wurü), Voméhla and Chedán (Vimúhla and Chiténg), Ksóru and Kegün (Ksárul and Grugánu), Kúrajú and Dórmu (Sárku and Durritlámish), and Dloméla and Hréla (Dlamélísh and Hriháyal). In the orthodox temples, of course, the priesthoods will employ the proper modern Tsolyáni names; on the other hand, in sectarian movements, older religious establishments, and divergent shrines and local cults, even the dialectal names given above may not be known and instead yet more archaic or obscure ones employed. Furthermore, the recognized Aspects of the Pavárian pantheon in turn also often have their own dialectal or local names. This situation—not unique to Pan Cháka, of course—fuels generations of careers for researchers in divine onomasiology.

ritualistic) of this tension and rivalry, though when faced with threats from outside the two religions quickly bury their differences and cooperate against the intruder. Cinnabar-quicksilver alchemy has become a major expression, in ritual and literature, of this symbiosis — and in fact it was originally introduced by the Engsvanyáli Priest-Kings as part of a cynical (and ultimately successful) effort towards reconciling the feuding faiths in Pan Cháka.

Vimúhla's cult is closely tied to Butrús itself and represents an important focus for civic ritual and sentiment; much of this god's following lives in the city. Despite the long presence of the Red Robes in Pan Cháka, there are actually not so many adherents of the Flame Lord or his Consort in the countryside; they often dwell in separate, segregated villages. The mysterious First Temple to the Lord of Flame is located in the remote western jungle, but there is also at least one secret monastery of the Society of the Scroll of the Blaze Revealed that is not so far outside the city, and probably others exist elsewhere in Pan Cháka. Butrús is a moderately significant pilgrimage destination in its own right, besides being an important stopover for pilgrims from across Mu'ugalavyá and Tsolyánu. This, combined with vast landholdings near the city and throughout the protectorate, makes the temple a wealthy one indeed. The Pan Chákan "flame opals" are widely used in regalia and ritual implements in the region, and are exported to temples elsewhere in Tsolyánu.

The most popular Aspects are generally the military rather than the abstract ones — e.g., Pa'lákh the Swath of Red, Dumúggash the Spirit of Battle, Valédh the Flayer (who was the special patron of the Black Theocrat's anonymous general), and Dikkómtla the Blazing Trident. One exception to this is Chahich'úr the Preparer, the Aspect representing forest fires (either natural or purposely set), and thus paid great homage by all practitioners of slash-and-burn agriculture. Its worship is scarcely known or noticed outside such regions, however.⁸⁰ The many volcanoes of Porubél Ta and scattered throughout Pan Cháka are collectively the

domain of another Aspect of Vimúhla so rarely mentioned by name (due to intense superstition and taboos surrounding these immensely destructive forces) that its proper name cannot, in the view of mainstream Tsolyáni theologians, be given with certainty. The Chákans refer to him indirectly, with phrases such as Showers-of-Ashes, His-Snows-Are-Fire, All-Beskirted-With-Obsidian, Cougher-of-Foaming-Rock, Tearstains-That-Smoke, or Red Weeper. He is also the god of grief and loss, and many rituals to quell volcanic activity and eruptions take the form of attempts to console and distract this deity from his sorrows.⁸¹ He is often represented (though not in shrines or temples) as a sleeping dog. Contrary to modern Terran expectations, the Chákans do not associate vulcanism with earthquakes, and the latter are the domain of other spiritual forces (below).

The western Aspect of Távastu the Bright Serpent is widely venerated in Pan Cháka as the god of drought, scorched earth, and the personification of summer.⁸² Likewise, Thájiran (or Thánjra in some temples; Thaijir in Mu'ugalavyá) is widely worshipped by traders and traveling merchants under the Vimúhlan faith; he also accompanies the Four Greater Red Clans' quinennial "Mission to Thurreqáimo for the Sons of Kádlesh" to Nrikakchné. While certainly not Aspects of the deity, one race of Vimúhla's otherworldly servitors are given particular attention in Pan Cháka — the Chóhrulesh, humanoid warriors with the heads of dragons, clad in plate armor of bronze.⁸³ In ancient times they were closely associated with the local dynasty of Dragon Warriors, who claimed kinship or even (symbolic) identity with them. Statues, murals, and sculptures of them are still extremely common in temple architecture.

⁸¹ Numerous stories account for his sadness: the goddess Dlamélish, whom he loved, leaving him to take up with Ksárul; the accidental death of a son of the Engsvanyáli Priest-Queen Tratikánte IV at the outbreak of the Flower Wars (also his lover), etc. The object of this deity's loss is often equated, on some level, with Vimúhla's Consort Chiténg.

⁸² Outside the Chákas, in both Mu'ugalavyá and Tsolyánu, this deity is female.

⁸³ Presumably identical to the Cholu'arth (or Kholur) of classical texts.

⁸⁰ Var. Chakhich'úr, Chasich'úr, and even Cháshchur. The same Aspect is known in Do Cháka as Chatrettúr, and in eastern Mu'ugalavyá as Satla'ásash.

Ecstatic devotees of the Flame Lord often become celebrities in Pan Cháka through their dramatic performances at various ceremonies throughout the year. These holy men and women, coming from all walks of life, perform feats such as breathing fire and walking on hot coals, but also can hold white-hot stone balls in their mouths, toss handfuls of grain in after them, and spit out popcorn for the amusement of children. Their most famous performances are on the first day of the new year and on the nineteenth day of Pardán, when towering ladders with sword-blades for crosspieces are erected and the devotees climb barefoot to the top — often chased by strings of firecrackers attached to the ladders' uprights. The ladders from the first of these occasions are reworked into the giant "fire trees" that are then paraded through the tenth of the month, concluding the New Year's festivities.

Among the fifty-odd clergy in the Butrús temple,⁸⁴ the Incandescent Blaze Society has seven or eight members, but in general the temple is not a great hotbed of political intrigue compared to Tumíssa or Bey Sü. The strict, "fundamentalist" or scripturalist Order of Devouring Conflagration has at least as many members, though they never leave the temple grounds and monopolize the duties of human sacrifice. There are fourteen scholar-priests in the temple, all of whom teach at least occasionally at the temple academy, the Crucible of Glowing-Hot Skulls. Several are familiar with Mu'ugalavyáni in its modern as well as classical forms, and conversant with the teachings of the priesthood of Vimúhla across the border.

Chiténg is strongly associated with the favorite local legion, the Givers of Sorrow, and has comparatively little lay or civilian following. He is, however, also strongly perceived as the patron and guardian of the city of Butrús, and special sacrifices and entreaties are made to him whenever the city is in danger from earthquake, flood, storm, invasion, or even (perhaps ironically) fire. Chiténg alone can quieten the volcanic eruptions and destruction caused by an

Aspect of Vimúhla, for it is really he whom the grieving Vimúhla believes is lost to him. He is the patron of the Givers of Sorrow, of the clan of professional executioners and torturers (the Company of the Edification of the Soul), of certain types of exorcisms, and of the neighborhood fire brigades. More than in most regions, then, Chiténg is seen as a protective deity as much as a destructive one; mythologically, he is seen as the "great soother", capable of intervening with angry gods and getting them, by force or persuasion, to leave the mortal people of his city and legion alone. The exception is the shrine of the goddess called Hard Sister,⁸⁵ a witch-spirit of the Desert of Eyági who rules its scorpions, tarantulas, venomous lizards, and poisonous snakes. A statue of Hard Sister was brought to Butrús about three hundred years ago, possibly by mistake, and out of wary respect (and uncertainty what else to do with it) the local priesthood began making offerings to it, as a demigoddess believed to grant her worshippers power over the venomous creatures of this land.

The High Priest of Chiténg at Butrús is *ex officio* general of the Legion of the Givers of Sorrow. Often this is a nominal post, but the current incumbent, Korikáda hiKurúshma, is an able military leader and is actively leading the legion in the field. His ecclesiastical duties as head of the Butrús temple have accordingly been assumed by the Imperial and Royal Preceptor of the Temples of Chiténg in Pan Cháka, itself a powerful and very ancient position.

Both temples have large guard forces — possibly more than a hundred each. Besides protecting the great shrines and hierarchs of Butrús and guarding pilgrims and more remote holy places in Pan Cháka, they serve as a training ground and manpower reservoir for the regular legions supported by the sects of the Flame Lord and his Consort.

Ksáru! is widely worshipped among the urban poor and some merchant and artisan clans. Unusually, he is also associated with the natural landscape of the region, particularly the monsoon jungles and cloud forests. There are thus a respectable number of Ksáru-

⁸⁴ Not counting acolytes, novices, lay servants or unordained personnel. As a rule of thumb, an urban temple has two acolytes or novices and about twenty non-priestly staff for every full priest it. The Temple of Vimúhla, for example, is home to around 1500 people all told.

⁸⁵ I.e., "harsh, mean" (Tsolyáni *zhahlánin*).

worshipping farmers and foresters in the more remote countryside. The sect of the Unlighted Germination is described further on among the heterodoxies though its classification as such is open to question at the moment.

Ksárul's Local Aspect in the city of Butrús is openly known to be the slumberous, lazy, troglophilic Toad God (usually just called "The Smoking Toad"),⁸⁶ who is the divine spirit of wells, standing water and cisterns, sinkholes, limestone caves, and frogs, and who is coincidentally also the local patron deity of bankers, pawnbrokers, and moneychangers. In this last role, even the non-Ksárulian banking clans in Pan Cháka pay homage to him — every moneychanger's shop will have a little statuette of the grinning, heavy-lidded god, with a twist of *sáttsa* leaf smoldering between its wide lips.

However, the Smoking Toad has not always been considered an Aspect of Lord Ksárul, and even today some scholars and theologians find this a suspect attribution. Some of the theories aired have been that he is one of the Demon Lords, either one already known but "in disguise" or one otherwise unknown to mankind; an old, discarded Aspect of Grugánu that has been confused with his master; the *true* Ksárul, escaped from the Blue Room and disguising himself for reasons unknown; an Aspect of the Blue Prince that just wants to be left to sleep in peace, and is trying to avoid being woken up by his "faithful"; a wholly artificial divinity, created out of local frog motifs and superstitions in an attempt to provide a more anthropomorphic and accessible deity for regional devotion; the form that Ksárul took on in order to woo Dlamélísh in her Aspect of the Frog Maiden (q.v.); or the aspect of Hrú'ü known as Kaishmá, misidentified. Given that in every other temple to Ksárul the Local Aspect is secret and hidden from the public (and even from members of the priesthood from other cities), it is possible that the Smoking Toad is not even the genuine Local Aspect, but a "cover" for the real and successfully hidden one.

⁸⁶ *Horókkoi Ghurúlmo* in standard Tsolyáni, but *Chóruľmen Lútul* in Pan Chákan dialect, in which *horók* refers only to small, smooth-skinned water-frogs, not larger terrestrial animals. Those are instead *lútul* in the vernacular. "Toad God" is the translation of Pan Chákan *Lútul-Mréďlan*.

In any case, the Toad God is believed to dwell snugly in a huge natural cavern far below the surface of Pan Cháka, lit by eerie blue lights and filled with strange jewels. Legend has it that on the night of the first new Gayél after the end of the monsoon, when the frogs have moved into the rain-filled stone grain-mortars standing by houses all across the land, and the courtyards are loud with the calls of the children of Ksárul and Dlamélísh, this deity deep in his limestone cyst produces a single glowing pearl from a wart on his head: a failed elixir to awaken the Blue Prince, always offered nonetheless. Should a mortal be fed this pearl, it is said to restore the dead to life and to make a living man into a holy sage. However, the Smoking Toad hates being woken up...

Among Lord Ksárul's other and less questionable Aspects, Mentutéčka, as the lord of stormcloud and nocturnal forest gloom, is locally very prominent. He is widely worshipped by foresters and loggers, as people who must frequently journey into the forbidding wilderness, and has several special shrines, within the main temple, outside the city, and in the western jungles. While an unusually "warm" and friendly Aspect, he does have a darker side in that travelers in the forests — ideally officials, scholars, or priests — occasionally disappear without explanation, and are only sometimes later found sacrificed on mossy rock benches tucked away here and there in little glens. Invariably their livers are cut out with clean precision and removed without a trace, but the rest of their bodies and belongings left intact. The same fate strikes one hapless resident of any village that fails to stage the proper tug-of-war, firecracker battles, and dances on the intercalary day of Vraháma — he or she simply disappears, a secret sacrifice taken by the Dark Forest God.

Another important Outer Aspect in Butrús is Nankhétiu the Eager, patron of students and academic competitiveness; its image is that of a young (perhaps adolescent) child, bright-eyed and large-eared, still baby-fat, of indeterminate sex, garbed in miniature robes of the priests of Ksárul but without a mask, holding an ink-brush in one hand and an empty scroll case in the other. One also finds the Prince of Sticks and Straws, patron of parties, picnics, private celebrations and banquets, dinner with friends,

merrymaking, drinking games and party games; at gatherings of Ksáruł-worshippers an extra drinking-straw is always put in a full wine goblet for his invisible presence to enjoy, and he is said to preside over fair and honest games and competitions at parties. More formal parties are customarily begun by serving custard-filled cakes made in his image: a flushed and slightly disheveled petty aristocrat, wearing a jaunty home-made headdress of reeds and bearing one handful of drinking-straws and one of counting-sticks for drinking games. He is also the patron deity of drawing and painting, particularly sketches and doodles. Pan Chákan temples are also home to shrines of Aspects such as Géthu (patron of certain lakes and of those who fish with hook and line), Nlūlu the Rigger, a.k.a. Nlūlu Fortyknuckles (a culture-hero with four joints in each supernaturally long finger, who invented bird-snares, mousetraps, and fishtraps, and is the patron deity of trappers, ratters, and animal-catchers), and Tlira or Tlira-Zhai (the personification of early morning mist, lightly overcast night skies, and ground fog, and patroness of fame and vanity). There is even a sort of “fire god” in the Pan Chákan sects of Ksáruł: Tánti’iki, the goddess of the hearth and kitchen-fires, stoves and ovens, charcoal braziers, chafing dishes, and alchemical lamps and crucibles. (She is not, however, a goddess of “industrial” forges, ovens, smelters, or the like.)

Pan Chákan temples were very late in repudiating the status of Ge’én as an Aspect of Ksáruł. The heresy laid out in the *Tome of Mournful Cogitations* and later promulgated in Tsolyánu through Nirodél Rarenésha’s translation was definitively refuted and suppressed by the High Synod around 600 A.S., which declaration was not made binding upon Pan Cháka until the Tsolyáni conquest nearly two centuries later. Even then, old practices survived in out-of-the-way towns and villages, and the Gracious Inquisition was obliged to track down and root out remaining shrines and observances to this Demon Lord. A fairly large such place of worship was located in the countryside near Butrús and survives in ruinous condition today.

The Temple of Ksáruł in Butrús is large, with over fifty priests and priestesses (not counting

the temple guards), and fairly wealthy. Pilgrims, particularly to the shrine of Mentutékka, are common. Páchi Lei are often counted (and indeed count themselves) among worshippers of Ksáruł, though there is wide variation in the orthodoxy of their faith.

Oddly, Grugánu is under-represented here and has a limited following and small body of clergy (a mere thirteen). However, this temple too has considerable landholdings and is quite rich — all the more so given the tiny establishment it supports. In the Chákas his epithets include the Eldest Burglar and the Great Perambulator,⁸⁷ as he is usually pictured as ceaselessly prowling about the perimeter of the wardings and walls that imprison Ksáruł in the Blue Room.

The secret societies for which the servants of Ksáruł are so well known are certainly present in Butrús. The Society of Blue Light counts sixteen members in the Temple of Ksáruł and three in the Temple of Grugánu; the Ndálu Clan has thirteen (known) members in the Temple of Ksáruł but only one, perhaps two, in that of Grugánu. It may reasonably be supposed that there are members of the Refulgent Blue Curtain Society in the main temples, but their numbers and identity are unknown. There is, however, a tiny “monastery” of this group elsewhere in the city — not secret, but sealed and secretive: the Priory of the Sapphire Shell. Beyond these, the Páchi Lei of Pan Cháka largely profess to worship Ksáruł, but even those that are ordained priests in the urban temples have many strange beliefs and practices of which their human colleagues are mostly unaware, and which to some degree are intentionally kept secret from them. These Páchi Lei — probably less than a dozen in both temples — may be considered a sort of fourth “secret society” within Ksáruł’s priesthood.

The temple guard force maintained by this temple is particularly large (four *semétlyal*, or eighty troops) and well equipped; these serve as escorts, guards, watchmen, and crowd-controllers in the temple grounds and in ceremonial processions. Due to their glossy

⁸⁷ He is thus apparently also venerated by professional thieves and burglars, and the obscure Butrusséne demigod Uncle Peeker is also presumably either an Aspect or another nickname of Grugánu.

lacquered armor and antennae-like plumes, they are known as "the Beetles". In addition, a distinct group of students of the martial art of *hu'ón* exists, whose members are believed to serve as special bodyguards, assassins, and "muscle" to the hierarchs. The number in this group is no more than five or six at any given time, with a wide range in ability; it is widely believed that these warriors have mystical powers. Their "official" duties include menial tasks (gardening, cooking, washing, sweeping), copying, librarianship, and so forth.

A certain rare type of black-petalled flower, the *unmáiyi*, grows wild in certain areas of the Pan Chákan forests, and seedlings can be grown (with difficulty) in Butrús. The *unmáiyi* is used extensively in cultic practices and in devotions in the temple of Ksárul as well as that of Hrü'ü. Another resource of value to this temple is the *mirozjulú* tree, a mutant species of *Diospyros*, whose fine-grained black wood is logged and carved into the smiling masks for the priestesses of Ksárul throughout the Empire. While other timbers are also used for this purpose, the southern Chákan *mirozjulú* is considered the finest material, barring the rare deformed heartwood of a certain tree of the southeastern Forest of Gilráya. Within the protectorate, a piece of *mirozjulú* is worth half its weight in pure gold; abroad, due to extortionate tariffs, it can easily fetch three or four times that amount.

Sárku — or Kúrajú, as he is known outside the Tsolyánu-oriented city temples — represents the traditions and faith of the oldest (extant) native elites and of the independent Chákan kingdom that dates back to the Time of No Kings. The theology, rituals, iconography, and even vestments and architecture of this deity have been profoundly influenced by the local sect formulated under and long promulgated by the Íto clan. On a humbler scale, Sárku is also the patron of many small agricultural and forest-dwelling clans — old clients of the Ítos — and some brewers, distillers, and textile-workers. In ancient times, he was clearly the primary chthonic deity of the entire region, and certain Aspects (of Durritlámish as well) even relate to soil fertility and crop growth. Moreover, he is nowadays generally associated with the local traditions of ancestor-worship, which are ancient and probably originally unrelated to his faith.

Despite all this, his worship is much weaker than in Do Cháka, and certain of his Aspects have taken on greater autonomy. They are often considered nearly distinct demigods (almost on a par with Durritlámish) by average Pan Chákans lacking a formal education in the theology of this temple. Peasants in Pan Cháka also tend to have difficulty keeping the traits and characteristics of Sárku and Belkhánu and their Consorts distinct, revering instead a confused spectrum of topically specific demigods and spirits relating to death, burial, tombs, and the afterlife.

Among the Pe Choi in Pan Cháka there has been since the beginning of the second millennium A.S. a small minority who follow the deities of Change rather than Stability; some of these are adherents of Sárku, though more worship Hrü'ü. Pe Choi worshippers of the Five-Headed Lord are thus a minority within a minority within a minority — but they are mostly clients of the Ítos, and given historical and modern conflicts with other Pe Choi and outside forces, they are more significant than their numbers would suggest.

The most widely and intensely worshipped forms of the deity in Pan Cháka are Albél the Pursuer, patron of dead (and Undead) women;⁸⁸ Dijátl the Copper-Clawed, judge of the dead; and Ku'un the Corpse-Lord, advocate or attorney for the dead in Dijátl's courtroom. Several of the great Demon Lords affiliated with Sárku, such as Gereshmá'a, are widely regarded as kings and custodians in the land of the dead, and as such paid reverence in certain funerary and memorial rituals or customs.

Besides these Aspects dealing with death and the underworld, there is also the specifically Chákan Aspect called Kóschi the Fermenter, the god of beer, wine, and distillation, and even the enjoyment thereof; it largely takes the place of the various Aspects of Dlamélsh and Hriháyal devoted to liquor and drink. The Aspect found throughout southwest and southern Tsolyánu,

⁸⁸ The ghosts of Aridáni warriors and noblewomen who died in childbirth are both said to become servants of Albél after death, taking the form of hawks in the afternoon (when they escort the sun from the zenith down to the Underworld) and more hideous figures during the night, when they lurk about roads, graveyards, and temples, seeking to catch children.

the “banana god” (patron of the copper-colored, black-seeded sweet dessert fruit of these regions), is called Kuráindi in Pan Cháka. The studious, philosophical Gem of Amber Society is locally quite strong, devoted to the Aspect Batha’ák the Eye of Eternity, a contemplative monocular pyramid; devout worshippers are said to return to their temples after death to continue regarding the state of the cosmos, their animated corpses placidly filling certain halls of meditation set aside for them.

Sárku is directly worshipped in Pan Cháka as the god of earthquakes. Whether as the Great Worm burrowing deep in the rock and soil of the world, or as the master of the still and silent underworld that lies below Pan Cháka who knocks on his roof when his upstairs neighbors upset him,⁸⁹ he is considered responsible for causing all types of tremors, temblors, and shudders of the land itself. Direct prayers for him to desist are conducted by his devout followers, but most people feel safer in seeking the intercession of the god Chiténg.

The Butrús temple has a total of forty or forty five priests and priestesses. Five of these are quintuplets, given to the temple upon their birth by their original clan. Despite the sanctity of their birth, they have not proven to be particularly gifted and are only moderately devout. Now in their late twenties, they serve in junior positions as administrative and ritual priests and priestesses.

Durritlámish's temple is deeply conservative (though not entirely orthodox) and quiescent, with its only strict adherents being the Tomb Guards and a single clan of weavers. Farmers in the hinterland, however, pay homage to a number of demigods that are “officially” Aspects of Durritlámish. For example, Kun the Moustachioed is Durritlámish in the form of a great catfish, devouring harmful larvae and dangerous eels in flooded fields, and is

constantly prayed to by farmers throughout the eastern part of the protectorate regardless of their nominal religion. Even more widespread is the peasants’ folk belief that Durritlámish copulates with the earth when it rains at night, and his “seed”, the earthworms, make the soil fruitful and rich. In this fertility role Durritlámish is paid homage in several rural and lower-class rituals, complementing or even filling the role generally attributed to Quyéla (an Aspect of Avánthe) elsewhere.⁹⁰ Grain fields after the harvest are sown with bushels of crude, tiny figures of worms made from sun-baked clay in order to attract Durritlámish’s vital forces and speed the decay of compost, mulch, stubble, and fertilizers before the next crop is planted. The current High Priest of Durritlámish, however, finds these beliefs both heretical and disgusting and would like nothing more than to stamp it out.

The temple has a total of twenty priests and priestesses, including a group recently sent from Sokátis or the City of Sárku itself (rumors vary), presumably by Prince Dchich’uné’s minions. Doctrinal and political conflicts within the temple are simmering towards the boiling point, though this is all but invisible to outsiders.

Other elements of the worship of Sárku and Durritlámish in Pan Cháka are somewhat contentious. What was originally a minor deity particular to the Ítos and their clients has long since spread to become the patron of suicides: Hmwú’ukha, “the Belled One”. She (or he) appears as a thin human of widely variable age (from a toddling child to a bent and gnarled elder), garbed in soft ash-brown robes trimmed with little copper bells, with the round flat face and great feather-rimmed yellow eyes of an owl. Her (or his) main role in popular conception is to watch over those committing suicide by hanging themselves and quickly conveying their souls to a special paradise.⁹¹ She (or he) thus overlaps

⁸⁹ Not a figure of speech or metaphor; Pan Chákans literally believe Sárku lives underneath them and is bothered by excessive noise, traffic, construction, destruction, or general misbehavior. This conception is largely restricted to the Chákas, though very ancient; some pre-Tsolyáni poems speak of the Ítos as “upstairs lessees” and their clients as “subletters”, possibly with reference to this.

⁹⁰ To the extent the two strains can be separated today, the fertility rituals associated with Durritlámish (or Sárku) tend take place immediately after the harvest, in the autumn, while those stemming from Avánthean traditions are more often in the spring, when the first new shoots and buds are appearing.

⁹¹ Suicide by hanging is an ancient and respected recourse in the Chákas and also in Vra (where a demigoddess similar to Hmwú’ukha exists, but as an Aspect of Avánthe). It is particularly favored by lovers not permitted by their families

with and often supplants Aspects such as Akhmér and Mrúgga (both Aspects of Sárku) and Mwakh (the Fifth Aspect of Durrítlámish), particularly in popular or common belief. Most Chákans believe that the fate of all who hang themselves, regardless of their religion, lies with Hmwú'ukha and the "Garden Beyond the Noose"; even the Temple of Belkhánu in Butrús has formally recognized this, much to the displeasure of its metropolitan colleagues. In Pan Cháka, Hmwú'ukha is officially treated as an Aspect of Durrítlámish and is usually female; in Do Cháka, of Sárku, and male.

The Aspects of these deities relating to disease (Naupál of the Blackened Lips is the best-known) are largely overshadowed in Pan Cháka and southern Mu'ugalavyá by a single deity known only by a wide variety of local euphemisms and taboo-names; it has no known "personal name" like other Aspects and gods. In most of Pan Cháka, it is known as Chrysoberyl Bunny, and represented as a handsome, well-set-up rabbit with a brilliantly gleaming yellow-gold pelt that is tinged with green. It represents, or is lord of, the hordes of unseen disease-spirits that (like rabbits) can multiply and swarm across the land, creating epidemics among men. Gemcutters frequently take old jade jewels and utensils and cut them down into small figurines of a rabbit, which are worn about the neck to provide protection from pestilence and plague.

A seemingly minor point that is nonetheless of vital interest to those concerned is the material used for face-paint by the priests of these deities. The orthodox position is that treated wood ash is to be used, creating a pale grayish cosmetic. However, Pan Cháka is one of a handful of regions that refuses to do so, instead substituting powdered hulled rice flour — which provides a much whiter paint, but a stickier one, that requires more frequent application and cleaning. In Pan Cháka, and many other locales that follow the "Heresy of Tarasúb", powdered rice flour is considered a powerful purificatory

agent, and is used in many other rituals and magical observances, from the highest temples to the most humble peasant household altars. Do Cháka is orthodox, as is Úrmish (another cause for mutual distaste); the Tsechénu Flats, Thayúri Island, south-central Mu'ugalavyá, and parts of far eastern Yan Kor and beyond are the only other major centers of the Heresy, though individual families and casually persecuted mendicants or sub-sects can be found scattered thinly throughout the Five Empires.

Belkhánu is one of the chief deities of the peasants and laborers of the eastern rural districts, as is his Consort Qon. Belkhánu's temple at Butrús, staffed by over forty priests, is charged with organizing most of the large public festivals of the dead that are so important in local folk culture, and in most towns and cities it also presides over burials and funerals — except those of individuals who worshipped Karakán, Sárku, or Vimúhla. The temples' direct involvement in these rituals is somewhat restricted to the middle and upper classes, in part due to the greater expense (compared to "folk religious" practices based on older customs), and in part due to the conception of Belkhánu as a "metropolitan" or "Tsolyáni" deity — that is, slightly foreign and new-fangled. All the same, the funerary-related Aspects (e.g., Aldeyá the Embalmer, Hetlášhte the Ferryman) are especially well known and revered.

Qon in particular is more popular than elsewhere in much of the west, in some senses eclipsing Belkhánu and even incorporating some Aspects properly his. The worship of Qon in Pan Cháka appears much older than that of Belkhánu, and some local theologians go so far as to suggest that the God is actually a secondary development from its putative Consort: Engsvanyáli *Khúon* (= modern Qon) → **Bal-Khúon*⁹² → modern *Belkhánu*. This directly contradicts the Scrolls of Pavár and thousands of years of commentary, and is pure heresy, actively prosecuted by the ecclesiastical courts.

A minor Aspect of Qon with a shrine in Butrús — the only one in the west — is Fashésh, god of dead and ruined cities. Locally he presides over

to marry; such "elopement by the rope" brings honor upon the couple and oddly enough upon their family-appointed mates-to-be too. Hmwú'ukha guarantees that such couples will be (re)united in the afterlife, which the mysterious and perhaps infinitely vast Isles of Teretané cannot offer. Suicide by drowning, however, is considered a special affront or insult to one's surviving relatives, even a curse upon them.

⁹² Meaning uncertain, but some claim it simply means "Lord Qon" in the language of the Great Ancients.

memorial services for the City of the Nine Walls and various minor towns and villages of the Chákas lost over the centuries, but occasional rituals are also held in memory of the great ruined cities such as Purdánim. There are twenty seven priests and priestesses in Qon's Butrús temple.

A local demigod of unknown origin has become an important figure within the temples of Belkhánu and Qon in the protectorate, and this unusual situation has been strongly supported and promoted by the Empire itself. This deity, called the Saffron Wisp Maiden, is an aerial, cloud-dwelling entity depicted as something between a butterfly and a young girl. This angelic spirit serves as a divine messenger between the Chákas and the Emperor in Avanthár. While her appearance closely resembles that of the beings known as the Voyagers of the Farther Isles, it is not clear whether she does belong to that "species" of *sharétl*; the similarity her cult bears to that of Nekkudlákte, the Eighth Aspect of Qon, is also suggestive but inconclusive. About two hundred years ago there was a concerted effort outside Pan Cháka to "prove" the Saffron Wisp Maiden is truly an Aspect of Chegárta, but this was ignored by Pan Chákans and successfully contested by the temples of Belkhánu.

The Guild of Those Who Repel the Dark is a powerful empire-wide group of exorcists; but, strangely, here they work well with the Temple of Chiténg — and even (on occasion) those of Dlamélísh, Sárku, or Ksáru. They are dedicated exclusively to the Bednálljan-era Aspect of Qon, Masséfa, a beast-like and somewhat belligerent entity. There are other societies within the two temples, such as the Society of the Yellow Robe (funeral specialists with ten or twelve members), the Light Above the Tomb Society (semi-professional hunters of Undead, numbering two or three), and the two general societies given to supporting the powers of Stability — the Cloak of Feathers and the Golden Refulgence Societies (with no more than half a dozen members in each).

Avánthe is, along with Belkhánu, the chief deity of the peasants of the eastern lowlands of Pan Cháka, and is also worshipped by a significant minority the central districts and in Butrús itself.

The Three Sisters (Chikúna, Quyéla, and E'éth), patrons of the crop cycle, are so popular that they are almost considered as a separate sect or cult by the uneducated and rustic. E'éth is the goddess of irrigation and the rains, in particular the great monsoon deluges; Quyéla, of crop and human fertilization; and Chikúna, of the ripening of fruits, grains, and the completion of pregnancies. Of them, E'éth is particularly revered and considered the most important of the "Food-Bearers"; among the less educated and urbane, this "water-spirit" Aspect of Avánthe overshadows any others. She is the personification of the season of spring (i.e., the "rainy" or "monsoon" season).

Human sacrifices for the fertility of the fields continued in Pan Cháka long after they died out in the rest of Tsolyánu, and animal sacrifices are still fairly common among Avánthe's worshippers even in the eastern part of the protectorate, despite it running counter to doctrine. Such sacrifices probably derive from older practices that were perhaps based in the rural soil and fertility cults associated with the cult-complex of Sárku in the Chákas and are now uncomfortably incorporated into Avánthean ritual. Drowning in rivers and sinkholes was a particularly favored mode of sacrifice, and inanimate offerings (such as flowers and food) are still often offered to the goddess and her many Aspects in this way.

More than most of the twenty Pavárian deities, Avánthe's many Aspects are given separate attention and devotion by the people of Pan Cháka — very often even by those who worship other deities altogether. Some of the particularly widely known and autonomous Aspects in the region include Zerússa of the Roads (especially popular with Pan Chákan merchant porters, and often depicted as a man-headed, human-legged black *epéng* or other centipede-like beast); Balmé the Healer (whose clergy the followers of Stability increasingly trust over those of Thúmis for medical care); Varému, Protector of the Small (whose solitary priestess in Butrús also has the duty of blessing the weekly Bird Markets and Goldfish Markets); Mékhis the Defender of Harmony (patron deity of the Legion of the Clan of Silver Lightning); and Nionél the Patron of Fragrances. Others, such as Póndu the Keeper of Scales, Eluláiku the Purveyor of Excellent Alimentation, Nikoné the Pillar of Purity,

Chraikála Who Cares for Children, Weltiga the Lady of Scrolls, Ngáchani the Mother of Babes, and Tahelé the Maid of Beauty, are more closely tied to the main temples of Avánthe herself and have less universal appeal. Avánthe herself is directly worshipped as the goddess of running and standing water (lakes, rivers, the ocean, flooding), she is also the goddess of marriages and childbirth, while the domains of family and of pregnancy are left to her Aspects.

Parnémimi, spirit of waterfalls, rapids, and rainbows, is known throughout the Chákas and eastern Mu'ugalavyá, and in most sources classified as the Seventy-Ninth Aspect of Avánthe. She is usually depicted as a tiny *pséppon* (the local generic term for small, long-billed, darting birds such as bee-eaters, hummingbirds, flycatchers, etc.; literally it means "thorn-wing"), with jade-green and iridescent gray markings not actually found in nature. It is said that rainbows are actually huge flocks of infinitesimally small *pséppon* of different colors, the courtiers of Parnémimi. In addition, the more fanatical devotees of Avánthe may be insistent that the god of the Lúshmun Canal is a local Aspect of Avánthe, if not Bolénde himself, but this is a minority (and alien) view in Pan Cháka as a whole.

It may be worth noting that Makórsa, an Aspect related to trees, forests, and hunters, is known only to some clans in the easternmost part of Pan Cháka, usually recent (as such things go) immigrants; Mentutékka (an Aspect of Ksáru) is the only true deity of the forests known to Pan Cháka, while a local hero-cum-demigod, Archer Hmi, is the accepted "patron saint" of hunters and bowmen. Some other well-established Aspects of Avánthe are simultaneously worshipped in other Pan Chákan temples, or entirely replaced by these "hijackers"; for example, Hlikársh, the master of hearth-fires and warmth, is scarcely known in the protectorate, while the temples of Ksáru and Vimúhla both have Aspects dealing with "constructive" uses of fire (domestic in the case of Ksáru, industrial in the case of Vimúhla).

The temples of both Avánthe and Dilinála are fairly wealthy, but their resources are spread thin. In Butrús, among Avánthe's forty-odd and Dilinála's two dozen priestesses there are

perhaps sixteen to twenty members of the Sapphire Bough Society, dedicated to blessing the crops, and also a significant number of members of the secretive, sorcerously-inclined Company of the Eye of the Storm. There are only a handful of members of the militant Girdle of Purity Society in the Temple of Avánthe, and no known members of their counterparts, the Sisters of the Cerulean Flower, in that of Dilinála.

The other deities are honored and revered, but less important in local life:

Dlamélish is present, but her cult is not particularly large, powerful or otherwise noteworthy. The favored local Aspect of the Emerald Ladies is the batrachian-headed Frog Maiden⁹³ — a sort of celestial amphibian minx, considered to be or to live in the small, slow green moon Gayél. It is not quite clear whether she is properly an aspect of Dlamélish or of Hriháyal, but Pan Chákan myths most strongly suggest the former. This Aspect is also known throughout Vra and in Penóm, but not elsewhere in Tsolyánu. She does appear as a mere mythological figure in many myths known throughout the islands and southern Téकुmel regarding the two moons and the relationship between Ksáru and Dlamélish — as well as in more casual, non-canonical, folktales. Other Aspects of special note in the Butrús temple are Teshkána the Musician (who is here the special goddess of xylophones and lithophones and their repertoire, more than of musicians or music per se), Snaré the Goddess of Enhanced Beauty, and also the demoness Pa'íya, who has a shrine in the main Temple of Dlamélish, albeit well-hidden and only open to members of the Inner Circles and the Order of Argent. Additionally, the character of Silly Puppy in local folklore and myth is generally lumped in with the Aspects of Dlamélish, as the spirit of irrepressible and irresponsible gaiety and playfulness. Though lacking a shrine in the temples he is represented in formal iconography fairly frequently.

In the temples of the Consort Hriháyal, particularly prominent Aspects locally include

⁹³ *Thiálakoi Horókin* in standard Tsolyáni, but *Hórokke Ndilik* in Pan Chákan dialect (or *Shan'gayél Andilik*, "The Maiden on the Green Moon").

Chío (patron of fetishes for inanimate objects and of the 27th Unspeakable Act) and Niyunén the Giver of Unlooked-For Wealth (no doubt thanks to the Pan Chákan penchant for gambling on battles, sports, races, and any other competition). In addition, the sisters Kilitána and Hajjana are the objects of devotion at the Monastery of Gleeeful Shrieks, a separate establishment with ties to the Company of the Orange Band. The regular rituals of Hriháyal's Aspects Iyéth and Onuqáimu are normally held on the 3rd and 13th of each month. Perversely and stubbornly, in Pan Cháka they are held on the 11th (Iyéth, of men) and 21st (Onuqáimu, of women). This is due to differences in the ecclesiastic calendars of the temples of the Dark Ladies; the Chákan temples continue to reject the authority of a certain early Engsvanyáli council that promulgated this reform, which is accepted elsewhere in modern Tsolyánu.

Every ten years there is a special festival in Butrús dedicated to the Aspect Sihári-Mèng, goddess of flowers, games, and dancing. Its celebrants wear elaborate masks in the shape of different flowers, birds, and colorful insects, and conduct elaborate dances⁹⁴ in the temples and plazas. Great quantities of precious camphor powder is expended in the arrows and darts shot by the priests and dancers during this festival, and the feather robes and capes specially made and preserved over the years for it are some of the most valuable objects in the entire protectorate.

There is also a special shrine in the main temple to the Obsidian Dagger, which in classical mythology was Ksáru's gift to his lover, Dlamélish. The gradually developing theology of this shrine is that the Obsidian Dagger represents the primordial impetus to blood sacrifice, the invention of stone knives, and the first human sacrifice to the gods. Given the local weakness of the Emerald Lady's temple and the strength of that of the Lord of the Blue Room, it seems likely that support of this shrine (and its relatively costly sacrificial needs) is politically motivated — an attempt to foster a link with the more powerful temple. Otherwise, rites in

Dlamélish and Hriháyal's temples are orthodox — sacrifices of silver coins, snakes and eels, and the big, waxy green, fragrant cup-shaped *tikánta* blossoms. The temple has a profitable sideline in the manufacture and export of ritual instruments and amulets made of obsidian, obtained from the volcanic mountain range in the south of Pan Cháka; this includes manufacture of the temple's ritual obsidian daggers, as well as the much rarer and more precious sacred sacrificial knives, the *diridza*, used in a few secret Inner Rituals. Temple workshops produce these items along with other jewels and specialty goods, such as the plain silver rings used as offerings to the Aspect Chío. The Temples of Dlamélish and Hriháyal count forty and thirty clergy, respectively. About half a dozen of this number may be members of the Order of Argent, an ancient school of demonologists which is known to work with the priests of Ksáru. This cabal is rumored to possess an exceptionally fine *nmeréng*⁹⁵ credited with an ancient lineage.

Worshippers of *Karakán* and Chegárra are a minority in Pan Cháka, though the size of the priesthoods in Butrús is disproportionately large. Two Aspects of Chegárra are particularly popular, particularly with governmental officials: Mi'irésh (concerned with roads, commerce, traffic, and the marketplace laws) and Qorushái (patron of military law and the legion regulations). Aside from these and other purely martial concerns, the priests of Karakán are primarily concerned with their god's patronage over the *hirilákte* arenas and sporting events — particularly *marotlán*. He is also the god of lightning and those killed by lightning strikes, and he guides the sun on its daily passage out of the Underworld up to its zenith.

A schism in the well-known Clan of the Sword of Righteousness⁹⁶ has produced a faction called the Glorious in Scarlet, given to vigorous political activism in support of policies of military expansionism and adventurism, that in Butrús completely dominates the temples of these two deities. Twenty nine out of Karakán's thirty nine priests and sixteen out of Chegárra's twenty five

⁹⁴ "Social dances" that draw in common devotees and even spectators, not formal ritual dances by trained specialists alone — though they do, obviously, have a ceremonial and religious meaning.

⁹⁵ A green fire-opal, used as a ritual instrument in certain sorceries and conjurations.

⁹⁶ A "secret society" or faction within the temples, not literally a clan.

are members of the Glorious in Scarlet, and thanks to their good organization and abundant enthusiasm, this society is actually a greater source of trouble along the Mu'ugalavyáni border and with Chákan secessionists than any other local faction. They are, in fact, more radical and militant even than the Incandescent Blaze Society of the temple of Vimúhla! The Companions of the Holy Thunder (q.v.) are loosely under the patronage of the temples of Karakán in southern Tsolyánu, and a fair number of their higher-clan priests, lay-priests, temple guards, etc. are members or at least supporters.

Hnálla is favored by a number of officials and their families but has little other following. While they carry on regardless, there are sometimes more priests than laity at the public rituals. Supported by donations and funding from outside the protectorate, the temple has a thirty of priests in residence, and even the little Temple of Dra is home to nine more priests — all but two of whom are members of the arch-ascetic “Perfect of Dra”.

One issue pertains to native Pan Chákan mythology but is included here rather than below: the “Adjustment Men”.⁹⁷ These beings are special emanations or servants of Hnálla that are sent out in small teams to fix errors of fate and mend irruptions in the Master of Light’s cosmic fabric. In Chákan theological circles, they are considered the Eighth Aspect of Hnálla, collectively; others would simply consider them a type of *sharétl*, or “demon”, if they even exist. Small and grayish, cold and heartless, these ontological technicians are universally regarded as unwelcome, sinister, and very possibly dangerous (both in practical and spiritual senses). Even worshippers of the Gods of Stability feel this way about them. Their corrections are rarely beneficial to mortals, and after all, most people would prefer to cheat fate rather than suffer it. Superstitious gamblers often carry some small globes rolled from hardened rubber, which are said to drive the Adjustment Men away if hurled at them quickly enough. Nothing else will do; even the mask-

⁹⁷ *Máfkemon Bášrimyal* in standard Tsolyáni; oddly, there appears to be no vernacular equivalent. The superstitious—or unexpectedly lucky—are careful to refer to them only by their initials, Ma-Ba, so as to not attract their attention.

wearing dwarves of Zrabísh⁹⁸ cannot stand against the Adjustment Men.

Hrü'ü is quite under-represented except through a local minor Aspect, that of the (nameless) Cat God.⁹⁹ The Cat God is an old and only moderately popular figure in Pan Chákan lore, perhaps representing a pre-Pavárian deity or tribal totem; it is the object of some pilgrimages from the north-central parts of the Empire and also Pijéna. The one other Aspect of note is the Black Old One, said to be the Pe Choi form of *Hrü'ü*. The image in his shrine in Butrús is considered particularly fine; it is a large lacquered wooden statue representing the Aspect as a black (male) Pe Choi bearing the purple-circle-with-scarlet-slash symbol of *Hrü'ü*, an iron lightning bolt (not real iron, alas), a serpent, and a obsidian-toothed sword-club (the latter being a transference from the *Páchi Lei* “Aspect” of *Hrü'ü*, called *Alsh*). The gemstones set as the serpent’s eyes are said to be taken from a piece of jewelry sent as a gift by Emperor Nríga Gaqchiké (r. 984–1010 A.S.), who was largely responsible for the origin and spread of the cult of the Black Old One among the Pe Choi. Unfortunately, even in Pan Chaka Pe Choi following the gods of Change are not common and the shrine is sparsely attended. There is no shrine to *Alsh* itself in this temple; Butrusséne *Páchi Lei* almost entirely attend the Temple of Ksáru, or else their own shrines in the Foreigners’ Quarter.

Hrü'ü himself is, in the Chákas, the god of wind, specifically the cool dry-season winds blowing from the north and west. Ever-present in the form of gusts and flurries, he is described as sweeping clean the paths of the planets in the sky and the roads of the gods below the earth, propelling the life-giving rainclouds, and ultimately breathing life and motion into the

⁹⁸ Apparently a species of “demon” with five legs, under the sway of *Hrü'ü*.

⁹⁹ Standard Tsolyáni designates this deity as *Mitlán hiTiúniyal*, the God of Cats, but the actual native formal equivalent is *Tsiu'en Mrelan*, more accurately “the Feline God”—the reflex of *tiu* in this dialect is not limited to domestic cats, but to any species of felidae. The normal vernacular expression, though, is *Shi'ikántuyi*, “Like a Soft Paw” (perhaps euphemistic). Among its Pijenáni worshippers its name is taboo, and pilgrims from there normally only refer to the deity as “that one over there” (*másunja*), combined with simultaneously pointing as if to indicate “here”.

entire cosmos. Outside of proverbs, conventional sayings and wisdom, and a few mythological tales, these functions are of little import or interest to Pan Chákans other than the priests in the Butrús temple and a handful of local scholars.

A small number of urban artisans and merchants are the core of local devotees of Hrú'ü. Many of these are descendants of officers, soldiers, and dependents of the Legion of the Sable Lord, disbanded in 1700 A.S. after backing a losing contender for the Petal Throne. A sizeable number fled to Butrús (which was then under Mu'ugalavyáni control) where they settled permanently. There is also a small community of Pijenáni expatriates and settlers, most of whom are loose adherents of this faith. Among the three dozen priests of Hrú'ü and the eighteen or twenty of Wurú, there are known to be at least a dozen of the Cusp of Night Society. However, it is reasonably certain that none of the senior priests belong — they regard the Cusp of Night (and its Ndálu Clan allies) as meddling outsiders from the distant and dreary cities of central Tsolyánu.

The Temple of Wurú is regionally famous for being the home of the lesser Aspect Menwási, patron of the *ténturen* and its local variants. These musical instruments are used extensively in the rituals of the consort and deity alike. Other Aspects that have their own shrines in Butrús are Diéllunak the Bleak Goddess of Changes and Perturbations and, more importantly, Siunéth the Pleasant One of Mazes (whose shrine is, in fact, a maze), to whom people sacrifice black *unmáiyi* flowers in order to gain help finding lost valuables or children. Most residents of Butrús know the Temple of Wurú best for its excellent, if solemn, performances of epics — both with players and shadow-puppets, accompanied by feasts.¹⁰⁰ These are held in the temple grounds throughout the year at irregular intervals — depending as much upon finances, weather, and the availability and readiness of performers as upon any theological or calendrical matters. Neither priesthood is particularly wealthy; they are probably the poorest of the five temples of Change in Butrús.

¹⁰⁰ The Hymn to Mü'ukané is a specialty of the priesthoods of Wurú.

Thúmis is considered a distinct "newcomer" but is not actually unpopular as such. The temple has a good library and runs a school that serves almost all of the devotees of Stability: the Pavilion of Vision in the Pearly Clouds. Currently the Temple of Thúmis includes among its nearly thirty priests only a few activists of the Brotherhood of Supernal Wisdom. Generally, it is an apolitical and conservative institution. The Gray Robes in Pan Cháka are not much given to mysticism, philosophy, or theology, but rather concentrate on practical scholarship — medicine, engineering, mathematics, and administration. This orientation may be entirely intentional, part of a long-term plan to win a place for the Lord of Wisdom in Pan Cháka by dint of useful, practical, public results. This sect played a crucial role in the recent *dittána* of the city, providing much of the administrative and engineering talent required as well as providing the design of the new city layout. However, this has backfired, as the temple is widely perceived to have "hijacked" the direction of the project, offending many powerful factions in the region and even the Empire. The small clique of Thúmis-worshipping clan-siblings who took control of the great project was made up of undeniably capable and efficient individuals, but their conduct ended up alienating even segments of their own temple.

The Seventh Aspect of Thúmis, Chokóth the Wanderer, here at Butrús presides over a special collection of gems, strange rocks, and geological scholia from around the known world. The shrine to Meshmúr the Molder of Flesh is larger and better supported, however. This deity, famed for the cure of internal injuries and ailments, is customarily portrayed as a rearing serpent with a large head and a single eye; when its cult was introduced to Butrús in the twelfth century, it was widely regarded as a cult of phallus-worship; or at very least, that a blatant phallic symbol was the manifestation of the Aspect. This led to the expected jokes about exactly *how* Meshmúr could "heal your internal ailments", and thus also provoked some poor reactions from the temple of Dilinála, which up until then had been the authority and source of aid for gynecological medicine in the protectorate. Some of this rancor persists to the present day — in the form of touchy priests of

Thúmis, nonplussed physicians dedicated to Dilinála (or even Avánthe), and devotees of Ksárul or Vimúhla with a taste for off-color religious ribaldry at the expense of the Grey Robes. To add insult to injury, the image of Meshmúr has spread into the countryside and is indeed resorted to by uneducated peasants solely as a guarantor of virility and (masculine) sexual prowess.

Another Aspect of note in the city is a little-known one, with only a few shrines elsewhere in Tsolyánu: Ethuví'ish, better known as the "God of Clocks". This Aspect, of Mu'ugalavyáni origin, is the patron deity of timekeeping instruments of all kinds, as well as those that manufacture and maintain them. Given the complicated and disputatious nature of official chronometry in Butrús, he is often supplicated and called upon by various officials and servants. His image is that of a bald, slightly frowning, middle-aged man wearing a short kilt and holding a gnomon, a sundial's disk, two different graduated rods of a clepsydra, an astrolabe, and an hourglass in his six hands. A purely local Aspect is Semwáse the Pounder, who is the patron and guardian of paper-makers and also of clothmaking — likely due to the widespread and ancient use of bark "felts" in the Chákas. He is now the object of devotions among weavers, spinners, and embroiderers as well, but in the guise of a *female* "sub-Aspect" (perhaps having absorbed a lost local Aspect of Avánthe, Mahabét or Ma'abét, who was the original focus of the Sewing Festival in Firasúl). Semwáse proper is paid homage by all manufacturers and dealers in paper products, even those worshipping Ksárul.

On Ngéshtu Head at the southernmost tip of the protectorate there is a shrine to the Aspect Kánukolúm, the god of navigators and astronomy. It must be supplied entirely by sea and cannot be reached from land (apparently); those expecting a monastic retreat full of sages and priests will be disappointed, as it consists only of a simple temple frequented by sailors and mariners who stop here on the coast to take on fresh water. Nevertheless, it is a spiritually significant place, and Stability-worshippers among the seafaring clans of southern Tsolyánu visit it to pay homage when the opportunity arises.

As in many locales, Keténgku is the patron of physicians, and most of the Butrús temple's seventeen priests are pharmacists, bonesetters, surgeons, circuit-listeners, and other varieties of medical men. Many are involved with the "hospital" run by this temple and that of Thúmis; over many years now it has been acquiring a bad reputation for "experimenting" on poorer or indigent patients. Dentistry is a local specialty of the priests of Keténgku, thanks to Butrús being the home of the Aspect Tírekshen of the Sweet Jaws, and pilgrims come from near and far to seek healing for injuries of the mouth and teeth. (Tírekshen is also the patron deity of chewing gum and of breath-freshening drugs and medicines.)

The temples of Thúmis and Keténgku in Butrús have a small number of Páchi Lei adherents, who tend to be unusually devout, and who suffer certain prejudices from the main body of Páchi Lei society. However, the priests are sometimes surprised to find that their pious Páchi Lei parishioners have suspiciously heterodox beliefs and ritual practices.

Heterodox Cults and Local Myths

Heterodoxy in the strongest and worst sense has had a dark history in Pan Cháka. All three of the Pariah Gods have had their worshippers here, even the obscure One Who Is. The One Other, best known for his mythological role in helping imprison Ksárul after Dórmoron Plain, has been particularly active — at the very least in the heated imaginations of the protectorate's devout Ksárul-worshipping population. The Goddess of the Pale Bone is known to have had small temples and monasteries in the region from Bednálljan times up through the early years of the Second Empire, and after that, networks of underground worshippers at least until the 1200s. It is, naturally, feared that covens of the faithful are still in operation today. Likewise, it is customary for the imaginative and suspicious to interpret any given historical event in the protectorate in terms of the hidden machinations of these diabolical forces; doing so is here left as an exercise to the reader.

The Empty Sharers of the Unlighted Germination, as the sect's formal name is usually given, are included in this section even

though the sect is widely understood to be an offshoot of the standard Ksárulian faith. Many consider it to have veered into a wholly unorthodox and heretical path. Having originated in Pan Cháka, it disappeared from the protectorate for centuries and has only recently returned.

It was founded in the 1140s at the village of Chejálsha (southwest of Butrús) by a moderately wealthy farmer named Kadíjen Tsúnkai. Kadíjen claimed to have received a series of visions in which Lord Ksárul showed him “the formless secret” and urged him to learn from it. Having converted most of his family and a few neighbors, the cult he founded was vigorously opposed by the local priests and never numbered more than a few score adherents. Kadíjen’s grandson, Kóhlumir, relocated the entire sect en masse to the backwaters of Marélmu province in 1230-32. There it grew steadily over the centuries, both by internal growth and slow accumulation of converts, until the segregated, aloof villages of its adherents were scattered across Marélmu and into neighboring provinces.

The Unlighted Germinators are all farmers at least part-time, and their communities aim at total self-sufficiency. Outsiders are not permitted to settle in them or to lease, rent, or even labor on their lands. On the few occasions they have been obliged to give up any of their land, they have sown the soil with salt and destroyed the irrigation system to prevent others from growing crops on it. Internally, they appear to be organized on a highly egalitarian model, with land and property held communally, decisions made by consent or consensus, strong sanctions against hoarding wealth or goods, and an absolute minimum of division of labor. Their beliefs, so far as they can be ascertained, could possibly be summed up by the term “esoteric agriculture”. All field labor is performed collectively, and all plantings and harvestings are done only at night, during the dark of the moons. The phrase most often heard from the cultists, at such times, is the cryptic “Blessed is the seed planted forever in darkness!”

In the early 2340s a few members of the cult visited Butrús and Pan Cháka; in following years a steady trickle of families have come to the

protectorate from the plains of northwest Tsolyánu, aiming at establishing one or more of their settlements. While no clear attempt has been made to re-settle Chejálsha Village (now mostly deserted), it is a site of frequent pilgrimages for members of the sect, even some from the northwest in recent years. The Unlighted Germinators are not finding a particularly warm welcome in their place of origin: the orthodox temples of Ksárul in the protectorate want nothing to do with them (not wishing to be associated with potential heretics, trouble-makers, or other embarrassments); many priests and priestesses of the temples of Avánthe are dismayed and alarmed at the idea of a bizarre sect of the Black Robes claiming knowledge of what are properly the mysteries of their own goddess. Farmers and rural adherents of both deities are suspicious and unfriendly toward the newcomers. Meanwhile, the College for Making the Heart Sincere is increasing its previously lackadaisical efforts to inspect their temporary quarters in Butrús and their initial farmstead in the country. Strangely, the most tolerant group seems to be the rural worshippers of Vimúhla, who themselves have traditionally lived in more or less segregated settlements and kept somewhat aloof from neighbors following different gods.

*The deity of the Lúshmun Canal*¹⁰¹ and its servants or children the “dragon colts” have been mentioned above. More than the other demigods and spirits described below, it partakes of elements of orthodox iconography — that of Ksárul and Avánthe. It also is clearly affiliated with the mythology and ideology of the Tsolyáni imperium, as well as indigenous water-spirit lore.¹⁰² This being is represented in its single canalside shrine as a kind of simian with a flat nose and a high beetling forehead; it is green of body but white-headed, and has small yellowish eyes. Long ago it was captured by the

¹⁰¹ Yet another blandly named local god: *Méklukoi hiBafaikán Lúshmunin*, “the God (literally, Cohort) of the Lúshmun Canal”. Local vernacular is basically the same: *Mrélan hüVamáikan Lúshmunne*. Even peasants dwelling on the canal itself do not seem to have any special nicknames or avoidance-names for this deity.

¹⁰² On two occasions, Tsolyáni governors and the priesthood of Avánthe have tried to associate this shrine with her Aspect Bolénde, or one of the lesser local Aspects thereof, but these foreign impositions have always been sloughed off at the earliest possible opportunity.

hero Nug (q.v.), chained up, and lowered into a bottomless pond, in order to regulate the water level in the canal. (This is hard to reconcile with the recent origins of the canal, but legend is legend...). It is said to have been as strong as ten *chlen*, even though it was only the size of a child at the time — and it is rumored to have grown vastly over the centuries. The other end of its chain is bolted into the side of a small mountain overlooking the canal, and the ruler of Pan Cháka is supposed to haul up the beast and inspect it every hundred years. This has not been done for many centuries, however, perhaps due to the cryptic and alarming notes left by the last officials to have performed this duty, and the prevalence of hair-raising stories and street-plays about its current girth and temper. Nonetheless, legend stipulates that the deity is a loyal servant of the Petal Throne.

The Goddess of the Turín River is now almost forgotten, and exists only as a figure in some local legends and in a few folk festivals. Up until the Gracious Inquisition, she was actively worshipped in Pan Cháka (at least in districts near the river), with rituals including regular human sacrifice through poisoning in specially-built grass shelters on the riverbanks. So far as can be determined, her cult was suppressed only at the request of authorities from the mainstream temples of Avánthe, who were deeply opposed to the human sacrifice and the commonplace attribution of this goddess to an Aspect of Avánthe. Perhaps already fading, the entire complex of cult practices and beliefs soon vanished.

The Purple Girl is a demigoddess at the heart of a strongly female-oriented folk cult, whose practices center on the handling of grain during the main harvests of the year. The spirit in question is supposedly that of a young woman who was murdered by her mother-in-law and whose body was buried in the mounds of chaff from the harvest. (She is also the protective deity of newlywed brides.) A lurking force who makes her presence known by what is described by the peasants simply as “the feeling that something very heavy is present with you”, she is more feared than loved. The best-known element of this cult is the belief in the “winnowing ghosts” — the souls of the recently departed who return each year at the harvest

time, in the form of evil bird-spirits. These ghosts try to seek out their relatives — who abandon their houses for the night and hide in the fields — and will occasionally leave cryptic messages scratched into the fallen chaff. The same “heavy” sensation that attends the Purple Girl’s invisible presence is also felt all during the day before the “winnowing ghosts” come back — or so the peasants claim.

The Pan Chákans pay reverence to a deity known only as “*the Grandfather*”, depicted as a huge gobbler-bat, or *khurruhirrúkhú*. His function seems similar to that of Belkhánu’s Aspect Mórskodel: a psychopomp who receives the soul at death. Gobblers in general are seen as the escorts or footmen of recently departed souls. Despite this figure’s theologically innocuous nature and apparent close affinity to Belkhánu, it has not been formally incorporated into the orthodox faith even during the Gracious Inquisition, but was in fact briefly discouraged.

A particular type of owl — or rather a spirit in the form of an owl — is the *Ghost Carriage*. This creature has a tiny body and huge wings when flying, but takes on the form of a normal owl when landed. They perch on rooftops at night and normally crane their heads upward, as if searching for something in the sky. If they should look down on top of someone’s head — especially that of a child — that person’s soul is instantly carried off and he or she will die. The same will happen if their feathers touch a child or its clothes, so it is unsafe to spread out children’s clothes or bedding to air at night — loose feathers from a Ghost Carriage might drift upon them. These Ghost Carriages are said to live in orchards during the daytime, but are invisible and intangible then. Dogs can still detect them, and their barking will drive them away. An alternate or additional part of the myth is that these birds are the transformed ghosts of women who died pregnant, before childbirth, and sometimes take the forms of girls during the daytime — and so owls are sometimes called “wetnurse birds” or “night-strolling girls”.

Green Boy and Red Woman are two unpleasant ghosts or demons who lurk about, seeking to attack children and youths — sometimes separately, often together; usually at night, but

sometimes even at dusk. Their depredations are apparently limited to the immediate environs of Butrús. There are many different tales of their origins, many quite elaborate. They are favorite bugbears of parents to quell their wayward children.

The *Well Visitors* or *Damp Citizens* can now be included in this section of the manuscript, though if what is said about them is true they might just as fairly have been placed under the heading of “Foreigners” along with other non-human persons.¹⁰³ According to the author of the *Gazetteer*, these entities are a sort of water-goblin, perhaps limited to the realm of myth and legend. They dwell in ponds, swamps, waterways, and sodden rainforest groves near pools throughout Pan Cháka, and also in water-filled caves and fissures — even (or especially?) under Butrús itself. Their underground warrens are said to connect with the city’s sewers and cisterns in a number of places, but there is a certain natural subterranean stream that they will under no circumstances cross. Their great fondness for melons and squashes and lack of respect for private property often bring them into contact with gardeners; their taste for rotting meat leads them to interact with humans as well, though in less lighthearted fashions. Local children are terrified into obeying their elders (and not playing around wells, for example) by tales of the newt-goblins prowling under the city. Country people are generally less afraid of them; Chiténg worshippers, particularly horrified. In folklore they are represented as being cruel, cynical, and untrustworthy, but also given to occasional acts of kindness. In most tales they are hostile and practically at war with surface-dwellers — e.g., many versions of the history of the “War of the Tsuru’úm” (q.v.) blame the Well Visitors. Some stories, however, relate that they have sometimes in the past come to the aid of Butrusséne (in the face of mutual threat by outsiders), and according to long-standing urban legend they even pay “taxes” at certain times, to one or another recipient — the Íto clan, the Temple of Chiténg, the Governor, or the Metropolitan Prefect. They are described as small and dark, lank and dank, goggling and hissing, with big webbed hands

¹⁰³ The relevant page was missing from the manuscript originally provided by the author.

and feet and a lush mane of black hair running down their rubbery backs. That they are supposed to be fantastically strong, their being the “inventors” of wrestling in mythological times, and the scores of needle-like teeth stuffing their wide mouths altogether presents a discouraging picture to the would-be hero.

The Thunder Lords are another peculiar class of being, difficult to classify as animals, spirits, or possibly even minor deities. Locals insist on referring to them as “gods”, but it is hard to determine exactly why. Their appearance is thoroughly chimerical — a Thunder Lord is said to have fleshy bat-like wings, a cat’s feet and hands, a pig-like head with soft furry horns and a mane of dark green hair, a hawk’s beak, and pitch-black skin; they wear bright red trousers and carry short-handled stone axes of supernatural sharpness.¹⁰⁴ As the name indicates, they are closely associated with thunder, particularly in the stormy season of the monsoons, when they will signal anger at the human populace by causing dikes and levees to burst and cisterns and reservoirs to crack and drain. They are thus the recipients of the “First Thunder” sacrifices in the month of Hasanpór. Effigies of them are hauled around in heavy, crudely built “thunder carts” during these festivals, and again in the autumn windy season. Dwellers on the coast claim to frequently see them flying out to sea in great flocks and doing battle with *akhó*, *hlüss*, and such monsters; tribesmen and Páchi Lei of the central jungles say that they hunt them during the dry season for food — they curl up in little stone cysts underground, and their flesh tastes like rich, juicy *tsi’il* meat. There are several other superstitions about them as well. Stone axe-heads are often found in the ground in Pan Cháka, and are believed to be thunderbolts of these creatures that were lost in storm-battles and not retrieved. During the autumn typhoon season, it is forbidden to eat fish with *hma* or

¹⁰⁴ The association of axes with the region of Pan Cháka extends to its etymology, at least in Tsolyáni scholarship: *pa’an*, meaning “axe”, is said to be the source of the name. Some contrary philologists insist that the name-element is cognate with the modern Tsolyáni stem *pal-*, “yesterday” (sometimes used to mean “the former, the elder” in names), suggesting that Pan Cháka was considered the older or original of the two Chákas. Many Chákan antiquarians assume the term comes from some long-forgotten local language and cannot now be recovered.

hmélu meat in the same meal, or the Thunder Lords become angry. If a traveler or village is attacked by Thunder Lords — as happens every few years — they can supposedly be driven off by urine, of which they are deathly afraid. Some argue that these are demons affiliated with *Vimúhla*, partially because of their known antagonism to frogs and toads — locally speaking, emblems of both *Ksáru* and *Dlamélish*, who in myth were no friends of the Flame Lord. On the other hand, they are often depicted as battling the *Chóhrulesh*, a species of “demon” owing allegiance to *Vimúhla*.

The Boneless King is an extremely mysterious being, said to have dropped down from the sky during the Time of No Kings and fallen into the waters off the coast of Pan Cháka. He was washed ashore and worshiped by the scattered tribal peoples of the region, eventually gaining his own temple(s) and sacrifices. This cult eventually gave rise to the Five Bushels and Seven Toes sect, which was finally suppressed by imperial order in the early 1200s. This affair was certainly an impetus for the “Gracious Inquisition” later in the century, but very little is really known now about the sect or the older cult. What became of the King himself is entirely unknown. Though Pan Chákan legends do not explicitly make the connection, this story is likely connected to that of Archer Hmi’s wife (see below), at least indirectly.

Lársang may be an (anti)hero of mythology or a demigod not attached to an orthodox religious tradition; he was a goldsmith and also an assassin, becoming the patron of cold-blooded murder.¹⁰⁵ Being blinded by Archer Hmi or *Pendárte* (or occasionally other epic heroes in a few versions of the tale) posed no impediment to his continued career of remorseless killing, and today people suffering blindness are said to have been stricken by *Lársang* when they (unwittingly) saw him escaping from the scene

¹⁰⁵ His brother *Ninko*, also a goldsmith, is in stories if not actual religious practice the “god of correct pronunciation”, cruelly and outrageously punishing characters who mispronounce the language. He especially objects to those who lazily and sloppily say his name “*Ningko*” (with a velar *ng*) rather than the proper “*Ninko*” (with a dental *n*). Deaf-mutes are said to be his victims — at some point either they or their parents (if they were born mute) spoke carelessly in his unseen presence.

of some infamy.¹⁰⁶ Goldsmiths, and jewelers who work with gold, feel obliged to go out of their way to demonstrate they do not follow in the footsteps of this most famous practitioner of their art. Even professional criminals of *Butrús* despise and fear *Lársang*. He is nevertheless propitiated by those planning secret bloodshed and by those fearing it alike, as well as by those who are threatened by blindness. Tiny, well-hidden shrines to him are rumored to be secreted about the city, attended by solitary evildoers and psychopathic killers. He is personally fond of seashells and is strongly attracted to them, and they are thus regarded with some horror by superstitious *Butrusséne*.

Epic heroes such as *Subadím* and *Hrúgga* are certainly well known to every Pan Chákan, but are really close to the heart only of immigrant lineages and the more status-conscious urbanites and elites. The major local culture hero in Pan Chákan lore has the name *Nug* — humorous even to urbane *Tsolyáni* ears. *Nug* was descended from a clan of animal-trainers that exists even today, taking much pride in their ancient clan-brother. It is puzzling that he is not said to be the *founder* of the clan, as most heroes would be, but so it goes.

After many gods and would-be heroes had failed to drain away the primordial waters that filled the cosmos, *Nug* managed to dam them up instead and so create dry land, by using an artifact or a substance — it is not clear which — called the Breathing Earth. The same item (under the name of the Pulsing Mold) was later used by *Nug* (or *Subadím* in some versions) to stop up the Eye of the Ocean, which threatened to drown the earth once more. *Nug* is also credited with having invented the digging-stick, the basket, the adze, the roof, the sickle, the drinking-straw, and the rain-cape, as well as many other implements of civilization. He invented the backpack so that *Sáрку* could bring home his belongings after his little-known “divorce” across the western sea (his mummified minions’ heads had kept snapping off when they attempted to use carrying-baskets with tumplines). Supposedly, *Nug* also captured the

¹⁰⁶ Those discovering a murder for the first time are supposed to immediately cover their eyes and leave the scene pretending nothing is amiss, so that *Lársang* will not blind them as he leaves to keep them from identifying him.

god of the Lúshmun Canal and tamed it to regulate the water levels, but this is hard to take literally, given the very modern date of the canal project.

Archer Hmi is a great hero of Pan Chákan legend, but scarcely known elsewhere. Nowadays a figure in stories and folktales, and the patron of hunters,¹⁰⁷ Archer Hmi went about freeing people from a variety of natural disasters and vicious beasts, using fairly direct methods that eventually got him in trouble. His first escapade was a journey to the Plain of Towers in the far west — leaving behind a train of slaughtered bandits and bullies each way (including an unnamed “culture hero” credited with inventing *robbery*) — where he charmed the “Fairy Queen” that lives there into giving him the elixir of immortality, a magic plum-like fruit. Though he had invented the bow, his own creations proved inadequate to deal with the foes he faced on this journey and his return, and so the “god in the sun” (Hnálla, according to proper Tsolyáni interpretation, but either Karakán or Vimúhla in the local view of things) appeared and gave him his famous red bow of demon-repellent bamboo.

First he killed the wicked Filetooth (a monstrous personification, maybe, of the tooth-sharpening tribal headhunters of the inner jungle) and took his invention, the shield, as booty. He went on to quell the Great Wind — a huge bird the size of a mountain, perhaps a symbol of the typhoon or tornado — by simply shooting it full of arrows. The next to meet the same fate was the Speckled Snake — a giant serpent with the habit of devouring *chlen*-beasts right out of harried farmers’ fields — and then its cousin, the quaintly-named Jiyiyiyi, a red-furred, human-faced snake a *tsan* long who preferred to eat humans, except for the small clique of wizards it tutored. He then turned to the Humped Chlen (see below) and dispatched him as well, due to his habit of being rude to passersby. The Jiyiyiyi’s students, meanwhile, had failed to revive their master and petitioned the gods for redress; the Humped Chlen’s parents also objected to Archer Hmi’s crusade, and it was decided by the gods to put a stop to him. He

was banished for eternity to the volcanoes of Porubél Ta, where his right foot, both hands, and his long hair are melted into the trunk of a small tree to keep him from shooting anything else. His later discovery there by travelers is mentioned in at least one Engsvanyáli history. Many Chákans consider him to be the same as or equivalent to the largely Mu’ugalavyáni hero Pendárte, while the Mu’ugalavyáni (especially those of Khéiris, Pendárte’s city) believe the character of Archer Hmi to be a borrowing of Pendárte into the rustic folktales of the disorderly eastern savages. Educated Tsolyáni more and more agree, even going so far as to substitute the name Pendárte when re-telling the legends of Archer Hmi.

Archer Hmi had a wife of astounding beauty but unknown antecedents and no known name who, while her husband was away making Pan Cháka safe for decent people, took the drug of immortality from its hiding place and escaped to the moon Gayél — thus, according to some interpretations, revealing herself as an avatar of the goddess Dlamélsh. Having eaten the now-shriveled holy fruit, she planted the pit in the lunar soil, where it grew into a magical cardamom tree. Nowadays she spends her time engaged in abstruse alchemical experiments; occasionally, however, seeds or blooms from the tree fall to earth, particularly during full moons and when certain dances for the fertility of the crops are held. These so-called “moon blossoms” are often dangerous, for they can assume the forms of other deities and otherwise get up to no good, gobbling up offerings intended for other gods (somewhat like Khájju, an orthodox Aspect of Grugánu), causing agricultural implements to come alive and abuse their owners, transforming animals into shape-changing spirits, and inducing epidemics of pregnancy in women. The myth of the tricky “moon blossoms” may be a later offshoot of the story of the Boneless King; or it may be the other way around.

Wiwí is yet another figure of Pan Chákan legends with an amusing name; originally he had the form of a one-legged, three-armed, two-tailed *rényu*, but invented music and acquired the form of a small wooden drum. His wife was named Yúrchuch or Yílchich (sources differ), but called simply “Woman in Darkness”

¹⁰⁷ On an etymological note, it has been suggested that this hero’s name is related to the modern Tsolyáni word *hmún*, “to hunt game, to track prey”.

— and is generally believed to represent Hriháyal. They had one son, with a name too ridiculous to repeat here, who had a homely appearance and bad manners. Going off to live in the Red Cassia Forest (probably in the eastern lowlands of Pan Chaka), he became known as the Humped Chlen and his poor hospitality eventually got him slain by Archer Hmi — an event commemorated in a local melody and seasonal folkdance called the Red Cassia Forest Dance. Orthodox Tsolyáni scholars find it interesting, if a little puzzling, that this myth complex suggests that Dlamélish (as Archer Hmi's wife) and Hriháyal (as Humped Chlen's mother) may not have been on speaking terms at one point.

The Year-Bearers are both cosmological demigods and heroes in local epics (very minor ones), as well as figures (again minor) in great classical epics. They are more commonly recognized outside Pan Cháka as lesser Demon Lords, servants of Prince Origób: Nimuné, Akhoné, Niritlál, and Nurgáshte. In local traditions they are known as the Three Kings, with Nurgáshte always referred to separately as the Fourth King. In classical legend they fought Hrugga on his quest at Lù-Ishatúr, but in local mythology they are four "Year-Bearers" who deliver the new year from its esoteric origins beyond the boundaries of time. They also are figures in local legends, primarily as defenders of Butrús in what could nowadays be considered "recent legendary times" — e.g., the defense of the city walls of Tirutlèklu by Nurgáshte from the demonic armies raised by the wizard Isinju during the Second Epoch of Éngsvan hla Gánga.¹⁰⁸ The mythological Three Kings are often conflated or absorbed in popular storytelling, folktales, dramas, and fiction with the semi-legendary but historical Three Kings of the land of Zru'o (q.v.), which remains a fairly common subject and setting for modern writers and audiences.

The "*Queen of the Fairies*" is a vague figure in several Chákan tales — vague perhaps because she lives so far away, in the Plain of Towers west beyond the farthest reaches of Mu'ugalavyá. Besides owning the secret of

eternal youth, which she shared with Archer Hmi (above), she is said to visit Pan Cháka every year in Firasúl for the Sewing Festival, to oversee the event and ensure that the season's love-matches are well made. She may be considered an Aspect of Avánthe, but is too remote and obscure to really be thought of much, outside of a few stories and some aspects of a minor festival.

There are many legends concerning the *Dragon Warriors*. For example, the mythical origins of the sub-dynasty that ruled the Chákas and beyond is preserved in the modern protectorate as follows: A local girl was wading across an irrigation basin one day, when she was impregnated by an invisible spirit — a Dragon Warrior wizard-god. Upon discovering her pregnancy, her family drove her from her house and she drowned herself in the Turín River. Her body floated back upstream and washed ashore; her belly was cut open on the rocks of the Narrows of the Black Stones, revealing ten strange eggs within. These hatched out as ten strapping young dragon-boys, who lived in the wilderness. Their father came looking for them, but they were so terrified at his appearance they hid — except for one. Eventually they became less afraid, scarified themselves with flame to remove their scales and become fully human, and married ten girls. The one son who wasn't afraid of the dragon-god became, perhaps predictably, the founder of the local dynasty of the Dragon Warriors. The story of their mother is often conflated with another legend: that of the two (or three, or seven, depending on sources) young daughters of a Bednálljan alchemist-king who drowned while boating on holiday hereabouts; they are honored by ceremonies held every spring on the shores of large bodies of water throughout Pan Cháka.

Local Magic

Pan Cháka has some peculiar forms of magic and sorcery that are worth noting. In general, the peoples of the Chákas (and of the city of Butrús in particular) are not very "superstitious" in the sense of regulations and avoidances in daily life to appease the forces of the unseen. This is, in fact, one of the (many) facets in their mutual antipathy with the people of Úrmish: the latter are foolish, gullible, and irrational in the

¹⁰⁸ Which incident (if at all factual) is considered by some to constitute the first historical rebellion of the Itos against "foreign" empires.

eyes of Butrüssene, while the Úrmishites consider their western neighbors practically profane and godless. They are, however, extremely fond of tales and stories of the unusual, uncanny, and bizarre, and on occasion large numbers of people are driven into fits of peculiar dread or even mass panic by the circulation of such stories.

Paper magic: Paper cutouts of goods are purchased from temple shops and burned at the first funeral to accompany the dead as “spirit furniture”, and entire meals made out of paper may be sacrificed at ancestral rites; paper coins are likewise sacrificed to spirits. These benign superstitions tie in to paper-figure sorcery, especially prevalent in the Chákas, as in the famous case of paper figures being animated to fight in both the Íto rebellions against the current imperial dynasty (in 1045 and 2045 A.S.) Certain wizards have been rumored to carry entire squadrons of bodyguards around on their person in the form of paper cutouts, and disturbing paper slips inserted as place-markers in books — particularly stolen or “borrowed” ones — can be a risky act. Supposedly the techniques of paper magic were invented, or at least rediscovered, by the Black Theocrat, but then almost any strange or dark custom in the protectorate is attributed to him.

Mirror magic: Local folklore holds that bronze mirrors in the shape of an owl are tokens of fidelity. If the mirror is broken in half and each partner keeps one part, then if one partner has an affair, that half of the mirror flies back to the other to escape the shame of its owner.

Tree magic: In shunned groves and along bleak ridges, certain types of trees — different species of paulownia, it seems — grow in the shapes of men, or with the faces of men on them. It is known that these are involved in some sort of particularly unpleasant sorcery, especially but not quite exclusively practiced by the tribal peoples of Pan Cháka. Details are not known, and most prefer to keep it that way.

“Bitterling” magic: A complex of necromancy, poison, and alchemy centered on a type of creature, demon, or spirit known as a Bitter

One, or a Bitterling.¹⁰⁹ These beings — apparently wormlike or snakelike in form — are kept by men and women of evil nature for their many powers. They live in little pots at their masters’ homes, but invisibly or spectrally follow them around wherever they go, and are inherited through the patriline from owner to owner. They magically clean and keep house for their masters, and require human sacrifices at irregular intervals or else they will turn on their masters and kill them. They will also gladly slay anyone pointed out to them, or sometimes chose to do so spontaneously, and guests in a Bitterling-master’s house are frequently followed and attacked by the little horror after they leave. They kill by causing the victim’s belly to be eaten away from inside. Sometimes the Bitterling seems to take up residence and do this work itself; at other times, it causes whatever the victim eats to come back to life and burrow its way out. The souls of those it kills while in the service of a master become his or her slaves; called “Gold Silkworms”, they can take on tangible form, look more or less human, and serve as the master’s sexual playthings and produce pure gold through some unclear means.

There are one or two extremely rare plants that serve as an antidote to poisoning by a Bitter One; it is also known that carrying a (live) *epéng* renders one proof against their initial attack — though not the bites of the *epéng*. Other than this, the only cure is to catch the subtle “thread” implanted by the Bitter One and give it (and thus the Bitter One) to someone else as a gift. Of course, this tends to make the former victim into a Bitterling-master in turn... Bitterling sorcery is feared and loathed by all right-thinking people of the Chákas, proscribed not only by customary law but by imperial code, and is rigorously rooted out whenever detected. Convicted Bitterling poisoners are executed by being buried in the ground up to the neck and their head encased in thick wax until they smother. The head is cut off and displayed on a high pole in the sunshine, while the body is left to rot in the ground, unmarked and unmourned.

Mount Chaith stones: According to local folklore, these are named after General Chaith, a semi-

¹⁰⁹ *Hadhárshemo* or *Hadhársheni* in proper Tsolyáni; in Pan Chákan dialect, *Sántash-Kháni*.

mythical advisor to an ancient local ruler. A famous figure in legend as a hunter of bandits and burglars, as well as a noted exorcist, he chose to metamorphose into a mountain (about three hundred *tsan* west-northwest of Butrús) rather than die. Stones with inscription “Mount Chaith Is Here” are placed in front of the main gates of houses and at the beginnings of streets; this is known to block their use by evil spirits (and robbers). It is possible that these stones, and possibly the figure of General Chaith, are a confused and ancient borrowing of the Aspect of Avánthe called Chaith, the Empress.

MILITARY

Legions

The most famous military unit of Pan Cháka is, of course, the Legion of the Givers of Sorrow, but there are many other bodies of troops in the protectorate. An unusually large proportion of these forces are non-human, giving an exotic luster to the region’s long martial tradition. No indigenous legions from the period before Pan Cháka was incorporated into the Tsolyáni Empire exist today. While some legions now strongly associated with Pan Cháka predate this event, they originated outside the protectorate and only later came into it. The Legion of the Givers of Sorrow, in particular, tends to gloss over this fact and presents itself as a wholly native legion.

After the re-conquest in 1842, the Givers of Sorrow became the protectorate’s senior legion, taking precedence over all others in local protocol, ceremony, and status. Relations with the Tangled Root Eaters, whom they edged out of the “top spot” and who may well have contributed more to the campaign, have been tense ever since. Resentment, squabbles, and duels are not uncommon. The Tangled Root Eaters pride themselves on being Pan Cháka’s oldest *native* legion, and furthermore disparage the Givers of Sorrow’s habit of being slaughtered by the Mu’ugalavyáni in every actual war (*qadárdál*). In addition, a major and ongoing bone of contention is the precise history of the re-conquest and the role of each of these

two legions in it. Even Avanthár has been unable to produce an acceptable definitive history of the campaign; the best attempt (c. 2060) was rejected not only by both legions but by their affiliated sects, and even other legions objected to the narrative.

The Legion of the Givers of Sorrow, Hammer of the Marches (10th Heavy Infantry). The legion’s own historians claim a documented continuity of the legion from the period of the Dragon Warriors clear through to the present day. Outside scholars, however, prefer to put the legion’s foundation at the end of the Engsvanyáli empire, as attested on the Stele of Scarlet Glory at the village of Navái (near Tumíssa; an important pilgrimage site and ritual locus for the legion even today). Apparently always devoted to Chiténg in one form or another, the legion’s involvement in Pan Cháka began with its very earliest modern attestations, in Tsolyáni records of Trákonel II’s invasion of eastern Pan Cháka and defeat of Páchi Lei warbands. It also appears to have taken part in raids into Mu’ugalavyá in 395 A.S., but in 446 was posted to Penóm for the next seventy years (at the very least) as a punishment for backing an unsuccessful contender for the Petal Throne. Emperor Horkhúnen rebuilt it and transferred it to Tumíssa sometime after 517, and it later led the conquest of the Chákas in 780, bearing the brunt of fighting against the forces of the Black Theocrat’s “Flaying General” (who was, perhaps ironically, a special devotee — some say avatar — of Valédh, an Aspect of Vimúhla).

After this it remained in Butrús as a provincial garrison. Aside from some minor events of the eleventh century, it next saw action in the conquest of Vra in 1115, winning battle honors for its assault on the northern highlands and the final siege of the city of Vra. Only a few years later, however, it was returned to Butrús with the intent of weakening both Vimúhlan and Ksáruilian factions through encouraging rivalry between them. It saw no further action until being wiped out — heroically — by the invading Mu’ugalavyáni army in 1565, winning battle honors from the Red Hats themselves (which are still allegedly preserved on the sacred island of Mu’ugállu). Reformed at Úrmish in 1808, it remained there until it took part in the re-conquest of Pan Cháka, storming Butrús with

heavy casualties in 1842 and winning its famous title of “Hammer of the Marches”. However, it was again defeated by the Mu’ugalavyáni in 2020 after being betrayed by the Tsolyáni Governor, and its soldiers were once more destroyed to a man after a long siege of the citadel. It was not reformed until 2240 by command of Emperor Arshú’u, in a grand ceremony held at Butrús. It has since had a long string of victories in *qadárni* with Mu’ugalavyáni legions, culminating in a solid defeat of the highly prestigious “Scarlet Battalion” (Legion II of Mighty Ssa’átis) outside Butrús in 2351. Many of the Mu’ugalavyáni legion’s bright red triangular shields now decorate the barracks’ victory shrine and grand hall, and their severed heads fill the skull-rack in the Temple of Chiténg.

Only recently, its sixteen active cohorts were sent north to Chéne Ho to meet the Yan Koryáni invasion, leaving the Pan Chákan frontier to be guarded by other, lesser legions. It is led by the fanatically devout General Korikáda hiKurúshma of the Red Sword clan, High Priest of Chiténg at Butrús and current Supreme General of the Northeast. A single training cohort remains in the vast and empty barracks. The Director of the Palace of War in the protectorate is also a veteran of the legion, and continues to favor it greatly.

The Legion of the Tangled Root Eaters (2nd Páchi Lei Medium Infantry) is largely dedicated to Alsh, Ksáru, and Hrū’ü, and composed solely of Páchi Lei. Nevertheless, it has served outside Pan Cháka for the majority of its history. Founded early in the reign of Hejjéka II, the legion fought in his campaigns in Salarvyá, and its alliance with the Legion of Tik-nekw-ket (1st Pe Choi Medium Infantry) dates back to the Battle of Koylugá. After the Mu’ugalavyáni conquest in 1565 A.S. the legion re-formed at Penóm with Páchi Lei and human refugees from Pan Cháka, but did not see major action until 1711, when it took part in the re-conquest of Do Cháka — though it was deployed only against the Íto clan forces, not the Pe Choi. Later posted to Mrelú, it was a favorite of the priesthoods of that city. In 1842 it was responsible for the retaking of Pan Cháka, under General Hozzübe G’dar; its troops purged the Mu’ugalavyáni from Butrús (slaughtering many outright), and soon

thereafter settled in as one of the chief defenders of Pan Cháka.

From 2015 until the War of 2020, the legion was called outside Pan Cháka and was unable to join in its defense, though it did fight at the sieges of Úrmish and Katalál and took part in the long retreat to Bey Sü and its defense. As the tide of the war turned, it joined the Army of the North in the Second Battle of Chéne Ho, only returning to Pan Cháka after the Mu’ugalavyáni withdrawal. Like other Chákan legions, it was active in the suppression of the Íto rebellion in 2045, moving north to secure Páya Gupá and seeking out Íto strongholds in the forest depths.

Since that time its headquarters has been in Butrús, with frequent detachments of its units to other locations; at present, though, all twelve active cohorts are in the North, along with their general, G-Gum-Shóggü. Before the outbreak of the Yan Koryáni war, High General Kéttukal hiMraktiné had been advocating the legion’s permanent transfer to Púrdimal as a garrison, thus weakening the power of the Dark Triad in Pan Cháka — an issue of concern to his patron, Prince Eselné. General G-Gum-Shóggü is itself indeed known to favor Prince Mridóbu.

Legion of the Forest of Hh-kk-ssá (10th Pe Choi Medium Infantry). A strange, secretive group of fanatically Stability-worshipping Pe Choi. Founded in 1900 A.S. at Si’is as a force of light infantry to oppose the Mu’ugalavyáni, it was actually posted to Fasiltum and the northeast for centuries, including a stint in Saá Allaqí c. 1978-2016; it fought in the War of 2020 at the First Battle of Chéne Ho and in the defense of Púrdimal. Subsequently the legion aided in suppression of the Second Íto Revolt and eradication of their forest strongholds in 2045; since then it has been posted to Butrús as a frontier guard unit. Currently it is the largest body of soldiery in Pan Cháka, with fourteen cohorts and its full legion headquarters, commanded by General Mt-trik. While respectful, many Pan Chákans, particularly those who follow the Worm Lord or support the Íto clan, view this legion with some degree of suspicion and resentment. They do not mix much with the local population, not even with civilian Pe Choi or their putative co-religionists.

The Legion of the Clan of the Silver Lightning (7th Archers). An old legion dating back at least to the first millennium of the Second Empire, with a splendid record in the Civil War (1010-26 A.S.) and the invasion of Vra (1115 A.S.). Its infamous string of terrible luck began as soon as they were sent to Butrús around 1154 — suffering repeatedly at the hands of the Red Hats, the weather, and the Tsolyáni government itself. Subsequent centuries saw repetition of the same unfortunate pattern in Salarvyá, Yan Kor, at the capital, and against the Mu'ugalavyáni once again. Since its rebuilding after the Great War of 2020, the legion has been stationed at Butrús to support the garrison. With eight cohorts presently under its command, General Vroggá Dzh-Urrú (a Páchi Lei) is known as a good planner and warrior and a close friend of the Governor, and is generally believed to be both clever and ambitious, working hard to rebuild the legion's strength by means magical as well as mundane. However, morale is low, and the gloomy troops continue to refine their ever-changing rituals and superstitious neuroses in the hope of turning their luck.

Flock of the Flashing Clouds. Remnants of the 7th Light Flying Squadron, a group of Hláka who filtered into Pan Cháka during the Mu'ugalavyáni occupation of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and turned on them viciously in the Tsolyáni re-conquest of 1842 A.S. They were formed into a legion thereafter by decree of the Tsolyáni Grand Commander, but during the War of 2020 the vengeful Mu'ugalavyáni nearly exterminated them and the unit was dropped from the rolls thereafter. Today they do not appear formally on any army list in Avanthár,¹¹⁰ but the Palace of Ever-Glorious War for the Protectorate of Pan Cháka (in Butrús) and the Directorate for the Defense of the Western Frontier (in Tumíssa) recognize them as an active (if tiny) unit, and funnel some basic funds and equipment their way. Though skittish and freewheeling as any Hláka, it is believed that these are likely to stay loyal and relatively firm in the face of any Mu'ugalavyáni invasion, due to a "grudge mentality" that now permeates their community.

¹¹⁰ The last date of formal recognition was in the course of the Reorganization of 2133, in which they were stricken.

The Legion of Ketl (4th Medium Infantry). The Imperial prison guards have a full cohort of four hundred men and women permanently stationed at Butrús, guarding the Sixteen Fields. They are also employed in escorting prisoners into exile in Pan Cháka.

Some other legions are not themselves located in Pan Cháka, but are important to its history or current situation nonetheless:

The Legion of Deep Green Shadow (6th Páchi Lei Medium Infantry). A minority of Páchi Lei worship Nrg and the deities of Stability, and the legion drawn from and representing them was founded much later than that of the Tangled Root Eaters (above) — in 1947 A.S., as a response to religious persecution within the Páchi Lei communities under Tsolyáni rule. It appears that at least until the War of 2020 its recruits were drawn primarily from urban enclaves of Páchi Lei in Tsolyánu proper, rather than from Pan Cháka. While based at Penóm, it fought at the First Battle of Tumíssa but was ultimately defeated and only re-formed after the war was over, in order to fight the Íto rebels in the deep jungle in 2045. Since then, it has been posted outside Pan Cháka (first in Do Cháka, then near Tumíssa) for fear of provoking further discord in the protectorate. It has been attached to General Kéttukal's forces since his first invasions of Yan Kor, and its eleven cohorts may be sent to Chéne Ho from its current depot in Khirgár. Its general, Fisa-Brugshmü, is a tough soldier and a well-connected devotee of the Tsolyáni god Thúmis.

The Legion of the Lord of Red Devastation (18th Medium Infantry) has ceremonial "secret" barracks in Butrús, since the time in the later eighteenth century when Emperor Durúmu ordered the legion to commit self-immolation and some members instead went into hiding in Pan Cháka (at the time, a Mu'ugalavyáni province).

The Legion of the Night of Shadows (15th Medium Infantry) is newly established at Jakállá under the sponsorship and direction of the Temple of Ksárul, and Prince Mridóbu wishes to move it to Butrús, though the High Priestess of Ksárul at Butrús dislikes the idea. The Prince has also suggested Púrdimal as a possible base for

the legion, and this may be more politically feasible and militarily useful at the moment. In any case, a cohort is being raised from the faithful — or opportunistic — of Butrús, and a small group of recruiters (and, possibly, Ndálu Clan agents) from Jakállá is always present at the hiring hall in the Palace of Ever-Glorious War.

The Legion of Giriktéshmu (23rd Archers) was sent to the borders of Pan Cháka (then in Mu'ugalavyáni hands) in the first half of the eighteenth century, where it stayed, participating in the 1842 re-conquest. It remained there with only brief excursions until the Great War of 2020, when it was sent north to Chéne Ho, retreated to Bey Sü, and was present at the Battle of the Temple of Chanis, at which it won its famous and still-treasured Great Standard. Afterwards it helped suppress the Íto uprising of 2045, and sometime during the later twenty-first through early twenty-third centuries it was reassigned to Jakállá, where it remains today. It is still well remembered and well loved in Butrús, however.

The Legion of the Inverted Hand (27th Light Infantry) served in the Chákas in 1842 and was posted to Butrús for some time afterwards (until no later than the mid-1900s). For reasons not entirely clear, their only enduring mark on Pan Cháka was to serve as the subject of a large number of popular songs involving shameful conjunctions of skirmishers and farm animals. Nowadays many people from Pan Cháka sing the songs without realizing they refer to the 27th Light Infantry, which has led to a few altercations.

The Legion of Lord Laingsha of Jaikalór (8th Medium Infantry) is very likely to have some of its units posted to Butrús in the near future, and there is a possibility that the entire legion may be sent to the city to bolster its defenses in the absence of its usual garrison. The relevant offices of the Palace of War have been cagey about any developments in this area, hoping to avoid more speculation, contracting battles, and bidding wars among the concerned private businesses than is necessary.

In addition, there are often small detachments of sappers and pioneers, most often from the

Legion of the Slayers of Cities (5th Sappers), temporarily posted to Butrús in order to supervise and assist with fortifications or critical elements of civil engineering — e.g., city aqueducts, the *sákbe* roads, and key bridges. An entire cohort of this legion was garrisoned at Butrús until 2349 A.S., and their barracks and workshops still stand. In periods of military crisis — at least when there is enough advance warning — units of artillerymen have also been dispatched to Pan Cháka and have manned the walls of Butrús.

As in every major city of Tsolyánu, one can find in the Hall of Recruitment of the Palace of War recruiters from the Nchesh of the Splendid Slayers of Ssu. This is a legion of Pecháno, largely composed of soldiers of fortune, almost always deployed against the Ssu in the northern part of that country. It is under the control of the dominant Beneshchán family at Mechanéno, though its current general is a Tsolyáni, Taiyán hiMérkkolel of Jakállá. The recruiters for this legion are also involved in helping to bring Hláka to Butrús, and repatriating these non-human visitors when necessary.

Some of the Mu'ugalavyáni legions that neighbor, and sometimes intrude upon, Pan Cháka are also worth noting:

Four *émishel* ("cohorts") of ceremonial heavy infantry from Legion II of Mighty Ssa'átis were, as mentioned above, decisively defeated by the Givers of Sorrow in a *qadárni* not long ago. This is only noteworthy in that the "Scarlet Battalion's" general, Prince Dilitlázish Ko'ól, is the elder brother of the Mu'ugalavyáni military attaché in Pan Cháka, the infamous Ku'ulménish Ko'ól. It is believed that the Prince-General, and presumably his family, will seek a rematch against the Givers of Sorrow in the near future.

Equally well known is Legion XIV, an excellent legion of Pe Choi scouts and forest warriors, with a good record in *qadárniyal* as well. Over the last few centuries, the "Slayers of Chket" have been involved in a disproportionate number of skirmishes, probes, thrusts, and even ambushes against Tsolyáni forces in the Chákas, and have hence acquired a strong reputation for poor sportsmanship and malevolence. The fact that they are Pe Choi has even led to this

prejudice spreading, in a weaker form, to be applied to the local Pe Choi serving in the Petal Throne's armies.

Legion I, "Destroy in Glory", is another famous heavy infantry legion that has participated in many *qadárniyal* against Pan Chákan legions. In these contests, it has a history of being defeated by the Givers of Sorrow and soundly besting the Tangled Root Eaters. Legion IX, "Lightningshaft", is a crossbow unit based in the forest, with extensive experience, awards, and citations. Its current commander is Commandant Re'ekmáinish Drússa, a famous and much-beloved hero in Mu'ugalavyá for his battles against the Tsolyáni in the Chákas (both *qadárniyal* and "unplanned" border clashes) — and is equally famous as a villainous foe in both Chákas. However, this legion is soon to be posted to Tlálu, in the far northeast of Mu'ugalavyá.

Other Mu'ugalavyáni legions are well-known to Pan Chákan storytellers and gossips as well: the patient, quiet archers from "Blood-Dart" (Legion XI); the almost supernaturally skilled marksmen of "Invisible Rain" (Legion VIII), sent hither and thither by the Four Princes to wherever trouble can be found; the reckless and foolhardy men of "Sword-Swinger" (Legion VII) and the reliable veterans of "Exalted Flame" (Legion VI); and the unfortunate warriors of "Rise to Strike" (Legion IV), now saddled with a drunk, womanizing commander who avoids going to the field camps even to inspect his troops, let alone lead them.

The Legions of the Sea I and II ("Tide of Death" and "Blood-Sail", respectively), based at Khéiris and mostly made up of Swamp Folk, are known to scout the Pan Chákan coast from time to time, and are alleged to land parties of engineers and marines to establish secret bases along the rough cliffs and inlets. Presumably the Palace of War investigates these rumors, but little factual news reaches the public.

Other Armed Bodies

Pan Cháka has a long coastline, along which much sea traffic to and from Mu'ugalavyá and Livyánu passes. Despite this, the forbidding inland terrain and extremely inhospitable shore — "rare as beaches" is a common idiom in

southwest Tsolyánu, referring precisely to this — impede naval operations, and Tsolyánu maintains no flotilla or marine troops in Pan Cháka whatsoever. Naval forces based in Penóm are responsible for patrolling the coast and attempting to control age-old problems of pirates, privateers, wreckers, and "wild" Páchi Lei seafarers, from the eastern slopes of Ngéshtu head all the way to the northern cliffs marking the Mu'ugalavyáni border. Often the bizarre ships of the Hlüss are seen wandering off Ngéshtu Head (whether due to currents, winds, or some navigational problem of the Foes of Man) and will engage human ships; occasionally they are found wrecked on the coast there. Recently one such vessel was cornered and captured nearly intact at Dzúruna Bay. It is supposed to have yielded up vast loot — yet Pan Chákan warriors had no taste of it.

The Temples of Vimúhla and Chiténg each have about an entire company's worth (a *karéng*, or one hundred men) of guards, who are genuine warriors and not mere doormen. The Empire and the Governor permit this strength of forces because of Butrús's frontier location and the special, fierce attachment of these two local temples to the protection of the city. Their equipment and outfit is typical for the Tsolyáni mainstream of their temples; their only "battle honors" in modern history consist of having ensured that Mu'ugalavyáni and Tsolyáni troops did not loot or occupy temple properties in their various invasions and counter-invasions.

The temple guard force maintained by the Temple of Ksáru, "The Beetles", is also particularly large and well-equipped as such units go. Many hold that this organization is descended from the army or the bodyguard of the Black Theocrat, though this is factually debatable. They wear black-lacquered plate armor polished to a gleam, and visored helmets with twin blue plumes, like antennae; they are armed with spiked, saw-toothed swords and double-ended halberds. This uniform and outfit is exactly the same for all members, regardless of position; rank and duty insignia are simply written directly on the breastplate and shoulder plates using lacquer-based paint.

The governors' palace guard unit is called the Hundred Frosted Plumes, a reference to the

white feathers used in the crests of their helmets. It was originally an elite force of the later independent kingdom of Pan Cháka under the personal command of the Íto king himself. After the final incorporation of Pan Cháka as an imperial protectorate, it was transferred to control of the governors and converted into a palace guard unit. It has lost most of its Íto traditions and no longer has a full complement of one hundred warriors, but still wears its egret-plumed headdresses for guard duty and ceremonial occasions. (In addition, of course, the Governor keeps a private bodyguard as well, for his personal protection.)

-See also City Militia, Provincial Militia, Market Police, Tomb Police, and Sákbe Road Guards.

Weaponry and Armor

Crossbows are very highly regarded and commonly used military weapons, as in Tumíssa and Mu'ugalavyá, but their use is concentrated among professional soldiers in the appropriate legions and among Páchi Lei. The civilian humans of Pan Cháka tend to favor longbows, made with good local materials, though archers use longer, heavier arrow shafts (somewhat in the Mu'ugalavyáni style) than one finds elsewhere in Tsolyánu. Compound bows are entirely restricted to military use; they develop about the same pull as local longbows, but are shorter and lighter. Short, hardened wooden clubs, however, are the classical ancient Pan Chákan missile weapon; they are oddly shaped and slightly curved, with a ball-shaped head, and are excellently balanced for throwing. They can also be used as melee weapons, of course.

A common weapon among local toughs is a short, heavy, straight-bladed, single-edged chopping sword or machete. While they are relatively crude weapons, as suited to cutting brush as fighting, practiced swordsmen can wield one in each hand, spinning them in blinding patterns to deadly effect. The sword of the Legion of the Givers of Sorrow is based on this weapon, though with a more elaborately contoured cutting edge and better craftsmanship and decoration. Simple spears are widely used for hunting and warfare; more sophisticated fighters in the region have long used double-ended halberds or polearms,

usually fairly short. Finally, the wooden swords of the Páchi Lei should be mentioned. These are longswords made of a certain kind of hard, heavy wood, set with jagged teeth of obsidian. While fairly fragile and requiring constant replacement of the teeth, they can inflict terrible wounds, particularly on lightly armored enemies.

Shields in Pan Cháka are most often large rounded rectangles of hardened leather on bamboo, or more commonly of lighter bamboo and rattan wickerwork. Páchi Lei in particular use round shields of rattan and bamboo, lacquered in strange patterns of black, violet, or vermillion. Pan Chákan warriors, regardless of religious or legion affiliation, often apply red face paint with black stripes before going into battle, making for a fearsome appearance. As has been noted elsewhere, among the tribesmen of the hinterlands and even in many rural areas, a white scarf or turban is reserved for warriors who have taken an enemy head in combat.

CITY GUIDE

General Layout

Butrús underwent *dítlána* only recently, less than two centuries ago (2166-79 A.S.), and is thus perhaps the newest, cleanest, and most tidy and planned of all Tsolyáni cities.

The new layout of city walls and streets is regular and linear. Long, broad paved avenues run arrow-straight from north to south and east to west (nine each); they are thirty *dháiba* (40 m) wide on average, while the central north-south avenue is a hundred *dháiba* (133 m) wide. They are raised slightly for drainage of the heavy monsoon rains; the runoff is channeled into stone-lined gutters along each curb, and thence into the underground storm sewer system and into the river. The major thoroughfares are swept daily; neighborhood officials are expected to arrange for the minor streets and alleys in their ward to be swept and cleaned. The north-south avenues are, at least in original intent, each planted with a different type of tree: purple-blossomed paulownia, scarlet-flowering cardamom, cinnamon or

cassia, magnolia, mimosa, *dáichu*, *ebzál*, *tíu*, and coral trees. As the *tíu* tend to die off in the local climate, and the small mimosas are ridiculously dwarfed by the size of the street and the broad porticoes and columns lining it, those avenues have been replanted with coral trees and magnolias, respectively. This has led to confusion as the original names have been retained by some residents, while others call them “the second magnolia avenue” or the like. Now being hotly debated in government circles is a proposal to replace one of these duplicate plantings with camphor trees, a popular choice for lining smaller lanes and side streets.

Each of the hundred (in theory) giant city blocks thus created is somewhat less than 900 meters on a side (roughly 77 hectares apiece). Smaller streets, lanes, and alleys (often unpaved, but usually still fitting a rectilinear grid pattern) further subdivide these blocks. The “wards” that result are largely symbolic, unwalled neighborhoods, marked off from one another by brightly painted pillars supporting emblems of the wards (often mythological figures, animals or birds, and clan emblems of various kinds).

The design of the city was not only highly regular but also vast in scope. While Butrús is one of the smallest cities of Tsolyánu in terms of population, it is one of the largest physically. The designers planned to leave generous expanses undeveloped and available for future expansion and growth. The unlikelihood of this actually happening means that for any foreseeable future the city will continue to contain large areas of empty lots. Some of these have been turned into vegetable gardens and fruit orchards, while others are simply abandoned to grassy meadows and parkland, tangled scrub, or even small forests in a few locations. As the city has reached the limit of its hinterland’s ability to provide food, it is unlikely to grow to its originally projected size unless major improvements are made to the eastward-bound canal system, allowing larger and cheaper shipments of bulk cereals.

The plain on which Butrús lies was artificially leveled by the Engsvanyáli, with further adjustments by the Mu’ugalavyáni occupiers; it is thus extremely flat and even. Subsequent *ditlána* has not even elevated this baseline:

rubble from the old buildings was used to fill in the cores of the new city walls, rather than to build atop of. There are no slopes or hills remaining in the city, with only two exceptions: the small butte where the citadel is built, and some artificially-constructed low hills and rock piles in the Garden of Zrang.

Several well-designed and excellently built aqueducts provide an abundance of running water to Butrús in all but the driest months — enough to have running water in certain sewage ditches and underground sewers and to feed many fountains. During the driest season (and in any sieges) great covered reservoirs, filled during the spring monsoons, supply the city. There are five main cisterns: one in each quarter and one in the center of the city. These feed twenty smaller underground tanks throughout the city wards. (Not all these tanks are operable, and some have been sealed off.) Sewers empty into the river, though members of the sweeper clans collect much human waste for use as fertilizer in the fields.

In general, Pan Chákan architecture is relatively plain and stark by Tsolyáni standards, presenting smooth, mostly unadorned exterior walls divided horizontally by a single broad decorative band. Construction is typically of limestone faced with white stucco and tan wood; because of the ready availability of easily-worked limestone and the torrential seasonal rainfall, few Pan Chákan buildings are made of mud-brick, even in the hinterland. Roofs are low-pitched and tiled in brick-red or crimson, though pale slate-gray or deep muddy green ceramic tiles or stained wood shingles are also seen. Because of the amount of land available in the city, buildings tend to be low and sprawling — rarely more than two stories high, except for “pagoda” towers (see below). Clanhouse compounds are always surrounded by a smooth-plastered wall, decorated with a band of fresco that identifies the clan and its qualities; the usual complex of courtyards, workshops, cisterns and wells, gardens, residences, storehouses, etc. sprawl out within. In larger and better-constructed buildings, selected structural walls (normally the southern ones) may be thick and hollow, with air flues for cooling during the hot summers. Normally, though, construction tends to be light and open,

with many sliding screen doors and lattices, and breezeways sheltered by hanging bamboo curtains that may be rolled up to let in more sunlight. Interior doorways are often in a circular or semicircular "moon door" shape; rectangular or oblong designs are considered either crude and rustic or else a metropolitan affectation, depending on the context and the observer. Small rooftop porches, balconies and windows are usually well-stocked with flowerboxes or potted trees and shrubs, screening trellises covered in bright vines and rattans, flat bowls of colorful fish, hanging wind chimes, paper lanterns, and so forth.

Pagoda-like towers are popular among the wealthier classes of the city. Pan Chákans prefer fairly short and slightly tapering towers of five to nine sides, each story with a flaring roof-gable extending outward from the wall. Usually only the ground level is built of stone, if at all; the rest is made of intricately interlocking timbers. They are most often found used for lounges or salons, libraries and studies, or private shrines. While Páchi Lei in Butrús do not live in such buildings, it is believed that the design was ultimately derived from them, though through a Mu'ugalavyáni intermediary source.

Heavy or massive structures, such as city or boundary walls, large building foundations, and raised platforms or terraces, are built with drystone construction, in which larger blocks of stone are fixed in place by smaller pieces cut to shape. This technique provides more flexibility than mortared or jointed masonry and permits the structures and their facings to better weather the region's frequent but minor earthquakes. These are often given a thin and superficial facing of plaster or stucco to provide a smooth and aesthetically pleasing surface, but mortar or cement is not used in constructing such supporting or foundational structures.

A final note on the civic architecture of Butrús is the almost complete replacement of stairways by ramps. This was specified and systematized during the last *ditlána*, based on historical precedent — both from the Butrús of the late Time of No Kings, as well as from the lost City of the Nine Walls during the Engsvanyáli era. For many centuries the city had built simple, normal staircases, and it has only been in the last few

decades that native Butrusséne themselves have become re-accustomed to the rampways. The ramps are restricted to public architecture — on bridges, roads, streets, government courtyards and buildings, etc. — and have not spread to private construction. Outside the immediate environs of the city, too, stairs are built instead of ramps — which is probably fortunate, especially on the *sákbes*, as the smooth sloping ramps can be slippery and treacherous in the monsoon season.

Suburbs and Environs

The lands within about a day's travel from the city are dedicated to intensive irrigated horticulture, supporting the needs of the city itself. There are very few aristocratic villas in the immediate vicinity of the city, since quite generous plots of land were available within it — "rustic" estates are typically maintained farther away, at a distance of several days' travel. There are a few limestone quarries still in use, while there are many more vast abandoned excavations that supplied the last two *ditlána* (in the seventeenth and twenty-second centuries) with building materials. The landscape is also crisscrossed by canals and by aqueducts from the south and west, and dotted with great irrigation tanks (some of Engsvanyáli origin) and reservoirs — large ponds, partially artificial, outside and above the city, which feed the aqueducts and suburban irrigation system.

Nearby points of interest include a large knoll that is the site of an ancient hill fort and town of the Dragon Warriors — apparently the earliest signs of urbanization near the modern city, and originally named N'létut. A disestablished shrine to the "Aspect" of Ksárul, Ge'en (q.v.), that dates back to the early sixth century perches forlornly above a basin of *mash* orchards; it is stripped, barren, empty, and partially defaced, but still occasionally visited by historians, iconographers, and pastoral poets in search of inspiration (however gloomy). The slave market of Butrús is also located outside the city, though much nearer — by the decree of a long-dead Tsolyáni governor, not less than one crossbow-shot away from the city walls and not more than two. The market is simple and crude even as such things go: merely a haphazard cluster of

sheds and huts around an unpaved, unroofed field.

River and Riverside

The Turín River is only navigable by larger boats and ships as far up as Butrús — and that only in the wet season, with the help of dredging and channeling at several points. Only small craft may pass upriver from Butrús. At Butrús itself, the river averages about 50 meters wide, swelling up the eastern bank to about three times that in the monsoons, and shrinking down to less than half by the end of the dry season. The deepest section, channeled close along the west bank at Butrús, is as much as seven meters deep at the floods, but can drop to half that late in the dry period. Dikes along the far shore keep any unusually high floodwaters from inundating the low-lying farmlands of the eastern protectorate; the higher elevation of the western bank protects it from flooding (at least from the river waters). The Lúshmun Canal does not run through Butrús, but a few *tsan* eastward through the lowland plains; part of its tree-lined course can easily be traced from the walls or towers of Butrús.

On the thin strip between the city walls and the river there is an important suburb supporting (and supported by) riverborne trade. There was originally a substantial boatyard here, intended to build and maintain articulated barges for the Lúshmun Canal; it has since fallen into ruin, and its great stone launch slip is a popular children's playground. There are now only a few small boatyards dealing in skiffs, canoes, fishing-boats, rafts, and pleasure-boats. (Working barges are mostly constructed farther down the river, particularly at the prefectural town of Chélyumai.) The waterfront itself is lined with boat sheds, small slipways, and stubby stone quays; opposite them are rows of warehouses owned by various mercantile and trading clans. The city's fish market is also located here in a small roofed plaza, and there are a few other businesses as well — net-weavers, rope-braiders, a sail-maker, and a general outfitter of boats and barges. Boatmen and towing-gangs can be hired here, too.

Several large rain gutters exiting from the base of the city walls divide the strip; these are

supposed to be covered by stone or ceramic slabs, but local residents often dislodge them. The lower face of the quay is also studded with the large outlets of these gutters, washing away storm runoff and unreclaimed household wastes into the river through the city's underground sewer pipes. These outlets are the same size and shape as the egg-shaped main (east-west) sewage tunnels — two *dháiba* high and one wide (2.7 m x 1.3 m). Grillwork is firmly fastened into each aperture to prevent anyone — or anything — from entering the system, but it is nevertheless possible to gain access to the city (or rather its *tsuru'úm*) through these outlets.

Just at the southern end of the riverside strip, a large stone dam juts out into the river, creating a placid pool even during the summer months when the river is at its lowest. Primarily intended to ensure a head of water to irrigate a group of farms just southwest of the city, it also allows swimming and boating by city-dwellers throughout the year. However, sewage from the drain system tends to accumulate here in drier weather, and the experience is not necessarily pleasant.

City of the Dead

Eastward across the Turín lies Butrús's traditional necropolis. Lying at a lower elevation and with the clear expanse of the river between them, from the walls of the city of the living it presents an impressive vista, particularly during festivals. Its very oldest stratum dates back to the mid-Bednálljan period, though little of this is visible on the surface today. The oldest major relics are one or two very large tombs constructed under the Engsvanyáli Priest-King Báshdis Mssa VIII, followed by some other notable examples of tomb architecture from the middle Second Empire. There are also several other interesting monuments from the Time of No Kings, such as the remaining levels of the low, round Peaceful Tower (an aboveground mausoleum used by both the Chalhái and Ink-Flower dynasties), and the quintuple pylons built above the deep shaft-tomb of the Son of the Vulture (a short-lived priest-warlord). Most structures are more recent, however.

Modern commoners just bury the body or its ashes, then erect either little wooden "ghost houses" or simple wooden slats painted with the name of the deceased and an invocation. When the paint has worn away, the spirit has departed this Plane and its other aspects permanently scattered or settled elsewhere, and mourning visits cease. The bones are later exhumed once to be washed and wrapped, and then reburied forever.

The necropolis is also site of the headquarters and barracks of the sizeable Tomb Police organization, as well as many of the offices, workshops, and storehouses of the College for Venerating the Completed Things (part of the Palace of the Priesthoods of Gods). The entire City of the Dead is walled only by a low fence in constant need of maintenance.

Walls and Gates

The city walls are low but extremely massive — four *dháiba* (5.3 m) high and twelve *dháiba* (16 m) wide. Their outer faces slope inwards, forming a plinth or batter to resist siege engines and scaling ladders. Several legion barracks and various storerooms, armories, and boltholes are built directly into them, while their tops are broad enough to conduct troop exercises and drills upon. The long, gently sloping ramps leading from the ground level of the city up to the wall-tops are themselves more massive than the walls of many cities. The walls and ramps' cores of demolition rubble and rammed earth are faced with whitewashed limestone and trimmed with a geometric design of red sandstone, which is also used for the high triangular battlements. The walls are commonly known as the Course or Pickets of Biyü the Inextinguishable.

Below the walls there is a moat on three sides (north, west, and south). It is shallow and usually dry, but adequately broad and troublesome for attackers to cross — approximately six *dháiba* deep and eighteen wide (8 m x 24 m). Broad causeways cross it, each with two flat wooden bridges and small defensive redoubts.

The enormous circumference of the city walls (seven *tsan*, or 9.3 km, on a side) may make

them difficult to defend in case of siege, at least without an enlarged garrison. Their strength (and the unplanned conversion of parts of the enclosed city to horticulture, which greatly reduces the efficacy of a siege) nevertheless will make up for this potential weakness, perhaps.

The four main gates are, like the rest of the city, cardinally oriented. There is the East (River) Gate, the North (Tumíssa) Gate, the South (Úrmish) Gate, and leading out to the jungles of Pan Cháka, the West Gate — often called the "Gate of Ghosts" due to the saying (among metropolitan Tsolyáni, not Chákans) that out of every ten men who go out through it, only nine return alive. These gates are huge structures, practically villages in their own right. Troops of the City Militia man the checkpoints and inspect travel passes while tax officials inspect goods and produce brought for trade or sale; their offices and auxiliary quarters are contained within the massive structures. Soldiers from the garrison legions have the honorable duty of manning the watchtowers and walls facing their barracks, but do not involve themselves in daily operation and guarding of the gates. Ancient stone statues of soldiers or governors (no one is quite certain what each of the statues originally represented) that were recovered from the site of Tírutlèklu before it was finally destroyed have been re-erected at some gates; they are so tall that their shoulders and high-plumed headdresses rise above the battlements. In addition to these gates the north, east, and south walls each have two smaller public gates; the western, one. There are furthermore several small postern gates, normally sealed or even hidden, and accessible only through the walls' defensive structures.

Only the North and South Gates have the great ramps leading up to the *sákbes* beyond; the other two open at ground level and connect to the regular road system. Butrús is connected to the northbound *sákbe* road by the Bridge of the Leaping Worm over the Turín River, immediately north of the city walls. This bridge is a very elegant five-arch construction, built by the Legion of Vrishtára the Mole in the late 2030s and early 2040s, just prior to the Second Ito Rebellion. While a fairly sophisticated feat of engineering, it is not much appreciated by conventional Tsolyáni aesthetic tastes. The Ítos

and their clients also object to the fact that the decorative worm-head of the bridge faces east (toward Bey Sü, Avanthár, and the City of Sárku), while mainstream worshippers of Sárku find this entirely appropriate. A similar but older and less architecturally interesting bridge takes the southbound *sákbe* across the river some eight *tsan* below the city, there continuing along the eastern bank down to Úrmish. The *sákbe* forts in Pan Cháka are quite well built and well garrisoned, each containing a troop of about a hundred soldiers. Patrols are as frequent as weather conditions and manpower allows.

A broad open strip runs all along the inside of the walls, by official decree kept empty and well-graveled in order to facilitate the movement of troops and reduce the threat of damage and fires to city buildings during an artillery bombardment. The width of this avenue is officially set at 40 *dháiba* (53 meters), and given the city's underpopulation it has not been hard to enforce. However, near the main gates there is often some encroachment on the cleared space by eager vendors and marketers. It should also be noted that this "avenue" is not officially recognized as a street by the city, but rather as part of the defensive walls. Travelers attempting to find their way by counting streets and intersections should be careful not to include these, or they will get lost.

Foreigners' Quarter

Despite the common name, it is not a literal "quarter" of the city. A genuine wall surrounds this section of the city, unlike most other wards and districts; in addition, there are several low internal walls segmenting it into smaller neighborhoods. Because of its small size, it is one of the most densely populated parts of Butrús, and one of the most "urban" in feel. Shen, Tinaliya, and Pygmy Folk live in the Foreigners' Quarter as well as the groups mentioned below, though more transiently and in much smaller numbers.

1. **City Militia station.** Strategically located between the Páchi Lei and Mu'ugalavyáni wards, its garrison is frequently called upon to intervene in scuffles and occasional full-scale riots between them. It is fortified and fully manned around the clock.
2. **Palace of Foreign Lands.** A smallish complex, but attractive and well built, particularly the main hall. Though not immediately obvious, it is riddled with cunningly built defensive structures and mechanisms, and (barring the use of siege engines) could hold off attackers for weeks with only a tiny garrison.
3. **Portico of the Perfumed Breeze.** A high-status hostel. Until recently it was run with pretensions to exotic Livyáni splendor, but the new proprietor is quietly doing away with this. It appears to be highly reputed in Salarvyá (for reasons completely unknown) and wealthy merchants from that country will pay extortionate rates for the privilege of staying here.
4. **Bower of Floreate Repose.** A medium-to-high-status hostel. Run by descendants of Mu'ugalavyáni immigrants, and it sometimes accepts Mu'ugalavyáni guests whose social status (and wealth) may not be quite up to the standard required of other lodgers.
5. **Cloud-Reaching Spire.** A medium-status hostel. Distinguished by its unusually high pagoda-tower, in which a large portion of its guests are housed. While the views are spectacular, the long climb is wearying, and during autumn storms staying in the creaking and swaying building can be unnerving, as well as merely drafty.
6. **Halls of Cool Shade.** A low-status hostel. Partially underground, in excavated limestone caves that have been (shoddily) furnished as temporary dwellings. Pleasant in the summer, but damp and chilly in the early spring.
7. **Den of Distant Home.** A low-status hostel. Pijenáni-run and primarily frequented by pilgrims from that country to the Temple of Hrú'ü's Cat Shrine; usually suspicious of and unfriendly toward other guests.
8. **Triple Balconies of Ge'étkish Ménthu.** A large hostel for Mu'ugalavyáni travelers, with appropriate facilities (and separate entrances and staffs) for visitors of lower-middle to lower-upper status. Most noted for its very unusual construction, with the outer walls of all buildings (even those facing the street) covered in a web of narrow, twisting, climbing and sinking balconies; there are even flying walkways connecting separate buildings. The founder, whose name the

establishment still bears, was an eccentric amateur architect who spent the later part of his life designing, building, and adjusting the peculiar structure.

9. **Eyrie of the Flashing Clouds.** Barracks for the remnants of the 7th Hláka Light Flying Squadron, and now also used by visiting Hláka as a hostel. Its three towers are better designed and built than those of the civilian Hláka (below), but in worse repair; the low "A"-shaped barracks building at their base is in even worse condition. Technically a military installation, though no one outside of a few stubborn bureaucrats in the Palace of War takes this seriously.
10. **Hláka Towers.** A small cluster of somewhat ramshackle four- and five-story wooden pagodas, in which those Hláka not associated with the legion of the Flashing Clouds dwell.
- 11.-12. The **Páchi Lei and Pe Choi districts** (respectively) are fairly large and considerably intermixed with one another. Of course, Páchi Lei outnumber Pe Choi by a vast margin in Butrús, and this neighborhood is primarily Páchi Lei in character. The Páchi Lei district is distinct for its architecture of low, one-story houses of polished and carved wood — particularly prone to fire. The Páchi Lei living here are the core of old urban dwellers who have not assimilated into human society (e.g., by taking on clan membership) and still live in these segregated quarters. This is not to say that they are newcomers from the Páchi Lei hinterland in the far south; many could trace ancestry going back thousands of years in the city of Butrús. They are basically somewhat intermediate between the "wild" Páchi Lei in the highlands and the "assimilated" Páchi Lei dwelling scattered throughout Tsolyánu proper: they retain their own social organization, religion, etc. (like the former), but are urban and politically subordinated to humans (like the latter).
13. **Páchi Lei shrines.** Each consists of an "exalted shrine" in twin extremely tall pagoda-towers with bare, tiny (single-occupant) shrine chambers atop them, plus a low mound with abstract wood totems and dance ground around it.
14. **Mu'ugalavyáni district.** Separated by a low wall, and as far from Páchi Lei neighborhoods as the Quarter's limits allow. Its architecture is pure Mu'ugalavyáni, with almost no Chákan (let alone Tsolyáni) influences.
15. **Scarlet Arch.** The compound containing the dwellings and offices of the official representatives of the Second Palace. Named after the high, curving roof structure of its official hall (in the second courtyard), covered with glazed red tiles.
16. **Temple of Hrsh.** A very small but complete (and exquisitely built and ornamented) temple. Attached to the main diplomatic compound across the street by an elevated and walled "bridge", it is part of the official legation in all but name. Hrsh is, after all, the state cult of Mu'ugalavyá.
17. **Swamp Folk residences.** Includes an informal hostelry run by one Yandhá of Tu'unket, which involves putting visiting Swamp Folk up in his own extended household's sprawling residence.
18. **Sérsar's Old House.** A large house (by Foreigner's Quarter standards), dating back to the time of the *dítlána* and originally owned by the bronzesmith Sérsar. Sérsar's family obtained Tsolyáni citizenship and moved out of the Quarter, selling the house to a Tinaliya jeweler noted for being reclusive, eccentric, and miserly. Most of the walls, windows, lintels, floors, beams, ceilings, etc. were redecorated by the new inhabitant in the abstract swirling motifs favored by Tinaliya artists; then the servants began to leave, saying the house was ugly and intolerable. The Tinaliya largely withdrew from society, undertaking only a few special commissions from wealthy patrons. About a hundred and twenty years ago, he simply disappeared. Since then the house has changed hands many times; no one — even squatters — will stay in it for long, citing a variety of disturbances, ailments, hauntings, and unnatural occurrences within. It is currently owned by a somewhat respectable landlord who has not been able to find tenants for nearly two years now. It is likely he is seeking to have the city officials recognize the property as legally abandoned, but has not yet succeeded in doing so. Sérsar's

descendants now dwell in the New House near the main bazaar and take a certain amount of pride in the continued association of their name with Butrús's most famous "haunted house".

19. **Mróppyu's Happy Kiosk.** A somewhat seedy wine-shop run by a Pijenáni adopted into the Green Pyramid clan. Its kitchen prepares only Pijenáni-style food and black *las* tea, aside from its low-grade wine cellar. The common hall, containing half a dozen large, low tables around which guests sit cross-legged on wide stools, is rumored to be a good place to contact thieves, kidnappers, cutthroats, smugglers, and poisoners... though this could be slander. Its private dining room, on the other hand, is visited by a trickle of adventurous middle- and upper-class Tsolyáni seeking a taste of the exotic. Its waiters have recently begun insisting that the clientele (regardless of background) use the three-piece Pijenáni silverware provided for visitors: a metal spoon, a short broad knife, and a two-tined fork. The current sommelier is particularly demanding and unpleasant about this. For the well-born Tsolyáni who would venture here in the first place, this seems to simply increase the frisson.

Quadrangle of the Students

A small, elongated plaza (or short broad avenue) with two temple schools facing each other. It is surrounded by genteel, scholarly shops and detached studios; this is the district where scholars-for-hire, tutors, private researchers, and the better sort of "bazaar sorcerer" keep their shops, despite the rambunctious nature of its young student population. Nearby one can also find the scribal clans' shops that produce the gaudy, bright woodblock print editions of popular fiction and vulgarized epic tales, which are the frequent target of complaint by better educated classes and the temples.

20. **Pavilion of Vision in the Pearly Clouds.** A single huge low structure with minor outbuildings in a small compound; its walls are of rippling gray stucco, and has a billowing tiled roofline. This is the local school for children and youths following Thúmis and other powers of Stability.

21. **Tower of Indigo Thought.** A long, high, narrow building with an octagonal pagoda-tower at one end; it is roofed in spiky blue tiles, and the walls are plastered in a rich plum color. It is local school for children and youths following Ksárul and most other powers of Change.
22. **Bookman's Lanes.** A sub-neighborhood of small shops dealing in the accouterments of a scholar or artist, particularly specializing in papers and writing utensils. There are three ink-makers, two brush-and-pen-makers, an inkstone carver, a famous seal-carver, two scroll-mounters and bookbinders, three paper-dealers (who own large paper manufactories outside the town, both for writing and "industrial" grades of paper), two smaller paper factories, and two general dealers (in discount goods and knick-knacks). Several little kitemakers' shops are in the vicinity as well. The Black Theocrat is said to have housed and operated the "Stones of Lichún" near here. What they were and what they did is uncertain at best, but some claim that their influence is still felt; they may even be hidden somewhere within (or under) the neighborhood.

Grand Plaza

Located in the exact center of the city; it is vast, flat, and empty, deserted and baking hot in the summers and gloomy and bleak in the windy winters and rainy springs. The Palaces of the Empire surround it; in the center there is a broad, shallow pool and a fountain, supposedly in the shape of Avanthár and the Golden Tower. A shallow moat all around the plaza and outlining the Palaces is filled with large colorful carp and crossed by flat bridges of blue and white stone.

23. The **Palace of the Realm** is on the southeast side of the Grand Plaza. Its massive roof-comb in shape of the Petal Throne and the Seal towers over the city; a cluster of attached halls and buildings spread out around it, almost completely filling the grounds within the fortified wall and leaving little room for aesthetic considerations such as gardens. The complex is very large, busy, and well organized. Normal hours of business are from well before dawn until early afternoon,

though of course there are officials on duty around the clock. The walls and gates are fortified, though the crowded and warren-like construction within would make the compound difficult or impossible to defend if the walls were breached.

24. **Governor's Courts.** A large and spacious complex of residences and offices on the southwest side of the Grand Plaza. With more land than the other four governmental compounds, the grounds contain some fine geometric gardens and fountains, cool groves, and an open-air theater. A low but strongly constructed and heavily fortified keep is built into the Governor's palace proper, and would serve as the last redoubt in case of catastrophic invasion. (The outer walls and gates of the Governor's Courts are also fortified, but internal security is largely dependent on large regular patrols and picked bodyguards.)
25. The **Mayor's Pagoda** is located in a side yard of the Governor's Courts. It is a short but broad tower with a number of outbuildings, which house the metropolitan administrative offices, archives, and official residence. One attached cavernous structure is entirely dedicated to housing the famous scale model of the entire city.
26. **Drum Tower.** Located in one corner of the Grand Plaza, near the entrance to a long walled passage leading to the Mayor's Pagoda. It signals the nighttime curfew, at which everyone must, in theory, return to his or her own ward of the city. Whether it is strictly observed or not, it is an important part of local tradition. The tower contains a single huge leather-skinned drum (two *dháiba*, or 2.7m, in diameter) and a plain, unadorned sheet of bronze placed at the top of an open, simply-built tower of unworked polished logs. The bronze gong is struck during the daytime to mark the passage of hours, while the drum is used to signal the curfews and during the nighttime. A clepsydra is housed in the ground floor of the tower; it is used to calculate the passage of smaller units of time and the end of each hour.
27. **Palace of Ever-Glorious War.** Located on the northeast side of Grand Plaza; it is large and busy. Its outer walls and interior structures are fortified and intended to resist

attack if the city's walls are breached; the main building is strongly built and provided with a stiff array of defenses. While this will be invaluable in case of siege, the necessities of military engineering rendered the interior layout less than optimal for routine operations as the protectorate's military headquarters. A pair of Mu'ugalavyáni heavy catapults, captured at the Battle of Butrus from Legion X of the First Palace ("Tower-Breaker"), rest as war trophies in the second courtyard.

28. **Palace of the Priesthoods of the Gods.** On the northwest side of Grand Plaza, it is relatively small, and usually quiet. Even this Palace is fortified, like the other government buildings in the Great Plaza, though in this case it is only the main building that contains defensive works, not the outer walls.

Temple Ward

Essentially, the neighborhood containing the Avenue of the Gods — a section of broad street with the city's temples neatly arranged along it. Emperor Tariktáme (r. 1251-79 A.S.) had gifted Butrús with a complete set of temples to the Ten Gods and Ten Cohorts of Pavár's pantheon, and this is essentially a painstaking reconstruction of it — in some cases merely a careful re-assembly of the original structures after *dítlána*. The temples are hence archaic in many architectural and decorative respects. It is worth noting that there is only a single temple for each deity in Butrús: the city is simply too "new" (and orderly) after its recent *dítlána* for such secondary and duplicate establishments to have arisen.

29. The **Temple of Avánthe** is a relatively low, wide pyramid with a crown of sky-blue tiles and two gold domes (stylized breasts); there are some large murals of shining turquoise-colored ceramic and glittering blue crystals on the exterior walls, and one special chamber has a skylight and two walls fashioned almost entirely of blue glass. The grounds contain several fountains (though problems with the hydraulics and water supply keep them inoperative much of the time) and numerous reflecting pools. The latter require constant cleaning and attendance to keep them from turning

bright green with algae — a source of much amusement to followers of the Emerald Ladies. Among numerous shrines to her Aspects, there is an unusual rain shrine in the main temple dedicated to E'éth (who normally has no shrines or images); the shrine to six-armed, many-headed Mékhis is frequented by soldiers of the Legion of the Clan of Silver Lightning and their families, and is something of a social gathering spot for them (even those who are not members of this faith). To the west of the main temple is the shrine of Chorisánde, where children born with mental defects are often abandoned to be raised by the priestesses; this is a relatively large establishment, with its own courtyard. There is also a school of the Tumissan musical academy devoted to Jogái the Songmistress located in an outbuilding.

30. The **Temple of Dilinála** is the "Ginger Lattices", a small domed shrine covered over with flowering epiphytes. The outer sanctuary (open to men as well as women, unlike the shrine itself) is a simple courtyard of blue and white checkerboard marble, and there are three long outbuildings around the low wall that divides the grounds from the Temple of Avánthe. Just as the shrine of Chorisánde is where mentally retarded children are often left, the Ginger Lattices often finds infant girls abandoned on its doorstep, and thus is something of an orphanage for about two dozen girls at any given time. Since the temple's clerical establishment is so small, the children stand out; Butrusséne like to jokingly wonder how the temple of a virgin goddess produces so many babies.
31. The **Temple of Dlamélis** is centered upon a tall square buttressed building of unusual design, topped by a high egg-shaped dome. The dome is made of copper or bronze that has turned a creamy green hue, and is one of the more noticeable elements of the Butrús skyline. This building is mostly reserved for more formal ceremonies. The compound contains other, more familiar temple buildings — in front, a market-like main courtyard, which is a major market for fine clothes, cosmetics, perfumes, and jewels, as well as religious and sacrificial goods, love potions,

aphrodisiacs, and various "marital aids". Behind this is the vast, low, triangular platform upon which are built most other temple buildings and low one-story colonnades supported by heavy pillars and sculpted with various demons, gargoyles, and Aspects; the outer rim of the platform where the buildings do not reach are fixed with statues and inscribed obelisks. A very wide and shallow staircase leads up the platform to the main temple buildings — the public ceremonial theater, the shrines of the Aspects, and finally the grand public hall containing the great alabaster statue of the goddess. The high domed ritual building is located immediately behind this. There is also a special compound that serves as a giant terrarium for the descendants of the holy frogs that fell from the sky several decades ago; portions of this compound are closed to the public and all but a select group of priests, spurring rumors of unusual and perhaps *unnatural* developments.

32. The **Temple of Hriháyal** is an open pillared court on a low platform with steps up all sides; high columns and free-standing arches upon it are draped with fluttering emerald streamers and cloths, and it is topped by a tangle of further platforms, rooms, porches, domes, colonnades, halls, and the various shrines to her Aspects. In the center is the main shrine, a large, sunken square room filled with images, statues, and incense burners. The giant marble frogs at the gates of this temple are famous landmarks. More than in most cities, these two temples have taken on the aspect almost of an amusement park — albeit an adult-themed one in many (but not all!) respects. There are fairly extensive grounds entirely aimed at children's amusement, including merry-go-rounds and a sort of Ferris wheel.
33. The **Temple of Hnálla** consists of a tall white limestone pyramid covered in bas-reliefs of intricately detailed geometric patterns; within are pure white walls, swirling floor mosaics of crystal and white marble, and high domes covered in bright murals. The structures within and atop the pyramid are centered on a high-arched hall lit by windows of colored glass and precious

stones, with white lead-clad stairs leading up to an altar dais in the nave.

34. The **Temple of Dra** is a small enclosed courtyard in the southwest corner of the Temple of Hnálla, surrounded by a flat, bare plaza of white limestone. The semicircular ritual hall has its patio for the Perfect of Dra upon its roof rather than behind it; here the true devotees sit and stare into the light of the sun.
35. The **Temple of Hrü'ü**. The central structure is a low (two story) stepped pyramid of basalt with blank faces; the inner Y-shaped sanctuary is down below ground level, linked by a stairwell in the main nave. The important local Aspect, the Cat God, has its own shrine within the pyramid, near which the famous (if of suspect authenticity) sculpture "Márya's Kitten" is proudly displayed. Beneath the foundations lies a more holy and private shrine to the same Aspect, which dates to the late Bednálljan period. Due to the large number of sacred cats sheltered within the temple grounds, the entire temple complex has a particularly pungent odor. The outer walls of this compound are noteworthy for their plainness and neglect; by ancient custom, they are left alone by the priests and the populace is free — even encouraged — to decorate and deface them as they choose. These walls are thus marked by graffiti ranging from the illiterate and profane to quite elaborate and literary stanzas, and drawings of the same range. Thanks to the large proportion of pilgrims coming to the shrine of the Cat God, many of them unlettered, sketches and impressions of various felines are especially frequent. On the other hand, there are also several famous poets who have debuted their works on these walls.
36. The **Temple of Wurú** is a squat rectangular building just behind the Temple of Hrü'ü; there is a largish courtyard with a permanent stage of heavy teak timbers used for public performances of certain epics. Also noteworthy is a large maze, the shrine of the aspect Siunéth, of which only parts are open to the public.
37. The **Temple of Belkhánu** is an open complex of courtyards and many-columned low buildings, forming a long spiral

concourse containing the shrines to the various funerary aspects. It surrounds the Great Nave, in which the Outer Rituals are performed. This structure is all built of yellow granite, and extends around three sides of an especially tall and imposing pagoda (the lowest two stories of which are also of yellow stone). Some levels are open to the elements or even placed on extended platforms. Building exteriors and walls are extensively sculpted with scenes of the Isles of Teretané and the voyages of the soul. In the rear, one finds the embalming shops and workshops for the preparation of funerals. The **Temple of Qon** is a separate shrine in an adjacent and connecting compound, smaller but similar (though with a long straight concourse rather than a spiralling one).

38. The **Temple of Sáрку** in Butrús is unusually pleasant, open, mellow, and studious, with the local demigod of distillation given some prominence. There are no walls, courts, or outbuildings, just a single, solid, steep-sided pentagonal pyramid of polished and gleaming brown stone, topped by a colonnade for meditation, which is in turn topped by a lacy roof-comb in the shape of the Five-Headed Worm. The lower external walls are covered in rather pretty, sprightly murals and bas-reliefs of processions of people approaching the sanctuary and the many forms of the Worm. Massive copper-plated gates lead to the antechamber and thence into the columned, multi-story main hall, a great open swirl of yellow and ochre banners hanging from the ceiling and wreathed with spirals of golden-brown incense smoke. This vast nave contains a central dais holding the huge copper ritual horn (below) and the temple's *tunkul* gong (above); around the walls are placed great candelabra, idols of the Worm, and shrines to the Greater Aspects. Galleries on three sides and two stories (three stories, including a mezzanine on the rear wall) open onto various dormitories, kitchens, dressing rooms, storehouses, classrooms, a library, and so forth, while from the center rear of the balcony a doorway leads to the narrow inner shrine and the coiled First Aspect. Further copper-paneled gates open out to staircases

and passageways down to catacombs, summoning rooms, more ancient shrines, and likely an underground passage to the mid-Bednálljan temple to Sárku, which is known to remain in good condition under modern Butrús and is still occasionally visited.

39. The **Temple of Durritlámish** is simply a small annex in the rear of the pyramid of Sárku. It is in the shape of a long rectangle of descending stepped vaults; in the lowest one, a vertical shaft descends into a ritual underworld below the surface of the city. This shaft (always called a "door" by the priests) is traversed using a simple elevator powered by slaves and aided with counter-weights.
40. The **Temple of Karakán** has a simple but attractive design. Within high scarlet-and-white outer walls studded with statues and friezes, an outer courtyard-garden faces a colonnaded porch, behind which is a large hall with great pillars holding up a painted and gilded domed ceiling. Beyond, a short passage leads to the inner shrine, where the chief image of the god stands high upon a dais and a series of pedestals. Altars for offerings and sacrifices are arrayed before the image, and murals and bas-reliefs of the god's heroic deeds at Dórmoron Plain and in other legends cover the walls. Further rooms for various rituals open off from each side of the main hall, and passages lead away from these to robing rooms and shrines for certain ceremonies. A separate building to the west, in the outer courtyard, houses smaller shrines to the 56 Greater Aspects. **Chegárra's temple**, in the same compound, is a small high-combed pyramid with lacework stone walls and an open floor plan.
41. The **Temple of Thúmis** is of a relatively new style: a long L-shaped stepped platform with columns along the outer edge. The main shrines and ritual chambers are placed atop it in front, and various libraries, classrooms, dormitories, museums, and so forth are in buildings built onto the sides and upper surfaces to the rear. One such "museum" contains a special collection of stones and minerals from all around the Five Empires and even beyond. The grounds are strewn with a thick bed of pale gray gravel;

there are few plantings or gardens to speak of, and overall the temple grounds are impressively serene, if stark.

42. The **Temple of Keténgku** is more conventional: a courtyard surrounded by colonnades, with an altar and small fountain in the open court. While still drawing the faithful for worship, the halls of physicians it maintains (together with priests of Thúmis) are not much frequented by patients any more (at least not native city-dwellers), due to the reputation the doctors have for "experimenting" on "expendable" patients.
43. The **Temple of Vimúhla** is the largest religious structure in Butrús. Semi-fortified and almost blank walls surround its courtyards, barracks, dormitories, kitchens, storehouses, and a sturdy *tunkúl*-gong tower. The main shrine is contained in a high truncated pyramid, on top of which is a towering flame-shaped spire (built of wood, but lacquered and polished to a brilliant crimson sheen); before the base of the spire is the sacrificial altar and flame-pit. Smaller sanctuaries within the pyramid are dedicated to several of the 87 Aspects; it also houses sleeping quarters for the highest ranks of clergy, administration chambers, studies, etc. To one side is a separate crematory furnace and funerary workshop, used by all adherents of the Flame Lord. This temple is also the largest giver of alms to the city's poor; there is a distribution of bread and some plain fried vegetables daily at sunset, and swarms of the needy congregate to receive this.
44. The **Temple of Chiténg** is adjoining; it is a slightly smaller duplicate of Vimúhla's temple, but instead of the spire atop the pyramid, a low circular roofless building surrounds the Chalice of Fire. The pyramid also has a steeper main outer staircase, and below it is a large skull-rack two stories high for the heads of certain sacrificial victims and slain enemies of the Legion of the Givers of Sorrow. This temple is almost entirely dedicated to the interests of the Legion and the protection of the city.
45. The grounds of the Temple of Vimúhla also house the luridly named **Crucible of Glowing-Hot Skulls**, the temple school for most families and clans devoted to Vimúhla or Chiténg in Butrús, as well as some

devotees of Karakán. The name is actually intended to indicate the raw intellectual power of its students illuminating their heads with a blazing aura, but suggests something more gruesome to many non-Vimúhlans. It has many students and some respected scholars, along with libraries and residences separate from those of the two sponsoring temples.

46. The **Temple of Ksárul** covers the most land in Butrús. Located on a large plot, the grounds are landscaped with fine gardens and parkland and planted full of dark-leaved *tíu* trees and deep indigo-flowering rhododendrons. The temple consists of a sprawling complex of low buildings under black-tiled roofs, whose massive gables sweep low to the ground. The main temple building is on a stepped platform with stairs up the south face only; besides its small replica of the Blue Room, it is filled with pillared halls and small, uneven, twisting rooms and passages, seeming larger on the inside than on the outside. Hidden somewhere in the complex — perhaps underground, but quite possibly lost in the warren of courtyards, pillared breezeways, and dim thickets — is the Hall of the Priesthoods of Shadow, the secret shrine dedicated to the Local Aspect and used by the Inner Sphere of the temple (unknown even to Inner Sphere members from other cities), where special local or secret rituals are conducted and plots hatched.

The old (Bednálljan) Imperial Repository has been restored on its original site with a reasonable degree of architectural authenticity, and now serves as the temple library. The grounds also contain a special gallery where statues of the Six Planetary Aspects of Ksárul are displayed (distinct from the actual shrines to these six Aspects); these are large and exquisite carvings of stone in the shape of frogs of different types. Their origin is unknown, though there are those among the Black Robes who claim them (perhaps in rivalry with the Temple of Hrí'ú) to be the work of Márya.

The shrine to the Aspect Mentutékka is probably the greatest in Tsolyánu and

perhaps in all the Five Empires; it is the principal focus for most of the great numbers of Ksárul-worshipping pilgrims that come to Butrús each year. Consisting of a narrow, single-story octagonal building — hardly more than a corridor with a colonnade facing the inner side — its heart is a large courtyard, planted thickly with living trees, sculpted trunks decorated with artificial leaves and flowers, and thin, towering sculptures of basalt and polished wood.

Caverns below the park are open to the public, and contain the shrine of the Local Aspect, the Smoking Toad (who is also represented in a small cubical building of roughly-cut lava blocks in the aboveground complex). A pre-Nayárian temple or monastery of the Black Robes is believed to exist somewhere more or less undeneath modern-day Butrús, but little is known for certain.

47. The strangely-constructed Collegium, built by the Black Theocrat to serve as a kind of huge school to educate and indoctrinate the entire populace, has been preserved and maintained, and most of it now serves as the **Temple of Grugánu**. It stands entirely within the grounds of the Temple of Ksárul and has no separate compound. The main inner school for the advanced priests and scholars of Ksárul, the **Hall of What Is Written on Shadow**, occupies another former wing of the Collegium. The connecting structure between the two has been demolished in order to leave a perfectly square building for the priests of Grugánu to inhabit, as doctrine and tradition require.
48. **Monastery of Gleeful Shrieks**. Essentially a sort of interdenominational temple for sado-masochistic sexual rites, a joint establishment of some of the clergy and faithful of Chiténg and Hríháyal; it is linked to the Company of the Orange Band. While some of the activities certainly seem to be recreational, ecclesiastical ceremonies are regularly performed and probable sorcerous rituals are conducted as well. It is located just off the Avenue of the Gods (across a grassy empty lot from the rear of the

Temple of Hnálla, in fact) but still within the Temple Ward.

Military Facilities

Not located in a single district, these structures are all located along the perimeter of the city, around the walls.

49. **Barracks of the Legion of Tangled Root Eaters** (2nd Páchi Lei Medium Infantry). Huge, lavishly built, and currently empty, it lies near the Úrmish Gate. It has a gigantic sculptural stele of General Hozzübe G'dzar (who led the re-conquest of Butrús and Pan Cháka); the stele is so tall that it can be seen over the top of the city walls from the *sákbe* road and the crest of the Bridge of the Leaping Worm approaching the city. It was to this statue that the "Dragon of 2339" (see recent events in the History section) was leashed, a point of outrage to the legionnaires at the time and a point of pride afterward.
50. **Barracks of the Legion of the Forest of Hh-kk-ssá** (10th Pe Choi Medium Infantry). High-walled, quiet, and somewhat secretive, even though this is the largest garrison unit currently in Butrús and is located near the busy Tumissa Gate. Except for the curious and those doing business with the legion, most Butrusséne ignore it, or even tend to avoid it.
51. **Barracks of the Legion of the Givers of Sorrow** (8th Heavy Infantry). Very large and richly appointed, now empty but for trainees — even most of its administrative personnel are currently in the field. Large parts are contained in the city walls, but it has proper buildings and warehouses too; it is naturally located near the Gate of Ghosts, facing toward the distant Mu'ugalavyáni border.
52. **Barracks of the Legion of the Clan of Silver Lightning** (7th Archers). Well organized and partially built into the eastern wall of the city, it lies just south of the River Gate. The legion's main target range is located outside the barracks (see below). Hawkers of amulets and fortunes throng outside its gates, knowing the superstitious and insecure nature of the legionnaires.
53. **Barracks of the Legion of the Lord of Red Devastation** (18th Medium Infantry).

Ceremonial "secret barracks" entirely contained in the western city walls; unlike all others, there are no exterior buildings or parade grounds attached to it. In reality, it could never house more than a few score soldiers, and any drilling or marshalling would be awkward. It is maintained by veterans and some Vimúhla-worshipping clanspeople.

54. **Yard of the Sappers.** The large compound formerly housing Cohort IX of the Legion of the Slayers of Cities (5th Sappers), which was posted to Butrús until 2349 A.S. It contains extensive workshops and warehouses in addition to the usual barracks, drilling fields, and so forth; it is intact but abandoned, with only a pair of watchmen and their families keeping an eye on the place.

Other Locations

55. **Garden of Zrang.** Originally the pleasure garden attached to the palace (now lost) of Tlyo Zrang, the last ruler of a petty ruling dynasty during the Time of No Kings. He was fond of whiling away his time here with his harem of foreign concubines and his favorite consort, the Lady Twei, also known as the "Toad Consort" — an epithet unflattering to metropolitan Tsolyáni ears, but she was considered to be an "avatar" of a (regional) Aspect of Diamélis possessed of lunar and batrachian features, as well as the usual considerable physical charms. It was in this garden, supposedly, that Tlyo Zrang established the cardamom-viewing festival (the Feast of the Red Cloud, also known as the Toasting of the Frog in honor of Lady Twei), and it is the center for its annual celebration today. There is also a certain amount of evidence, both documentary and archeological, suggesting that well before his time (during the early Engsvanyáli period) it was the temple grounds of the first Pan Chákan shrine of Avánthe. The gardens are open to all but the lowest orders of the public and are free to visit, but "donations" are expected, particularly from the wealthy.

It contains a rococo fountain in the form of mating *sro*, several pavilions (including the

Terrace of Morning, with an excellent view), rushing streams, ornate bridges, and placid ponds and canals for pleasure-boating. It is planted with cardamom, lilac, and coral trees; there are also tangerines, bananas, gum trees, and koelreuterias. The ponds and pools contain water lilies, blue lotus, and sleeping lotus, while other plantings hold oleander, hibiscus, jasmine, frangipani, camellia, giant ferns, rhododendrons, and many specialty bamboos, which also cover the many artificial hills and "mountains" built in the parkland.

While Tlyo Zrang's cultured indolence and love for his garden certainly contributed heavily to his downfall at the hands of Íto insurgents, stories that he and his favorites were surprised by the invaders in the Garden itself and put to a gruesome death on the spot are probably spurious. There is no respectable support for the suggestion that their ghosts haunt the grounds.

- 56.—59. **City Militia Stations.** Four in number (not counting the additional one in the Foreigner's Quarter); not especially large, but strongly fortified. All have one or more high watchtowers that should be manned at all times — keeping an eye out for fires is one of the most important jobs of the militia. The gatehouses in the city walls are also facilities that are manned by the city guardsmen, of course.
60. **Observatory Park.** Built around a small tower with a broad flat top and surrounded by several sighting-pools; it also houses a fairly large clepsydra of Tinaliya manufacture. While nowhere near as good as the observatories in the Temple of Thúmis at Páya Gupá or the Gallery of Gazing Forth by Night in the Monastery of the Grey Cloak, this is possibly the finest such facility in the western half of the Empire outside of Do Cháka. Formerly it was located just outside the city walls but is now contained within them on a large grassy plot, kept neatly trimmed by a flock of *hmélu*. Technically it is property of the Palace of the Priesthoods of the Gods, but its use is often squabbled over by various astrologically inclined temple factions and even private individuals. The sighting-pools

used to fix the heliacal rising and setting of the planet Shichél are perhaps the most frequented, by priests of Avánthe.

61. **Citadel.** On a low but quite steep-sided bluff (around 8-10 m high), the only remaining elevation of any note in the city. The entire complex is actually not large. It has been much rebuilt, but is roughly in the Engsvanyáli style of concentric rings around the keep; a spiral moat runs around the base, crossed by arching red wooden bridges. The central keep is quite tall, whitewashed, with dark blue tiled flaring roofs, and very pretty. The site of the Givers of Sorrow's famous last stands in the Mu'ugalavyáni invasion of 1565 (when it was burned to the ground) and in the War of 2020, it is now a romantic tourist destination for legion members, supporters, and enthusiasts of military valor and worshippers of Chiténg in general. Rumors of hauntings and hidden treasures or lost secrets abound even now. It is not currently an active military facility, but could be refurbished in case of need. Given its location in the modern city (near neither the walls nor the "government district" at the center of town), it may not be useful to do so even should war break out. Originally the site of a watchtower of the Dragon Warriors, it was heavily fortified in the Bednálljan age, and rebuilt early in the Time of No Kings in a regional Engsvanyáli idiom, which has been preserved (with repairs and reconstructions) until the present day. In former times the Tsolyáni Viceroy would move into the breezier and cooler citadel during the hot season, and the buildings comprising the Summer Palace still stand, maintained but empty.
62. **Hospice of Gleaming Teeth.** A clinic run by the Staff of Mercy Society of the Temple of Keténgku and dedicated to the Aspect Tírekshen, specializing in dentistry and oral medicine. It does not share the bad reputation of the main temple's hospital, and is located in a separate building away from the Temple Ward. It is a small, two-story structure behind a large, open porch, all atop a low stone and earth platform.
63. **House of Curious Antiquity.** An antique dealership and curio store, easily recognized by its topaz-brown window-shutters and

golden-hued door. The small shop is cluttered with goods and pets, and is dim and heavily shuttered. It opens onto a pleasant but equally small garden visited by unusually dense swarms of moths and butterflies. There are few servants and no assistant shopkeepers, so the business is entirely run by a genial but somewhat reclusive elderly couple. Their origins are uncertain, as are their religious beliefs and even clan membership. They deal in antiquities, lesser and occasional greater *objects d'art*, souvenirs, and better-quality trinkets.

64. **Sixteen Fields Prison.** Located in a remote area of the city that is otherwise mostly deserted and undeveloped. The official prison of the Kingdom of Pan Cháka,¹¹¹ and simultaneously designated a Imperial Prison. It is quite large, due to the fact that it is used to house prisoners from elsewhere in the Empire whom the courts or Avanthár wish to keep in some more remote and distant part of the land. A single massive high wall runs all around the prison, studded with bartizans for watchmen atop it and small, almost invisible gates set into the base. Within, the grounds are broken up into several sub-compounds (the sixteen fields of the prison's name) within which prisoners of different classes are segregated and largely left to their own devices, if their sentences warrant it. There is a "high security" block as well, and of course extensive facilities for the staff, guards, and officers of the prison itself. This includes the Butrús barracks for the Legion of Ketl, and the area of the prison is thus avoided by residents of the city, who fear being impressed into service.
65. **Priory of the Sapphire Shell.** Located in another somewhat out-of-the way, largely residential section of the city, this is a monastic establishment of the Refulgent Blue Curtain Society of the temples of Ksárul. Physically, it is a small, old-fashioned, Mu'ugalavyáni-style mansion within a high and forbidding wall. No one is seen to come or go; provisions and supplies are left by various shopkeepers and

tradesmen in the small blank-walled courtyard just inside the main gate, where they also pick up written orders for their next delivery. It is not known how many priests are in residence here, let alone what their researches and studies are directed at. The name of the priory stems from an early Tsolyáni interpretation of the beetle image of Ksárul as symbolizing the hard, impenetrable shell of secrecy protecting his inner secrets.

66. **Armory of Kadráru hiFershéna.** A branch of the famous Tumíssan family of craftsmen.
67. **Armory of Ní'itúmish Chládo of Pagús.** The foremost bowyer, fletcher, and crossbow-maker of the city
68. **Armory of Mürül of Sokátis.** The lowest-status armory, mostly concentrating on producing workmanlike, inexpensive, practical weapons for militias and *sákbe* guards.
69. **Arcades of Whickering Hostility.** A crossbow instructor (600-800 *káitars* per month tuition).
70. **Field of Strenuous Application.** A teacher of the two-handed sword (700-900 *káitars* per month tuition).
71. **Hall of the Bearer of the Gift.** Butrús's greatest dueling-master, and trainer-in-chief to the Legion of the Givers of Sorrow.
72. **Hirilákte arena.** Main events include the weekly *marotlán* game every Daunél. The avenues immediately around the arena are often the scene of impromptu riots and street battles when unpopular "foreign" teams are in town — or when favored local teams disappoint the mob. Neighboring homes and shops are accordingly provided with heavy shutters, stout doors, and spike-topped outer walls.
73. **Archery grounds** for the Legion of the Clan of the Silver Lightning; in a big open lot within the city, nearby but separate from their barracks proper.
74. **The General's Mound.** A large, plain tumulus covered in long grass, said to house the remains of the Black Theocrat's chief henchman, a psychotic military genius given to peeling the faces off his enemies. Many of his troops are said to be buried here as well. It was formerly outside the city walls, and many were reluctant to let it be enclosed in the new city plan. However,

¹¹¹ I.e., of the Protectorate of Pan Cháka; the ancient original title survives for complicated legal reasons.

excluding it would have involved some extreme irregularities in the orderly layout of the city walls, and no one was willing to risk razing it, either.

75. **Ínjo's Pit.** An illegal gambling den, mostly the site of boxing and cockfighting matches, patronized by the lower classes and a few decadent wealthy residents. Attempts by the *hirilákte* concessionaires to shut it down or to obtain their rightful share of the profits have so far been unsuccessful. Protected by the Great Brotherhood of the Fist of the Ink-Stained Knuckles in Hiding, if not in fact their headquarters. The actual location moves intermittently; it is currently an abandoned warehouse.
76. **Blackie's Top.** A gigantic stone head over four *dháiba* (5.3 m) in diameter; originally a huge Bednálljan or Engsvanyáli statue that was re-carved to represent the Black Theocrat and then repositioned. When it was torn down in 542 A.S., the head of the statue was left in its present position, sneering (at a 45° angle) at passers-by on the street. No one has dared to deface it.
77. **Arcade markets.** A tidy block of colonnaded lanes, housing the great bazaar of Butrús. Several kiosks hold "courts" of the market magistrates, while others, at the entrances, are the posts of officials responsible for issuing hawking licenses and collecting taxes. In a city of this size, there is no single "market day", of course; however, on certain days of the week there are regular specialized gatherings of vendors and buyers of particular products — the bird market on Tlakál drawing an especially large number of out-of-town traders and merchants. Smaller neighborhood markets also exist, of course, catering to the routine needs of nearby households.
78. **Ever-The-Same Granaries,** operated by the government of the protectorate. Grain is stored in huge single-story warehouses, raised off the ground by heavy stone pillars to improve air circulation and reduce infestation. Other warehouses, two stories high, are built on conventional foundations; these are used to store other foodstuffs and stockpiled goods. There are also two separate buildings containing the offices and records of the granaries.

79. **Lacquerers' Row.** Four great firms of lacquerers, each with their own "damp rooms"; there is some specialization (furniture; eating utensils; decorative and artistic pieces, etc) between the families, which nevertheless has not reduced long-standing rivalries.
80. **Qùruhlóngashèn** (the "Anything-At-All Shop"). The closest one gets to a variety store in Tsolyánu. It was established by a *mérato* (professional "finder") who is a notorious packrat, in the habit of buying stuff up sight unseen with the alleged intent of later selling it himself. He purchased an old warehouse complex on the cheap, one originally constructed for the last *ditlána* to store materials and tools. He began using it as a storehouse for his collection of goods, and eventually turned it into the foundation of his new business (with help from his more practical and aggressive wives). He now buys up lots of dry goods and hardware whenever the price is low and stores them here; buyers who need a (relatively) convenient way to shop for such items often come here. Most of his goods are cheap, plain, and often remaindered by their manufacturers who find it simpler to unload them here than to store and try to sell them personally. He has vast array of rattan furnishings, minor pieces of clothing, utilitarian pottery and cookware, simple hand tools and implements, common items of toiletry, and some more obscure items — several score callus-removers carved from pumice in the shape of naked dancing girls; a hundred sets of paper clothing left over from a religious festival, in a no longer authorized color; a box of unfinished bronze mirrors; a few dozen strangely-shaped cushions custom-sewed for a particular suite of furniture that was cancelled; a huge barrel of ship's caulk; bales of unfinished bark rope originally intended for the shipyards at Penóm, etc. The better sort of person would not be caught dead here, and even the middle classes would prefer to send their servants — but it is still an interesting place, nonetheless.¹¹²

¹¹² Adventurers who might turn to this as a "general store" or as a buyer of their loot should be warned that the Qùruhlóngashèn does not deal in foodstuffs, livestock, armor

*Tsuru'úm*¹¹³

- A. The uppermost level consists of the post-*dítlána* sewers, storm drains, cisterns, and foundations. These are generally of excellent design and construction, laid out in an orderly and regular grid. The main sewers are 2.7 m high and 1.3 m wide, running east to west; feeder tunnels are smaller, but large enough to (barely) admit human passage. Drains and sewage pipes from households are usually too narrow to allow access; drains from the rain gutters on the streets are built to allow entry or exit by cleaners and repairmen, though a block-and-tackle is required to lift the heavy stone manholes. The five huge reservoirs are closer to the surface, while the twenty smaller tanks are slightly deeper, and gravity-fed from the main reservoirs.
- B. Among the private excavations of the recent era, the largest and deepest is that of the Temple of Belkhánu, which constructed a moderately deep catacomb to house the remains of its priests. There is also the "ritual underworld" under the Temple of Durritlámish, which is ornate and complicated but not very extensive; its only access is through the elevator-like "door" in the surface temple.
- C. Excavations by the Mu'ugalavyáni in the 1660s as part of their *dítlána* still remain. Much of the modern system of cisterns, reservoirs, aqueducts, and drains actually dates from this phase of construction and was merely repaired and renovated in the latest *dítlána*.
- D. Tunnels and basements that caved in and were cut off during the Great Storm of 1155; some may still be intact but not rebuilt or re-connected to their modern successors.
- E. Older Second Empire temple elements (of Vimúhla, Chiténg, Ksárul, Hrü'ü, and possibly others) are buried farther away

from their modern sites but perhaps still connected by more recent tunneling. There is also a secret library of the Temple of Qon, excavated and expanded gradually over the period roughly 880-1440.

- F. For many centuries during the post-Engsvanyáli era (the Time of No Kings) and even the early Second Empire, Butrús was a smaller town, crowded around a castle complex. One can find cellars and foundations of fortresses of Vimúhlan and Ksárulian warlords; a Temple of Sárku dedicated to the Íto clan; several strange constructions of the Black Theocrat and his military forces, etc.
- G. Engsvanyáli remains. The Priest-Kings' City of the Nine Walls was farther away to the north, though the leveling of the plain the city now stands on dates to this period, as do several other minor works. The ruins of the Engsvanyáli city were destroyed by massive cave-ins and flash flooding in the Great Storm of 1155. Engsvanyáli ruins under the modern city will all date to the earlier periods of the Priest-Kings' rule.
- H. A late Bednálljan shrine to the Cat God, connected to the modern Temple of Hrü'ü and in fairly regular use.
- I. A mid-Bednálljan temple of Sárku under the modern city, in good condition and still visited through a well-maintained tunnel.
- J. There may be other small and fragmentary structures of a religious nature from the Bednálljan period still extant underground.
- K. From the period of the Fishermen Kings (at least prior to the reign of Nayári) there is a supposedly still extant temple or monastery of Ksárul, location uncertain and current status secret (or simply unknown).
- L. Foundations of buildings of the Dragon Warriors do remain, deep under the modern city.

or weapons, full suits of clothing, jewelry or gemstones, bullion, other precious materials, books, relics, or the like.

¹¹³ This section is so fragmentary and sparse that it would have been omitted were it not for the high degree of interest it is likely to hold for certain readers. The author has indicated that further details and clarifications in this area may become available in the future, and eventually be translated into English.

APPENDIX A: FESTIVAL CALENDAR FOR BUTRÚS

INTERCALARY DAYS

I. **Ikáner:** Ritual of the Garbing of the Lord of the Blue Room

Procession of a man-sized statue of Lord Ksárul through streets on a palanquin, led by acrobats, musicians and special standards; candy and miniature silver coins with the crescent-and-beetle image are thrown to children. Upon arriving back at the Temple of Ksárul, the image is solemnly washed, groomed, and redressed in new clothes. The festival is originally from Púrdimal; it was imported in the late thirteenth century and still considered to have a slightly exotic flavor to it.

Golden Conveyance of the Great Blue Hymn

Ceremony enacting the Saffron Wisp Maiden's receiving a hymn of praise from the Governor and priests of Pan Cháka and flying to Avanthár to present it to the Petal Throne. Staged in several segments throughout the day.

When these two events are both completed (just after nightfall), the city's first barrel of vanilla-flavored New Year's "wine" is ceremoniously broached by the chief of the Wine Stewards' Section of the Court of Shining Banquets (q.v.); meanwhile, however, the Governor spends the entire day in prayer at the Temples of Hnálla, Karakán, and Chegárra.

II. **Turugáshe:** Transportations of the Small Paw

A set of public ceremonies at the Temple of Hrü'ü, symbolic and abstruse, but apparently with some connection to fertility and/or adolescence. Ritual presentations of kittens to the Temple by the laity, who in return receive other kittens from the Temple, all according to a mysterious schedule. However, most citizens rest and do not take part in any ceremonies or festivities this day.

The Governor spends the day in rigorous seclusion in the Temple of Ksárul, performing ceremonies to prepare for the new year.

III. **Vraháma:** Dance of the Amber Swords

Parade of military *káingyal* (by legions devoted to either Vimúhla or Karakán) by dancing soldiers; spectacular and wild. Simultaneously, mass public exorcisms are conducted by priests of Qon and Chiténg, with teams of stilt-dancers in huge fantastic costumes and ear-splitting firecracker orgies. Tug-of-war using giant ropes representing dragon-monsters or snake-demons. Particularly in the villages and smaller towns of the protectorate, children are divided into two teams whom fight mock battles with rocks, dirt-clods, larger seed-pods, and firecrackers; supposedly, any village in which this is not done will find someone from it has disappeared — a sacrifice taken by Mentutékka (an Aspect of Ksárul). Priests of Ksárul and Hrü'ü are confined to the grounds of their temples on this day.

The Governor, besides participating in these exorcistic parades, performs difficult ritual dances and songs at the Temples of Chiténg, Vimúhla, and Qon.

IV. **Ngaqómi:** (Thanksgiving ceremonies at ancestral shrines)

Private rituals, conducted in clanhouses shortly before dawn, notifying the lineage ancestors of the completion of another year and requesting their assistance in the coming one. Together with the five other domestic ancestor-

worship events listed below, this is a practice only of native Pan Chákan families, and not even all of those.

Pageant of Death

Durritlámish-themed parade in outlandish, garish costumes of ancient times, with yellow paper lanterns, distributing brown rock candy to children along the route; very popular and fun. Late morning or early afternoon, depending on the weather.

Dance of Flowered Lanterns

Public, led by sacred youths of several different temples; lasts from before sundown until dawn the next day. Inspired by, if not directly copied from, the celebrations of Hriháyal in Jakállá, but also likely influenced by the famous ceremonies of Dilinála at Haumá. Falls somewhere between them — a sort of remote, serene lasciviousness. Traditionally shadow-lantern or shadow-puppet shows are put on after dark, though these rarely have anything to do with the ritual dance itself.

The Governor is faced with yet another full day of sequestered rituals, now in the Temple of Sárku.

V. Chitlásha: Celebration of Drawing Aside the Azure Veil

Rituals of the temple of Ksárul, known (openly) only in Butrús; takes place around dawn.

Farewell to the Aged Year (Funeral of the Late Year)

Sárku rituals, combined with an temple festival and feast for the laity that starts mid-morning and lasts until mid-afternoon. The latter spills out into the streets and is attended by many devotees of other gods. Also, many people visit the City of Dead to pay respects to those who died during the year. Best known for the burning of extremely thin long brown candles (called *ánret* in the local dialect) throughout the day in large quantities.

Celebration of Glorious Triumphs

Military parade around city walls and to the Palace of War. Due to the size of Butrús' walls, runners perform most of the circuit, and the full legions only assemble to march a chosen segment of wall-top and through the city.

Kindling of the New Fires

Vimúhlan ritual complex, imported from Mu'ugalavyá long ago but now considered "native". Includes many sacrifices, as well as special rites in the Flame-dedicated legions and important agricultural ceremonies in rural areas. Starts at noon, when the sun passes its zenith.

The Governor's New Year duties consist of long chants and a particularly slow but complicated dance conducted in his own palace; they are performed under extremely close guard and watchfulness, and knowledge of their details treated as a state secret.

MONTHLY CALENDAR

Hasanpór (I) Arrival of the monsoons, onset of rainy season.

1: New Year's Day (Spring Equinox)¹¹⁴

Political pageantry; feasting and gift-giving, particularly among the wealthy and ruling classes. The Governor, together with senior clan-elders and high priests, officially and publicly welcomes the four mythological "Year-Bearers" (Akhoné,

¹¹⁴ The "waxing split" in indigenous terminology.

Niritlál, Nimuné, and Nurgáshte) and thanks them for having delivered the new year to Pan Cháka, and gives them the “keys to the city” for the next ten days. The official calendar and almanac for the coming year is released to the public by the College for Guiding Human Nature (q.v.) at the same time.

Purification of the Flame

Rituals & sacrifices for prosperity in the new year; continuation of the Kindling of the New Fires rituals the day before, concluding at mid-morning. Religious ecstasies scale sword-ladders and perform other feats and spectacles.

Renewal of the Count of Hours

The civic administration resumes its timekeeping duties: washing and cleaning the water-chambers in the morning, recalibrating at noon, paying their respects to the “God of Clocks” in the afternoon, and the curfew goes back into effect at dusk of this day.

1-10: Illumination of the New Year

Roughly stated, the secular and private round of festivities for the New Year, following those of the more religious-themed intercalary days. Orange and pink globe-lanterns are hung everywhere, representing the new or reborn sun. Clan banquets and neighborhood open-air feasts are held, visits made to family members living nearby and clan branches in the vicinity meet together. There are daily parades of “fire trees”: huge branching structures of silk, paper, and lamps in the shape of birds, *sro*, *serudlá*, *feshénga*, *vringálu*, and *zrne*, up to 30 m high and hauled on massive flatbed carts supported by cables, managed by teams of their sponsors. Clans, temples, and government offices engage in a competitive display of these, though the cost prohibits all but the wealthiest from participating every year. The extended sequence of the many New Year’s festivities formally ends on the tenth of the month, and any leftover vanilla liquor must be poured out by midnight, or the entire household is cursed through the coming year. The resultant rush to drink down what’s left rather than waste it in the gutter tends to cause severe hangovers and not a few deaths.

15: Commemoration of the Death of Pavár

Rituals in temples, government offices, and clanhouses; relatively sober and low-key, coming after the long and somewhat hysterical festival season. Officials make offerings to the protectors of the Soil (Avánthe or Sárku, depending on whom you ask) and the City (Chiténg) at certain ancient megaliths outside the city walls, led by the Governor carrying a device known as the “Flag of Twenty Tassels”. Clan-elders simultaneously offer prayers for the children of their clan in the coming year.

20: Quintuplicate Collocation of Court Officers (The Monsoon Banquet)

An old tradition of the Governor’s Court in Pan Cháka, perhaps based loosely on old Íto clan-council practices but given its modern form under the Mu’ugalavyáni occupation. Originally it was “quintuplicate” in the sense of five times each month, i.e. once per week, but it is now understood to mean five times per year. All officials and bureaucrats of the Tenth Circle and above are “invited”, regardless of what actual post they hold — even retired officials or those on leave are usually included. (Though there is no formal regulation, attendance is effectively mandatory.) They meet with the Governor in the Broad Hall of Devotion to the State, in what is supposed to be “casual” dress and manner, and in turn present verbal reports and summaries of current developments and issues in their area of responsibility. This is followed by a banquet, by firm tradition always held outside official premises — usually in facilities rented from a winemakers’ or food-preparers’ clan, but sometimes arranged as an excursion or picnic to some suitably scenic and cultured location in or near the city.

Monsoon Ceremonies: To mark the return of the monsoons and the heavy rains, which usually arrive by the middle of the month, the Temple of Avánthe rings its *tunkúl*-gongs for at least a full day, sometimes longer, creating a tremendous din. Meanwhile, the Temple's priests and priestesses lead processions through the streets during the first torrential downpour, which the public may join in. Special costumes of dyed paper are worn for this, which are destroyed in the process of the participants' marching or dancing up and down the city's long avenues until they are exhausted and soaked through.

First Thunder Ceremonies: For five days after the first thunderstorm of the year (which usually occurs this month), no work is supposed to be done that involves digging, chopping, or hammering. This is only laxly observed except in particularly conservative rural districts, however. Most villages do construct a crude "thunder cart" upon which an effigy of one of the Thunder Lords (q.v.) is placed, haul it around the outskirts of the village and its fields, and make various minor offerings to propitiate these peculiar beings. In Butrús, on the other hand, a sacrificial victim in the Temple of Karakán is fed on special sacrificial meats, and is then struck by lightning on the sixth day of the period.

Shápru (II) Climax of humidity and the monsoons.

3: Water Rituals

On the northern banks of rivers and northern shores of lakes or pools, girls in long-sleeved robes perform ritual dances while people lower leaf-wrapped fruit and colored ribbons on weights down into the swollen waters to reach the drowned daughters of a long-forgotten king. Special prayers are offered up to the drowned girls by and for pregnant women, and also for the prosperity of textile-producing crops and small livestock in the coming year. Light-spirited festivities follow, in which (among the wealthy) cups of wine are floated around small rivers and winding streams to the banqueters. While under the auspices of the temples of Avánthe and Dilinála, their contribution is largely limited to teaching and overseeing the ritual dances; this is essentially an observance of the folk religion.

16: Calling Up the Fertility of the Land

Rituals, feasting; visits to limestone caverns and sinkholes, into which celebrants throw flowers. Those who cannot make such visits instead throw these offerings into small excavated pits, which are left standing until they fill naturally. This often coincides with the annual return of migratory birds from the north. In the countryside there is the belief that those with psychic gifts can obtain oracles for the coming year on this day by pouring oil onto the surface of standing water in sinkholes and seeing the future in the patterns it forms. Many also drink a special broth of ginger flowers on this day as a spiritual cleansing agent. According to traditional Chákan calendars, this date marks the beginning of the season of summer.

18: Adoration of the Gray Veil

This festival honoring the Lord Thúmis is not particularly popular outside his priesthood, despite attempts to encourage lay folk to attend. Even the minority of Butrusséne who worship Thúmis tend to skip this day-long ceremony of hymns, repeated temple processions, rituals, and more hymns.

Didóm (III) Humid; rainy but less intense; long drizzles (the "ink rains"). Harvesting of winter crops.

2: Quintuplicate Collocation of Court Officers (The Rainy Banquet)

See above for full description.

3-4: Hailing the Glory of the Army

Military pageants in which the local garrisons leave the city overnight and then march back inside in decoratively muddied and stage-bloodied but triumphant

array, simulating return from a battle. Largely inspired by the cult of Hrsh and Mu'ugalavyáni military traditions.

19: Touching the Worm of Copper

Ancestor worship and visits to graves. Old bones are exhumed, washed, wrapped, and replaced in their tombs — ideally by their living relatives or descendants, but often (among wealthier citizens and non-adherents of Sárku and Durritlámish) by stand-ins hired from among the traditional tomb-tending clans. These practices, and the entire month of Didóm among devout Sárku-worshippers, are called “grave-sweeping”. Nobles and aristocrats, meanwhile, visit the shrine of the First Aspect in the main Temple of Sárku and are permitted to touch its copper image. Aside from this last elite practice, the holiday is entirely based in the autochthonous Chákan practice of ancestor worship, given a thin veneer of Pavárian orthodoxy.

22: Conflagration of the All

Minor rituals and sacrifices (primarily to Vimúhla & Chiténg). The Red Cassia Forest Dance, commemorating Archer Hmi's last victory, is performed in those temples, and other public performances are sponsored by various secular patrons.

25: Litany of Noble Deeds

Minor military rituals (primarily to Karakán & Chegárra), sacrifice of captured enemy soldiers who have been “saved up” for this day. Soldiers (of any legion or religion) receive awards and medals for special valor or victories over the past year; dead heroes are remembered and honored. The Red Cassia Forest Dance is performed again.

26: (Private ancestor-worship ceremonies)

The “summer” round of rituals in honor of lineage ancestors, conducted in private clanhouses.

Langála (IV) End of the monsoon season. Summer crops planted.

3: Feast of the Lighted Path (Summer Solstice)¹¹⁵

Nominally a rural-oriented ritual holiday of the Temple of Hnálla, but the connection between actual local activities and the high priesthood of Hnálla is especially tenuous here in the protectorate. General and generous feasting across the region; special wine spiked with cinnamon bark and ginger root is drunk at boat races and swimming and diving competitions.

There also is a second layer of native Pan Chákan solar observances at the time of the summer solstice, oriented towards protection and purification. These festivities originally fell on the 5th of Fésru in Pan Cháka, but many were re-scheduled in the late thirteenth century by imperial decree. People seek to rid themselves and their houses of poisons, witchcraft and other harmful influences — wreathes of orchids, ginger, and certain “lucky” flowers are draped everywhere, and little red silk bags of anti-demonic drugs are made in the home and hung over doors; red and multicolored ribbons are also hung on doors and sleeves. Both love-charms and poison-brewings alike are said to come to a head during this festival, and the Bitterlings are particularly virulent.

19: Passing over of Souls

Belkhánu rituals for the dead, in the temples. A fairly important event for the clergy, not much observed by lay folk except a few very pious devotees of Belkhánu or Qon.

¹¹⁵ The “sunlit seating” in native almanacs.

Fésru (V): A inauspicious month in general, especially for male children born during it — if not killed by evil spirits or simple bad fortune, they are likely to become patricides in later life and malicious ghosts after death. Promotions granted this month are said to be “permanent” — that is, one never advances again afterwards. Souls tend to grow heavy and separate from their bodies during the month, and sink low; thus, by climbing up high and accidentally looking down, one might see one’s own soul, which is said to cause nervous disorders or madness. Many people fast most of the month.

5: Preparations for the “Poison Days”

Flowers of sulfur are rubbed on children’s heads and pregnant women’s bellies to protect them from sickness-demons; the word “King” or “Emperor” is written on their foreheads (in Classical Tsolyáni) for the same purpose. Officials and others in public service are served a special stew of owl and frog, which is said to build their filial piety as well as protect them from witchcraft or assassination. People executed for Bitterling sorcery during the year have their wax-encased heads displayed on poles as a warning. Human effigies are woven from flowering canes and lianas and used in ceremonies in which evil spirits are rounded up, marched onto boats and set adrift on the Turín River (as some would say, to float back down to Úrmish, where they belong).

6-14: The Nine Poison Days.

The most dangerous days of the most dangerous month of the year. Sexual relations are tabooed, and one must be especially careful not to look down from heights (e.g., ladders, stairs, or roofs), because of the danger of seeing one’s own soul left standing below. Upper stories and rooftops are almost abandoned for this period.

17: (Private ancestor-worship ceremonies)

The “central season” round of rituals in honor of lineage ancestors, conducted in private clanhouses.

18: (Beginning of Autumn)

According to traditional Chákan calendars, this date marks the beginning of the season of autumn. Usually not marked by any formal observations, though sometimes the occasion for small dinner-parties within clanhouses to mark the end of the “Nine Poison Days”.

20-21: Offerings to the Foster-Mother

Unusually bizarre Hrū’ū rituals of uncertain meaning; also involve ritual combats (often to the death) by humans for the ostensible entertainment of domestic animals and pets. (Some claim this is a Pijenáni barbarism introduced by pilgrims from that uncivil country, but in fact it is definitely an ancient, native tradition within the temples in Pan Cháka.)

Drénggar (VI) Drier and hotter weather.

8: Pavár’s Birthday¹¹⁶

Ceremonial lustrations and dousings with water, especially of statues and icons — perhaps also symbolizing the deluge that overtook Engsvanyálu.

9: Enhancement of the Emerald Radiance

Dlamélísh rituals; feasting, orgies; an unabashed copying of the famous Jakállan festival. If the weather is still and clear that night, huge numbers of green-hued fireflies are set loose from the Temple of Dlamélísh; the longer they stay swarmed over the Temple, the more auspicious the festival.

14: Quintuplicate Collocation of Court Officers (The Summer Banquet)

See above for full description. Note that technically this should fall exactly one month earlier, in Fésru; because of the extreme inauspiciousness of that date,

¹¹⁶ According to an older dating tradition now discarded in more modern and “sophisticated” centers.

however, it is always “specially postponed” by a rote decree of the Governor to this date.

- 19: Birthday of the (unnamed) human mother of the ten dragon-men, or Chóhrulesh, who founded the Dragon Warrior empire and its local kingdom. Nowadays it is mostly, if not only, celebrated by common prostitutes, which displeases members of the Sword of Fire clan to no end.

- 28: Seating of the Court of the Judge of the Dead

While officially a ceremony of the sect of Sárku, this has become a popular folk festival in honor of Dijátl the Copper-Clawed, who judges the merits of the newly deceased in the Judgment Hall of the Worm and hands down “sentences” for the afterlife. The temple ceremonies take the form of solemn mimed and chanted representations of this court, and of reverences and honors being paid to the high judge. In popular and rural forms of this festival, lay folk may put on a sort of “passion play” where they play the roles of the court staff and selected members of the community who recently have gone before Dijátl.

Firasúl (VII) The peak of summer; hottest month of the year, relatively dry.

- 4: Autumn Equinox

Known as the “waning split” of the year, on the autumn equinox visits are made to limestone caverns and sinkholes (as for the Calling up the Fertility of the Land on the 16th of Shápru). Sweet rice is sealed into bamboo sections, weighted with lead, and sunk into nearby bodies of water to feed the souls of the lost, disappeared, and drowned and to propitiate the serpentine water-spirits. The rice used is a special strain, stuffed with a native fruit resembling the strawberry, and steamed in the leaves of a certain marshland plant; besides being sunk as an offering, it is also eaten by the celebrants.

- 7: Sewing Festival

Women build structures of multicolored cloth and stick pins in it, seeking to be made good seamstresses by these offerings; at night there are contests of threading needles by moonlight. They also put spiders in little boxes and the next morning open them to see if they’ve spun webs — which is known to foretell whether they’ll get good marriages. (Note that a very similar practice in Katalál is said to foretell whether a woman will become a good weaver and embroiderer.) At the same time, a “Fairy Godmother” visits, supposedly from the Plain of Towers in the far-off west, and love matches are made and entertained. This festival is said to be in honor of Halél, a blue-bodied, sapphire-eyed spiderlike Aspect of Lady Avánthe, but that is probably a relatively recent accretion. At the same time, there is a more casual festival of drying out books, bedding, etc. after the end of the rainy season and replacing what has been damaged beyond repair.

- 13: Chastisement of Birds & Correction of Flowers (every fortieth year)

A periodic mock battle held every forty years. Regular soldiers of the legions in Butrús, as well as visiting legionnaires from certain other cities invited to participate, draw lots and are sorted into two “armies” and equip themselves with elaborate, garish body paint, armor, weapons, battle-standards, and war regalia — one side portraying brilliantly colored birds and flying insects, the other side gorgeous blossoms and flowers. They then fight each other from dawn to dusk in the Grand Plaza in the center of Butrús. (This naturally brings all government operations to a grinding halt.) While weapons are blunted and unweighted, there are always many injuries and some deaths (often from heatstroke, at this time of year), and at the end of the day a certain number of warriors from the losing side are sacrificed at the Temple of Chiténg (see “Gushing Forth of the Flame”, below). This custom is said to be a “reminder” to

that deity so that he will continue to protect the city from all threats. These long-term cyclical ritual battles held in the ceremonial center of the city itself appear to date all the way back to the time of the Dragon Warriors, though they have taken many guises over the millennia. The current incarnation appears to date from the late Time of No Kings, though in the last few centuries the costumes of the “Flowers” have taken on a suspiciously Mu’ugalavyáni coloration, and incidents have appeared to “recreate” events in recent Tsolyáni-Mu’ugalvyáni wars.

18: Naming Ceremonies

The date each year on which children in Butrús and most of Pan Cháka are formally given their adult names and accepted into their clans. Fairly typical rituals of this sort for Tsolyánu; there are no particularly noteworthy local variations. This is technically only the date when the clans present rosters of their new adult members and their names to the Palace of the Realm (which is itself unusual; perhaps a Mu’ugalavyáni bureaucratism that has taken root in the protectorate). Some clans in Butrús may hold their puberty ceremonies a few days earlier or later than this; and in outlying towns, often several weeks beforehand, to allow time for their clanhouse’s roster to be sent in to the city. Additionally, clans and families worshipping either of the Flame Gods perform these rituals quite differently and at the winter solstice (Trantór 5th), and those worshipping Karakán or Chegárra (on Trantór 18) despite submitting their documents along with the rest of the populace on this day.

21: (Private ancestor-worship ceremonies)

The “autumn” round of rituals in honor of lineage ancestors, conducted in private clanhouses.

26: Quintuplicate Collocation of Court Officers (The Moonlit Banquet)

See above for full description. Often held as an outdoor picnic for a “moon-viewing” party whenever possible, or at least as an excursion to view the cardamom-flowers (see below).

Feasts of the Red Cloud. At any and all full phases of either moon during this month, parties (involving much drinking) are held to watch the moons and the flowering cardamom trees, especially in the Garden. In honor of King Tlyo Zrang and Lady Twei, particularly the latter; thus also known as Toasting the Frog.

Pardán (VIII) Summer. Dry, hot, and fairly still. High-altitude winds often blow in dust from the northeast and east, turning the sky a yellowish-gray.

7: Fete of Boats

Ritual and festival commemorating the date of souls of the dead setting sail for the Paradises of Teretané; copied from the Qonite festival in Bey Sü. Observed only in Butrús and not known elsewhere in Pan Cháka; in more remote areas, it is likely this has never been heard of. Another thirteenth-century importation (or imposition) from central Tsolyánu. Somewhat disconnected from the local conception of the afterlife and proper funerary ceremonies, but still observed seriously due to its glittery charm and cosmopolitan allure. The dropping water level of the Turín River at this time of year can create some practical problems — grounded boats and collisions are fairly routine.

18: Offering of Wisdom (I)

Presentation of new books to temples and writing tools to young scholars. Start of the “school year” for students in the temple academies. Long ago borrowed from Keténgku rituals at Khéiris and Páya Gupá, yet here observed by all faiths — except that of Chiténg, due to their important rituals on the 19th.

19: Litany of Blood-Song, Sword of the God

Chiténg rituals and sacrifices, copied from those at Chéne Ho. Mostly confined to the priesthood and some military officers; also attended by the Metropolitan Prefect and other city functionaries (but not the Governor's suite). Also a secondary adulthood ceremony for those specially dedicated to Chiténg (mostly children of families associated with the Legion of the Givers of Sorrow), who have completed the "Dedication to the Flame" the previous year. A fairly successful transplanted festival, due to the garrison of the Givers of Sorrow and Chiténg's traditional role as the patron or guardian of the city. According to traditional Chákan calendars, this date also marks the beginning of the season of winter.

21: Offering of Wisdom (II)

For students specifically devoted to Chiténg and who attend the Crucible of Glowing-Hot Skulls, the "school year" begins on this day, and they are given gifts of pen sets, ink sticks, new books, etc. by their families at dawn. Their classmates who favor Vimúhla, or who are less devout overall, have already begun classes and traditionally look down on the "latecomers", who are often in an exalted state from the Litany two days earlier — the first few weeks of school are quite rowdy and loud.

Halír (IX) Late summer and early autumn. Dry, beginning to cool, and windy; occasional typhoons (from the south and west) and tornados (from the north and east) later in the month.

7, 9, or 13: Harvest Festivals (Date depends on weather and astrology)

Feasts and celebrations of the end of the main harvest season. On the night of the full moons, people climb up onto nearby heights to enjoy the cool clear dry weather of autumn; singing, dancing, and drinking wine decorated with yellow flowers (meant to signify and confer longevity). These observances mix with some agricultural fertility rites going on simultaneously in rural areas.

On the night of the new moons in this period, spirits of the dead return home in the forms of evil bird-spirits. Villagers sprinkle chaff from the recently threshed grain around their houses and flee for the night; when they return in the morning, tracks left in the dried husks tell them what animal their dead relative has temporarily become. Furthermore, the wise can sometimes read messages left by the dead written with the chaff in antique scripts, and a sorcerer, it is said, can sometimes have his questions answered by these messages from the departed. These "winnowing ghosts" are associated with the myth of the "Purple Girl" — a young woman murdered by her mother-in-law and buried in the chaff.

19: Gushing Forth of the Flame

Normally celebrated on the 18th in other parts of Tsolyánu; it may also be postponed until the next new moon of Káshi if the moon Gayél is full on this day. Usually known simply as the "Torch Festival". Large and impressive performances by fire-walking, flame-breathing, coal-eating, sword-ladder-climbing religious enthusiasts. Magical or pyrotechnical "volcanoes" are built, which after spewing sparks and fire shower the crowd with red fruit, crimson-dyed nuts, ribbons, and candies. The fire brigades of the different neighborhood wards (almost all devotees of Chiténg, or at least captained by them) hold drills and dances in competition with each other. Meanwhile, within the Temple of Chiténg itself, human sacrifices are decapitated, with the heads bowled down the steep stairway of the main temple pyramid and placed on the Temple's skull-rack; the bodies, meanwhile, are rolled down a smooth slide to a different courtyard where spits and fires are set up, and they are cleaned, dressed, roasted, and devoured by the priests and select devotees.

25: Private ancestor-worship ceremonies

The “winter” round of rituals in honor of lineage ancestors, conducted in private clanhouses.

Trantór (X) Autumn. Dry, cool, windy; occasional typhoons and tornados as above.

1: (Food taboo)

In the countryside and among conservative Pan Chákan families in Butrús, the taboo on eating fish and *hma* or *hmélu* meat in the same meal goes into effect on the first day of the month and lasts until the end of the typhoon season, lest the “Thunder Lords” be angered. If the weather has been unusually windy, the ban will be started earlier.

5: Festival of the Shining Sun (Winter Solstice)

Procession to Shrine of Chiráshin Tuléngkoi, the Second Aspect of Hnálla. Observed either on the 4th of the month or on the 9th of Firasúl almost everywhere else, this ceremony is probably scheduled so as to directly compete with the older local Vimúhlan rituals on this day. The winter solstice is an important occasion, in any event, and is known locally as the “shaded seating”.

Dedication to the Ever-Living Flame

Vimúhlan rituals, military blessings; consecrations/ordinations of new acolytes, priests, and temple warriors. Also the date of puberty rituals for families devoted to Vimúhla or Chiténg; this involves shaving the new adult’s sides of the head and sacrificing the locks in a fire, and in rural areas where these gods are worshipped, facial scarification. Solemn and stark, with little pomp and glory.

12: Circle of Self-Enlightening Illumination

According to the priests of the deities of Stability, the anniversary of the creation of the world by Hnálla, as a feint in his cosmogonic struggles with Hrürü. Pan Chákans think this is, to put it mildly, a load of crock, but even those with only a smidgen of politeness and decorum deal with it by trying to pretend this celebration and theory behind it simply don’t exist. Unfortunately, it is strongly promoted by the Seal Emperor and the imperial apparatus.

18: Might of Heroes

Karakán military rituals and consecration of young warriors. Adulthood rituals for families devoted to Karakán or Chegárra.

Lésdrim (XI) Autumn and early winter. Driest month of the year; cool to chilly, windy; rare typhoons.

9: Birthday of the Seal Emperor (Hirkáne)

Imperial pageantry, ritual, military display.

10-20: Return of the Vessels of the Blue Prince (date determined by astrological factors).

The date on which worshippers of Ksarúl come to the Temple to present small statuettes of the god in one of his mythological forms from the Battle of Dórmoron Plain — blue-glazed clay for the poor, stone for the middle-class, and lapis or turquoise for the wealthy. These are the statuettes kept in the house-shrines during the course of the year and worshipped by the family; they must be replaced annually after the inhabiting fragment of the god departs this month. In practice, one simply returns the following day and pays a minimal fee to the priests to retrieve their old statuette.

18: Quintuplicate Collocation of Court Officers (The Winter Banquet)

See above for full description. Technically this should fall a month earlier, in Trantór, but is always “specially postponed” by the Governor due to the scheduling conflict with the observation of the Might of Heroes and in order to “match” the postponement of the banquet in Fésru.

21: Reconsideration of the Order of Things

Ceremonial debates in the Temples of Hrū'ū and Wurū, combined with humorous public ceremonies and ritual "reversals". Also, according to traditional Chákan calendars, this date marks the beginning of the season of spring.

Dohála (XII) Winter. Cool and windy. Coral trees shed their white petals.

4: Masque of the Red and the Silver

Public ceremonials and dances (glacially slow) performed jointly by the priests of Vimúhla and Ksárul. Extremely obscure and abstract, but believed to symbolically represent the ancient (pre-Bednálljan) conflict between these two sects in the Chákas, and reaffirming the Engsvanyáli-era truce between them. Meanwhile, in both temples secret mystical and alchemical rituals are performed in which red cinnabar is transformed into silver mercury, and vice versa, under the supervision of certain priests of Belkhánu and Qon.

8: Examination of Candidates for Office

Aspiring officials who have received a nomination from an appropriate sponsor are "examined" by the Governor's Chamberlain for the Gentlemen in the Court of Attendants. Deportment, skill at versification, penmanship, mental capacity, and general education are tested in a series of essays and interviews. The new cadets are informed whether they are accepted for service, and if so in what category of "Court Gentleman", the afternoon of the following day.

10: Accession of the Seal Emperor (Hirkáne) to the Petal Throne

Imperial pageantry, feasting.

13: Private ancestor-worship ceremonies

The "spring" round of rituals in honor of lineage ancestors, conducted in private clanhouses. The night before (Dohála 12th), windsocks in the shape of worms are hung above any clanhouse where a male child was born during the past year; these are left up for about a month.

15: Commemoration of the Massacre of 261 A.S.

Semi-public ceremonies, including small parades through certain streets, speeches, and memorial services, held by the Pan Chákan branch of the Íto clan and their clients and supporters, to mark the anniversary of the mass assassination of their leadership at the hands of the main branch, or Northern Ítos — at the time, feuding with them over control of the kingdoms of the Chákas. While the imperial government can usually be counted on to suppress any displays of Íto political memory, in this case it actively promotes the event, in expectation that it fuels dissention within the clan. Accordingly, several high-ranking government officials will be sent to attend and take part in the events; on occasion even the Governor has appeared.

16-21: Kite Festival

Kite-flying parties, especially popular with children; perhaps more importantly, there is also a grueling series of competitions, with considerable awards of cash and honors to the victors of each, and attempts to unseat the current "King of the String". The starting date may be postponed up to three days if the weather should happen to be too calm.

25: Festival of the Light of Wisdom

As in Tumissa and Sokátis, a great litter bearing the image of Thúmis is carried in a processional march from the Temple of Thúmis to "visit" the Temple of Hnálla. This is another Thúmisite ceremony imported from Tsolyánu that has not wholly caught on, despite the best efforts of the temple and the imperial government (both of which would like to see the priesthoods of Vimúhla and Ksárul less dominant in the region). However, it happens to fall on the day set by ancient tradition for the settlement of all gambling debts from the Kite Festival. This has come to be incorporated into the Festival of the Light of Wisdom, to the extent

that the final awards and title of “King of the String” are bestowed on this day — at the Temple of Thúmis, just before the procession starts out — and nowadays the unwritten law is that all debts must be paid in full by the time the great palanquin enters the outer gate of the Temple of Hnálla.

30: Lullaby of the Tired Fires

Vimúhlan rituals to bank fires. Involves massed choirs of singers (comprised of specially-trained members of the laity as well as the clergy), which in Butrús are enormous (several thousands of singers) and extremely loud — anything but lulling, in fact.

Perhaps connected, the functionaries in charge of maintaining the public waterclock let it drain at dusk and do not refill it; curfew is not called nor do the city guardsmen announce the hour with their rattles while on patrol, until the completion of the intercalary days. Symbolically, time stops until the new year is “brought” to Butrús and the Governor “takes receipt” of it during the intercalary days.

For the curiosity of the pedantic, the common Pan Chákan dialectal names for the Tsolyáni months are Hánspor, Shápru, Dídom, Lánglu or Lánggü, Sáthor (or local substitutes), Daréngka, Firsúla, Párdan, Alür, Tanaró, Lísdran and Dóhla. The names of the intercalary days are Ga’ánren, Trúkti’ish, Vrahán, Ngóqma, and Chitla’ásha.

Other Calendrical Notes

Almost all known calendars of the literate civilizations on Tékmel place the beginning of the year at the spring equinox. Also, according to the calendars now most commonly used in the Five Empires, each of the seasons begins on the day of the relevant equinox or solstice. However, older and regional calendars (including those of the Chákan tradition) place the equinox or solstice at the middle of the season. This latter system has the minor advantage of putting all the shortest days of the year in “winter” and all the longest in “summer”, while “spring” and “autumn” cover the periods of most rapidly changing periods of daylight. This may be more convenient for those using the “four-and-four” system of horology.

As the actual climatological seasons do not correspond (in almost any part of Tékmel) to the neatly and evenly divided seasons of the civilized calendars, it hardly makes much practical difference which of these two ways of dividing the seasons is followed. Under neither system does the “calendar season” closely correlate to the local temperature or weather.

Weekly events:

Daunél: *Marotlán* match at the *hirilákte* arena

Tlakál: Bird market (songbirds, etc.; also some other non-aquatic pets)

Zaqé: Goldfish market (ornamental fish; also some other non-avian pets)

Surúnra: Flower market

Horology

The gongs of the temples and government offices can be heard across most of the city, and their distinctive notes and punctual schedules serve as a rough public timekeeping device for the inhabitants of Butrús. As described in the section on government, the bureaucratic and public clocks are slightly out of synchronization.

The standard system, laid out in Engsvanyáli times and widely accepted ever after, is based on a day of 8 *ténmre* or 48 *kirén* of equal length; the day begins at observed noon for purposes of timekeeping. This is called the “eight-the-same” system by most people who need to distinguish it from others (though scholars argue endlessly over the proper name for the system, based on who invented it, under the reign of which Engsvanyáli Priest-King, and precedent in various ancient textual sources). This is the time kept almost everywhere in

Tsolyánu, as well as being the clock used to regulate the work of the government offices in Butrús. While strictly speaking it is only officials who are bound by this timekeeping, its increments can be followed through most of the city: the 60-ton brass gong used to notify bureaucrats of its intervals is one of the largest *tunkúl*, and perhaps the loudest, in the entire city. While the bell is rung at noon to signal the start of the (horological) day, in terms of daily human activity the “first bell” is rung at the start of the sixth *ténmre* (approximately 3:00 a.m.) and is called, at least among bureaucrats and their families and servants, the Mustering Bell, as it summons them to report for duty.

The older system, dating back to Bednálljan and pre-Bednálljan times and still in use in a few locales in the Vrayáni mountains and the Káija Protectorate, parts of Salarvyá, eastern Yan Kor, and the remote northeastern states, is also based on eight *ténmre*. However, it assigns exactly four *ténmre* to the daytime and four to the night, with the length of each *ténmre* varying depending on the time of year. (That is, during the winter the daylight *ténmre* will be shorter than the night *ténmre*, while in summer it will be the night *ténmre* that are shorter than the daylight ones.) Obviously this system requires more complex calculation and daily adjustments in order to keep careful track of time on a smaller scale; its adherents seem to feel that it is worth the complication, and often cite the “unnaturalness” and “awkwardness” of having sunset and sunrise fall in the middle of a *ténmre* or *kirén*. It is most often called the “four-and-four” system, to distinguish it from the standard or “eight-the-same” horology. Most modern users of this system (including the city of Butrús) consider the day to begin with the first “nighttime” *ténmre*, at sunset. Because the normal Tsolyáni custom (and that of the provincial government itself) begins each day at noon, there is some scope for confusion or misunderstanding of “which day it is”.

In Butrús, the authoritative clock for public purposes is kept according to this latter system — “city time”, as opposed to “officials’ time”. City time is announced by different means: by drumbeats at the beginning of the four night watches and by gongs at the beginning of the four day watches. These signals originate at the

central drumtower and are repeated by the watch stations in each quarter. City guardsmen on their patrols carry rattles that they stop and shake at the center of each city block, in order to indicate the current *kirén* within the watch-period. Finally, outside each watch station, city gate, government office, or market magistrate’s pavilion, a plaque or board is placed upon which is written the current *ténmre* and *kirén* according to “city time”. The tattoo of the drums and gongs is distinctive and arresting, and at the same time so much part of the background of life in the city that its natives often comment on feeling adrift and disoriented without it when they visit other cities. It is a series of eight fast, three slow, and five medium beats, repeated three times, at the beginning of each *ténmre* (note that the sequential number of the *ténmre* is not actually indicated, merely the transition to the next one).

The curfew drums, on the other hand, are a single long, fast, rolling tattoo that are sounded 40 *yom* after sunset and 20 *yom* before sunrise (one hour or two “standard” *kirén*, and half an hour or one “standard” *kirén*, respectively). The morning drum roll that lifts curfew is shorter and faster than the evening drum. Curfew is not observed during the intercalary days, and the city clock is abandoned until the start of the first day of the first month.

The usual vigesimal subdivisions of *ténmre* and *kirén* into smaller units of *yom* (90 seconds) and *sivél* (4.5 seconds) are followed in Pan Cháka, regardless of which horological calculation is used. In the older “four-and-four” system, each *ténmre* always has exactly six *kirén* in it; it is only the number of *yom* and *sivél* that vary.

APPENDIX B: Personages of Butrús

Ages, ranks, and positions given are as of 2360 A.S. Unless otherwise noted, the place of origin should be assumed to be Butrús or Pan Cháka.

Officers of Government

- **Mikó Késun Tlanéng hiSáyu** of the Red Stone clan. Governor (*Jaithulén*) of the Protectorate of Pan Cháka (C20). Age 66, and a follower of Vimúhla. From ancient Chákan stock, though raised in Tumissa. Not handsome or a particularly charismatic public speaker, but genial, diplomatic, and well-liked. Lavish tastes and believes very strongly in doing things on a large scale, in the grandest way that resources permit — limited only by boundaries of Imperial protocol. Appointed as interim Governor after the disgrace of his predecessor; following his capable handling of the Mu'ugalavyáni crisis of 2346-7, his position was made permanent.
- **Keng Tsayáme hiAvú** of the Scroll of Wisdom clan. Senior Magistrate (C17); age 49, Hnálla; born in Usenánu but of an old Chákan lineage. Extremely ugly — bat-eared, snaggle-toothed, and pug-nosed — and socially inept if not blatantly rude and insulting, but as smart as they come. Considered one of the Empire's greatest living legal scholars and practical jurists, he has been rusticated to his ancestral home of Pan Cháka after having insulted one too many important people in Bey Sü, his former post.
- **Hmu hiDlámeja**, President of the Palace of Realm (C18), with c. 500 bureaucrats (plus guards and servants) under him. 51 years old, of the Iron Helm clan from Mekú, and vaguely a follower of Ksáru. Very charismatic, likeable, affable; already plump and continuing to grow. With his curly hair, he's often called "Hma", which he usually thinks is funny.
- **Tiláshe hiDmil**, Superintendent of Hydraulics. Age 33, Blue Kirtle clan, Thúmis. Pretty, intelligent, athletic, and friendly, but of awkwardly lower-class origins. She is in charge of aqueducts, fountains, and cisterns for the city and irrigation of the immediate countryside.
- **Hirétku hiMa'ársa**, President of the Palace of Ever-Glorious War (C18); age 61, Red Mountain clan, from Tumissa. A follower of Chiténg and former legionnaire of the Givers of Sorrow. Awkward around people and fairly stupid, but muddles through with help from a loyal staff.
- **Zhatlásh hiChanalú**, a Vice-Director of the Directorate for the Western Frontier Defense. Commonly called "Zha" (as in "Zha and Zu", below). In charge of the Southern Division of the Directorate, responsible for organizing and training militias, border patrols, and *sákbe* guard forces along the southwestern frontier. The High Coast Division of his directorate has been without a chief for many years.¹¹⁷ Accordingly, he is additionally saddled with the Acting Vice-Directorship of that division and thus finds himself responsible for the defense of the distant coastline of Pan Cháka (which he has never visited). He avoids all reference to this Acting Vice-Directorship whenever possible, especially in official contexts.
- **Zuságha hiZahagán**, chief and leading light of the presently (and hopefully only temporarily) understaffed Detached Department of Diplomacy. Commonly called "Zu" (as in "Zha and Zu"; the two are perhaps the most publicly known and socially engaged officers of their Palace). Among other duties, he is responsible for arranging *qadárniyal* with the Mu'ugalavyáni.
- **Msikúre "Timuél" hiDlang-Uth**, President of the Palace of the Priesthoods of the Gods (C16). Age 45, Dark Flame clan, and devoted to Hrü'ü. Not at all interested in politics per se, but only in getting her job (in the narrowest sense of the letter of the law) done. Extremely intelligent but dislikes conflict and tries hard to avoid trouble. Laid-back and hands-off in her approach to her work. Duties include supervision and

¹¹⁷ Within the Palace of War, the position *is* considered more desirable than that of the Low Coast, i.e. the Tsechélnu Flats—marginally so—but a death-knell for one's career, as it is practically impossible not to be seen failing at it miserably.

nominal command of the Tomb Police, which are always under the Palace of Ever-Glorious War in Tsolyánu proper; those in Butrús tend to like to run things their own way and now have more than the usual freedom to do so. One of the “Gang of Five” of the temples of Hrü’ü and Wurú. Nicknamed after the ritual stiletto of the priesthood of Wurú — slim, deadly, and often poisoned, but in fact usually just worn as a harmless costume piece. Msiküre is said to be the real thing, when drawn.

- **Víru Cháya hiHuméva**, Warden of the City of the Dead. Age 60, a worshipper of Durritlámish and member of the Black Stone Tomb clan, still devoted to the Ítos. Perceptive and thoughtful, but has a mean and nasty temperament, not improved by money problems. Responsible for upkeep of the necropolis and also the head of the Tomb Police (about eighty soldiers). A personal and professional feud between him and one of the watch commanders of the city guard is in its early stages.
- **Zága hiKru**, President of the Palace of Foreign Lands (C16); age 53; Blade Raised High clan from Katalál. A follower of Karakán who somehow manages to get along well with the Vimúhlans who predominate in high places of the protectorate, despite his arrogance, religious priggery, and lack of social skills — and he’s dumb as a rock to boot.
- **Vennüre hiQu’úrus**, Metropolitan Prefect or “Mayor” (*Savàlharéto*, C13); an office left over from the recent *dítlána*. Age 49, Golden Bough clan from Thráya; a worshipper of Avánthe. Neither smart nor personally wealthy, and at the mercy of underlings who are one or supplicants who are the other. Handles many aspects of civic administration and is answerable directly to the Governor. The post may be discontinued, which would be a bad thing for the incumbent — he is dependent upon it for money and power.
- **Írwesh**, one of the eight lieutenants of the City Militia. A middle-aged Páchi Lei whose “family” settled in Butrús over two thousand years ago; a member of the Black Mountain clan and an earnest devotee of Grugánu. It is a brilliant detective, but perhaps too gruff and picks its friends poorly. A feud is beginning to develop between it and the

warden of the necropolis. It has also been chastised by a number of magistrates for presuming to meddle in their rightful duties.

- Captain of the Omnipotent Azure Legion, **Bláppa hiSsánmírin** of the Jade Diadem clan. A sleek artiste, aesthete, orgiast, and Dlamélish-worshipping gentleman from Jakálla, aged 31. While he holds military rank in the Legion, he has absolutely no discernable military experience or training; nor is he one of the deaf-mute Servitors in Silence. It is thus widely assumed that his brief is one of pure intelligence work. He has successfully persuaded a large number of people that he couldn’t possibly be involved in any real espionage, though, since it’s so publicly “obvious” that’s what he must be doing.
- **Gusérse hiZhakkél**, member of the Golden Sapphire Clan and token worshipper of Thúmis, he is overseer of the city’s slave market, holding a nominal 6th Circle rank in the Palace of the Realm. Notoriously corrupt, he preys heavily on the slavers. His depredations have hurt these despised merchants so much that the supply of slaves in Butrús is becoming a bit scarce.
- **Makbé Ntóyi hiSsurné**, Captain of the Market Police. His character, and that of his troops, can perhaps best be captured by an incident where he personally kicked one of his men to death for corruption. After serving a two-year hard labor sentence, he returned to the force and rapidly rose again through the ranks, this time reaching the top. Tremendously upright and strict; perhaps his only shortcoming is his distaste for Úrmishites (common enough in old Butrusséne families like his own) and for Jakállans (for reasons unknown).
- **Kwo-Hü-Kú’o**, **Mkhóqu O-Myess**, and **Yélyo Bzü’úrh** are the three current “Speakers” for the Páchi Lei community of Butrús. While each apparently represents a separate constituency, it is unclear to outsiders how this is organized — it is at least certainly not along residential (neighborhood) lines. Yélyo, with the best attempt at a human-style name, is generally considered the most acculturated of the three, having traveled and lived extensively in other cities of Tsolyánu; the other two are more parochial — with “family” histories

going back millennia in Butrús, they tend to find less of interest and use in the world outside Pan Cháka. Nevertheless, by standards of the Páchi Lei enclaves of the deep south, they are all highly Tsolyanified cosmopolitans.

- **Chta-ks-spe**, Chief Person (*Tii-petk*) of the Pe Choi community. Notably, he does not represent the members of the Legion of the Forest of Hh-kk-ssá and their families, who are socially distinct from the “native” Butrusséne Pe Choi. He is a worshipper of the Black Old One, nominally a member of the temple of Hrü’ü for human social purposes, and a furniture-maker by profession.
- **The Old Man**. The power behind the powers of the city’s Hláka community, this reserved and cunning politician is possibly the oldest living resident of the city, having just turned 109 this year. He is a rich repository of the city’s history, gossip, and trivia over the past four or five generations. The eyrie’s nominal “king” (*aóí elá*) is a chattering fool who is dependent on the Old Man for any important decision, and his choice of a “Flight of Death” (war-chief; see below) was determined for him by the Old Man.

Mu’ugalavyáni Residents

- **Nishrásish Qefél**, Mu’ugalavyáni Consul of the Second (Scarlet) Palace (C16), reporting to the Prince (*Dü’ümünish*) of Khéiris. Age 51. Ugly as sin but a seasoned diplomat; loyal and tactful, uninventive and perhaps a bit dull. His main interest lies in Mu’ugalavyáni history: diplomatic history, naturally, but also the allegedly thrilling topic of land reforms in the Second and First Palaces.
- **Mno’oyél Ántiu**, High Priest of Hrsh (C10). Age 51. Handsome and talented in many polite arts, he is a frequent guest in the mansions and courts of the elite of Butrús. Also the owner of an exotic sword fashioned, apparently, of clear glass, an ancient heirloom of his family. In fact, it is technically treated as a *member* of his family: his foster-brother, to be exact. It seems to have originated in Pan Cháka long ago, and in his new posting Mno’oyél has

learned that its name, Záyeglòku, could come from a Chákan vernacular, meaning “River-Razor” — which is also its traditional nickname within in the family and among collectors and students of weaponry.

- **Nakhásnya Ántiu**. The 23-year-old daughter of High Priest Mno’oyél, a *Va’álza* or “Higher Spellcaster”. Beautiful, very intelligent, and gifted, but shrewish, vicious, snobbish, insecure and generally unpleasant to actually be anywhere near. Her full-length, long wide-sleeved robes of red linen are nevertheless frequently spotted at official events and society gatherings. A special devotee of the 21st Aspect of Hrsh, Giugémish, whose sphere is knowledge to be used for the “Expansion of the Flame”.
- **Ku’ulménish Ko’ól**, military attaché and (more importantly) the brother of Prince Dilittázish Ko’ól, general of Legion II, the Scarlet Battalion, of Khéiris. (The Scarlet Battalion was defeated in a *qadárni* at Butrús recently). Age 44. Both physically repellent and horrendously idiotic, a disaster on two legs. The other members of the consulate are still desperately seeking ways to get him recalled to Mu’ugalavyá before he causes more unpleasant “incidents”; however, powers that be back home have so far foiled all such plans.
- **Bárresha Hlaqórish**, Professor Itinerate of the College of Phenomenal Philosophy in Ssa’átis. He has come to Butrús to study the twin questions of whether the Páchi Lei are capable of reason or not and whether a state of civilization may be induced in them. The College of which he is a member is a “scientific” foundation established by the Mu’ugalavyáni government and the temples of Hrsh (lavishly endowed by both); while highly prestigious in Mu’ugalavyá, it is looked down on abroad as a convocation of vulgar engineers and technicians.

Temple Personnel and Religious Figures

The head of each city temple is listed, plus the most talented or senior sorcerer for each God-Cohort pair, and any other members of particular note, including protectorate-level patriarchs, who are often based in the Butrús temple complexes as well.

- **Zurunár Klálo hiVríga**, High Priest of Sárku (C12), age 49, White Crystal clan. Mostly concerned with rituals, tidiness and upkeep of the temple, and in attending and arranging public rituals and festivals, of which he is very fond. Thanks to this dedication, many in Butrús and its suburbs would agree that the Worm Lord throws the best parties. Perhaps not too talented, but a hard worker. Far from a sharp theologian, despite his high office. Homely and too obese for his own good health.
- **Sságru hiQigór**, High Priest of Durrítlámish (C10); age 42, from a medium-status clan in Tsa'avtúlgu in Salarvyá, but has lived in Tsolyánu for fifteen years or more. Only just recently adopted (reluctantly, it seems) by the Black Hood clan. Plain but polite and cultured (at least by local standards), and certainly devout and capable. Superficially he seems dignified and nice enough, yet leaves one feeling indefinably sickened. This slimy and secretive affect has prevented his faster promotion, and he is not much liked even by the personnel of his own temple. A vocal supporter of Prince Dhich'uné, presumably with hopes of thereby winning further advancement.
- **Nzirís Ákhle hiSrírra**, Commander of Energies and Powers and a scholar-priest (C6, but only a *kusijákto*) of the Temple of Durrítlámish. Age 52, Black Mountain clan. Very intelligent and the best sorcerer of the two temples; however, he suffers from extreme impoverishment. He quietly dislikes and distrusts the High Priest, but his lack of resources and connections — as well as a lack of concrete objections — keeps him from any overt expression of this.
- **Horiyór hiBeshkík**. Head of the Gem of Amber Society (in Pan Cháka), a contemplative and mystical “secret society” of Sárku’s worshippers, and a special devotee of Batha’ák, the Eye of Eternity. He is 43 years old, of the Copper Door clan, originally from Sokátis, and belongs to a rich mercantile and money-lending family. Jolly and mellow, given to rolling his eyes at the dark, horrifying, and as he says, “ultimately adolescent” aspects of his faith as normally perceived and presented. Holds the position of Proctor (*Qürupengáto*) and member of the 14th Circle in the scholar-priesthood.
- **Sranéku Mekhtéte hiUlé’e**, Grand High Priest of Vimúhla (C15). Age 51, Sword of Fire Clan, half-Mu’ugalavyáni (on his father’s side). Frankly of only average intelligence and capabilities. Handsome, moderately wealthy, and somewhat prickly and paranoid — though justifiably so, given the schemes of the Priestly Party at Avanthár, intrigues within the Flame Temples, resentment from the Red Clans of the Chákas that he won this position, and the international situation in the west. Particularly distrusted by the Imperial Court and its loyalist adherents, given his clan membership and father’s nationality; they suspect his patriotism. Doctrinal and political blandness combined with his family’s money, however, have permitted him to rise to this sensitive position.
- **Delákna hiAká**, Administrative Preceptress of Vimúhla (C15); age 61, Red Mountain clan from Tumíssa. Responsible for the secular properties and bureaucracy of Vimúhla’s sect throughout the protectorate, not merely the city of Butrús. Canny and politically astute; she manages to be the real power behind the scenes in the local temple, and is even a noteworthy power outside Pan Cháka. Filthy rich, certainly one of the wealthiest *individuals* (as opposed to families or clans) in Pan Cháka.
- **Hrkháno Vríddi**, Grand Wizard of the Temple of Vimúhla, and a lay-priest largely resident there. Age 52, a Vríddi from Fasíltum; typically arrogant and haughty, he is respected but not much liked. He is homely, nasty, tatty and cheap. He’s also as a consequence actually quite lonely, though he could never admit it.
- **Narrukóle Chéshet hiBosúga**, a mid-ranking ritual priest of Vimúhla with harsh and outré views on sacrifice — he takes an extreme position on the purity of the Flame, which he holds should not be contaminated with the bodies or spirits of any but the most devout, worthy, and purified. He advocates fiercely for the cessation of “indiscriminate, foul, disgusting profanation of the Sacred Fire”. This is also an ancient Mu’ugalavyáni doctrine that still has a small, suppressed number of followers in that country.

- **Tháte Khesákh hiChúatsu**, Headmaster of the Crucible of the Glowing-Hot Skulls, the school of the temples of Vimúhla and Chiténg. An acclaimed scholar as a youth, who traveled in Mu'ugalavyá and brought back several extremely important religious texts and commentaries; he (and others in his temple and field of knowledge) know it was all a matter of luck and political favoritism, and that he's frankly a mediocre mind. Nevertheless, the Crucible is considered one of the best schools of the Flame Priests in all of Tsolyánu, due entirely to the Headmaster's late-found knack (he is in his early sixties) for identifying, recruiting, and managing the scholars and teachers to do the actual work. He is a Proctor (C11) in the scholar-priesthood of his sect, as well.
- **Ámkhon** (temple name), or **Kshurrgghút Beqf** (original name, rarely used), a ritual priest in the Temple of Vimúhla (C8), of N'lüss origin. Now in his early thirties, he was a rising star in the temple hierarchy of Malcháiran and on his way to becoming a notable theologian, but left for reasons as much political as professional. After brief stints in temples of eastern Mu'ugalavyá, he emigrated to Tsolyánu and soon wound up in Butrús. Besides having brought a large collection of Vimúhlan religious texts from Mu'ugalavyá, he is now the temple's chief authority on Mu'ugalavyáni religious affairs (and one of Tsolyánu's leading experts on the field) as well as occasionally tutoring students in his own language. He brought one wife with him from Mu'ugalavyá and has since acquired a second, Tsolyáni, bride of the Red Mountain clan in Butrús — into which he is due to be formally adopted in the immediate future, having long been an informal member of her family. Widely suspected of being involved in secret conspiracies and political dealings, though conflicting reports accuse him of being a Mu'ugalavyáni agent rather than of a domestic faction. He is faultlessly cultured, though he does not make an undue effort to conform to Tsolyáni high society; he speaks with a flawless Butrusséne accent — though he enjoys doing imitations of Tumíssan arrivistes, Pagús schoolteachers, and the stereotypical "raging N'lüss bumpkin".
- **Hlútku Takhím hiMákuru**, Royal and Imperial Preceptor for the Pan Chákan Temples of Chiténg (C15). An unremarkable member of the Red Sun clan, by all indications and appearances. The head of the priesthoods and supreme ecclesiastical authority in the protectorate; however, his main concern is with Butrús, where most of Chiténg's cult is focused, and whose great temple's high priest is concurrently the general of the Legion of the Givers of Sorrow. The latter post is usually the more demanding, and so the Preceptor effectively presides over this temple as well. He seems to have no particular ambitions, despite the high rank he has already obtained at a young age (he is only 39).
- **Firígga hiPenála**, Abbot-in-Crimson of the Monastery of Gleeeful Shrieks. Age 34, Iron Fist clan. Handsome, thoughtful, frenetic, chipper. He is said to be a careful but skeptical student of the *Interrogation of Usónesh*,¹¹⁸ an extremely volatile and delicate subject in Chiténgian theology, particularly in Butrús. The Monastery is a sort of seminary for sado-masochistic ritualism, linked to the Company of the Orange Band and drawing on the temples of both Chiténg and Hriháyal.
- **Yársa hiHyáguru**, Abbot of the Monastery of the Scroll of the Blaze Revealed. Little to nothing is known of this person, who along with his monks dwells in rigorous seclusion from the secular world in the not-so-distant depths of the Pan Chákan jungles.
- **Pséreng Úhat**, a well-known religious mendicant and noted ecstatic devoted to an obscure and antique local Aspect of Vimúhla

¹¹⁸ The alleged transcript of the questioning of one Usónesh Kátlen Pilutóda, an apparent nobody accused of theft and embezzlement, by a run-of-the-mill quartet of the Company of the Orange Band in Butrús. While under torture, Usónesh suddenly presented a long and sophisticated statement of esoteric philosophy and cosmology, combined with a number of meticulous prophetic passages, all recorded by the baffled torturers. This visionary state ended immediately when application of torture was ceased, and he appeared to retain no knowledge of what he had said, even when torture was recommenced. What became of the prisoner after the session ended is hotly disputed, and the subsequent histories of the four members of the interrogation team raises difficult questions. The transcript has received intensive but still restricted circulation among priests and sages of the temples of Chiténg and Vimúhla; it is highly controversial, to say the least.

(Muhlumálu, the Flicker of Life). Wanders the countryside — where he is viewed with great respect and fondness — preaching, performing miracles at festivals, and (somewhat unusually) fiercely condemning all forms of soothsaying, prognostication, fortune telling, and even divine prophecy. Having been investigated at least twice by the ecclesiastical courts for heresy on this last matter and having soundly trounced his would-be prosecutors, most recently about twelve years ago, he is now left alone and studiously ignored by the powers that be. His origins are uncertain, as are his clan, but he is clearly of native Pan Chákan origin, from the humbler strata of society.

- **Sherésa hiDuruntláno** of the Dark Moon clan, age 33. Grand High Priestess of Ksáru (C14). No mere functionary or politician, she is a skilled sorceress and linguist, and strikingly beautiful as well. A member of the Refulgent Blue Curtain Society and strongly opposed to the Ndálu Clan, she has lately been involved in opposing Prince Mridóbu's plans to move the new Legion of the Night of Shadows from Jakálla to Butrús. Has a tense, conflict-ridden relationship with General G-Gum-Shóggú of the Legion of Tangled Root Eaters, though she is unusually close to Páchi Lei in general — having several of them in her private bodyguard. She comes from a minor and poor branch of the clan in the hinterland, has no surviving family of her own (and has not married), but rose with exceptional rapidity through the temple hierarchy.
- **Aómu Séru hiSafénaya**, Senior Commandant of the Temple of Ksáru (C12); age 48, Black Hand clan; a special devotee of the Aspect Mentutékká as well as acting head of the secular administration in Pan Cháka. Regarded as a protector of urban underclasses and an advocate for rural and forest peasantry. Very poor, both by heritage and by personal choice, and also very charismatic. Due to the extent of his involvement in these issues, temples and monasteries of Ksáru outside Butrús proper have a large amount of freedom in their internal administration. Suspected by many of being partial to the cult of the Unlighted Germination, though this is not at all the

case. A staunch supporter of the Grand High Priestess Sherésa.

- **Bussúna hiKhanúma**, Commander of Energies and Powers and also a Ranking Scholar (C7) in the Temple of Ksáru. Age 36, Cloak of Azure Gems clan, from Púrdimal; a devotee of Ksáru. Very intelligent and cunning, self-consciously good-looking and fashionable, affable and sociable, but in straitened financial circumstances. Also a Ndálu Clan sympathizer, though not necessarily a member; in any case, such an outlook is kept carefully to himself, given the climate in the temple at Butrús. The Ndálu Clan, at least, has realized his money problems make him easily bought.
- **Hyellé hiZhama'í**, High Priest of Grugánu (C11). Age 57, Black Stone clan. Pockmarked, ugly, and a social dud, he is a semi-open Ndálu Clan member. He lacks nerve and doesn't dare oppose, or even intrigue against, the Grand High Priestess; instead, he tries to play off all sides against the others. Ever so slightly inept, he is forced to spend much of his time just struggling to keep his head above water. The fact that he is from Úrmish does little to help his popularity among the real natives of Butrús. As the temple is relatively wealthy, given its small size, he uses its resources to bolster his position and manipulate all factions; he uses his own not inconsiderable wealth to compensate for the shortcomings of his private life.
- **Vrána hiPávu**, Rector of the Tower of Indigo Thought (the temple academy for followers of Ksáru, and of the Tlokiriqáluyal generally). Age 48, Sea Blue clan, from Mrelú by way of Bey Sü; a devotee of Grugánu. Funloving and dedicated to his students, totally apolitical and perhaps not too devout in a strict sense. Dashing handsome, smart, easygoing, and all around a nice guy. Said to have money problems, perhaps due to his free spending and generosity with the school. Some have grumbled that his breezy attitude towards study is all very well for the handful of pupils talented enough to pull it off, but sets a very poor example for all those who need to buckle down and work hard. An amazing polymath, but one of the areas he is most

renowned and respected for is the extremely difficult and confusing field of native Chákan historical annals.

- **Master Mbeth**, so nicknamed after a martial and furry aspect of Grugánu due to his own striking hairiness. An expert *hu'ón* fighter and trainer of a small group of martial artists and meditation practitioners. While he trains those sent to him with the proper authorization — whether they are worshippers of Hrürü or Grugánu, Ndálu Clan or Refulgent Blue Curtain Society members — he also has a smaller cadre of senior students, whom he apparently hand-picks and who have no known political or factional ties. No one has ever seen Master Mbeth or his close disciples in genuine combat, only in training bouts: they all swear they are committed pacifists who would never fight an enemy — in fact, if pressured on the subject, they spend many a *kirén* arguing for the invalidity of the very concept “enemy”. Technically, he is a junior administrative priest (C6) with a position dealing with compiling and auditing the accounts of district and prefectural temple establishments in the protectorate. His real name — known to very few indeed — is Khéskhe Mar, of the Black Mountain clan; because of a bitter feud within his family, split between two lineages, he personally renounced the use of a lineage-name altogether and refuses to be involved in family or clan affairs of any type.
- **Hóchu'eng hiTsúnkai** has appeared as the (default or nominal?) leader or spokesman for the members of the Unlighted Germination sect in Pan Cháka. While the sect's internal leadership traditions and structure is unknown, most Tsolyáni tend to look to Hóchu'eng to represent his people — he is the direct, lineal descendant of the cult's founder. Nevertheless, he only came to Pan Cháka a few years ago, being born and bred on the flat, treeless, temperate plains of Marélmú province. He is 34 years old, but is weather-beaten and worn by regular manual labor — disconcerting and embarrassing to mainstream priests, bureaucrats, and scholars who might deal with him. Patient and unfailingly polite, apparently impossible to anger, and like most of his fellow cultists, possessed of an

almost supernatural aura of profound tranquility and calm. He is slightly more forthcoming about the sect's tenets than most of his fellows, and has made tentative attempts at conversion of a few likely candidates.

- **Éptakh-At hiPayál**, High Priest of Avánthe (C11). Age 54, White Stone Clan. Plain-faced and dull but very competent. Could have gone much farther in his career, but was simply too boring and forgettable for his superiors to bother with. Well-liked by all his underlings.
- **Tarkúma hiHága**, a priest of Jogái, Thirty-Third Aspect of Avánthe. Age 40, Silver Collar Clan, from Tumíssa, where he studied and taught for years in the musical academy. Now runs a small branch school at Butrús. Extremely talented and erudite. He has something of a chip on each shoulder about provincial bumpkinness, being alternately contemptuous of the level of Pan Chákan culture compared to that of Tumíssa, and insecure in the face of metropolitan (Bey Sü) tastes and fashions. He is also a good swordman, with at least two duels to his credit.
- **Kolúkke vuChéka**, High Priestess of Dilinála (C10). Age 44, Joyous of Vra clan, from Vra. Pretty, intelligent, and comfortably well off, but sharp-tongued and given to offhand, biting jokes that mainlanders don't think are funny at all. As a result, her life is much more stressful and difficult than one would reasonably expect.
- **Sáti'um Gerré hiMsha**, Commander of Energies and Powers, and a lay priestess. Age 47, Gray Wand clan, of an old Pan Chákan family though she herself was born and raised in Páya Gupá; a devotee of Dilinála. Bony and tall, still somewhat good-looking but austere, sullen and stiff in public, often withdrawn; more a deep than a fast thinker. Inclined to mysticism in theory but calculated and ruthless action in practice. Almost certainly a member of the Company of the Eye of the Storm, a secretive sub-sect within the temple. Said to be the lover of the High Priestess, but this is said of practically any two priestesses of the goddess, and these two are rarely seen together outside of formal functions. Her

second (teknonymic) name comes from her adopted (obviously) daughter, who recently joined the Legion of the Sapphire Kirtle and is presently training at Tu'únmra.

- **Fuléngga Vu'éI hiKumítle**, High Priest of Belkhánu (C12). Age 53, Golden Bough Clan. A very friendly, outgoing, kindly fellow of no particular professional distinction. One of the city's great numismatists; if his collection is not the biggest or richest it is at least the most public and easiest to view. Gets along quite well with his counterpart in the Temple of Sárku; there is talk of their grandchildren marrying, which would be an unusual alliance.
- **Ka'ággi hiTéngka**, High Priestess of Qon (C11). Age 47, Amber Cloak Clan. Missing one arm and one eye, which are said to have been removed by demons; also scarred about the throat, leaving her voice a menacing whisper. A former "ghost hunter" and "consulting exorcist". Tends towards the portentous entrance, esoteric inquisition, and ominous utterance; an unsettling person to be around. Elevated suddenly to the position, and not especially suited to it.
- **Fadiltsúni hiTvósret**, lay priestess and sorceress. Aged 30, Sea Blue Clan, well-traveled and somewhat rootless. She settled in Butrús only two years ago and it is not certain how long she intends to stay. She is rich and beautiful, but eccentric to the point of frightfulness, and possessed of a family of even more outlandishly obnoxious aristocrats, some of whom visit often.¹¹⁹ Nevertheless, an accomplished musician and demonologist, and casual specialist in the Planes Beyond.
- **Peréksudà**, High Priest of Thúmis (C11). Age 52, Amber Cloak; a Pe Choi from Do Cháka. He has assumed a human personal name and been adopted into a high clan, but not into a lineage. While naturally close to General Mt-trik, he is more acculturated than most of the General's legionnaires, and has concerns about the soundness of their

beliefs and religious practice. He has extensively involved himself in regional politics and is in regular attendance at the Governor's Court. Has absolutely no time for or interest in the allegations that the hospital run by his temple is mistreating or exploiting its poorer patients. Privately he believes these rumors are part of a campaign by the Temple of Ksárul and its minions to defame the Lord of Gray, but is careful about whom he shares such suspicions with.

- **Tsákten hiRadáika**, a scholar-priest of Thúmis, privately known within the temple as "the Chief Supervisor of External Deaccessions" for his talent at acquiring texts for his temple from private libraries and even from other temples — with or without their permission. He is from an extremely wealthy family in Do Cháka, belonging to the Grey Wand clan; despite his modest temple rank (C5, and a *kusijáktosa* or senior scholar), he lives up to his family's expectations and is known best as a high-living young aristocrat. Some of his schemes have been quite elaborate, requiring the use of independent teams of dupes, stooges, and decoys in addition to the usual spies, informers, technical specialists, and "hard men". Some of the former category who have escaped and survived are likely to hold grudges and may come seeking the source of their sufferings.
- **Shútesh Ázak hiJainú'u**. Caster of Enchantments and Controls and a minor ritual priest. Age 53, Golden Sheaf clan. A devotee of Thúmis and activist of the Brotherhood of Supernal Wisdom; the most powerful sorcerer of the Grey Robes in the Pan Chákan hierarchy, which at the moment is not saying much. Would like to leave Butrús — which he complains about constantly, despite having been born here and never having left the protectorate — and enter one of his faith's monasteries in the north, but he has so far been unable to secure permission.
- **Záiru hiChuhó**, Headmistress of the Pavilion of Vision in the Pearly Clouds (the temple academy serving Thúmis and the other Tlomítlanyal). Age 38, Victorious Globe clan, from Thráya; a special devotee of Feshmu'ún the Eternal Teacher, Eighth

¹¹⁹ Redacted commentary and extratextual evidence suggests this individual may be a cousin or sister of the author's employer. If this is so, it is puzzling why the author chose to insert this peculiar assessment of the family, knowing who would certainly read it. (– the translator)

Aspect of Thúmis. Ascetic and stern, she is best known as a strict, even harsh, disciplinarian. Personally, a scholar of the Dragon Warriors, in particular the history of later splinter-dynasties and their descendants in the early Bednálljan period.

- **Turgéru hiHáqtlas**, High Priest of Keténgku (C14). Age 52, Staff of Beneficence clan. Best known as a mercurial bully who frequently explodes in violent rages at his people, then spends endless amounts of time trying to set things right.
- **Aqirúng hiUlél**, Chief of Staff of the Hospice of Gleaming Teeth (a clinic specializing in dentistry, dedicated to an Aspect of Keténgku called Tírekshen of the Sweet Jaws); age 36, Golden Sheaf clan, member of the Staff of Mercy Society. Defensive about the practices and slightly unsavory reputation (among common folk) of the main “hospital” run by the Temple of Thúmis. He has frequently clashed with High Priest of Thúmis, who continues to regard him as nothing but an upstart craftsman, and with his own High Priest, who simply becomes enraged and abusive.

(The following four individuals, plus the President of the Palace of the Priesthoods of the Gods, are all natives of Butrús and old school chums; they comprise their own little secret society alongside the others — the so-called “Gang of Five” or the “Five Purple Fingers”).

- **Buach-Ikwá-Ung**, High Priest of Hrú’ü (C10); age 46, Black Stone clan; an urban Páchi Lei. Has a large family, which it is able to support only through a large bequest from a deceased human clan-elder some fifteen years ago. The eldest and most “responsible” of the group; intensely parochial, with little interest in what goes on beyond the walls of Butrús, and none whatsoever outside of Pan Cháka.
- **Sa’árin hiMráyal**. Age 41, Dark Water clan. Possessed of an icy, unflappable calm, a coldly analytical mind, and a photographic memory, he terrorized at least two generations of teachers and now his fellow scholars. While technically a scholar-priest of Hrú’ü (of the 12th Circle, but only holding a Proctorship), he is a special devotee — or at least student — of the Cat-God, which he claims is not an Aspect of Hrú’ü at all, but a

non-Pavárian deity. Technically heretical in the eyes of theologians of the sect elsewhere in Tsolyánu, and perhaps under investigation by agents of the ecclesiastical courts — not that that bothers him any, particularly with the protection of his lifelong friend Msikúre in the Palace of the Priesthoods of the Gods.

- **Tetésh Snémi’u hiTeqúrnu**, Commander of Energies and Powers; age 42, White Crystal clan. A lay priest of Hrú’ü practically resident at the temple. Painfully shy unless drunk, then simply painful. Has a stepdaughter from a brief and disastrous marriage in his early thirties, who ended up staying with Tetésh rather than following either of her birth-parents.
- **Okóme Dijét hiHrken**, High Priestess of Wurú (C10). Age 44, Standing Stone; the only member of this set interested in genuine politics on even the level of the protectorate, let alone the empire. Supports the idea of greater autonomy from the Petal Throne, or possibly even independence, but is not known to favor the current Íto leadership, nor the Red Hats. She has failed to rise in the priesthood’s hierarchy due to outspokenness on this issue and others, but managed to win the High Priesthood recently after a concerted and savage intrigue against outside candidates.
- **Pakántu hiChrégar**, High Priest of Karakán (C11). Age 39, Red Stone clan. While he gets along well with Vimúhlans, he is violently antipathetic to the Mu’ugalavyáni. Under the strong advice of his temple and certain non-Chakan clanmembers, he has rejected adopting a second name in the local manner. This has become a sore point for his clan relatives in Pan Cháka, particularly as the child in question (**Inthátu hiChrégar**) is a bright and rising star in the Legion of Lord Khariháya (14th Crossbowmen), much admired for his heroic qualities.
- **Rayáfe hiAmiyála**, High Priest of Chegárra (C12). Age 36, Might of Gánga, from Gánga itself; snobbish and loathes all locals, regardless of status, as barely-Tsolyáni provincial louts. Particularly disdains the local Chalchái lineage of his own clan. Avoids contact with all but the highest levels

of society; even then he is still rude to native-born Chákans.

- **Mne Takhím hiEshói**,¹²⁰ Higher Spellcaster and scholar-priest of Chegárra. Age 37, Red Sword clan. Currently the most powerful sorcerer left in these two temples; others, more experienced and skilled, have left to take up posts in the north, closer to the promise of fighting.
- **Hrákash hiSsankólun** of the Sea Blue Clan, Administrative Preceptor on the High Council of the Temple of Karakán, originally hails from Butrús. He is now 63, and known for being less expansionist than many in his sect (instead favoring consolidation). He lives, of course, in Bey Sü.
- **Ákoleng hiChunmíyel**, High Priestess of Hnálla (C12). Age 58, High Pinnacle; a westerner, but not a Chákan.
- **Thagádi Ra'át hiSsolén**, High Priest of Dra (C14). Age 61, Ripened Sheaf.
- **Ra'át Nu'úme hiNyókka**, Higher Spellcaster. Age 32, Ripened Sheaf; daughter of High Priest of Dra.¹²¹
- **Morkásh hiKirigáyu**, High Priest of Dlamélish (C11). Age 49, White Stone clan. Also has the title and position of "Bearer of the Obsidian Tentacle", which is an ancient artifact of chipped obsidian said to date to early Bednálljan times. It seems to be a type of *diridza*, or sacrificial dagger, or at least the blade of one. Ownership and the special rites associated with this object are not part of the High Priesthood, but are handed down in a secret master-pupil lineage within the temple at Butrús. Morkásh is said to be a eunuch; he may be at least sterile, as he has yet to father any children despite the odds.
- **Ngántho Mképi hiTómuren**, Caster of Enchantments and Controls and scholar-priest of Dlamélish; age 47, White Stone Clan. Something of a bully, employing his

considerable bulk and muscles as well as sorcerous powers to intimidate all those around him and extract flattery and favors. He actually has friends, despite this.

- **Dívri hiEshársa**, better known as "the Bug Man". A lay-priest of Dlamélish, whose (only?) passion is fireflies. His life goal is to breed fireflies of ever-brighter and ever-greener luminescence, apparently out of devotion to the Emerald Lady; he supports himself — being of humble means — as the premiere vendor of deluxe firefly lanterns and glowbeetle lamps to the city.
- **Halishéya hiSenéru**, High Priestess of Hriháyal (C10). Age 45, First Moon clan, from Penóm. Strongly oriented toward the organizational and financial aspects of her position, and openly irritated by the ritual and liturgical requirements made of her. Generally impatient and sharp-tongued.
- **Shkítla hiBéyilto**, Abbess-in-Emerald of the Monastery of Gleeeful Shrieks. Age 60, Green Kirtle clan from Bey Sü, and a Chief Ritual Priestess (C8) of Hriháyal. Much less prepossessing and outgoing than her counterpart from the Temple of Chiténg, and far more deeply religious and spiritual.
- **Nópru-Námin (Qlókhez)** the Alchemist. A mysterious figure of foreign extraction — Livyáni, Salarvyáni, or Yan Koryáni, depending upon the source consulted — who lives in a large, airy cavern sheltered by Silver Mountain, near Butrús. The cavern is easily visited and in fact is a tourist destination, though the sections he personally inhabits are said to be invisible to mortal eyes. According to local legend, he dedicated himself (with fearful oaths) to discovering the elixir of eternal life and youth — but he still hasn't quite got the recipe perfected yet, five thousand years later. The entire figure and story of Nópru-Námin (or Qlókhez, in the accounts claiming Livyáni origin) may just be a local joke, perhaps based on some long-ago visitor.
- **Vri'ér hiZushái**, an astrologer at the city's observatory park; not a priest or lay-priest, but a semi-professional student of the planets and caster of horoscopes. While of high clan himself (Emerald Girdle), his family fell on hard times when he was a child, and it is tacitly accepted that he must support

¹²⁰ This name is pronounced, and usually spelled, as Mnetákhim, and is found across the Mu'ugalavyáni border as Mentákhim. The Red Sword clan spells it as two words, however.

¹²¹ No further information on the personnel of these temples was left after redacting the portion that was not relevant or otherwise not reproducible. It appears that the author or his employer are involved in a series of lawsuits with these individuals.

them by his work. Favored by the wealthy and high-born of Butrús, especially when they do not want to seek counsel from within their own houses or temples.

- **Sirrúva hiNelívir**, a mysterious and highly private sorcerer. Lives on a medium-sized barge converted into a sort of houseboat, in which he travels the rivers and canals of Tsolyánu; attended by three demure and astoundingly gorgeous girls. He is currently docked at Butrús.
- **The White Man**, a performing magician, of the non-magical sort. Known for always wearing white lacquered masks (often in layers) which completely conceal his face; he is normally seen in voluminous white robes as well, and according to some rumors, even to cast a white shadow in the sunlight. Though children are uniformly terrified of him, he is a fairly popular entertainer at parties and soirees of the wealthy; his ongoing series of "Edifying Enchantments for the Everyman" leave his rivals in tears, sorcerers in perplexity, and not a few guests in highly peculiar states of unease.
- **The Man in Purple Tatters** is a well-known beggar who haunts the bazaars as well as the temple district, when he is not occupied in working his way through the city, obsessively counting each avenue, street lane, and alley over and over again, checking his numbers. As his name indicates, he is usually dressed in some assortment of rags and cast-off clothing of various shades of purple. He gathers such items compulsively, and wears his entire collection. He is widely believed to be a former priest (or lay-priest) of Lord Hrú'ü who lost his mind after a personal or family tragedy (accounts differ, but all are somewhat vague) and took to the streets. Completely insane and rarely coherent, the only explanation that he can give for himself is that he must keep counting all the city's streets to make sure that none go missing, or worse yet, that none creep in. He is often somewhat agitated, but rarely at anyone visible, and has never been known to cause any trouble. His clan, as well as his name, is now unknown, and the temples of Hrú'ü and Wurú in the Chákas and neighboring

provinces have been unable to find any record of whom he might have been.

Soldiers and Military Officers

- **G-Gum-Shóggú**, General of the Legion of Tangled Root Eaters (2nd Páchi Lei Medium Infantry), now at the northern front under General Kéttukal. Known to be attracted to Prince Mridóbu's faction, and thus has a difficult and troubled relationship with Grand High Priestess Sherésa hiDuruntláno of the Temple of Ksáru.
- **Korikáda hiKurúshma**, General of the Givers of Sorrow (10th Heavy Infantry) and High Priest of Chiténg at Butrús, of the Red Sword clan. Currently Supreme General of the Northeast at Chéne Ho under Prince Eselné. A fanatic of his religion, and a member of the Military Party.
- **Mruláni hiKétkolel**, chief sorceress of the Givers of Sorrow's magical contingent. She is a niece of Kuruktáshmu hiKétkolel, general of the Legion of the Lord of Red Devastation (18th Medium Infantry), in whose ranks she served for nearly a decade before re-entering the priesthood and devoting herself to military magic. She is now 34 years old, a demanding, sometimes bullying, no-nonsense career soldier with three meek husbands and two small children. While a poor spellcaster herself, she is an excellent leader and officer, and has employed the contingent with consistently good results so far. An infamous religious fanatic in her youth, she seems to have lost her interest in religious matters or her sense of devotion over the past few years, and has been reprimanded repeatedly by her peers and superiors in the legion and the temples of the Flame.
- "Captain" **Háihai** of the Flock of the Flashing Clouds (7th Hláka Flying Squadron). He is also the "Flight of Death" (*iwáu ou*, or war-chief) of the Hláka community in Butrús; this is a position appointed by the Hláka eyrie's "king" and which in Butrús is almost invariably linked to command of the remnants of the 7th Flying Squadron. Constantly ordered, asked, threatened, or entreated to exercise his authority to keep Hláka from joining in (or even starting) altercations in the Foreigners'

Quarter between Mu'ugalavyáni and Páchi Lei: minimal discernable results.

- **Mt-trik** (also transcribed as **Mt-t-ik**), General of the Legion of the Forest of Hh-kk-ssá (10th Pe Choi Medium Infantry), at Butrús. Precise on points of protocol, conscientious in his duties, polished and pleasant at social events, and otherwise somewhat aloof and reserved. Possibly the senior general in Pan Cháka at the moment. He may be a "neuter" male, and is approximately middle-aged. Despite the reclusive habits and strange ways of his Stability-following legion, the General at least is known to be devoted to Hnálla, and is regularly found at that temple.
- **Vroggá Dzh-Urrú**, General of the Legion of the Clan of the Silver Lightning (7th Archers), a Páchi Lei who has "differences" with its own people; a good planner and warrior, and close friend of the Governor. Far less superstitious than his troops and junior officers, though still wary of ill omens and dubious prognostications.
- The **Honorable Little Monster (Qu'úminikoi)**, the new leader of the 7th Archers' magical contingent (a small and fairly incompetent group) and formerly an Erudite of the Institute of Academicians in the Governor's palace. A particularly cunning and perhaps ambitious member of the Pygmy Folk, he draws considerable attention to himself not only for the rarity of his species in Butrús but by his constant scheming and plotting. Beyond his task of trying to hammer the spell-casting contingent into functional shape, he fancies himself a revolutionary tactician and strategist in the mold of the Black Theocrat. His personal name is something like "Thpa' Qrr-rh" but he has defiantly — or maybe proudly? — adopted as his usual appellation the sarcastic nickname given him by his detractors.
- **Jíryal hiZaikolé**, Liaison and Barracks Commandant of the Legion of the Lord of Red Devastation (18th Medium Infantry) — a formal, ritual post. A one-eyed veteran of the legion, aged 43; Red Sun clan from Chéne Ho. A military historian and a Mu'ugalavyáni agent, among other things.
- **Linggákch Oriyuqqór** and **Bákwemu Drashshü**, recruiters for the Nchesh of the

Splendid Slayers of Ssu. A pair of Pecháni "noblemen" (really more of minor gentry), with splendid mustachios and an infamous taste for carousing, dueling, swashbuckling and derring-do. Their exploits are a considerable advertisement to the young and romantic hotheads of Butrús to join the "Pecháni Foreign Legion". Despite the difference in surnames, they are close cousins and lifelong friends, whose fiercely competitive nature often leads others to mistake them for deadly rivals.

Private Individuals

- **Count Chéksa Ksámri Íto**, head of the local branch of the Íto clan. The branch of the clan in Pan Cháka is somewhat estranged from the main clan (which is based in southern Do Cháka); the locally dominant sublineage has been separate and independent since the early Engsvanyáli period. Known to be a non-supporter of Prince Dhich'uné, unlike the Do Chákan clan leaders. Generally he prefers to ignore the existence of the Northern Ítos entirely. Dabbles in many aristocratic pastimes, and is a noted patron of the arts and sciences. One of his cousins and agemates is **Nóchikor Íto**, a powerful sorcerer at the Temple of Sárku in Pála Jakálla, quiet and reserved, and as famous as a collector of trained animals and menageries as for his knowledge of thaumaturgy.
- **Zhigáyu hiHómesu**, the 53 year-old, Dlamélish-worshipping local head of the Jade Diadem Clan, the second-ranked noble clan in the region in terms of status. The Jade Diadem are major landowners and also represented in government. One of the great sponsors of civic festivities and feasts; he has something of "the common touch", but probably not to the degree he imagines. Privately a collector of inkstones and ink-sticks, one of the more obscure hobbies.
- **Avuké'e Semt-Snékhi-Pser Jumrigáni hiChalchái** of the Golden Sunburst clan, the (Chákan) head of the lineage descended from one of the great old Engsvanyáli royal dynasties, and also one-time rulers of a kingdom in Pan Cháka. Has ambitions — wildly unrealistic — of reestablishing an independent Pan Chákan kingdom under the

Chalcháís. Particularly snobbish about his lineage's flaunting of the three-syllable personal name taboo among the ancient Pan Chákan families — the point being that *his* family is so old and they so far predate the origin of the taboo that they hold themselves exempt from it. He is one of the few adult members of his line not a complete imbecile, though some would dispute that. He also claims rightful and legal ownership of numerous ancient artifacts and artworks in the collections of other aristocrats and connoisseurs in Butrús and around the Empire.

- **Hárida hiMéshene**, local head of the Clan of the Standing Stone. While a native-born Butrusséne, he is best known locally as the living representative of the city's despised ancient rival, Úrmish. Cultured and witty, he gamely enters into the prestige competition on behalf of his clan's home city against his fellow aristocrats in Butrús. Due to his skills at repartee and extempore versification, his presence is in high demand at parties, particularly those of the Four Red Clans. He himself is a devotee of Ksárul, which adds further color to the ongoing struggle.
- **Thíolleb Chiúving Aókueth**, heir to the Reticulated Foam Balcony (i.e., throne) of Prash. A Livyáni émigré who was forced to flee her home city and country after, she claims, the death of her parents and her unjust dispossession by a wicked cousin and the temple faction backing him. She escaped house arrest and sought help in Mu'ugalavyá, but found herself ignored after a brief flurry of celebrity.¹²² She then traveled to Tumissa but ran afoul of that city's Livyáni legation, which successfully pressured the Tsolyáni authorities to make her *persona non grata*. After a brush with an assassin presumably hired by her cousin's agents, she removed herself to Butrús, where she continues to seek official, and increasingly private, aid in returning to Prash and regaining her titles and position.

¹²² Details are obviously scarce, but the Mu'ugalavyáni declined to champion her cause against their southern neighbors—they may even have attempted to hand her back to the Livyáni temple faction backing her cousin. Her family is also known to hold an ancient grudge against the people of Neihái (and vice versa), which may have complicated matters.

She has attracted a considerable amount of attention in this provincial city, of a cautious sort; nevertheless many young romantics appear eager to take up her cause. Not even seventeen years of age, she is beautiful and charming even to xenophobic Tsolyáni eyes, and with her naïveté being scraped away by her recent travels and travails, she may yet prove to be a shrewd politician and strategist.

- **Maríddi hiArusá**, an official retired from the foreign service of the Petal Throne. Having been posted to Tsámra as a mere clerk at the age of fourteen, he spent all but a fraction of his career abroad, eventually serving as Legate at Heméktu for the decade before his retirement a few years ago. With no close family in Tsolyánu, he chose to settle in Butrús largely on a whim — he had passed through it once long ago and thought it seemed “quaint”. Of a fairly minor branch of the Sea Blue clan, he is nevertheless wealthy (both by inheritance and by personal investments and acquisitions), and has thus chosen to occupy a fair-sized mansion of his own, separate from the Sea Blue clanhouse. He has stocked it with a huge collection of Livyáni manuscripts, artworks, and artifacts of all sorts, much of his devoted official staff who followed him when he retired, a casual flock of handsome and burly young men, numerous stage magicians,¹²³ two independent and violently feuding kitchen staffs (both of the highest caliber), and what some consider to be the finest, and certainly the most extensive, private winecellar in all of Pan Cháka. The festivities and banquets for his upcoming sixtieth birthday are expected to be most noteworthy, and invitations eagerly sought among the worthies of the protectorate (and perhaps beyond).
- **“Boodle” Balkhétish**¹²⁴
- **Chóqu “Wébni” hiTiyané** of the Red Stone clan, chairman of one of the local circles of poets and authors. 45 years old, from a family devoted to Chiténg and

¹²³ That is, performers using sleight-of-hand and mechanical or optical illusions to create “magical” effects—a subject of long-standing deep interest to him.

¹²⁴ Redacted under threat of litigation immediately before publication.

nominally of that faith himself, but notoriously impious. His is the “cosmopolitan” circle, given to following recent trends and famous authors from metropolitan Tsolyánu as well as the classic forms; it also permits women to perform their own poems — and for people to recite poems (rather than chant or sing them). They even dabble in works of prose! **Tsálu Varshóre “Ífe’eth” hiZírudhan** is chairman of the other local poetry circle — the “conservative” one. In this group, female authors are welcomed and considered equals, but are, as old tradition has it, “mutes” — they cannot perform their own works for the group, but must bring a “second throat”, a male (usually a kinsman or family member) to perform it for them. The feuding between Ífe’eth’s group and Wébni’s group has been heating up steadily over the last two or three years, over this as well as issues of genre, meter, and sources of inspiration.

- **Zhántlo “Snéship” hiShesánu**, chairman of the local circle of wine connoisseurs. A local man of the Emerald Girdle clan, 58 years old and a follower of Avánthe. Known for his haughty dismissal of Pan Cháka’s famous *mash* brandies as unworthy of aesthetic consideration by any gentleman worthy of the name. This may simply be a position taken to whip up controversy and attention.
- **Gáishan & Tulivé Íto** — antiquarians, collectors, shopkeepers, and occasional tomb-robbers. Keeping a low profile from the temple of Sárku and to some degree their own clan, they operate a curio shop and antique business, quite respectable. Elderly, tall and thin, with white hair and dark-tanned skin, the doting couple are rarely seen outdoors except on warm and sunny days (when they are often seen basking in the heat). They are actually minor aristocrats of the (Northern) Íto clan, originally from Do Cháka and, in fact, dead these last six hundred years. Having been born — “for the first time”, as the initiates of Sárku’s sect say — around the time of Emperor Kánmi’yel Nikúma the Fifth’s reconquest of Do Cháka, they helped Emperor Durúmu put down the Pe Choi revolt in the later eighteenth century, were involved in

the defense of the Chákas during the War of 2020, and then helped betray the Second Íto Revolt. Since then, they have lived in exile in Lnóris, Chame’él, Héru, Pelesár, and here in Butrús since the last *dittlána*.

- **Kóyeren hiZu’úgga**, King of the String (*Khéten-Ípehu*): the incumbent master kite-flier. He regularly vanquishes local bravos and conducts a bitter, personal, decades-old feud with his counterparts in Úrmish and Tumíssa.
- **Washáye’e “Khéti-Rèr” hiShesánu**, master kitemaker and guru in all things airborne. A 39 year old woman of the Victorious Globe clan, she is a follower of Avánthe. She occupies a detached kite shop and quarters in the Bookman’s Lanes.
- **Vresésh Vréres hiVrésaka**, elder of the clan of the Victorious Globe and head of the Butrús clanhouse — extremely conservative Pan Chákans, from an ancient lineage that was until a few centuries ago an entirely separate clan (the Frame of Sunset). They are almost entirely occupied with papermaking, particularly of the highest grades. Aside from his tongue-twisting name, he is best known as the holder of “Rippled Honey”, a large smooth agate used for paper-finishing and handed down as an heirloom since late Engsvanyáli times. Though this is a well-kept secret, he has been notified that an attempt will be made to steal it shortly, possibly by none other than the Slippery Mótti (q.v.).
- **Sákuten XI**. A castrato choir-slave of the Temple of Wurú, one of the premier vocalists of the age and widely regarded as one of the greatest performers of the epic “Hymn to Mù’úkané” as well as certain religious hymns. Ten or fifteen years ago he was even summoned to Avanthár to perform for the late emperor (Mursun Dlekkumine), as he also had once for Emperor Hetkoláinen in the past, and previously for Hirkáne when he was only a prince. Now in his sixties, his career was suddenly ended by a prolonged respiratory illness five years ago that destroyed his voice. Sákuten himself believes his voice was taken away by his god, as punishment for a certain sin (which he will not discuss); certain others allege — very quietly — that he was deliberately poisoned by a rival, or else by

an imperial agent as punishment for declining to stay on in Avanthár as a singer in the Golden Tower. In any case, he is extremely wealthy (though still technically a slave), still dedicated to his temple and his music (now as a choirmaster and teacher of the epics), has refused suggestions he be adopted into a suitable clan, and continues to train his disciples, including his adopted “heir”, the presumptive Sákuten XII.

- **Súlmurt hiChállu**. A merchant princeling in the making. While a member of the Golden Lintel clan, he is not satisfied to remain a mere moneylender as tradition demands. Forced to leave his home of Si’is because of politics within his own clan, he resettled in Butrús. Vigorous, enterprising, ambitious; highly innovative. Far too smart to be “just” a merchant, he is frustrated by the complacency and dullness of his peers and interested in new techniques of trade and banking (accounting, letters of credit, bonds, stocks, etc.) A lavish donor (largely in secret) to the Temple of Dilinála, due to a curse or bond he must pay off.
- **Qumíra hiChu’úru**, the “Diamond Widow”. Born into a poor family of the Golden Sheaf clan, as a child she was given as a concubine to a wealthy member of the White Crystal clan, who later married her. He fell into disfavor with his clan and died under a shadow; she was able to keep possession of only a single cinnabar mine. With good management and luck she has been able to turn this small inheritance into the basis of a considerable fortune. Having converted to the worship of Hnálla later in life (she is now in her late 40s), she is extremely devout and sinks the majority of her profits into funding religious works — most recently and famously, a hundred and eleven village and roadside shrines around southwestern Tsolyánu. This is said to have attracted attention in Avanthár, and within official circles it is rumored she may soon be awarded a Notice in the Imperial Hand, or even the Blossom Plume. She lives in a small district town south-southeast of Butrús but visits the city fairly frequently for consultation with the priests of Hnálla there.
- **Zhrída “Bakhnát” hiHanélmú**, the wealthiest and most prominent (or infamous) of the slavers of Butrús; she is 54

years old, a recent immigrant from northern Tsolyánu, and dedicated to Hnálla. Also a master breeder and collector of ornamental fish, her mansion is a great water-garden.

- **Kadláru hiFershéna**, a relative of the famous and widespread Tumíssan family of armorers, belonging to the Iron Hand clan; in his late 50s, he worships Karakán and runs a great armory in the city. The next most important such enterprise is that of **Ni’itúmish Chládo** of Pagús, a bowyer, fletcher, and crossbow-maker — and despite the name, a woman. Around forty years old and devoted to Vimúhla, she continues to operate the family armory after having inherited it from her father, whose name she has taken as her own.
- **Téngai Mérbukha hiVrinála**, the teacher of the crossbow at the Arcades of Whickering Hostility. She is a local, 36 years old, and worships Avánthe. Most of her students are military personnel — either current, or veterans or aspirant recruits — as the crossbow is not much used or respected outside the legions and the Páchi Lei in Pan Cháka.
- **Vretl Ússet hiZavénnu**, teacher of the two-handed sword at the Field of Strenuous Application, a local man devoted to Vimúhla. His fees run up to 900 *káitars* a month. Another colleague of note is **Kténfa Nánketh hiShálane**, dueling-master, instructor at the Hall of the Bearer of the Gift, and chief sword-trainer to the Legion of the Givers of Sorrow; in his early forties like Vretl Ússet, he is a devotee of Chiténg.
- **Srúchche hiChegáni**, a tutor of *arruché* style sword-and-dagger fighting. While hailing from Salarvyá — after, he claims, an action-packed and dangerous stint in Háida Pakála — his family is actually of recent Tsolyáni emigrants to that country, hence his lineage and Tsolyanified personal name. He is fairly competent and a good teacher, but has been forced to cut tuition prices to the point where he is barely supporting himself — *arruché* is simply not fashionable in Pan Cháka, and is looked upon as “hoity-toity” and effete, and simultaneously as somewhat sinister and foreign. Srúchche is wondering whether finding some way to “advertise” more effectively will save him; the possibility of playing up that “sinister

and foreign” aspect of his art to appeal to those with tastes for the same has occurred to him but been rejected — for the time being — as simply too disgraceful.

- **Ganú’e Nayál hiSrúnel**, a noted (rather than merely notorious) professional tout, or *mérato*. Said to be able to find anything, given enough time. She particularly enjoys sleazy, exotic, or salacious requests, but her normal clientele — the wealthy, aristocratic, and too often “noble” — are all too respectable and decent. Anyone looking for something truly nasty will find a most enthusiastic guide here, though her stiff commissions are hardly likely to be reduced.
- **Nyánu Húrshma hiHyénaya**, another noted *mérato*, who runs the “Anything-at-All Store” (q.v.); acquisitive, a packrat, sloppy, proud of his weird institution. His three wives (Erúnye [née Chikállu], Sánu [née Kítlaku], and Tlórüka [née Tikéva]) are more practical and aggressive, with far better business sense, and manage to keep the peculiar and dubious enterprise’s books out of the red ink.
- **Chayúl hiTléngeku** is the gladiator of the day in Butrús; despite a fairly long career in the arenas, his star has only recently risen. While no mean fighter, many suspect that large numbers of his successes are due to pre-fight “negotiations”; his irresistible graciousness, charm, and gift for moving oratory make it impossible for all but a few killjoys to resent this. **Ssurídl hiSugáni** is considered the greater swordsman but lesser showman; he is less often seen in the arena (being frequently employed as a bodyguard, for “special errands”, and undertaking peculiar expeditions of an independent or amateur nature) and so is not considered a real challenger. Likewise, **Trugáya hiTlanátl** is too often occupied with the duties and in service of her temple of Dilinála to become quite the *hirilákte* hero she seems to have the potential for. Fans of the gladiators are still in shock over the recent brutal murder of **Hávumar Gírganne**, a popular and well-liked fixture for nearly two decades. It is suspected by some that Hávumar fell afoul of the Great Brotherhood of Ink-Stained Knuckles in Hiding, perhaps for failing to throw a fight correctly or pay protection money; this rumor

may even be true. A clique of backers attempted to promote local petty aristocrat **Mzu’ámri hiGyesü** (better known for his stunning good looks and service record as standard-bearer of the Legion of the Givers of Sorrow than for any history in the *hiriláktes*) in the immediate aftermath and resulting “gap” at the top; this was deeply deplored and the responsible parties were openly ridiculed as opportunistic money-grubbers. Mzu’ámri was so humiliated he left for Jakálla or perhaps even the capital.

- The courtesan **Chíra hiSúyemen** is the reigning belle of Butrús, though she has several fiercely competitive and ambitious rivals, such as **Ashmái hiChélekem** and **Puruméi hiPakáillu** (from Ferinára and Tumíssa, respectively). The elder courtesan that Chíra edged out, **Tlónuka hiSráshar** of Bey Sü, remains an influential figure and has retained some key supporters, while her native Butrusséne coeval **Chuká’a hiSsúdune** has wholly retired to become a teacher of the *ténturen* and demi-*ténturen* to young ladies. Among the younger up-and-comers **Kokíri hiHairáme**, a native of Jakálla, is making a name for herself by sheer ruthless inconstancy; she is said to be madly jealous of the equally young but shockingly naïve and romantic **Tsúnimel hiNyeti**’s unintentional feat of having driven no less than three disappointed suitors to suicide in the last year.
- **Aváyu “Dlajál” hiJalchéma**, probably Pan Cháka’s most famous gambler currently resident in Butrús; her colleague **Tren “Hlivín” hiTúpellu** is no less worthy, but has made his career mostly in the cities of central Tsolyánu, away from his hometown of Butrús. Both are shining examples of the classic “cool and urbane” Tsolyáni ideal of a gambler. Their fans have long been hoping for a match between the two, playing up tenuous stories of their rivalry — e.g., that Hlivín, as a boy, received a magical gambling-familiar directly from the hands of the aged Markóle Sinjálím (2247-2334 A.S.) on his deathbed, while Dlajál’s mother’s family is descended from the sister of Únuka Kaichén (2095-2133), who is often said to be the greatest and most stylish gambler in Tsolyáni history, and some of whose feats were much later surpassed by Markóle in a

notably spiteful and ungracious manner. Unfortunately for such followers of the gaming tables, the two Butrusséne luminaries have shown no particular interest or inclination in facing off; which is also a sore disappointment for certain businessmen who would like to profit from the enormous volume of side-bets that would be placed on any such match.

- **Semné Kanái hiMnúye**, captain or coach (*menátna*) of the top city *marotlán* team. While himself fairly irreligious, he has been known to play up the cult of Chiténg as the guardian and patron of Butrús (and her athletes) for the sake of publicity — or even to foment riots of fans against outside teams, when convenient.
- **Hérpef hiTru'úna** of the clan of the Scarlet Sash, manager of the *hirilákte* arena in Butrús. An excellent manager of performers and producer of spectacles, but a dire businessman. It is not known how the arena has remained solvent as long as it has.
- **Granny Kless**, of a lowly and vile branch of the Green Pyramid clan that has a notoriously shadowy history; she herself is a cunning old blackmailer, extortionist, smuggler, and all-around gangster godmother.
- **The Slippery Mótti**, an infamous cat-burglar of whom very little is known but quite a bit rumored. While many rumors concern which secret patron's greed the latest daring and mysterious outrage serves, no one actually seems to know how to go about contacting this character if his or her services are required. At first widely rumored to belong to Butrús's Pijenáni community, the Slippery Mótti's continued success and amazing exploits have convinced most of the city that the cowardly and simple northerners could not have produced such a bold and cunning rogue.

APPENDIX C: NOTES ON THE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF TÉKUMEL

Bibliographic Classifications

The oldest surviving system of bibliographic classification is called the “Six Epitomes”. While systems of the same name are known from the Engsvanyáli and even Bednálljan eras, what goes by this name today dates from the early period of the Tsolyáni Empire. The six headings of the system are Canons (i.e. religious texts), Poetry, Philosophy, Mathematics, Medicine, and History. It should be remembered that the Six Epitomes are used to classify books in bibliographic writings and scholarship, far less frequently for library catalogues, and almost never employed in the actual arrangement of physical volumes in collections. They are thus an intellectual rather than a practical tool. However, in Pan Cháka the Six Epitomes are used only in the temples of Avánthe, Ksárul, and Sárku.

The remaining temples, colleges, and almost all private bibliomanes of Butrús instead employ the classification known as the “Four Gates”, a more recent invention of the Mu’ugalavyáni. The Four Gates are systematically subdivided, unlike the Six Epitomes, and furthermore are put to more extensive use — many libraries in Mu’ugalavyá and even a few in Butrús prepare their catalogues using this system; one or two (eccentric) private libraries have even been built as physical representations of this classification.

The Four Gates and their subdivisions are:

- I. The Canons
 - a. Epics
 - b. Cosmology & Theogony
 - c. Religious Scriptures
 - d. Devotional Works
 - e. Theology & Hermeneutics
 - f. Mantic & Theurgic Arts
 - g. Bibliography & Epigraphy
 - h. Philology
 - i. Other “classical” works of antiquity
- II. The Histories
 - a. Standard Histories
 - b. Annals
 - c. Topically Arranged Histories
 - d. Unofficial Histories
 - e. Miscellaneous Histories
 - f. Biographical Works
 - g. Historical Excerpts

- h. Contemporary Records¹²⁵
 - i. Calendrics & Horology
 - j. Geography
 - k. Government Institutions
 - l. Edicts & Memorials
 - m. Historiography
 - n. Miscellanea¹²⁶
- III. The Masters (Philosophy)
 - a. Logicians & Ethicists
 - b. Legal Writers
 - c. Military Experts
 - d. Agricultural Writers
 - e. Thinkers on Statecraft
 - f. Sorcerers & Thaumaturges
 - g. Practitioners of the Fine Arts
 - h. Medical Experts
 - i. Mathematicians & Geometers
 - j. Miscellaneous Writers & Essayists
 - k. Common Religion & Folklore
 - l. Manuals of Craft (e.g. cooking, gardening, construction)
 - m. Encyclopedias
 - IV. Belles-Lettres (Collectanea)
 - a. Literary Anthologies (of a given period)¹²⁷
 - b. Collected Works (of a given author)¹²⁸

¹²⁵ One might keep in mind that this includes compendia such as the *Complete Collection of Prose from Remote Antiquity and the First Empire*, which contains texts of a literary nature as much as a historical one, but is not technically classified as “literature” because it is not in verse. The bulk of this category is comprised of the genre called “Collections of Important Documents”, preserving original official texts from previous reigns or dynasties.

¹²⁶ A given author’s notes, queries, and assorted writings on various topics, in the (nominal) form of a notebook or literary diary. This subcategory also includes contemporary gossip, anecdotes about current events, and even short stories in prose. “Miscellanea” can vary widely from intensely focused scholarly criticism of a specific question to fictional fantasies of the author. They are thus very personal, often much more so than the same author’s “official” literary output. In Mu’ugalavyá, this heading has since been placed under Belles-Lettres, not History; the older location is retained in Pan Cháka.

¹²⁷ Some of the modern “literary canon” is in this category, e.g., the *Threefold Collections of Engsvanyáli Poetry*, the *New Collection of Old Poems*, the *Old Collection of New Songs*, or the *Anthology of Ancient Poetry*.

¹²⁸ Following its usual prefaces, the normal organization of such a collection is: memorials and official writings; congratulatory poetry on public occasions; prefaces; commentary on events and diaries; letters; commemorative

- c. Literary Collectanea (combining the two above)¹²⁹

Encyclopedias

Literally “Classified Materials” or “Categorical Volumes”, this genre is worth some extra attention for its own merits, for what it might be taken to reveal about the Five Empires’ taste for orderly regimentation on a vast scale, and (not least) for the great value such works have been to the compiler and translator of the present *Gazetteer*.

Unlike encyclopedias in the modern Terran sense, the entries in Tékumelian encyclopedias are usually excerpts from existing primary sources. Articles written specifically for the compilation are rather rare, and used most often to fill in gaps. Encyclopedias thus may preserve (in fragments) works that have otherwise been lost. Given the huge size of some encyclopedias and their sometimes poor organization, ancient and valuable texts are from time to time “rediscovered” buried in old encyclopedias.

The genre’s origins began with primers on political and moral precedent for rulers and high officials. The concept later spread to officialdom and the nobility as a whole; simultaneously the priesthoods began preparing similar volumes (on secular concerns). Such texts spread then to the educated classes, and continued to develop in other directions.

Most encyclopedias are arranged into twenty to thirty general categories, with many hundreds of subdivisions. An alphabetical organization is entirely unknown to the genre. It is estimated that some 3000 encyclopedias have been written since the beginning of the Engsvanyáli period, and about 400 are currently extant to one degree or another. (There is now even a project underway sponsored by the lords of Chame’él to compile an “encyclopedia of encyclopedia fragments”, collecting and collating

the partially lost or destroyed encyclopedias.) Some of the most famous are the *Excerpts from the Books of the Northern Hall* (largely governmental and Engsvanyáli in content); *Collected Literature in Categorical Arrangement* (badly organized but with much ancient information); *Writings for Elementary Instruction* (basic and background knowledge for beginning students, much used in schools); the *Imperially Sanctioned Encyclopedia of the Eternally Glorious and Pacific Age* (massive and doctrinaire); *Outstanding Models from the Warehouse of Literature*; and the *Sea of Turquoise* (also badly arranged). The author of the lattermost also produced *Purple Pearls for the Novice*, another pedagogical work of encyclopedic format.

A description of encyclopedias is incomplete without mention of the “Great Compendium of All Knowledge”, from the height of Engsvanyáli glory just before the Flower Wars of the Third Epoch. Better known to modern scholars just as the *Ssemúga IV Encyclopedia*, it is by repute the largest unified work ever written on Tékumel — estimated as being some 740 million words in length. It took over four thousand scholars sixteen years of labor to produce, and even in still incomplete form it proved too expensive to reproduce. Accordingly, almost all of it has since been lost. Of the original 11,000-odd volumes only sixty are known to exist now, though there may be as many as two hundred in private hands not available to the public.

The description of the encyclopedia and its organization is well understood, however, and has served as an influential model for later, far more modest, undertakings. (Among other things, it probably influenced the tradition of bibliographic classification under the “Six Epitomes”, above.)

- Matters of the Heavens
 - The Manifold Planes
 - The Gods
 - The Year, Time, and Astronomy
 - Arithmetic & Numerology
 - Strange Phenomena
- Matters of the Land
 - The Earth
 - Political Divisions
 - Geometry & Measurement
 - Mountains, Rivers, and Seas

biographies, epitaphs, encomia, etc; poetry; family instructions; miscellaneous items.

¹²⁹ The *Famous Complete Poetical Corpora of the Second Epoch* is the largest, and despite its name includes a large amount of work from earlier and later phases of the Engsvanyáli period, but includes far from every writer of the age.

- Foreign Lands
- Matters of Human Relations
 - The Emperor
 - The Imperial Household
 - Government
 - Family Relationships
 - Social Intercourse
 - Clans & Property
 - Clan & Lineage Names
 - Attributes of Man
 - Womankind
- Matters of Society
 - Official Service
 - Agriculture & Food
 - Trade in Goods & Coins
 - Ceremonies
 - Music
 - Military Administration
 - Law & Punishment
 - Industry & Manufacturing
- Matters of Thought and Action
 - Occupations, Crafts, and Trades
 - Religion
 - Persons Who Are Not Human
 - Animals
 - Plants & Trees
- Matters of Morality and Literature
 - Canonical & Classical Literature
 - Learning to Conduct One's Life
 - Literary Study & Criticism
 - Scripts & Calligraphy
 - Past & Distant Languages

Most recently, encyclopedias have begun to reach the lower levels of society (primarily, the literate middle classes) in the form of "Encyclopedias for Daily Use" or "Expanded Popular Almanacs". These summarize more practical information for people not directly concerned with high matters of state and religion, but who need some acquaintance with higher culture and finer things as well as practical advice. These works follow much the same arrangement as their more scholarly and upper-class models, but will focus, for example, on travel advice and trade routes rather than on classical works on the weather and seasons or ancient literature about the landscape. Some of the better-known examples of this subgenre are the *Correct Path to Ten Thousand Purposes* and its confusingly titled cheaper rival the *Correct Guide with Ten Thousand Uses*; the *Wide Gleanings on Miscellaneous Matters*, the

Complete Book for Daily Purposes of a Thousand Treasures, or the *Complete Book of the Variety of Things Necessary to be Done in Life and Home*. An eightfold structure is most common in such popular works; one might find eight separate volumes or chapters on (for example) canonical religious and moral texts, non-canonical but orthodox texts of the same nature, biographies of famous figures, historical works, literary works, felicitous phrases and graceful language, anecdotes and popular myths, and "indirect reports" (i.e. articles written for the encyclopedia, not excerpted from an extant authoritative source).

Mu'ugalavyáni Genres

A number of works generally known as "Comprehensive Histories of Institutions" comprise a Mu'ugalavyáni genre of historical writing, one that is especially useful for Tsolyáni administrators in modern Pan Cháka. Aside from their value to scholars of later ages, they serve as guides and reference works for administrators of their own time. Three exist for Pan Cháka: *The Encyclopedia of Institutions*, *Comprehensive Notes on Institutions*, and the *General History and Critical Examination of Institutions*.¹³⁰ Together, the "Three Encyclopedias" consist of about 6,000 pages. They are an invaluable aid in sorting out the changing names, titles, and hierarchy of Pan Chákan government. There is also a modern *Appendix* (bringing them current) and even an *Index* (though of poor quality).

The gazetteer is a fundamentally Mu'ugalavyáni genre. Though it has since spread to neighboring countries, as a transplant it lacks the variety and depth of history that the genre has in its native land. Ultimately the gazetteer springs from an extremely old but still current Mu'ugalavyáni governmental requirement that

¹³⁰ For example, the lattermost has chapter headings as follow: land taxes, currency, population, service and corvée, customs and tolls, official markets and purchases, local tribute, national expenditures, examinations and promotions, schools, government posts, imperial sacrifices and ceremonies and their deputizations, minor sacrifices, dynastic lineage and rites, other temples and shrines, court rites, posthumous titles, music, army, penal law, bibliography, calligraphy, imperial genealogy, nobility, astronomy, freaks of nature, geography, and foreign countries.

each prefecture must produce its own guidebook — as a resource both for future incumbents in local posts, and for study and reference by central authorities and scholars. This original type of gazetteer, usually just called a “local handbook” or “local gazetteer”, has since been joined by a number of other specialized types of gazetteer — the district gazetteer (focusing on the level of the smallest sub-unit of direct government authority), the town gazetteer (likewise focused on a single urban center), the temple gazetteer (dealing with a single temple, its land holdings, branch shrines, satellite temples, significant historical figures, etc.), literati gazetteers (covering the scholars and students of a given region, whether deceased or alive, famous or obscure), and landscape or scenery gazetteers (treating the notable hills and mountains, rivers, waterfalls, valleys and gorges, overlooks and vistas, towers, pavilions, mansions, castles, fortresses, antiquities, and general curiosities of a region or route). A final outgrowth is the comprehensive gazetteer, which draws on all these other varieties to produce a definitive guide and body of data (official and private) for a specific locale. The present text is, in origin, such a gazetteer.

The officially stipulated contents and order of a local (prefectural) gazetteer is given below. This has largely been carried forward to other guidebooks and handbooks in the genre, where feasible.

1. Preface and general rules (compilers, editorial policy)
2. Maps of prefecture; town or city plans
3. Changing borders; tables of changing or altered administrative units
4. Main topographical features
5. Famous places and views; ruins
6. Official buildings; city walls and moats; government offices
7. Passes, fords, and bridges
8. Water conservancy; canals and rivers; hydraulic and irrigation works
9. Chronicle of natural and human disasters or omens
10. Temples
11. Academies and schools
12. Office holders (last five to twenty years, depending upon rank; last century of prefectural heads)

13. Fiscal information; household and head counts; land and other taxes
14. Granary reserves
15. Markets, tolls, and barriers
16. Products and crops
17. Customs and festivals
18. Biographies of dignitaries; meritorious officials; wise priests; heroic soldiers; dutiful women
19. Military institutions and military men
20. Biographies of technicians (doctors, monks, etc)
21. Inscriptions and tombs
22. Bibliographies and choice excerpts
23. Miscellaneous topics and records

APPENDIX D: TÉKUMELIAN WORKS CITED

The following is a list (and where available, brief description) of some of the books that were either used by the original author of *A Gazetteer of Butrús* or that have been referenced within it. Much of this information recapitulates or expands on bibliographic footnotes in the main text. See also Appendix C.

- *ABCs of Circuit Listening*. (Literally, in Tsolyáni, *The P-B-M-F-etc. of Circuit Listening*.) A medical handbook that deals specifically with the western and Livyáni practice of identifying disease-demons and locating them in the patient's body by feeling or listening to the pulse, heartbeat, and digestive tract.
- *Book of Water Control Within the Chákas*. A Mu'ugalavyáni work, of an often technical nature and not of much use or interest except to engineers, administrators, or scholars.
- *Collected Materials on Earthquakes*
- *Collection of Lucid Decisions and Parallel Cases by Celebrated Judges*. A practical manual and guide for low-level judges on all three legal systems of Pan Cháka.
- *Compendium of Administrative Statutes of the ... Reign Arranged by Category* (a.k.a. *The ... Statutes*)
- *Complete Manual of Benevolence and Happiness*. The most famous practical handbook for officers of the court and lawyers.
- *Comprehensive Notes on the Citrus Estates*
- *Comprehensive Understanding of Flowing Waters*. A definitive text that charts all the river systems of both Tsolyánu and Mu'ugalavyá; unfortunately it is not entirely up-to-date.
- *Conspectus on Penal Cases*. Casebook of precedent for criminal cases.
- *Digest of Regulations of the Government Offices of the New Western Protectorate*
- *Essentials of Taxation*
- *Grand Collection of City Fires*,. A recounting of famous conflagrations throughout history, with chronological and geographical tables, several maps, and even illustrations; written by a Butrusséne pyromaniac of some repute (mostly ill). While it is considered to be of very good scholarship, most readers find the author takes simply too much delight in retelling the stories of one city or another burning to the ground. Very little source material is recounted in the text, despite the name "collection"; the author mostly retells the stories in his own somewhat over-excited voice.
- *Green Pillars of Delight*. A recent treatise on the growing, pruning, splicing, etc. of *mash* trees. The work on the topic most widely known in Tsolyánu proper, but often dismissed by Pan Chákan scholars and experts, who rate their private stock of techniques and lore above this amateurish (by comparison) compilation.
- *Handbook of Techniques Essential for the Subsistence of the Commonality*. The authoritative agronomic manual of the Chákas and eastern Mu'ugalavyá; by ninth century Mu'ugalavyáni writer Jáishe Fiú.
- *Handbook on the Chambers of Jurisprudence*. How to operate and order a court, handle its staff, deal with lawyers, and so forth.
- *Heshtú'atl Reign Encyclopedia of Foods and Kitchenry (Far Western Volume)*. A (very) large collection of recipes and information from throughout the empire, but is considered a second-rate work by many, as it was poorly edited and badly copied, with many recipes from famous manuals and gourmands reduced to confusing or improbable instructions.
- *Itemized Substatutes of Pan Cháka*
- *Itemized Substatutes of the ... Reign*. Compiled precedents and substatutes issued in any given emperor's reign.
- *Local Case Histories of Pan Cháka*
- *Master Mulákna's Annotated Portfolio of the Little Gentlemen and Ladies of the Rattan Palaces*. A handbook, with copious illustrations, for breeders and trainers of songbirds and ornamental avians. By a Butrusséne; fairly well known and regarded throughout the empire.
- *Master Nikórva's System of Dining*. "Cookbook" by a Butrusséne author; scholarly and pedantic, but infused with a strange enthusiasm and confidence, and widely considered to have the best, if most difficult, recipes.

- *Monthly Ordnances of the Protectorate of Pan Cháka*. The standard regional almanac, issued annually by the government.
- *Mu'ónikh de Parshál Tlakichéngguyal Hibu trús par Churé* ("How to Tell the Butrús Ailments, 'Get Out!'", by an anonymous author of the turn of the nineteenth century. Nominally it is a pharmacoepia specifically for the local sickness-demons of the city of Butrús. It is chatty and entertaining, full of extraneous detail about different neighborhoods, cooking tips, shortcuts around town, musings on interior decoration and choice of furnishings, anecdotes about neighbors and colorful local characters, advice on selecting fresh melons at the market, and snippets of popular songs of the day; perhaps as close to prose literature as there is to be found on Tékumel. It is in fact a translation from a Mu'ugalavyáni original, though few are aware of this today.
- *New Table on the Practical Affairs of the Land*. A regional phenological manual.
- *Prescriptions Worth a Thousand in Gold*. More focused, less wordy, more boring than *How to Tell...*; a pharmacoepia dealing with the ailments endemic to Pan Cháka as a whole.
- *Provincial Substatutes of Pan Cháka*
- *Record of Waterways in the Western Region*. Oriented towards the educated traveler by water; includes routes, products, antiquities, biographies, and even illustrations of notable landscapes along the shores.
- *Supplementary Regulations of Pan Cháka*
- *Treatise on Brandy*. Written sometime in the eleventh century, with special reference to Pan Chákan *mash* liquors.
- *Two Chákas Recipe Manual*. A Mu'ugalavyáni composition, in clipped and uninformative prose; technically exact and easy to follow, and extremely thorough in covering the range from peasant foods to formal banqueting, but considered intensely dull and boring to read.
- *Volcano Manual*. A natural history of volcanoes, drawing extensively on ancient and classical texts, combined with a fairly comprehensive listing of active or semi-dormant volcanoes in the known world.
- *Wake-Up-the-Courtyard Stove*. A famous and common Pan Chákan-Butrusséne

cookbook entirely in rhyming verse, as narrated by a genial and festivity-loving oven.

POSTSCRIPT

My imagining of this region of Tsolyánu bears an obvious debt to classical and medieval China and Japan, leavening the more “Occidental” (Indo-Byzantine-Egyptian) qualities of M.A.R. Barker’s original conception. The Mesoamerican influences have been retained and perhaps in places strengthened. Visually I picture Pan Cháka as a peculiar conjunction of Guizhou and Yucatan; the city of Butrús itself bears obvious similarities to Chang’an and Heian-kyō.

On a more general level, this version of Tsolyánu presents it as a more strongly centralized state but a much less unified culture. Secondly, it is meant to be closer to “low fantasy”, with magic being far scarcer and much less “technological” in nature. The supertechnologies from before the Time of Darkness, and other science-fictional elements, are invisible or potentially even absent.

As this document is meant to be a sourcebook, a considerable amount of information within it recapitulates official Tékumel publications. While this has bloated the size of the text, I felt doing so may make it more comprehensive and convenient, rather than supposing all readers will have access to, and be well-read in, texts such as *Deeds of the Ever-Glorious* or *Mitlányal*. I have attempted to incorporate not only canonical writings into this sourcebook, but also non-canonical (or perhaps “para-canonical”) sources. This has included articles from *The Eye of All-Seeing Wonder* and *Visitations of Glory*, postings to the Blue Room email list and other online discussion groups, private comments from Old Skool Tekumelists, and bits of information spotted on various Tékumel-themed websites. Ideas and elements created by the many gamers and fans of Tekumel and other settings I’ve known over the past two decades and counting have also percolated into this project as well. My deep thanks to everyone who has provided, however unwittingly, such content. Professor Barker has provided a correction to the Tsolyáni title of the document (which I haven’t been able to implement yet, and so have gone without for the time being). Furthermore, a volunteer proofreader has been invaluable in catching embarrassing numbers of even more embarrassing errors.

Some of the specific non-Tékumelian sources of inspiration and detail have been:

Edward Schaffer’s books on material culture and exotica in the literary culture of the Tang dynasty, *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand* and *The Vermillion Bird* (particularly the latter), as well as his other works — *The Shore of Pearls* and *The Empire of Min*. His final book, on Tang star-lore (*Pacing the Void*) was obviously of less utility on Tékumel but was still indirectly inspirational. For bureaucracy and government, Charles Hucker’s *Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, Hans Bielenstein’s *The Bureaucracy of Han Times*, and Denis Twitchett’s *Financial Administration under the T’ang Dynasty*; on technical matters, the various volumes of *Science and Civilization in China* edited by Joseph Needham et al., and Paul Unschuld’s *Medicine in China: A History of Ideas*. On the city itself, G. Eugène Simon’s *La Cité chinoise* and Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt’s *Chinese Imperial City Planning*. Another secondary source on China I found useful was Charles Backus’ *The Nan-chao Kingdom and T’ang China’s Southwestern Frontier*.

Among primary sources that served as background, I drew on Sima Qian’s *Shiji* (translated as “Records of the Historian” etc.), Ban Gu’s *Hanshu*, various snippets of Shen Fu, the *Ziji Tongjian* and the *Xin Tangshu*, and from among classical literature, the *Liji*, *Zhouli*, and *Shangshu*. Pu Songling’s *Liaozhai Zhiyi* stories of the weird (translated under titles such as “Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio”) and Cao Xueqin’s *Honglou Meng* (English trs. as “Dream of the Red Chamber” or “Story of the Stone”) also played an important part. Some Classical Japanese literature was also an influence: *Genji Monogatari* and *Makura no Sōshi* (Arthur Waley translations). For that matter, the Kintaikyo at Iwakuni is, *mutatus mutandum*, the Bridge of the Leaping Worm.

For the Mesoamerican element, the two texts probably most referenced were *A Forest of Kings* (Linda Schele & David Freidel) and the always entertaining *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan* and *Travels in Central America*; many

individual journal articles provided the rest. Equally useful for inspiring local color was Kaempfer's even older (early 1700s) *History of Japan, Together with a Description of the Kingdom of Siam*.

From fiction, Robert van Gulik's Judge Dee mysteries, I must confess, and Clark Ashton Smith's fantasies, particularly the "Hyperborea" and "Zothique" cycles, and his "Martian tales". Thomas Ligotti contributed a one-liner.

And — need it be said? — the many works of M.A.R. Barker, up to and nearly including his Klamath materials.