

Issue Five | Summer 1995

Sharu'una Fief

Sharu'una Fief is a campaign setting for those of you who are fed up with getting off that boat in Jakállá harbour. It is set in the far east of the Empire just after Dhich'üne's first ascent to the throne.

In 2365 AS, Jannura Ito, High Priestess of Sárku in Hekellu, denounced Chirine baKal, Governor of the Kerunan Protectorate, as a rebel loyal to the Prince Mirusiya and ordered him impaled. The new Emperor, far from being pleased with Jannura and granting her the governorship she desired, decreed that she be taken to Avanthar and detained in the Lower Catacomb of Silent Waiting. The governorship went instead to Atsaban Ito who, though a worshipper of Sárku, was known to be a moderate and a much respected man.

Geography of Sharu'una Fief

Sharu'una fief lies in hex 3526 of map 2. It is bounded by Lake Hekellu to the east, the Hekku river to the north (the official boundary is actually the Sakbe road, which lies in the neighbouring fief of Chayen Tsallu), and Tlani Hidallu peak to the south. Most of the fief lies at an altitude of over 2500m—even the river is at an altitude of 800m above sea level.

The population of the fief is about 6,000. The main settlement is Sharu, a walled town of about 2,500 people on the western shore of Lake Hekellu. There are two villages in the foothills: Amtwa (pop. 800) and Vu'u (pop 500). The fertile river valley has about 20 fortified clan-houses along the river, but these are used only by agricultural clans and can't really be called villages. About 100 people live in each clanhouse.

Climate

Winter in Sharu'una is hard because of its altitude. The first snow falls in early Lesdrim but is usually confined to the foothills. Snow is common throughout the fief from Dohalla until Shapru, but rarely sticks for more than a week in the valley. Temperatures in Amtwa and Vu'u may reach down to -20C on the coldest nights.

Late Shapru brings the spring thaw, usually accompanied by a lot of rain. The ice-cold melt water makes for some chilly days and there is often fog or mist.

Summer in the fief is warm and pleasant—the noon temperature is usually around 25C and rarely rises above 30C. The mild summer climate means that wealthy nobles from Fasiltum and Sokatis often maintain summer residences or hunting lodges in the area.



Map of Hekellu
(click to enlarge)

Economy

The fief has a number of important sources of income. Lake Hekkelu provides good fishing during the warmer months. (The lake often partially freezes over in winter and during the spring the cold melt-water makes the fish sluggish.)

The river valley is fertile and supports a reasonable agricultural base. There is a summer crop of dna grain and a winter crop of kukemikh (a spongy, green-leafed vegetable rather like a brussel sprout).

Hma and hmelu are farmed in the foothills around Amtwa and Vu'u.

Hunting and trapping, also in the foothills, provides a small amount

of income. The winter fur of the Sorrenesh (a sub-species of zrne which lives locally and has a habit of attacking hma) is particularly prized.

Social Structure

The clans found locally are:

VERY HIGH

Vriddi—The Vriddi have no permanently occupied clanhouse locally but they have no fewer than 2 summer residences and 2 hunting lodges in the fief. One of the summer residences is owned by Elara hiVriddi, the notorious rebel leader, and was often used by Prince Mirusiya.

Sea Blue—The clan maintain a large summer residence in the foothills on the western edge of the fief. It is seldom used.

Golden Bough—a large clanhouse in Hekkelu and some smaller dwellings scattered around the lake. They maintain two hunting lodges in the fief.

Ito—The new governor has brought several family members to the region. The baroness of Sharu'una fief, Naramai Ito, lives in Sharu with her companion and several relatives. She has use of the official summer residence-cum-guest lodge near Amtwa.

Blue Shadow—A prominent local clan based in Hekellu. Mostly worshippers of Hrü'ü and Wuru. General Yamashsha hiKorokol of the 20th Imperial Medium infantry maintains a permanent residence near the lake (just inside the fief—his property marks the fief boundary). There is a medium-sized clan-house in Sharu and a single lineage in Vu'u.

HIGH

Jade Diadem—2 small clanhouses in Hekellu. Both are owned by wealthy lineages. The clan also keeps a small clanhouse in Sharu and a summer residence for visiting cousins near Vu'u.

Purple Gem—a small clanhouse in Hekellu. A small hunting lodge in the mountains.

Rising Sun—several clanhouses in Hekellu and Sharu, individual lineages in Amtwa and Vu'u. The wealthy Vuqqumai lineage maintains a magnificent summer residence on the shores of the lake.

MEDIUM

Black Pinnacle - a very strong and influential local clan. Many clanhouses, including 5 of the fortified clan-houses along the river. The clan patriarch resides in Hekellu but keeps a well-appointed summer residence near Vu'u. There are clanhouses in Sharu, Vu'u and Amtwa. There are also 3 or 4 private mansions around the shores of the lake.

Ebon Spire - a local clan, formed in 1932 A.S. as an offshoot from Black Pinnacle following a bitter inter-lineage dispute. Relations between the two clans are now almost amicable—some lineages refuse to admit the split ever occurred! Their major clanhouse is in Sharu with a smaller one in Amtwa.

LOW

Blue Water—clanhouses in Hekellu and Vu'u and along the river valley.

White Keshchal—another local clan, mostly mercantile and transport. Based in Sharu and Hekellu but individuals can often be found guesting in the clanhouses of other clans while on business.

Round Rock—very prominent locally. Clanhouses in Hekellu, Sharu, Amtwa and Vu'u. They own about half of the fortified clanhouses along the river.

VERY LOW

Bronze Scythe—a local clan of low standing despite large numbers. The dirty jobs usually end up being done by this clan.

Copper Scythe—an offshoot of the Bronze Scythe. This small clan is devoted to Sárku and Durritlamish. They provide the local tomb police.

There are many clans present in Hekellu, e.g. slaver clans, but these have no representation in the fief. In addition, there are many hunters and trappers who belong to no clan. Often, they are natives of Kilalammu.

Political Structure

Atsaban Ito is the newly appointed governor of the whole protectorate. He is a tall, lean man of about 45. He joined the First Legion of Ever Present Glory under Kettukal and distinguished himself as a young officer during the raids into Yan Kor. However, a wound he took in the leg never healed properly, despite sorcery, and he was invalidated out of the legion at the age of only 19. He joined the Imperial bureaucracy and was attached to the Imperial Embassy in Tsamra. He is said to have been instrumental in forging the good

relations between Tsolyánu and Livyánu that characterised the Old Emperor's reign. Even now, Atsaban bears a small tattooed glyph on his left temple that any Livyáni would recognise as "Qayabaz", the kenemuz-glyph for an exceptionally trusted and favoured foreigner. He speaks and reads Livyáni like a native of course.

Atsaban is regarded as an intelligent, moderate man with the persuasive powers one would expect of a senior diplomat. His appointment was looked on with relief by the people of the protectorate.

Naramai Ito, newly appointed to the fief of Sharu'una, is the younger clan-sister of Atsaban and spent some time with him in Livyánu. She is about 40 and rather plump. She is more forthright than her brother, quite stern, and hates deception, lies and trickery (probably why she never made it as a diplomat!). She is a born commander, with the voice of a sergeant-major when she chooses to use it. Her companion is a much younger clan cousin from a minor clan lineage, Zarano Ito. The two have lived together for about 3 years. There is no secret that Naramai expects sex and loyalty from Zarano in return for a respectable lifestyle and inheritance.

Tlokun hiChurringa of the Jade Diadem clan is the senior bureaucrat in the fief and personal assistant to Naramai.

Molkar Chomura hiKorokol of the Blue Shadow clan is the senior military officer in the fief. He commands the 3rd and 4th cohorts of the Legion of the Many-Legged Serpent and is a nephew of the legion's general.

Jodesh hiVuqqumai of the Clan of the Rising Sun and Keketl hiNgotu, patriarch of the Black Pinnacle clan, vie and intrigue for dominance locally. At the moment, Keketl seems to have the upper hand.

Bayal hiMerqatani is patriarch of the Ebon Spire clan. He is a friendly man but seems to know a very great deal about other peoples' business.

Military Structure

Hekellu is the headquarters of the 20th Imperial Medium Infantry (The Legion of the Many-Legged Serpent) under General Yamashsha hiKorokol. There are always a number of cohorts in training so manoeuvres and troop movements are common in the fief. The barracks of the 3rd and 4th cohorts are in fact in Sharu. The legion also protects the province's eastern border against Kilalammyani bandits (who sometimes attack in considerable numbers).

There are also two cohorts of the 21st Imperial Medium Infantry (Storm of Fire) based around Hekellu. They have no barracks in the fief, but are often seen moving though it.

There is also a sizeable militia in the whole protectorate. Following the bandit raids of 2109, the governor ordered that all clans must provide for a certain number of armed men in case of emergencies. Currently, about 30% of all men between the ages of 15 and 40 have had weapons training and would have to serve in a militia if another large-scale invasion occurred.

History of the Fief

Little is known of the area before Engsvanyali times. Hekellu was then a major staging post on the routes to the eastern provinces. It is though the city was much larger at the time—possibly 5 or 6 times its current size.

There is also some dispute amongst scholars as to whether the city occupied its current site—though most agree it was somewhere on the shore of the lake.

An interesting event is related by an unknown scribe that the Priest-King Ssirandar XIV—apparently an incompetent and disliked man—was 'murdered by diverse persons whilst partaking of the mountain air at his Palace on the lake near Cheke Elluthen. Full five score times was his body pierced yet none, from lowest slave to highest minister vouched that he had heard aught of it!'. However, no trace of such a royal residence has ever been found.

The fall of the Engsvanyali empire was associated with some topographical changes in the region. Part of the city, which was on a promontory, sank into the lake. Even now, fishermen sometimes bring up ancient artifacts or pieces of worked stone in their nets. A river which ran nearby into the dry bay of Ssü'um also appears to have dried up or changed its course, and this may have been at least partially responsible for the drying up of the bay.

There are many legends and stories about the wizard Thomar in the area. There is even a quarry where it is said the stone for Thomar's tower was quarried in one piece, and even now the outline of it is visible. Many of the stories about Thomar are probably confusions as there was a famous local scholar, Tumar hiAraken, who went on to become Grand Adept of the Temple of Thúmis in 814 A.S. and played a major part in the religious strife of that time.

The Kerunan protectorate has changed hands several times during the Second Imperium. Usually, Hekellu and Sharu fief have remained in Tsolyáni hands, but the Salarvyani succeeded in capturing and looting both Hekellu and Sharu in 1218. The Salarvyani influence has given many loan-words to the local dialect, and a native of Vu'u or Amtwa will usually speak it with an accent so strong that a Western Tsolyáni may not even recognise his own language being spoken!

The Grey Plains

"The Grey Plains", or the Greys, is the local term for the slum area of Hekellu in its southeastern corner near the Old Palace. It is a region of derelict, grey stone housing which serves the city as an unofficial Foreigners' Quarter. Its name comes not just from its colour, but also from the high crime rate. No Tsolyáni of other than the lowest of clans would enter the Greys without escort, and one who did would be unlikely to leave it alive.

The inhabitants of the Greys are itinerant foreigners, clanless Tsolyáni and members of the lowest lineages of the lowest clans. There are no clan-houses or hosteliess as such. The inhabitants form small groups for mutual defence and live in squats. Squabbles between local groups are fierce and frequent. Law, order, honour, duty, face, status and the myriad of other social customs which normal Tsolyáni consider "noble" or "civilised" simply do not exist in the Greys. Justice and status are determined solely by might and fear.

Many strange things are said to happen in the Greys. People disappear frequently, more frequently even (it is said) than corresponding bodies are found floating in the lake! Strange lights are seen in the areas where even the inhabitants fear to venture, and it is whispered that in these regions creatures of the underworlds roam the streets. This is almost certainly not the truth, but few would dare to check the veracity of such myths.

The Greys are the home of the Whisperer of Secrets. This shadowy figure is said to be responsible for much of the crime that happens in and around the area, yet no one has seen this person or even know for sure if he or she exists.

Map of Sharu'una Fief

The fief lies on the western edge of Lake Hekellu. It is some 12-20 hours distant from the city itself by boat.

There are two main parts to the fief, the river valley with its many clanhouses dotted along the banks and the mountainous region to the south.

A Sakbe road runs parallel to the northern bank of the river, but there are no other all-weather roads in the fief, making travel onerous at times.

Travel to the village of Vu'u is usually by foot or via a small boat which can be ported over the cataracts in the river. Amtwa is accessible only by foot.

Travel into the mountains is extremely dangerous without an experienced guide.

