



The Temple of Lady Avánthe

Mistress of Heaven, Maid of Beauty, Mother of Devotion

A Tékumel Netbook

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The Aspects of Lady Avánthe

**Mistress of Heaven,
Maid of Beauty,
Mother of Devotion**

*The Goddess dwells beside a Pool of Cerulean Blue, Ever-
Changing yet Ever-the-Same; Eternal, Contemplating Her
Loveliness in the Still Water*

*Warm Cycles of Tranquillity Flow from Her Left Hand; Gentle
Waves of Sweetest Joy Emanate from Her Right Hand*

She Who Is Peace; She Who Is Adoration

*Oh, Goddess, We Cover Thy World with Flowers; Oh, Mistress,
We Build and Plant and Make Thy Abode a Paradise of Endless
Being ...*

Misuénde the Singer

*(Engsvanyáli, Reign of the One
Hundred and Nineteenth
Priestking of Gánga the
Glorious of the Gods)*

In the Age of the Priestking **Amukánatl**, just after the Flower Wars and before the World became a place of mourning, the Priestess **Teshkorúsa** of Jakállá did compose a tome listing all 93 Aspects of the Glorious Goddess. This work has since disappeared, but extracts are found in the Volume of Sweet Endeavour, the Scrolls of Niukúmina, the Records of the Keeper of Blue, and the Book of the Spirits of the Fecund Earth. Here I set down only a sampling from those compendia.

The First to be glorified is **Sikkuné**: she is of the form of an old woman of gentle mien, kindly, courteous, and noble. Her hair is white, her robe is of blue marked with symbols in the tongue named Thu'úsa. She it is who consoles those who suffer family losses, those who mourn, those whose hearts are sorrowful, those who would commit suicide and so leave this world, those whose Skeins are desolate and lonely. Her greatest

shrines are at Béy Sü, Páya Gupá, Katalál, and Thráya. Her symbols are many, and her rituals are well-attended.

The Second is **Kátha** the Warrior Maid: she appears as a young woman in full armour, except for her face which wears an expression of sweet joy. She is the patron of victories, of women who fight for their homes and their dignities, of glorious singing of battle-songs, of the repelling of ignobility and sloth. She loves mighty Lord Karakán and also serves as the handmaiden of Lord Chegárra. Warriors, both male and female, attend her rites. Her greatest shrine is in Khirgár, and she has lesser fanes in Mrelú, Si'ís, and Chéne Hó.

The Third is **Tahelé**, the Maid of Beauty: she is the patron of young girls who would be beautiful, of sex and love and the burgeoning of pleasure

between man and woman. Her image is that of a slender young woman, standing on tiptoe and reaching out both arms. She grants favours to those who are ill-visaged and ugly, to those who are crippled and twisted, and to women who cannot find a mate. Her shrines are everywhere in the Empire and even beyond its frontiers, although the greatest one stands in a village 37 Tsán north of Usenánu on the Sákbe-road to Béy Sü. There, her priests and priestesses dress her golden image each day, anoint her with Purú- oil and sweet perfumes, and give her sacrifices of gentle blue flowers and fruits.

The Fourth is **E'éth** of the Rains: she it is who brings the rain to water the fields; her older sister is **Quyéla** (see below), who fertilises the crops, and her oldest sister is **Chikúna**, who ripens the crops and causes them to be ready for the harvest. E'éth has no shrines or images but is worshipped in the fields by priests and priestesses specially trained in her rituals. If she does not respond and rain does not come, farmers may then appeal to **Qalái**, the Maintainer of Cycles.

The Fifth is **Quyéla**, mentioned above. She causes the crops to become fertile, animals (and people) to mate and bring forth offspring, and pollens to blow with **Keréna**, the Wind. **Quyéla's** rituals are held in the fields at night, and the celebrants often become drunken and engage in wild orgies which result in the scattering of semen into the soil. She has a shrine in each village temple of Avánthe where green stalks of grain are sacrificed. In the south-west, villagers often come to her shrines to consummate their marriages before her altar. Her images are various: sheaves of grain, statues depicting a sower bearing a sack of seed, statuettes of a young couple engaged in sexual congress, etc.

The Sixth is **Chraikála**, who cares for children. Her images are simple globes of blue glass (about 3 inches in diameter) engraved with her name in the Thu'usa script. A worshipper holds one of these globes to his or her breast and prays for aid. This Aspect finds lost children, helps sick babes, succours orphans and those in poverty, and also guides parents in matters of upbringing and discipline. Her greatest shrine is at Katalál, a small addition built onto the Avánthe temple there.

The Seventh is **Nikoné**, the Pillar of Purity: she is the patron of those who have been raped or violated, those who suffer at the hands of a brutal spouse (either male or female), those who are

wronged by law or government, and those who have been cursed by a sorcerer or a demon. She is depicted as a strong, athletic-appearing woman with the head of some sort of bird of prey. Some of her statues have six arms, in each of which are symbols: a rod, a sword, a book, a bowl, a tube (?), and a six-sided polygon of blue ceramic. Her temples are found within most shrines to the Goddess all over the Empire.

The Eighth is **Chikúna**, the Ripener: she sees to the passing of cycles, the re-emergence of Time, the ending of events, the excellence of finished Skeins, and the harvesting of crops. She is charged with the ripening of fruits and grain, the coming to term of pregnancies in both humans and animals, and the cutting of the harvests. Pregnant women frequent her shrines, which are found in almost every temple of the Goddess across the Empire, leaving sacrifices of coins, flowers, and menstrual blood. When a woman gives birth to a male child, she leaves the umbilical cord upon a special altar in **Chikúna's** shrine; a female child is honoured by leaving the afterbirth similarly. Rituals and prayers and feasting accompany these sacrifices. Those who have multiple births (twins, triplets) are seated upon daises covered with blue carpets, and their bodies are anointed with perfumes and oils and are displayed to the public in elaborate ceremonies. **Chikúna's** greatest shrine is in Jaikalór, to which thousands of pregnant women make pilgrimages to ask her favour.

The Ninth is **Aoméla**, the Maintainer: she sees to the smooth running of society, the proprieties of the clans, the ties of religion and law and government. She is thus a frequent companion of Lord Chegárra, and her stout, matronly images are often set beside His at yearly festivals. Worshipers who have been wronged by their clan or by the government come to her shrines to appeal, and her clergy may then take likely cases to higher courts, serving as unpaid lawyers. Her greatest shrine is within the Avánthe temple at Béy Sü, where her followers maintain a law-school and library. She was the special patron of the 52nd Seal, the Empress Aléya, the Damsel of Purity, who ruled from 1,872 to 1,931 A.S.

The Tenth is **Niluéldé**, the Mistress of the Air: she governs the Demons of the Air, who are Lady Avánthe's special creatures. When summoned correctly, she may bring her strange warriors, who can only be seen as wraith-like, bluish-green patches of mist by such perceptive races as the Pé Chói, Ssú, Tinalíya, Hlüss, and Mihállí. She

has no temples, and her images are statuettes of blue malachite carved to represent a naked woman sleeping. Evocation is effected by special spells taught only within the inner temple and only to women. They accept only spells from those who summon them, drawing the spell from the summoner's mind forever (it must then be relearned).

The Eleventh is **Hlikársh**, the Master of the Demons of Fire. These are specifically Lady Avánthe's creatures and have nought to do with the incandescent monsters of Lord Vimúhla. They represent the warmth of the home fire, the hearth, and the peace of good family company. They calm ferocious animals and drive away serpents and vermin. They are only evoked out-of-doors by specially consecrated priests (never priestesses). They are whimsical, however, and may or may not aid. They accept magical books, scrolls, or other items as sacrifices.

The Twelfth is **Dedé**, the Master of the Spirits of the Earth. He represents the warm, enfolding, fertile earth and never the grave-earth and damp of Lord Sáрку and other Lords of the Dark Trinity. He is the special patron of potters, brick-makers, stone masons, farmers, and others who work in the soil. His temples are often found in remote corners of some village field: small, square buildings of sod or stone, in which a simple male statue made of mud (and left unbaked) is placed upon a dais. No fire or water is allowed into these little shrines, and sacrifices of carved bits of wood, clay pots filled with beer or liquor, and wrapped bundles of cloth are laid before him. He seeks earth-magic: scrolls, spells, devices, etc. that deal with the working of soil, stone, etc. His celebrants sit naked in a circle, eat fresh bread, drink beer, and recite hymns to his glory. Sometimes he may then send his special spirits to aid his worshippers in some matter related to the earth.

The Thirteenth is **Jelél**, the Goddess of Potence: she aids men who have become impotent and women who are barren. Her images consist of a female organ made of light blue moonstone, and a male organ made out of Lapis Lazuli. Her shrines are found within the temples of Lady Avánthe all over the Empire, as well as in Mu'ugalavyá and Yán Kór. Prayers are said over the relevant image and a little golden pot of fresh milk is spilled over it.

The Fourteenth is **Keréna**, the Wind: she aids ships and sailing but is treated with great caution

since she can also bring windstorms and cause vessels to founder. Her image is that of a young woman with raised wings that are feathered like a bird. She is the patron of things of the air: the Hláka, birds, and all aerial creatures of the hinterlands. Her shrines are round so that aerial creatures can never hurt themselves on the corners. They are filled with singing birds, which are never caged and come and go as they please. She is the favourite deity of sailors, and she is said to be the special friend of **Niluéldé**, the Mistress of the Air (q.v. above). It is said that her clergy can bring about windstorms strong enough to sink ships and blow away armies, but she does not favour violence and rarely allows this.

The Fifteenth is **Chorisánde**, the Guide of Fools. She is the patron of the mentally deficient, the deranged, and those who are born with mental defects. Her small shrines are built on the east side of a temple of Avánthe in most large cities, and they function as hospitals for these unfortunate people. Her priests and priestesses are closely connected with the clergy of Lord Keténgku and the healing arts. Afflicted children are often brought to her shrines and abandoned; they will be well cared for as long as they live. She is depicted as a motherly woman with heavy breasts. In her arms she sometimes holds a babe. The clans and the Imperium both pay to support her hospitals and staff.

The Sixteenth is **Bolénde**, the Lord of the Spirits of Water. Like **Niluéldé**, **Hlikársh**, and **Dedé** (above), he is charged with the demons of a specific realm. He is the patron of those missing at sea, of ships that are becalmed, of the creatures of the water (both fresh and salt), of certain beings from other Planes where water is the medium of existence, and of sunken treasures. His images are shaped like swimming fish with high dorsal fins and long, serpentine tails. His shrines are simple stone platforms, found along the banks of a lake, river, or ocean, and his only sacrifices are fresh fish (not crustaceans or eel-like creatures).

The Seventeenth to the Twenty-Fifth Aspects are now lost or fallen into desuetude. They seem to have been local variants of certain of those described here. Scholars of the temple can provide some of their names and descriptions if one is interested.

The Twenty-Sixth is **Shuchéla**, the Virgin: she cares for youths undergoing puberty. Her priestesses provide counsel and medical aid to girls, and her priests similarly guide adolescent

boys. She has no shrines, but her clergy are usually to be found on the staff of larger Avánthe temples everywhere. Her images are of a young woman with her hands down at her sides. Symbols and special talismanic marks cover her body from her chin down to her knees, and she wears a head-dress of blue Khéshchal plumes.

The Twenty-Seventh is **Makórsa**, the Kind Protectress of Trees and Forests. She guards trees (specifically old, gnarled Gapúl-trees and tall Tíu-trees that stand alone) and is said to slay those who would cut them down wantonly without replanting. She also sees to wounded animals and those who are wrongfully hunted (including escaped slaves and prisoners!). She is thus the patron of foresters, hunters who would use their victims for food, and those who travel through the woods. Her shrines consist of small, wooden houses built on the brow of a hill in rural areas. Within these, her image, a carved wooden statue of a tall, commanding woman with bow and arrow, is found. She accepts sacrifices of berries, roots, and wild honey.

The Twenty-Eighth Aspect has been expunged, for what reasons no one knows.

The Twenty-Ninth is **Kshésa**, the Knower of Cycles: she holds the keys to those of the Planes Beyond ruled by Lady Avánthe. She is the patron of books relating to nature and its various forms, to the tranquil passage between the Planes, and to sorcerous spells guarded by the Temple. Her image -- a prim, scholarly young woman sculpted in blue faience seated cross-legged upon a dais -- is to be found in the scholar's chambers of every Avánthe temple, usually on a shelf above the door. Students often sacrifice bits of fresh fruit to her, along with a bit of incense. She is a friend of **Qalái**, the Maintainer of Cycles, q.v.

The Thirtieth is **Nyéles**, the Wise: she is the patron of womanly wisdom and intuition. It is customary to pray for her aid whenever a woman needs to make a decision about something unknown or for which she lacks data. She has no shrines, but the priesthoods of Lady Avánthe's temples accept small sacrifices of money or gems from women who believe that they made a correct choice with **Nyéles'** guidance. She is pictured as a seated female figure with indistinct features and wrapped in a veil. These figurines, often of gold, are worn around the neck or set upon a little beside table.

The Thirty-First is **Jogái**, the Songstress: she

patronises music, both vocal and instrumental. Her tiny blue turquoise statuettes are worn as amulets by almost every woman who sings or plays an instrument in the Empire. Her likenesses vary: a lute-like Sra'úr for one who plays that instrument, a kneeling girl for a singer or a boy, similarly, for a male singer, etc. Musicians squeeze their image of **Jogái** before a performance for luck. Her shrines are found across the Empire. Her clergy operate a music academy in Jakállá that is justly famous, and she has others in Béy Sü, Tumíssa, and Thráya.

The Thirty-Second is **Eluláiku**, the Purveyor of Excellent Alimentation: he patronises cooking, gourmet foods, and eating (but not gluttony). He is represented as a seated man with a tray of foodstuffs in front of him or on his lap. He has no shrines, but every wealthy kitchen has a statue of him. He accepts no sacrifices or prayers but is said to relish a friendly thought while one is enjoying a good meal. The cooks of the Empire treat him as a patron saint.

The Thirty-Third is **Póndu**, the Keeper of the Scales: he is shown as an old man holding a balance in one hand and a staff in the other. He sees to weights and measures, business integrity, proper practices, and honesty. Most markets and market police headquarters display his statue (often of blue pottery) prominently. Whenever a market opens in the morning, Póndu is invoked, and a piece of incense is burned before him; this is repeated when the market closes at night. He has shrines in many administrative areas of the larger temples.

The Thirty-Fourth is **Halél**, the Servitor of the Forlorn: she leads unmarried women (mostly) to find spouses. She is depicted as a spider-like, six-legged, delicate being with bright blue eyes of sapphire or even blue diamond. Unmarried girls often place this image beside their sleeping mats and pray to her before going to bed. Her shrines are found in most temples of the Goddess, and her clergy often act as match-makers. For some unknown reason, she also is invoked when parents seek a name for a new-born child.

The Thirty-Fifth is **Varému**, the Protector of the Small: he is charged with guarding small animals, pets, and even little children. He deals harshly with animal abuse: his statues are of dark bronze and depict a stern monster with fangs, a scythe-like weapon, and talons! His shrines exist in most temples of the Goddess; these are usually filled with pets of all kinds, and his clergy spends much

time in prosecuting those who harm, abandon, or mistreat animals. He accepts sacrifices of money, and garlands of flowers.

The Thirty-Sixth is **Koruláinen**, the Giant Within the Earth: she (it?) guards the secret treasures of the Temple of Avánthe wherever they might be. This creature is described as a furry, eight-limbed giant that smells of some vile substance the odour of which causes unconsciousness. The demon is never invoked -- and is rarely mentioned -- but is said to know whenever a shrine is being violated and arrives by itself. It has no shrines or special rituals.

The Thirty-Seventh through Forty-Seventh are local manifestations of the Goddess. They are rarely known outside of their own limited regions. Worse, their names and descriptions differ from text to text and scholar to scholar.

The Forty-Eighth is **Njévra**, the Cold: he is the patron of ice, snow, and the cold that dwells in the north. He is depicted as a pale blue face of whitish-blue stone with the eyes and mouth closed. He is not often invoked, and only one shrine is known: at Khirgár, possibly under Yán Koryáni, N'lüss, or even Lorún influence. No prayers or rituals are known. A form of this deity is much more popular in Yán Kór.

The Forty-Ninth is **Zerússa**, the One of Roads: she guides travellers who have lost their way. She is usually portrayed on medals and in amulet form as a bent, ugly, old woman leaning on a staff. She has no shrines but accepts offerings of food, wine, etc. from those who seek her aid. Most caravans carry an image of her, and she is pictured on the lintels of many Sákbe-road towers.

The Fiftieth is **Orodhún**, the Paragon of Unimaginable Allure: she is the principle of beauty, of graceful form, of pure form and perfect dimensions. She is shown as an abstract triangle of blue sapphire stone, the better quality the more desirable. She is the patron of art, painting, sculpture, and physical perfection. Her clergy are chosen for their beauty; her shrines are thus filled with lovely women and handsome men. Older artists also come to pray for the success of a specific work, of course, as do nonhumans seeking to create artistic works appealing to humans. She accepts no offerings except simple prayers. Her studios and academies are found in Thráya, Ferinára, Jakálla, Usenánu, Tumíssa, and Chéne Hó, but her greatest shrine with an extensive art school and museum attached, is in

Béy Sü.

The Fifty-First is **Kandomél**, the One of Smooth Remembering: he is the patron of gentle old age, tranquillity, and peaceful living. He is shown as a kindly old man, seated upon a low dais, and holding three golden rings (?). He has very few shrines, the largest being in Mrelú. He accepts offerings of money, golden beads, and gems, in return for which he is said to facilitate the vicissitudes of old age. Those who are tired of living can obtain gentle release from this life through special liqueurs dispensed by his priests and priestesses. He is said to be a close friend of Lord Belkhánu.

The Fifty-Second through Fifty-Eighth are lost to history. No text contains their names, although scholars agree that they once existed and these slots were indeed filled.

The Fifty-Ninth is **Qalái**, the Maintainer of Cycles: this deity of indeterminate sex guards the smooth continuation of the universe from those who would upset it (such as Lord Hrü'ü). This Aspect is depicted as a broad-based pyramid of bright blue stone or ceramic; this is inscribed with symbols, spells, and talismans in the Thu'usa tongue. **Qalái** needs no offerings, shrines, or priesthood but pursues his (her, its?) affairs far away among the Many Planes. Once a year, however, during fifth Intercalary Day, the priests of Lady Avánthe at the shrine in Komoré gather to do homage and to request that the Universe may not be overturned, as was the Egg of the World.

The Sixtieth is **Weltíga**, the Lady of the Scrolls: she is the patron of her temple's administration, records, scribal schools, and beautiful calligraphy. Her worshippers create elegant pictures using the letters of the Tsolyáni script; these are inscribed in colours, gold, silver, and powdered gems on vellum and are submitted to the temple authorities for judgement. Scribes of Lady Avánthe's faith often keep an image of her on their writing tables. She is depicted as a slim, pretty, nearly nude girl with long, curling tresses and a necklace of blue stones. She accepts offerings of blue gems, particularly sapphires. Her shrines at Mekú, Úrmish, and Thráya also function as scribal schools where calligraphy in many languages and styles is taught.

The Sixty-First is **Nionél**, the Patron of Fragrances: she governs scents, perfumes, sweet essences, and cachets. The oil-makers and perfumers all have statuettes of her in their

factories: she is pictured as a serpent-headed woman embracing herself. Her shrines are few; Haumá is perhaps the most famous. Here the Purú oil so popular in Béy Sü is made, as well as a thousand perfumes. The only other major centre for perfume in the Empire is at Púrdimal, under the patronage of Lord Ksáru.

The Sixty-Second is **Mékhis**, the Defender of Harmony. He is another militant Aspect of the Goddess: the patron of such Legions as Eléchu of Usenánu (30th Archers). He is shown as a many-headed, six-armed warrior, each head wearing a plumed helmet and each hand bearing a weapon. He represents the resistance of the forces of cyclical change to unplanned, chaotic change. His shrines are found wherever Lady Avánthe's legions are bivouacked. Just before a battle her soldiers offer drops of their own blood, prayers inscribed on paper and dipped in blood, and small coins. Her main shrine is located in the temple of Lady Avánthe at Mekú. Smaller ones are found at Si'is, Tsurú, and Tumíssa.

The Sixty-Third is **Cháith**, the Empress: she patronises those of her worshippers who seek to rule. Her images show a rigid, stern-faced woman garbed in a blue robe, seated on a throne-like dais and crowned with an elaborate head-dress of Khéshchal plumes and gilded plaques. She is said to represent one of the ancient queens of the Engsvanyáli Priestkings, but it is not known which one. She guards palaces, gates, fortifications, and secure places belonging to her worshippers. Sacrifices to her consist of gold coins. She has a large shrine in the temple of Avánthe on the east bank of the river at Béy Sü.

The Sixty-Fourth to the Ninety-Third Aspects are all local, forgotten, or similar deities with different names and depictions. Those with deeper interests should consult the Scrolls of Niukúmina, which are to be found in the great library of the Temple of Avánthe at Béy Sü.

**Be Glorified Forever,
Oh Queen of Beauty!**