The Five Empires

# Livyánu

The state with by far the greatest continuity going back in time is Livyánu. This completely totalitarian theocratic state has existed since before the First Imperium (10,000 years old). The people of Livyánu are thoroughly dedicated to their shadow gods, and all social structures are connected in some way to the great temples of these mysterious divinities. There are no clans, in the Tsolyáni or Mu’ugalavyáni sense of the term. Instead, there are Septs. Septs divide (based on aptitude and achievement rather than blood) the laity connected to a particular Temple into hierarchic and functional groups.

Other nations look upon this with disgust and with horror.

# Tsolyánu

The state that is perhaps the closest to Livyánu in terms of bureaucratic elaboration is the Empire of the Petal Throne. This largest of states is governed by the Tlakotáni family, a dynasty that has held absolute power in the great basin between the Chákan and Ranállan Highlands, between the Thendráya Massif and the Deeps of Chanayága, for 2350 years. Each Tlakotáni emperor rules in total seclusion from within the Fortress of Avanthár, and is considered a god by his people.

Other nations view the Tsolyáni as try-hards.

# Mu’ugalavyá

The Land of the Three Rivers, centred on the Mu’ugállu, the Putuhénu, and the Rukkúnket watersheds, is nearly the equal of Tsolyánu, but is governed by a charismatic emperor whose public cult maximizes devotion to the state. The current emperor has initiated a religious revolution, introducing the syncretic god Hŕsh as the primary temple in the land. He has also opened up relations of Livyánu, and some people suspect that the dramatic changes in spiritual life have had to do with this rapprochement.

Mu’ugalavyá has existed for only three centuries, when the northerners of what is today Yán Kór flooded south through The Chelnú Gap and forced the city-states previously existing along its three famous waterways to unite in order to face the invasions.

The Tsolyáni see the current emperor and his religious revolution as a threat, and have launched a series of military campaigns designed to topple him.

# Yán Kór

Yán Kór is a unified state in name only. The many Kingdoms which have only recently surrendered their sovereignty to the greater whole still exercise much independence, and the office of the emperor itself is filled as a result of a vote taken by the most powerful nobles in the land. The reigning emperor is a very capable man, and is succeeding in strengthening the central government. He too views the changes in Mu’ugalavyá as a threat.

# Salarvyá

Salarvyá is not a unified imperial state at all, but rather a constitutional monarchy whose “King” has more or less only ritual functions. This form of government has been maintained in Salarvyá for 1267 years, and during that millennium the merchant class that brought about the political innovation has made itself ever more and more powerful. Today the merchant fleets of Salarvyá rule the Deeps of Chanayága and colonies have been established as far away as Tsúpil Hláya.

Salarvyá is expansionist and aggressive; it is more dangerous than Mu’ugalavyá, but takes care to hide this fact.

Cities of Tsolyánu

# Jakálla

Jakálla, the Mistress of the Mssúma River, City Half as Old as the World, is unique in that it is built upon a series of natural and man-made islands in the Gulf of Porudáya (much like Venice on Earth). There are also two bankside adjuncts to the city, Pála Jakálla on the north bank and Músa Jakálla on the south bank. This means that Ditlána is done differently here; there is no gradual build-up of elevation and no extensive underworld. There is, as elsewhere, a City of the Dead south and east of the city on the Eqónuyel Heights and this certainly has an underworld.

# Jáikalor

Jáikalor, the Queen of Arámkom Bay, Gateway to the World, is a typical small to mid-sized Tsolyáni port city, built a little distance from the east bank of the Ranánga River (to give it room for Ditlána). Currently the city is rebuilding its defenses to guard against the ambitious Salarvyáni. The Burújikh hiHitláshikh, the Tower of Victory, is a notable landmark, raised to commemorate victory over the Engsvanyáli during the reign of the First Tlakotáni.

# Paránta

Paránta, the City of Processions, the City of Joy, is a place known for fusing Salarvyáni culture with Tsolyáni culture during the Time of No Kings. It is also associated with Engsvanyálu, and was considered to be the second city of that maritime league thousands of years ago. When after the Fall of Kolméktio Mridlenél sorcerer-kings oppressed the people, a phenomenon known as the Muthubá Movement appeared in Paránta to protect the peasants and overthrow violent despots. The legendary hero Hagárr of Paránta led this movement for a time, casting down several dark tyrants.

# Penóm

Penóm, the City of Beautiful Bridges, is a city known for having miles-long wooden bridges crossing the Kshétra Estuary. Archeological evidence proves that Penóm is the furthest east that any outpost of the Empire of Llyán of Tsámra was established. Apparently they knew it by any of a number of names: Malri-mulrep, Krokolaz, and Delob. Long just a fishing village, Penóm has grown into a small city over the last millennia.

# Thráya

Thráya, the City of the Trumpet Flower, the City of The Magic Stroke; this city is known in legend for having been created by sorcery some 10,000 years ago. Later, when Queen Nayári of the Silken Thighs wanted to shift her headquarters to face a threat of invasion over what are today known as the Oqréjja Mountains, she moved to Thráya. The ruins of her palace can still be seen by looking south from atop the Bridge of the Sun or east from the battlements of the Fortress of the High Lord.

# Sokátis

Sokátis, the City of Roofs, the City of Myriad Loggia, is an interesting place where one can walk for hours and never emerge from under an arcade. In many respects, Sokátis is more typical of a Salarvyáni city; carven gargoyles, ornate parapets, intricate bas-reliefs and heavily decorated walls slope up to the ponderous vaults and domes of its roofs.

# Béy Trántis

Béy Trántis, the City of Victory, the City of Perfect Symmetry, was designed by the Mridlenèláni Archon Ssesmúga IV. This famous scholar employed scientific and cultural knowledge to make a brilliant city. Being a lover of mathematics and science, Ssesmúga IV sought advice from wizards and wise men, who built the city following the principles of *nraméskh*. The city is divided into ten blocks, out of which two consist of temples, state buildings and palaces and the remaining eight are allotted to the public. In order to ensure security, huge fortifications were built, pierced by seven strong gates.

# Úrmish

Úrmish, according the mythological legend, was founded by the god, Chiú Knésh (an aspect of Wurú, said to have been born there), and so the place is called the City of the Sentinel, and the Blue Stone Bulwark. This mention of colour derives from the lovely, if dour, dark blue basalt with which the entire city is built. Politically, Úrmish has been ruled by Llyáni exiles, pre-Bednálljan pirates, Gilráyan monks, Chákan warlords, the Empire of the Gods, and now Tsolyánu. It has retained traces of all these to this very day.

# Butrús

Butrús is located deep in the Gilráya Forest, high in the hills of Pán Cháka. Its major egress lies south along the Podhhár River to the Deeps of Chanayága, rather than east toward Úrmish or west toward the Mu’ugalavyáni frontier. Called the Gem of the Gilráya, Butrús is a pretty little city making artistic use of woods as much as stone. The city is coveted by the Mu’ugalavyáni, partially because it was indeed a part of that nation in the past.

# Katalál

Katalál, the City of the Battle of Falling Hills, is a small city (actually a very large town) that is the capital of Ketvíru Province. Like most of the bustling cities of the Bednállja Plain it is flat, neat, stolid and a little pompous - devoted to the agricultural bounty of the region, and to the making of money. Its major exports include forestry products, timber, hides, and Chlén-hide weapons and tools.

# Béy Sý

Béy Sý, the Soul of the World, the World Mountain of Mutual Harmony, was built by the fourth Mridrenèláni emperor Ssirandár I. This famous ruler situated his new capital on the confluence of four rivers, the two greatest being the Mssúma and the Arjáshtra. The Kingdom of the Gods was ruled from this place for over five thousand years, the longest running single political entity (except possibly for the government of Livyánu) on the continent. Béy Sý remains an important imperial administrative center, even though the far northern mountain fortress of Avanthár is the current capital.

# Púrdimal

Púrdimal, the Black Toad of the Empire, the City of the Cradle, is a place founded by refugees fleeing the destruction of Purdaním when the Demon Prince Kurritlakál devastated that ancient city over three thousand years ago. Built on high ground within the wetlands called The Cradle of the Twins (in legend, Ksárul and Dlamélish were twin deities and eventual lovers), the city’s reputation for eerie and eldritch phenomena has grown and grown.

# Purdaním (New)

New Purdaním, the City of Rebirth, the Bastion Against Evil, is a city founded by the Tsolyáni emperor Hejjéka IV, “The Restorer of Dignities”. It is populated by returning families whose ancestors lived in Old Purdaním, but also by colonists from all over the Second Imperium. The haunted ruins of Old Purdaním have been off-limits for nine centuries, but in recent years have been opened up to cautious exploration and plunder.

# Mrelú

Mrelú, the City of Roads, lies not only beside the important Chaigávra River, but also the roads leading east and west between Tsolyánu and Mu’ugalavyá. Across the river and southwest of the city lies the scenic Férghanu Valley which bisects the hills of Dó Cháka and leads to Chéne Hó and thence to Malcháiran. Because the city guards the entry to the Férghanu and the fords across the Chaigávra, Mrélu has seen plenty of warfare. Scholars have found evidence of eight separate cities in the ground on which Mrélu now stands.

# Chéne Hó

Chéne Hó, the Middle City, the City of the Friends of Man, lies amid the hills of Dó Cháka and so also close to the enclaves of the non-human Pé Chói. Because of this, Chéne Hó is a center of scholarship and of the ancient crafts of embroidery, gold embroidery, the weaving of Gýdru-cloth, and engraving, carving, and painting on wood. The city is informally semi-autonomous, the nearby human population speaking a pigeon of Mu’ugalavyáni and Tsolyáni, and is claimed by both of those two powerful empires.

# Méku

Méku, the City Beautiful, stands at the confluence of the Chaigávra and Umétla rivers. It is part of the highlands belt of cities that staunchly hangs onto the worship of the Tlokiriqáluyal. Its Governor retains his traditional title, The Disposer of Méku, and its religious life traditionally revolves around the Temple of Vimúhla, God of Fire and Destruction. Méku withstood the waves of barbarians who broke upon its walls in the invasions of the second millennium, and today it is a staging area for punitive raids into Mu’ugalavyá.

# Tumíssa

Tumíssa, the City of the Crag, the City of the High Redoubt, is built inside the Átkolel caldera and is surrounded by a series of lakes that act as a vast moat. Considered impregnable, the volcano that serves as its base is part of the Chayéngar Range and the Umétla River flows from Lake Párunal to feed its lakes. To the east across these lakes lies Súba Valley, and beyond, rising rank on rank, rises the Thendráya Massif. Tumíssa is another of Tsolyanu’s cities that remains steeped in the worship of the Masters of the Shadow; as in Méku, the fire god Vimúhla holds power here.

# Fasíltum

Fasíltum, the City of the Chiming Skulls, the Heart of Flame, stands proudly upon a southward thrusting arm of the Thendráya Massif. Ruled for over ten millennia by the haughty Vríddi Family (who have occupied the thrones of half a dozen empires), Fasíltum is constantly plotting to overthrow the emperor, to strike out with Tumíssa to create a Fire Kingdom, or to ignite a holy war to convert the world to the worship of Vimúhla. Fanatic in their devotion to the god of Fire, the city’s inhabitants are dangerous foes (and perhaps even more dangerous friends).

Several of the Vríddi’s finest are in prison.

# Sárku

Sárku, the City of Death, Eternal Splendour, squats like a carrion beetle upon five hills running down the middle of Mzhu’úm Valley. This place is as close as Tsolyánu gets to having a “forbidden city”. No one goes there. No one, even other worshipers of the Tlokiriqáluyal, welcomes anyone coming from there. The faint scent of *undeath* hangs about everything and everyone having to do with the City of Sárku. High in the mountains, just west of the sky needle of Thénu Thendráya Peak, this city belonging to the Master of Decay goes its own way.

# Avanthár

Avanthár, the Seat of the God-King, the Fortress of the Flowering, is a vast natural fortification cut from the heart of a small mountain. Deep in its center there stands “The Petal Throne”, a beautiful seat of jade shaped like an exquisite half-opened *tetél* flower. Legend swirls around The Petal Throne: it was the supreme creation of the Kingdom of the Gods; it caused the downfall of the Golden Age; it closed over and swallowed up the emperor Tóntiken Rirúne, who was said to have made pacts with demons. These legends don’t even approach the truth.

The Petal Throne is *god*.

# Khirgár

Khirgár, the City of Aromatics, Home of the Anointed Ones, is famous for having an Hlýss city underneath the surface of the earth to the northeast. In fact, the city’s wealth in part derives from gold scavenged from the mounds of slag that dot the plain overlying this settlement. It also means that *dnélu* and *nenyélu* trouble the area at night. Its people anoint themselves with aromatic herbs to ward off the attentions of these creatures.

Cities of Mu’ugalavyá

# Kheíris

Kheíris, prior to the creation of Mu’ugalavyá, came under the control of successive dynasties; the flooding of the Mu’ugállu River has been critical in attracting the ambitions of various claimants, for it ensures the fertility of the soil in the region. Now the most populous city of the empire of Mu’ugalavyá, Kheíris is called The Mother of the World, The Well-Guarded, and The Thousand Towers. It exports grain to as far away as Mélek Táru and Chame’él.

# Heméktu

Heméktu, The Magicians’ Phylactery, was originally a colony of Livyánu (founded some 7000 years ago). This center of thaumaturgy boasts an enormous library and a famous observatory. Its College of the Priesthoods accepts students of all faiths, no matter their nationality or their religion. There is a certain air of mystery about this city, almost as if influenced by Livyánu to this day. The Temple of Hŕsh has had more converts here, proportionately, than anywhere else in Mu’ugalavyá.

# Sru’ú

Sru’ú, The Overwatcher, is so named because it serves as a watchpost over the hill peoples of Pán Cháka and the Gilráya Forest. Currently governed by Lord [Kurtóglish Hizír Reís](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurto%C4%9Flu_H%C4%B1z%C4%B1r_Reis),this adventurer now actively excavates the ruins of Ktélanu, anciently Kutteláino (the home of the legendary wizard Changéla). He hopes to uncover the secret of that ancient city’s destruction, as well as to recover some of the paraphernalia once belonging to that powerful wizard himself.

# Hŕsh Fortress

Hŕsh Fortress, Glory of Lord Hŕsh, is a vast fortification crowning Mi’íhir Hill in the west-central Chákas. It is located an equal distance from Chéne Hó, Katalál, Úrmish, and Sru’ú. Emperor Tu'úmnish Ssa'amýssa spends his summers here, as the elevation and dry air is more comfortable than the humid basin where the Mu’ugállu, the Rukkúnket, and the Putuhénu rivers meet. Recently, a vast walled hunting preserve has begun to be constructed to the east of the fort.

# Edlún

Edlún, The City of Temples, stands between the Tlashté Heights and the Nráksùra Plateau, and was the capital of the Kingdom of God during the Time of No Kings. Instead of having several huge temples with shrines to their gods’ aspects contained inside, Edlún has individual separate shrines – spread out and all mixed together – situated throughout the city. There are three hundred and fifty-five of these, most dedicated to the aspects of Karkánish, Kigársh, Awédha and Di’íla, but also to the aspects of others of the Tlomítlanyal and now to Lord Hŕsh.