

Haida Pakala and Mretten

Based on the world of Tekumel created by M.A.R. Barker

With some help, I've pulled together what information was available on Haida Pakala and Mretten. Some imagination was then used to fill in certain blanks. While not canon, it will hopefully provide food for thought.

Elaborating a bit on Haida Pakala, externally, it is viewed as a land rife with piracy, which it is. Digging a bit deeper though, there is an apt comparison between this culture and Somalia today. It's a place with many regional gangs and warlords. Where slavery is more prevalent than in Tsolyanu, life is cheap, and all are loosely governed by tribal leaders, pirate lords, merchant princes and, to a lesser degree in cities, a religion-based aristocracy.

Without central leadership or monetary authority, trade is based on commodities and assets, in particular slaves. Absent a means of assuring coin purity, a fair amount of Salarvyani coins as well as bars of gold and silver of varying purity are used as money. Lacking agreed laws about property and coordinated trade, it's a place of violent theft, vast poverty, draconian tribal law enforcement, and stark contrasts between those with and without wealth.

According to the Sourcebook, no broad clan structure exists such as those in Tsolyanu. Concepts of family and kinship are more limited. Therefore, the concept of aridani does not exist either. While gender roles are more traditional, opportunities for the different sexes are not formally bounded by this.

The Haida Pakalani speak Hijajai, from the Khishan language group that contains the tongues of the 5 Empires, and similar to Salarvyani.

Culture and dominion have waxed and waned through the ages. At the height of Engsvan Hla Ganga, emissaries from Haida Pakala paid homage to the Priest Kings. It is unclear whether this was simply to foster trade or actually represented some form of central leadership.

In Haida Pakala, Ksarul's worship (under various different names) predates all. However, Mretten's ancient worship took a more central role with the dependence of Haida Pakalani on Chanayaga (the ocean) and the vagaries of the weather.

Throughout history, humans have attempted to understand and influence the forces that most dramatically affect their lives by anthropomorphizing them into gods. On Tekumel, the line between cause and effect isn't quite as clear.

Particularly in larger cities, Mretten, more commonly called She Who Strides the Wind, has older and larger temples that date back to ages past. While some of these temples are vast in scale, they are not well utilized or maintained. Haida Pakala does not have a thriving theocracy.

Mretten is likened to some of Avanthé's grimmest aspects with the added twist of human sacrifice to appease her tempestuous nature. With life so cheap and Mretten's symbol of twin upright parallel tridents, these sacrifices evolved into

gruesome spectacles to capture the jaded sensibilities of the populace. Religion in Haida Pakala is little more an opiate for the downtrodden masses.

Stated differently, Haida Pakala is a secular land, much too materialistic to be very keen on temples. As opposed to clan, birth status, education, or divine sanction, it is wealth and the power to keep it that determines social status.

In the Sourcebook on life events, there is mention that the Haida Pakalani tend to practice a Salarvyani style of circumcision that the priests of Mretten very much object to. Each HP princeling supports a small priesthood of She Who Strides the Wind, and the larger towns often have small and rather humble shrines to Shiringgayi, and/or to some of Pavar's Pantheon (1.832).

With its higher temperatures and seasonal shifts, storms are an omnipresent concern in Haida Pakala. Mretten's clergy claim some dominion over these storms and, on occasion, have been known to successfully invoke their goddess to perform related miracles.

A secret society called the Company of the Eye of the Storm may have common roots within the temples of Mretten, Avanthé, and Dilinala. They are very accomplished at sorcery. Shiringgayi may also share this society. However, there is no known or acknowledged linkage between the worship of Mretten and Pavar's pantheon.

At least some Salarvyani consider Mretten to be an aspect of their own Shiringgayi, or vice versa. There are a few similarities of worship. It is the custom on both coasts to raise obelisks in honor of the Goddess, in gratitude for storms averted or as protection from storms or raiding fleets (says the Sourcebook).

As an intriguing tidbit, the ritual center for worship of Shiringgayi is a "temple-city" named after her on the shore of Lake Mrissutl near the Pechano border. The family that rules the City of Shiringgayi and controls much of the priesthood of Salarvya field several armies. The Armies of Tekumel book for Salarvya notes that there is a "Nchesh (=legion) of the Secret Goddess", whose heavy infantry use tridents and barbed spears, and who serve secretly, only on an island in the lake, where they guard certain ancient ruins. They are rumored to be there to keep something or someone from emerging, not to keep people from arriving on the island.

In Seal of the Imperium 2:1, There's an unofficial article in there about Haida Pakala.

Haida Pakala could be a much more congenial place for priests of the Pariah Deities to operate than the Five Empires are. Consider this reply from the Professor on The Blue Room, many years ago...

<http://www.indeterminate.net/%7enewt/blueroom.php?action=4&messid=137>

The following back-story for a character beginning in Keruna highlights one possible vision of that moderately large city. WARNING: GRAPHIC!

Do'olnar Pretast'ta crossed Mretten's vast temple expanse at a brisk purposeful pace. As one of the most ancient temples in Keruna, a port city in western Haida Pakala, its many thousands of chambers, crypts, and ruins sprawled over an inconceivably large area. It was said that some portions of the temple literally dated back to The Fisherman Kings. He had never seen anything quite that old, but it was certainly possible; he had only been invited to enter certain portions of the inner temple. Ditolana had never been practiced here. Practically speaking, so near to the Flats of Gyogma, all construction regardless of how sturdy, gradually sank, which accomplished the same destructive purpose.

He had been away on assigned duty, tending to the needs of their Tsolyani visitors. Their unfortunate discovery surely threatened the Ritual High-Priest Machta'ar's fortunes as well as those of the temple. He had much to report. With so many under his care and unable to safely break away to send a message, he had been forced to grimly watch the undoing of centuries of effort. Hopefully, his news had not flown ahead of him.

Absently, he noted that the fish and crabs still slowly feasted on his Goddess' lunar sacrifice from the night before. Arms secured behind the sable-tressed girl's back, a venomous lancer crab had first been sewn inside her, and then she had had the twin parallel tridents of Mretten jammed through her young breasts. With her ankles then secured to the trident shafts, she had been effectively immobilized as these were tipped upright into the well-used altar recesses. Screaming incoherently as they all did, with blood flowing down the girl's torso and legs, the altar had been slowly immersed into the consecrated seawater with only her thrashing head emerging. As hymns were sung and prayers offered, the small fish and crabs in the holy pool, long accustomed to feasting on the flesh of these unfortunate sacrifices, fell to with measured gusto. Larger predators were discouraged from entering the divine pool by the naturally small size of Chanayaga's grotto. While it did happen, that often resulted in the too-rapid demise of the sacrifice, a clear sign of impending doom by She Who Strides the Wind, Mretten's common name among the people.

As a frequent supporting cast member in such rituals himself, he knew that the girl had been frequently healed so that her torments would last from Gayel's ascendance to the dawning of Tuleng, at which time, she was finally allowed to expire. That the day dawned clear and calm with a steady breeze was a visible sign that their sacrifice had been accepted and acknowledged by his grim goddess. All who wrested their lives from the Chanayaga's depths and called Keruna home saw the portents as good for their respective trades. The pirates and fishermen would have left in mass on the morning tide.

Something about the set of the girl's shoulder arrested Do'olnar's attention and motion. With a sudden sickening feeling, his eyes found the small blemish on the girl's tattered left shoulder that told him that he was looking at the mangled remains of his youngest sister. So beautiful! She had been in training to be a priestess here! What had happened?!