

The Barbarian Invasions

The Dragon Warriors were hardy barbarians, scattered tribes who lived in the harsh mountains of the far northwest. They were both stronger and taller than the peoples of the south, averaging about 2m in height to the southerners' 1.56m, and rode into battle 'dragons' that 'flew upon brazen wings', were 'armoured as though with iron' and 'slew with tongues of flame' (scholars from Engsvanyáli times to the present have disputed whether these dragons were in fact aircars preserved since before the Time of Darkness or living beings, perhaps related to the Sró, a species of huge flying reptile brought originally from one of the Shén worlds).

If the Dragon Warriors were anything like their modern descendants, the N'lüss, one can well imagine the terror of the soft and civilised peoples of the south when confronted with serried wedges of these gigantic barbarians, each led by its war-chief, every man swinging a two-metre long two-handed sword, flanked by yelling, ululating hordes of women and youths hurling stones from slings, firing arrows, and running in like madmen to display their courage!

One of the reasons for these invasions was the establishment of the worship of Vimúhla, Lord of Fire. N'lüss culture is based upon violence, and the chiefs and shamans of their ancestors quickly seized upon that 'god' who best suited their ethos: mighty Vimúhla, Lord of Fire, Power of Destruction and Red Ruin, the All-Consuming One, whose function is violence, catharsis and rebirth through the cleansing transition of the Flame.

Their tribal shamans became a red-robed hierarchy, and the squalid log huts of the village of Malcháiran were transformed into the proud towers of the capital of a theocratic empire. Soon a thousand captives went to their deaths each day in the furnaces named *The Cupped Hands of the Flame* atop the truncated pyramids of Lord Vimúhla. The Red Robes sparked the greed of the tribes, united them, and led them out in a mighty wave upon the lands of the south, very much like the raging conflagration which they worshipped.

Thirty years after their first incursions the Dragon Warriors had overrun the many city-states of what is now Mu'ugalavyá and sacked the mighty city of Ch'óchi. Within 50 years they had destroyed the remnants of the Empire of Llyán. The Shén states stopped their progress in the south, but they turned east, plundered the coasts of what is now Yán Kór within another century and became locked in a death struggle with the Three States of the Triangle. The latter fell, and by the end of the second century of their great adventure their banners of painted human skin flapped from the towers of Tsatsayágga in Salarvyá. Here their empire reached its greatest extent. Frustrated in the north by the barren peaks of Jánnu and Kilalámmu, blocked in the east by the Ssú enclave of Ssúyal, and confronted in the south by the rising vitality of the Salarvyáni feudal states, over-extended and too few to maintain their sprawling conquests, the Dragon Warriors set up their boundary stelaes and swore to go no further.

The Empire of the Dragon Warriors maintained its internal cohesion for only some 200 years; by the year 500 of their dynasty, a number of remote regions had begun to splinter away, local rulers arose who were only part-N'lüss, or who were not descended from the Dragon Warriors at all. The hotter climes and softer ways of the south took their toll. The history of the next 1,500 years then reads like a compendium of petty wars, personal intrigues, rivalries and vengeance—and always endless, pointless, self-serving greed ...

SOURCES

Ménum Boródllya

Gáchayayal

(The Dragons)

Original manuscript in the Temple of Thúmis in Khéiris, but copies are commonly available

Tsárnu hiFatlán and Koyón

Bashánvisumkoi

Thékudàlikn molTané

(The Great Expedition to Tané)

in Tsolyáni, available from most book-copyists in Béy Sū