

THE PIONEERS

Vol. 12

The Radio

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227.

Opposition

Mid Brénmènu, 8/626

Amos Keino walked slowly and deliberately from his classroom to his office. The Mitruí Génadema had very kindly provided him an office, since he was teaching two courses there for the entire first fall term. What he really wanted to do was engineering research—developing and refining new devices—a task he had never planned to do as a career, but which had proved increasingly rewarding over the last seven years. But teaching, even when it was elementary engineering or general science, was rewarding in its own way.

His office was one of eight available for faculty, fairly small but adequate, with a larger office for Mitrubbaru, fourth son of Lord Mitru and head of the génadema, at one end, and a secretary for everyone in front of his office. As Amos stepped into his office, he saw the secretary rise from his desk and enter Mitrubbaru's office. Amos put down his satchel of papers and sat to rest a moment. He had about 60 to 90 minutes before heading back to Pértatranisér on the 6 p.m. bus. He found it more restful to take the bus than to drive, and it was probably safer.

He glanced out the small window at the rain pouring down. Brénmènu, the “month of browning” at autumnal Mèddoakwés, was a month of rain in tropical Ora. He pulled out a report from Èndraidha detailing the progress on producing a cheap radio for the weather bureau's reporters. He was starting on page two when he heard a knock on the door.

“Lord Mitru!” he said, surprised by the visitor. He rose and the lord entered his office. In the last three years Mitru, in his mid fifties, had put on a considerable amount of weight, so he walked a bit slowly, but with considerable determination in his step.

“Honored Amos,” he said and extended his hands to shake. Amos took them with his and they shook hands.

“How may I help you, Lord? I’m honored by your visit. I’m sorry I can’t offer you anything.”

“I’ve been in my son’s office, making phone calls and waiting for your return.” Mitru plopped down in the office’s spare chair. “How was your first day of classes?”

“Reasonably good. The mechanical engineering and physics students seem fairly well prepared.”

“I wish you could teach every day! But we’ll take what we can get, especially since Behruz and Lua will be here next term. I was talking to the engineers. I gather the plans for Suksdiu are proceeding fairly well.”

“Yes. I’ll be here for classes Dwodiu and Kwéterdiu, and for research all day Suksdiu. It’ll be dedicated to refining the design for the steam-powered cement mixer and transporter and refining highway construction equipment. May teaches at the Néfa Génadema Tridiu and Penkudiu, so I have to be at home part of those days for the sake of the children.”

“For the children? Amos, you have nannies!”

“We do. But I like to pop in to see them. And I have responsibilities at Pértatranisér as well. I have a small engineering lab there where I am working on several devices, and I’m overseeing the village as well.”

“*Not* Lord Kristoféru?” Mitru was startled. He wagged his finger at Amos.

“Pértatraniséer shouldn’t exist; it represents rebellion or, at least, refusal to accept aristocracy. And it should be part of this province, not Rudhisér, for it is built on *my* land. And now I hear you are helping run it? Why should I not expel you from this city and province instantly!”

“Lord Mitru, we are here to serve people. We serve Ora, its students, you, the people of Néfa, and now the people of Pértatraniséer. If you don’t want me to serve at your génadema, I can serve elsewhere. There is plenty of service to do.”

Mitru raised his hand. “No, no, we want you here, giving classes. I just don’t want you at Pértatraniséer as well.”

“Well, Lord, neither of us have much choice in the matter. Her Majesty assigned it to Rudhisér and wants regular reports. She wanted it to succeed. So we will do what we can to make it succeed. And that means we can get here to strengthen Ora as well.”

He smirked. “It better mean that.”

“We will be providing family members to Ora to teach at the génadema almost every term, and we now have the money to invest in industries here; will that not strengthen Ora?” Amos raised his voice a bit; he was getting tired of Mitru’s jealousy.

“Imagine how much more you could strengthen Ora if there was no Pértatraniséer and your family had a house in this city!”

“Well, Lord, there is a Pértatraniséer and we have a house there. It’s only a half hour away by car. We don’t have to come down, but we want to strengthen relations with you and we want to see this city develop. Melwika won’t shrink if we’re there a bit less.”

“I suppose it won’t.” He looked at Amos for a moment. “Tell Lord Kristoféru that next time he comes through the area, I’d like him to stop and see me.” He rose.

“I will, Lord,” said Amos. Mitru nodded and stepped out of the office.

Amos sat and found it impossible to get any more work done. The family had thought carefully how to handle Lord Mitru; their strategy involved a lot of time in Ora. But it wasn’t working as hoped.

Finally he went out to get on the bus, which took 45 minutes to travel the thirty kilometers because of all the stops it had to make. He spoke to a few regulars; one reason he took the bus was to get to know the people in the nearby villages. That night, however, no one struck up a conversation with him, making him feel even more like a stranger.

He got off at the Pértatranisér bus stop in the thickening twilight and walked up Second Street to their house. The outer wall was complete; inside, only one small section was finished, but the three rooms were plenty for Amos, May, six-year-old Bahiyé, three-year-old Marié, a cook, and a nanny. In the house’s future private courtyard next to the outhouse was the family’s trailer, which Amos had converted into an engineering lab during a quick three-day trip back to Məlwika. He was surprised to see a rover parked there as well.

Amos hurried inside to see a dinner table set and ready for the family, and Lua sitting there with May and the kids. “Alláh-u-Abhá,” he said, with a smile.

“Alláh-u-Abhá.” She rose and he gave her a quick kiss. “How were classes in Ora?”

“They were fine, but tell dad Lord Mitru wants to see him. He is glad I’m teaching at the génadema and is really, really mad that Pértatranisér exists and is not part of his province.”

“I suppose dad has been avoiding him.”

“Well, it’s time to talk to him. Otherwise he could start doing something underhanded. I don’t expect anything specific and he didn’t make a threat, but you never know.”

“I know,” replied Lua. “Sit and have some supper. We’ve been waiting for you.”

May stood to give him a kiss as he came around the table to the seat next to her. He sat and they began to fill plates with rice and stew.

“What brings you here?” asked Amos.

“A sad and unexpected emergency,” said Lua. “I got a call last night in Melwika; it would have been about dawn here, I suppose. Lord Gnoscéstu had gone to Isurdhuna Hospital; he had been ill several days, had no appetite, and had been vomiting. They couldn’t figure it out, so they called me, and I wasn’t sure what was happening either.”

“So you went there.”

“He’s a Lord, so he gets special treatment. Besides, this is the first time he’s been near a doctor. Of course, once I got there—after driving all night—he wouldn’t let a woman examine him! So I had to stand nearby while a male nurse poked and described things to me.”

“What does he have?”

“I’m still not positive, but the only way to be positive is to give him tests we don’t have, or to wait and see. I think it’s pancreatic cancer, though, or possibly stomach cancer.”

“Fatal.”

She nodded. “He can’t eat; if he tries, it comes back up. So he’ll starve to death in about a month, basically.”

“How old is he?” asked May.

“I asked him and he said sixty-four; then he said no, seventy; then he said he wasn’t really sure.”

“Will he come to Ora Hospital?” asked May.

Lua shook her head. “No, he insisted on going back to the palace. I said there was nothing we could do. I tried to explain cancer and he wouldn’t listen, so he went home to call traditional healers. Stauréstu plans to go to Isurdhuna weekly; I just called him. I did get a chance to explain the situation to his daughter, Brébádánté, and her son and his heir, Yusbéru. They understood.”

“Yusbéru’s smart and accepts the new knowledge,” said Amos. “This is very sad.”

“It is,” agreed Lua. “And be careful not to say anything to anyone else.

Gnoskéstu’s related to everyone. His older sister was the Prince-Consort’s mother, his mother was from Lord Mitru’s family just like Her Majesty’s mother, his younger brother was Lord Kandékwes’s uncle. . . it goes on and on.”

They turned to their food. Amos asked Bahiyé about school. May updated him about the noise and pounding of the workmen as they built the rooms on the south side of the house. Once they were done eating, the cook cleared the table while they said good

night to Lua, who was going to nap a few hours before getting in the rover and driving back to Melwika. “Do you wish we could drive back to Melwika?” he asked May, after Lua headed for the trailer to sleep.

“No,” replied May. “I miss home, but so far, so good. I’m looking forward to classes at Néfa Génadema tomorrow. I’m told I’ll have fifteen in English 101. I’m surprised so many think it’ll be useful. I’ve got twenty in Professional Writing and I’m hoping, among other class projects, to put out a city newspaper every week; Sulanu will even typeset it. We’ll call it the *Néfa Yoros*.”

“The ‘Néfa Times,’” said Amos, translating into English. “A newspaper is a good way to think about what is important and how to write about it, too.”

“Exactly, and to start the use of advertising. Three students are taking the bus with me from here, so I’ll have them write articles about Pértatranisér, maybe for *Melwika Nues*. I’ll have a better idea whether we need a printer here or in Néfa, but right now I think we do.”

There came a knock on the door. The cook hurried over to open it and admitted Estoipuru, “God’s fire,” the village headman. Amos rose to greet him. “Come sit and have coffee, Honored Estoipuru.”

“Thank you.” It was the same routine every night. He came with a sheet of paper bearing a list of points; he could write that much. He hurried over and sat with Amos and May while the cook appeared with a pot of coffee. It was hard to believe that Pértatranisér was now three months old. “This morning two more families arrived on the bus and requested house lots. One was from Charnéfa, the other from Rudharudha, so the trend is now clear: we are getting immigrants from all over the province and no longer

just from Néfa. Yesterday we got a family from Kadakvas, which is a new village in the far southeastern end of Véspe province, about as far from here as you can get, so we are also beginning to get people from other provinces as well.

“I had my wife go through the deeds and count. We now have assigned 253 housing lots and 221 farming lots. The latter total about 4,600 agris.”

“So, how big is Pértatranisér?” asked May.

“We think it has about 1,200 people. The village site only has 300 house sites and some are dedicated to schools and other uses, so we have about 25 left. We’ll run out in a month. We can’t create a Sixth Street because we assigned the land there to farms. We can add some lots in a few odd spots, but we’ll have to create some slots around the grange building east of Route 2. After that, if the town keeps growing, we’ll have to consider streets on the north side of the Atranisér. And tonight when I was talking to Váranu, he said that two families who have their own oxen have squatted on farmland across the river and started to plow it. So we already have people over there.”

“Hum.” Amos thought about that. “When was the last time Bruagras used any of it?”

“We have a family here from Bruagras and they say cattle sometimes were grazed along the river, but when we arrived, there was no cattle dung to be seen anywhere near us. Bruagras is eight kilometers up the road. About two kilometers up the road, the plain along the river ends and is replaced by rolling forest. There seems to be no reason why we shouldn’t farm the two kilometer wide strip along the river, east and west for at least five kilometers in both directions.”

“I had better call Lord Kristoféru about that issue,” said Amos. “That’s not something we can decide. We have an agreement with Jathisérvika and Nuvika to the south of us, thanks to the Réjé’s decision, that Pértatranisérv extends an average of 2.5 kilometers to the south, but we have no decision whether it extends across the river.”

“But we’re filling up the south bank. Some people are already walking 4 kilometers to farmland east or west of here. That’s almost an hour; close to the reasonable limit.”

“I know. If the village grows more, we’ll have to start providing transportation to farmers or expand along the north bank.”

“And Bruagras is farther away than Jathisérvika. And with the cement plant, they are doing less cattle and wheat raising.”

“I know, I know. I’ll talk to Lord Kristoféru tonight. I think he’ll be here next week. He’ll have to talk to General Perku and Lord Sarékordu and have surveyors come to mark boundaries between the villages. It sounds like it’s getting urgent, if people are squatting.”

“Not just squatting; since they learned how to survey land, they borrowed the grange’s surveying ropes and marked out their plots very carefully.”

May jotted down a note on a pad. “What else do you have for us, Estoipuru?”

“A report from Váranu. We now have 2,800 agris plowed and planted; the oldest families have fifteen agris each, the new families five. The first harvest starts next week and after that harvesting will be continuous. Most of the families occupying the thousand agris in ‘the Bowl’ downstream will replace wheat with rice and they’re just about ready to start flooding the fields; the ditches and dikes are almost completed. Váranu wants to

meet with you in the next few days to give a report because it is not clear how much harvest the Grange owes your family.”

Amos looked at May. “Lord Kristoféru said, if I recall, that he does not want to be paid for the food we have been providing the village every day, but he does want to be repaid eventually for the rental of the four steam tractors and their farming equipment. That has totaled about 40,000 dhanay so far. A third of the harvest already goes to taxes, and he does not want any of that to go to him; the Réjé gets twenty percent and the village thirteen percent. In Mēlwika, a twelfth goes to the grange and a twelfth to Lord Kristoféru as mortgage on the land. Here, he doesn’t own the land, so he doesn’t get the mortgage payment. I suggest that he get a twelfth of the harvest until the forty thousand is paid off, though.”

Estoipuru nodded and watched May make a calculation. “Assuming a price of fourteen dhanay per berwoni and ten berwoni per agri?” she asked.

“Yes, that’s about right,” he agreed. “We may get a bit less per agri because of the humidity.”

“That’s 140 dhanay per agri, divided by twelve . . . about twelve dhanay per agri. If we have 2,600 agris planted, that’s 31,000 dhanay right there. In other words, one harvest will cover about three quarters of the cost of the machines.”

“And leaves the grange enough to rent them from now on,” said Estoipuru. “I think that works fine. I’ll propose we pay your family a twelfth times two harvests. That should cover much of your expenses.”

“Fine,” said Amos. “Once the harvest starts to come in, it’ll be time to draw up a village budget.”

“At 140 dhanay per agri per harvest, three harvests per year, 4,600 agris eventually planted, thirteen percent tax. . .” May began to compute rapidly; she was very good with numbers. “Roughly 250,000 dhanay.”

“Two hundred fifty thousand!” exclaimed Estoipuru, shocked. “What will we do with so much!”

“Build schools, hire teachers, gravel roads, pay for police and fire . . . it adds up,” replied Amos. “Remember, the average family’s income will be double the usual local income, thanks to the larger farms the steam engines allow. They’ll want to buy things, so there will need to be stores, which means hiring inspectors to make sure the merchants don’t cheat.”

“I’m going to need to learn a lot more!”

“You will,” said May.

“I have one more report,” said Estoipuru, glancing at his list. “The first classroom will be finished by the end of the week, and two teams have started building two more classrooms. I talked to the foremen and our three teachers. They all agreed we shouldn’t move the classes in until the three classrooms are all finished, because the noise will disrupt classes.”

“Okay,” agreed Amos. “How many children in the village of school age, now?”

“Give me a second,” replied May, and her pencil began to fly. “Three percent per school year, roughly; that’s thirty-six per grade, so we should have over four hundred children.”

“I think that’s high,” replied Estoipuru. “We have more young people who are unmarried or just married than the average village. But you are right that we probably need ten or twelve classrooms altogether if all the kids were in school.”

“And we want to open a high school,” said Amos. “Let’s build four classrooms before we move classes into any of them. They’re in pairs with a corridor between them, right? Then we’ll build four more, but space them an entire classroom away from the others to minimize the noise; we can complete the two missing classrooms when the school closes for a vacation, or do the work at night and on Primdius.”

“I’ll tell the builders,” agreed Estoipuru, making a note. “I don’t know where we’ll get the teachers, though.”

“Leave that to us,” said May. “We can probably hire people going to génadema in Ora. Perku plans to increase the teacher training classes in Néfa, too, because he wants to make sure there are schools in every village in two years.”

“Times are changing,” said Estoipuru.

[Oct. 12, 2006; reread and edited 5/29/13, 8/9/17]

Funeral

Lord Gnoscéstu survived three more weeks, gradually faded, slipped into a coma, and died. The next day several dozen vehicles headed over the Snowy Mountains—blanketed by their first new snow of the fall—and descended into the Kerda rift valley for the funeral.

Chris, Liz, and Thornton—as heir—were among the mourners. The funeral procession started at the palace and wound across the city, where the entire populace joined in and followed the cortege. It stopped at the Stēja, the tomb of Widumaj, for a program of holy hymns interspersed by eligiac poems and eulogies praising the deceased. Then it proceeded to the junction of the North and East Rudhisér Rivers where a great funeral pyre had been prepared. The coffin was placed on top and Yusdu lit the pyre. Once the flames had spread from bottom to top, the crowd began to break up. A reception line formed of the VIPs to give their condolences to the family.

“Gædhémæs are not welcome here!” growled Lord Albanu at the Menneas as they got in line. Liz was startled; Thornton wondered about the word, which should be *játhémás* on the western shore; Chris flashed an expression of contempt at the former head of Néfa before he got himself under control. Lord Déolu of Bellédha, who was in line in front of them, put his arm on Chris’s shoulder.

“Ignore him,” he said, fairly loudly. Déolu looked at Liz. “A beautiful funeral.”

“It was,” she agreed. “I had no idea Gnoscéstu was such a pious man.”

“Well, parts of the poem I’ve heard before. But he was pious; pious enough to support more than half this world’s priests.” Déolu rolled his eyes. “No wonder there was no money for development!”

“How are things in Northshore Province?” asked Chris, changing the subject, for criticism of the deceased was unwise in the reception line.

Déolu sighed. “Well, only a third of our land was planted this year, and the harvest per agri was low because of wheat rust that spread in the cool and damp. Harvest was a quarter of normal, so no one paid any taxes. We are dependent on the generosity of the palace for our budget and of the army for food, in return for work.”

“At least Route 1 is smooth and concreted for thirty kilometers,” said Liz. “It’s the nicest road in the world, right now.”

“That’s what everyone says. And Route 21, which loops through the Polar Basin, is now very nice, and there are utility poles along almost all of it. We also have graveled all major roads in the province to villages or between villages. The area has seen a lot of improvements, at least.”

“Now we just need to get electrical and telephone lines on those poles,” said Chris. “And that isn’t easy because the companies have to make a profit, but those lines won’t. Demand is too low. The electrical line across the Ornakwés through the Kwolone villages barely covers the costs of maintenance; the costs of stringing the wires will never be paid back, even with the army paying for the poles.”

“And I can’t give anything to cover the costs because I don’t have it. We have forty-five kids per classroom in Belledha.” Déolu shrugged fatalistically.

“You’ve got to encourage the villages to buy steam tractors,” said Chris. “In the last three years, almost half of this world’s agriculture has been mechanized. Planted fields have increased fifteen percent and harvests seem to be up about twenty-five percent. There are now 125 steam vehicles being used in agriculture. But I bet your area has four. The reason this is urgent is because farmers without access to steam equipment will get poorer and poorer every year. Farm prices will fall over time. People will eat better, but some farmers will get poorer.”

“I see.” Déolu digested Chris’s advice. “Of course, no one can afford to buy them. We’re broke because of the crop failure.”

“I understand. I’ll talk to Miller. Maybe we can set up a loan program.”

Déolu had reached the family of the deceased, so he turned to offer them words of comfort. He greeted Brébádánté briefly. Chris raised one hand to shake with her. “I’m so sorry. I was greatly honored to meet Lord Gnoskéstu and get to know him. I know of no other Lord in this world so devoted to Widumaj and his priests.”

“Thank you, Lord, you are immensely kind. We have much appreciated your advice and encouragement.”

Chris moved forward slightly and waited for Déolu to finish talking to Yusdu. Meanwhile, Liz hugged Brébádánté. “I am terribly saddened and grieved. We can thank Esto he had such a long life and got to see so much. I am sure he will receive a warm greeting from Widumaj.”

“Thank you, Lady Liz, you have always been so kind to us.”

Chris stepped forward and extended both hands to Yusdu. “Because of our long friendship with you, we are particularly affected by the Lord’s passing. He was a great grandfather to you and a father to the entire valley.”

“He was. Thank you, Lord Kristoféru. And now I have much to think about, to guide Chárda wisely.”

“I’m sure you will.”

“We must develop this place. I will seek your advice in a few weeks.”

“It must be done carefully; you have many people to please.”

Yusdu nodded and glanced nervously at a priest nearby. Chris moved on through the line, shaking hands with Yusdu’s wife, kissing their baby, then shaking hands with Yusdu’s seven younger brothers and sisters, three aunts and uncles, their spouses, and some of their children and grandchildren.

Finished with the receiving line, the Menneas started to walk back to the steam car they had rented for the funeral. “Thank God he’s going to push development,” said Thornton. “Kerda’s not falling too far behind because the Festival has expanded so much and brings them tens of thousands of dhanay.”

“He has to be careful, though,” cautioned Chris. “Seventy priestly families with an average of two wives and twelve children each; I bet they cost about six thousand dhanay each. That’s four hundred thousand dhanay! That’s a third of the valley’s tax revenue. It’s equal to the entire tax revenue of all the local lords. Some comes from the crown, but her Majesty also maintains a palace here. I bet Yusdu won’t have much spare cash.”

“And he’s young; it’ll be hard for him to make tough decisions and make them stick,” added Liz.

“And he has his own family and the extended family to support,” noted Thornton.

As they walked and talked, Lord Mitru, who was ahead of them, stopped and waited for them to catch up to him. “Did you get my message from Amos?”

“Indeed, Lord Mitru. I have not been to the western shore since, until this funeral. I could stop by tomorrow morning, however.”

“That would be good. We need to talk, Lord. I am very displeased, and you have made no attempt to explain your actions.”

“Lord Mitru, I apologize. I did not know you were concerned. And I apologize I have not come to Ora in several months. Please understand that Pértatranisér was not my idea; it was an accident, caused when Lua stopped to take care of a wounded woman. The refugees were not leaders of the rebellion. Three leaders of the rebellion were killed in the assault and three more were captured and crucified by the army later, but none were in Pértatranisér. The gang visited the village three times and I stopped that. My support for the refugees was gradual and received her Majesty’s reluctant endorsement, then grudging support. And I never took a position whether Pértatranisér should be part of the province of Véspe or of Rudhisér; I carefully drew its borders to remain within the northern half of the buffer zone. Her Majesty has made it part of Rudhisér and we are both loyal to her.”

“Lord, I have heard this story several times, and while it is all plausible, it is still hard to believe.”

“I understand, and that is one reason why you will have a member of my family available for your génadema almost constantly from now on. We now have a commitment to the western shore as well as the eastern. We will have a house on the western shore and we’ll probably be there often in the winter. We will develop Pértatranisér, but we will also develop Ora and Néfa. Some day there will be a corridor of houses, factories, and stores running from Néfa to Mëddwoglubas, with Ora at the middle, and Pértatranisér will be part of it.”

He pulled his head back at that idea. “Interesting notion. As long as your vision doesn’t put Pértatranisér in the middle! Ora has always been the center of the western shore. Néfa’s rivalry does not amount to much. I don’t want that to change now, and I will act to make sure it doesn’t change!”

Chris nodded. “I understand, and we will support Ora’s centrality in the western shore.”

“Shake on that,” Mitru challenged him.

Chris extended both hands, with only a slight hesitation. Mitru looked him in the eye, took his hands, and shook.

“Alright,” he said. “Stop by tomorrow. I want to know about your plans in detail, for Pértatranisér, Néfa, and Ora.”

“Let us make some of those plans together,” replied Chris.

They exchanged parting words as the Menneas reached their steam car. They got in and started to drive. “So, did you have any plans for Ora?” asked Thornton.

“No. I really don’t have concrete plans for Pértatranisér, either, but I had figured that for every two or three dhanay I’d invest there, I’d invest one in Néfa.”

“Sounds like you need to develop a new formula,” said Liz. “Say, three for Pértatraniser, two for Néfa, and one for Ora.”

“Too expensive. We’ll buy stuff from Ora rather than investing there; Lord Mitru’s got plenty of money for investment.”

Chris unlocked the steam car’s air vent, opened the firebox, and checked the contents; there were still coals. He threw in some tar-covered charcoal, an innovation from Khermdhuna that helped get the car going faster. Then he closed the firebox and began to pump the mechanical fan with his foot until there was enough steam.

“So, are a lot of people going to the palace?” asked Thornton.

“Probably, but no one invited us, and that may be just as well,” said Chris. “We have to be careful about what we eat and who’s at our back.”

Once the engine was fired up, they headed over the mountains for Pértatraniser. It was just after sunset when they drove into town. First Street was a gigantic open-air party and when they saw the Mennea family arrive, the crowd ran over, cheering.

“What is it?” asked Chris.

“The first harvest!” shouted someone.

“Thank you, Lord!” shouted someone else.

Chris parked the car and they got out to celebrate with the crowd. Amos, May, and the kids were on First Street as well where the bakery was turning out loaf after loaf of fresh bread for the crowd, all for free.

“It’s from wheat paid to the village for taxes,” explained Estoipuru, when Chris tried some of the bread. He nodded.

“It’s good!”

“Of course, very good! I suppose, Lord, things change, now.”

“We won’t be hauling in wheat from Melwika or Néfa! This is your wheat, your tax revenue, so you plan how to spend it.”

“But you’re Lord.”

“We need a Council; the villagers should decide how to spend their taxes.”

“No more subsidy from you?” Estoipuru was worried.

“Yes and no. The Grange has grain to feed and pay its workers and the village has grain to feed its workers and the needy. But I plan to invest here, so we’ll have businesses as well.”

“Don’t leave us now, Lord. We can feed ourselves, but we don’t feel safe.”

“Neither do I, Estoipuru.”

A villager was playing a fiddle-like instrument and another one a panpipe, so Chris and Liz danced with everyone for a while, then walked back to the car and drove it to the house. By then, Amos and May were back. May was helping the nanny put the kids to bed.

“Chris, you’ve got to see this,” said Amos. He pointed to a small black box on the dining table.

“What is it; the new radio?”

“Exactly! The model is finally finished and ready for production.” Amos took the cord and plugged it in. He turned it on and scanned the dial. “There’s nothing there, of course; the army doesn’t use these frequencies. Neither do our phones or c.b. radios. But we can broadcast on the frequencies, and as soon as there’s another radio, there can be conversation.”

“How many will the army make?”

“Fifty, for our weather reporters. Gwiwéru is anxious to get them distributed; mailing in weather data hasn’t been very helpful for him.”

“And the radio can transmit or receive ten different bands?” asked Liz.

Amos pointed to ten marks on the dial. “Those are the ten. If anyone broadcasts on frequencies in between, they’ll interfere with the ten channels. Weather reporting will use one, with another as backup.”

“So we have eight for other things, like education,” said Liz. “That’s excellent. A lot of potential. Have we approached the Melwika School system yet?”

“No, we weren’t sure the army would make a radio with so much capability,” replied Chris. “But now it’s time. Amos, can you make a sound recording system? Wax cylinders, wire recording; something?”

“I’ve been thinking about exactly that lately,” replied Amos. “If we can start a radio broadcasting system that reaches into the villages, we have to be able to record and play back programs, music, all sorts of things. I’m not sure what recording system will be easiest, but I’ll figure out something in a month or so.”

“Good, that needs to be a major investment of time and money,” said Chris.

“When the palace realizes how big this is . . . what will they do?” asked Thornton.

Chris sat at the table and eyed the stew, which was now getting cold. He dished out some for himself, then passed it to Thornton. “I don’t know. We have to be extremely careful. First, we’ll just report of weather data, with emergency communications allowed. Then we’ll start an educational frequency and broadcast, say, eighth grade science. That would be ideal because adults would enjoy it as well, but it has to do with which teacher

can do a good job as a broadcaster. Then we'll broadcast more and more lessons. And we'll add music, starting with Kekanu. Then we'll start reading from the newspapers . . . that sort of thing."

"And we'll ask the Queen to record greetings to the kingdom periodically," added Liz.

"Yes." Chris began to eat the stew. The others sat and ate as well; it was late and they had only eaten a little bread on First Street.

"So, what's the development plan you'll share with Lord Mitru about tomorrow?" asked Thornton.

"I don't know yet," said Chris. "But now that the harvest has started here, this place can feed itself. Since it's right on the equator, planting and harvesting are constant."

"The Grange needs six steam tractors," said Amos. "They've gotten that big. If they had seven or eight, they could lease some to neighboring villages."

Chris nodded. "It's time for them to buy steam tractors. We've spent almost as much leasing for three months as it would cost to buy them! But now the grange workers know how to operate them. If you can teach them how to repair them, that's a good regional business." He thought as he chewed. "A village of 1,200 subsistence farmers doesn't need many businesses. We've invested a hundred dhanay in a bakery and it's barely functioning. But the farmers have a lot of time between planting and harvests and the extra work will raise their income and purchases. The cement plant starting up next month will create a few dozen jobs. It'll need firewood to reduce the limestone and that will require a dozen more jobs. We could cut timber on the future seabed and haul it to the lime plant or to a charcoal making plant."

“The Atranisér flows straight into and through a drowned forest,” said Amos.

“Men could cut dead trees at the water level from a boat and float them upstream. That’s how Ora gets its charcoal. The more timber is cut, the better; otherwise it’ll just be drowned and rot.”

“The problem is selling it,” said Thornton. “This village could use charcoal; firewood’s scarce.”

“The Néfa Basin is deforested, so every village needs charcoal, but it’ll have to be cheap because the people are poor,” said Chris. “People are cooking and heating their houses with wheat straw and cattle dung. But if the trees are sliced up mechanically, reduced to charcoal in big ovens, and hauled to villages in big lots, maybe it could be cheap enough.”

“I’ll help the Grange work on that,” said Amos. “It’s a perfect task for them. They’ll have to learn how to use boats, though.”

“And that means I’ll have to teach them how to swim,” complained Thornton.

“A sawmill is a possibility, also,” said Chris. “Some of the dead trees will be seasoned wood. That could employ a half dozen or a dozen more. I suppose copper mining and smelting would be next.”

“I can get that going,” agreed Amos. “I helped the Dwobergone set up theirs. Copper production needs charcoal as well.”

“Of course, if you spend a lot of time on charcoal and copper, you’ll never work on audio recording,” noted Liz.

“The audio recording may have to be postponed, then,” said Amos.

“If you innovate with the copper mining here, be sure to tell the Dwobergons,” requested Chris. “We don’t want to undercut them. Copper can provide this place ten or twenty jobs. Behruz is willing to put the new plastic extrusion plant here to make tooth brushes and other things; that’s a dozen jobs for now and maybe fifty eventually. If I can get the nearby villages to agree to support a regional high school here, that’s maybe twenty teaching jobs.”

“A hundred or so jobs will support six hundred people, and will bring another hundred jobs in terms of shops and such,” said Amos. “That could double the size of the place.”

“That’s how it works,” agreed Chris. “Add a regional fire station, a regional clinic, and support for the army’s highway building program.”

“There are the usual women’s industries we can start,” added Liz. “Sewing machines have revolutionized clothing manufacture and can be done at home. The area has a lot of tropical fruits to convert to jam and a year-round supply of things to preserve and can. Melwika doesn’t have the same produce, so it won’t be competition. And it’s low cost to start, too.”

“Definitely, we’ll do that,” agreed Chris. “Those are pretty good choices for now.”

“Other than the copper mine, Lord Mitru will laugh,” said Thornton.

Chris shrugged. “That’s because he thinks the only things worth doing are huge. Good. He won’t complain about our development plan.”

[Oct. 13, 2006; reread and edited 5/29/13, 8/9/17]

School of Government

First week Génmènu

The four adults had to laugh as Jonu—Mitru and Diné’s oldest—and Jalalu, Thornton and Lébé’s oldest, began a contest to see who could shout louder. “Hey, that’s loud enough!” Mitru finally shouted above the din, into which his second oldest child and Thornton and Lébé’s Kalé had joined in.

“Jalalu, you stop!” added Thornton, raising his voice. The boys stopped shouting.

“It’s the weather,” said Diné, occasionally glancing down at the baby at her breast. “Three days of chilly weather; they’re stuck inside. Once the roof is installed over this courtyard for the winter, they’ll be able to run around again.”

Thornton looked up at the plastic that had just been stretched over a metal frame installed over the small courtyard. “It helps a lot; in fact, it can get too hot in here.”

“I like the way you’ve fixed this up,” said Lébé, who had Jonkrisu nursing at her breast as well. “The white stucco makes this place much more attractive.”

“Dad paid for it,” said Mitru. “An advantage of still living in his home, I guess. We like helping the older kids, too.”

“And they’re *so* smart,” added Diné. “Awsajtu has lived up to his name. He’s a really bright engineer. Primu’s incredible as well.”

“I really wish I had had the time to get a good education,” sighed Mitru. “I had to learn enough to get started and scramble to learn more as needed. Awsajtu, though, and Yimu’s oldest, were just young enough to go to génadema full time.”

“It’s never too late,” said Thornton.

“True, but now it’s hard to change habits,” said Mitru.

“I’m going to take some business classes,” added Diné. “The stores that Bloré has started look like fun to operate.”

“I gather she’s thinking about starting one in Pértatranisér,” added Mitru. “Now, when are the two of you staying there?”

“Next term; Fall 2,” replied Thornton. “That’s the last three weeks of Prusménu and all of Belménu. Then we’re back here until spring term 2, Blorménu through the fourth week of Kaiménu, when we’ll be back at Pértatranisér again. Amos and May are taking the first fall and spring terms; mom and dad will be there during all of Plowménu, and none of us will be there during Ejnaménu.”

“So, it’s all planned,” observed Mitru.

“It has to be because of teaching. I’ll teach geology and ecology in Ora in the second fall term; I’m teaching geology and advanced science for teachers at Néfa during spring term 2. Lébé’s teaching at both as well.”

“And while you’re teaching there, you’ll also be serving as lord?” Mitru sounded a bit jealous as he asked.

Thornton nodded. “By then, it shouldn’t amount to much, because at some point this fall the villagers will elect a village council and headman. Once that happens the Lord will be more advisory in capacity. Amos spends an hour every evening overseeing the village.”

“You should come visit us,” Léb  said to Din . “By Belm nu the house will be finished and it’ll have a lot of spare rooms. It’s a good spot from which to run things, since it’s right at the center of the western shore.”

“I might want to build a house there,” said Mitru. “I’m thinking about it. I’m jealous that you get to run a village. I bet I could do that!”

“You could,” agreed Thornton. “You should talk to dad, then. We’ve been looking at the maps to see where else we could start agriculture. Between Swadl ndha and Ornakw s is a lot of rich prairie that used to be desert, and no Tutan  tribe claims it. The queen presumably could give it away.”

“No, don’t encourage him,” said Din . “I don’t want him becoming a farmer, too!”

“How many buses do you own now, anyway?” asked L b .

“I’m not sure because it constantly changes. About forty, and they move about eight thousand passengers a day, generating an income of about eight hundred dhanay per day. Add to that thirty trucks and about thirty tractors . . . it’s amazing.”

“And we’re paying almost half of that to dad to buy the equipment, and then we’re squeezed into three rooms in the back of his house,” added Din . “That’s amazing, too.”

“Maybe the solution is to build a second house for ourselves at P rtatranis r,” replied Mitru. “That way, we have our own space without offending anyone.”

“You worry too much about offending people,” replied Din .

There was an awkward silence after that. The two of them fought less than right after they had gotten married, but they still argued. Mitru turned to his sister and said, “Jonkrisu seems to be growing well.”

“Yes, he’s two and a half months old now, and not too colicky. He’s beginning to sleep pretty well, too, which is amazing at this age.”

“That’s a blessing,” said Diné. “I don’t want any more, Mitru! Three are plenty.”

“I agree!” added Lébé. “I don’t like being outnumbered!”

“Bahá’u’lláh said ‘bring forth one who will mention me,’” added Diné. “That commandment is now fulfilled three times over!”

It surprised Thornton and Lébé that Diné would quote Bahá’u’lláh; she had declared several years ago, but had not followed up much, and had not been studying the Faith very much. Mitru smiled. “You’ve got me there, dear.” He looked at her quizzically for a moment and she nodded slightly. “This brings us around to the reason Diné and I invited you over,” he said. “We want to declare ourselves as Bahá’ís.”

“Really?” said Lébé, surprised.

“How marvelous!” replied Thornton. “Welcome to the Bahá’í community!”

“We both want to dedicate ourselves to making people happy,” said Mitru. “And that means using our resources wisely to help others to develop and better this world. And the Mennea family really knows how to do that.”

“And you know because of Bahá’u’lláh,” added Diné.

“Well, as you know, Bahá’ís aren’t perfect,” added Lébé. “We have chosen to set out on a path; we haven’t arrived.”

“Well, we haven’t arrived, either!” said Mitru. “But we know the path we want to follow: the path of service. We told dad last night. I think he was very appreciative.”

“Then we welcome you on the path,” said Thornton. He rose and walked to Mitru and Diné and hugged them both. Lébé did the same.

“Now, the four of us have even more in common,” said Diné.

“I love the view up here,” said Chris from the roof of his house. He turned to face south, over Melwika’s fallow fields.

“Do you get up here often?” asked Estanu.

Chris shook his head. “Almost never! And now that it’s cold, we won’t be up here again until spring.” He pulled his jacket together and buttoned it.

“The first week of Génmènu: frost was about two weeks early,” said Déanu, Estanu’s older brother and the acting head of the family’s construction company.

“And the irony is, if we had planted right after the last frost and replanted immediately, we could have just squeezed in two crops,” said Chris. “But who would have known that?”

“Farmers don’t like to take chances,” said Estanu. He pointed at the old “Science and Engineering Building,” right across the street from the house. “So, you’re going to empty it out completely and refurbish it?”

“That’s the plan. The widows don’t need the kitchen on the ground floor any more; they can use the high school and génadema kitchens instead, and both are bigger and more modern. Their store needs more space, so they’re moving it across the river to Ménwika. Part of the ground floor will become a garage for our rovers, so we don’t have

to park them in the house's courtyard; not only are they unsightly in the courtyard, and get in the way of the kids when they play, but this street is getting too busy to open the house's main door and drive into the courtyard. It produces quite a traffic jam!

"The rest of the ground floor and the first and second floors will be the new tomi headquarters. That'll give us about a half more space than we have now, and we need it. We're bursting out of our building next to the génadema administration building."

"And you want the public classes in those four classrooms moved to the high school or the other schools," said Estanu.

"The city is paying for some of the teachers already, and the génadema students teaching some of the courses will continue to do so. There are plenty of city classrooms now."

"True," said the city's new mayor, nodding.

"And the old tomi building becomes the new School of Government building?" asked Déanu.

"Exactly. I'll have a design ready for you in another month." Chris turned to the right slightly, where the hospital had been built on a slope between houses along Temple Street and the wall of the old citadel. He pointed to the line of houses inside the old citadel. "Of the ten houses along the southern wall of the Citadel, we have purchased three. We want the first six; they're the ones adjacent to the hospital. But as we know—Déanu's in charge of the job—the hospital is undergoing an expansion in the rear, and will soon be adjacent to all ten. We own the second and third houses and plan to tear them down this winter in order to build a new emergency entrance to the hospital, because the hospital's current front door is on a busy street and the ambulances have to

block the street when delivering a patient. Dangerous. Eventually we'll buy all ten and tear them down to double the hospital's width. This will also bring the hospital to within ten meters of the Medical School; very convenient. We own the fifth house and Méné Miller has started converting it into the headquarters of the Development Corps."

"Obviously you have no plans to double the width of the hospital soon, then," said Estanu.

"No, that's five or ten years from now. The rear addition will be three stories high and will more than double its size. It needs the space. People are getting used to telephones, ambulances, and hospitals. The ambulance brings three or four emergency patients here every day. In fact, they need a second ambulance."

"That's expensive," said Déanu.

"And no one can afford to pay for it," agreed Chris. "We're still putting together the financing of the hospital."

"Bonds! Bonds! They're perfect!" exclaimed Estanu. He had become fascinated by the idea lately.

"Well . . . they'll work well to finance a city hall or a school. They're good for governments. But the hospital is a private non-profit. I have to think about that."

"Lord, when the public finds out you're part of it, they'll climb over each other to lend it money," said Estanu.

"That's why I hesitate! The hospital is not my property and it is not right to tie it to my reputation. If it has financial troubles, I am not obligated to bail it out."

"But you will," said Déanu, with a chuckle.

Changing the subject, Chris turned around to face north. Mēlwika had climbed the hill there five years earlier, but now he pointed northwest. “This summer, a lot of that hillside got developed.”

“We built fifty-one houses there,” said Estanu. “And people built about a hundred more by themselves or in teams. The entire road to Nénaslua is now lined on both sides, and there are houses along the reservoir and the low area to the east of it. Over the winter, two hundred houses were extensively remodeled, as people used their spare time and cash to make their houses more comfortable and useful. Meanwhile, over the fall and winter our people gave birth to six hundred babies.” He said that with a bit of awe in his voice.

“The kid who arrived unmarried five years ago is now having his third child,” said Chris. “It really is amazing. We have 2,700 households, and the number of people per house keeps going up.”

“We are the largest city now,” said Estanu. “I asked the city staff to do a count last week. And I’m going to announce it quietly. I don’t care if some people are jealous.” He pointed to the hillside northwest of them. “A new middle school has to be built over there. And two new elementary schools are needed, one there and one there.” He spun around and pointed to Mēnwika to the south.

“I know, and I agree,” conceded Chris. “Your proposed mandatory two dhanay per month school fee per child will be very controversial if the City Council approves it, and it’ll be hard to collect, but I think it’s necessary. Tripola did it two years ago and it helped the school system a lot. Néfa plans to do it as well. My proposal of free literacy training for all adults, including women, is even more controversial, but on Gēdhéma it

was always found that when women were educated, they wanted and had fewer children.”

“*That’s* the controversial part!” exclaimed Déanu, shaking his head. “The average head of household wants free education for his children and none for his wife!”

“These attitudes will take a while to change,” sighed Estanu. “Anyway, let’s go inside before we catch a cold!” He turned toward the door, and Chris and Déanu followed.

Chris offered parting farewells to the men and headed for his office. Luktréstu was ready with a handful of written messages. “Widubéru is ready to go to Khermdhuna with hundred square meters of polyethylene to build greenhouses and was wondering what advice you have. Amos reports the grange has started cutting trees along the southern bank of the Atranisér in order to clear a towpath so they can pull them to a truck loading area, and they plan to start by cutting trees they can wade out to; no boat or raft needed for some months. Thornton stopped by to say that the next issue of the *Melwika Nués* will run a full-page map of the world; the army has finally given permission. He was quite excited by that. And Lord Kandékwes’s secretary called; the Lord wants you to schedule an appointment right away—today if possible—regarding the Board of Trustees for the School of Government.”

“Oh? It’s late; after 4 p.m. It must be urgent.”

“It sounded pretty urgent.”

“Okay, call him back and see whether I can come at 5 or 6. After that it’s less convenient.”

“You’ll have to leave in half an hour to make a 5 p.m. appointment because of pre-eclipse traffic.”

“I know! I wish he would do business like that over the phone.”

Luktréstu shook his head. “No, face-to-face is the only way people will do anything important.” He headed to his own room—grandmother Mary’s old room—to use the telephone that had recently been installed there. The house now had two. Chris went out the door and walked to the fifth house down the southern side of Citadel Square, where Widubéru was setting up the headquarters of the Development Corps.

“Wow; lots of progress,” Chris said.

Widubéru put down a hammer. “The house was well built; or maybe I should say it was redone several times, as the first owner’s prosperity improved. And as you can see, I’m learning how to wire a house!” He pointed to the electrical line he had been very carefully nailing with U-shaped nails along the bottom of the wall, where a molding would cover it.

“I’ve wired quite a few buildings here,” said Chris. “The trick isn’t installing the wires, but wiring the light sockets and plugs and setting up the electrical box. I’d watch an expert do that *twice* before trying it yourself. When will this phase of renovation be finished?”

“Three days. That’s when the furniture arrives. Two days after that, we’ll have our offices set up and functioning. So early next week I want to go to Khermdhuna to help set up the greenhouses. But I’ll need introductions.”

“I’ll draft several letters. The plastic involves a loan, right?”

“Ten dhanay, to be paid back over a year. Why is it a loan and not a grant, anyway?”

Chris considered the question. “I suppose we are making loans when, first, the loan will be used to do something that will make money, and, second, when we have confidence the people will pay the loan back. In this case, the man building the greenhouse, Khuanu of Tripludha, is a Bahá’í, so we are confident he’ll pay us back.”

“But it would be a peculiar situation if we gave grants to the followers of the hymns and loans to the Bahá’ís; it wouldn’t be fair, and we’ve already had several discussions about the need to be fair.”

“True. I will leave the matter to your discretion, then. But I think they will want to pay us. I have to run home, Widubéru, but I’ll stop by tomorrow.”

They exchanged parting words and Chris walked the few dozen meters to the front door of his house. Once inside, Lukréstu told him Kandékwes was available any time, but sooner was better. Rather than waste any further time, Chris beckoned Luktréstu to the rover. Chris drove to Mæddoakwés, dictating a half dozen letters to Luktréstu as he went.

Kandékwes was pleased Chris had arrived so quickly. “I feared you’d get caught in all the traffic that builds up the half hour before the eclipse,” he said. “Too many people think that’s the logical time to end the work day! My work seems never to end. Please, sit down with me. Wëranobéru, bring the Lord a cup of tea with sugar, the way he likes it.”

“You are very kind, my Lord,” said Chris. “What can I do for you?”

“I had a conversation with Estoiyaju today about your request that I serve on the Advisory Board of the School of Government, and as I suspected, he referred the matter immediately to Her Majesty. The three of us met for about half an hour.

“She is in favor of the idea in theory; the key is how it is implemented. The idea of good government is in flux and is controversial right now; I suppose that’s the polite summary of half our conversation. If you want to create a school of government, Her Majesty must approve the members of the Board, and they must have final say over the content of the courses.”

“I see. I can understand Her Majesty’s concerns. The five names I had proposed were myself, yourself, Wëranolubu, Brébëstu—governor of Dëksawsakëla—and Mitrané, governor of Lëwëspa.”

“We have some suggestions. We are concerned about Mitrané. She doesn’t have much experience and with her, the Board would have three Bahá’ís. Her Majesty suggested that if you really want representation from Lëwëspa, we can appoint her husband, Èjnësu. He is a member of the Old Houses as well.”

“But he is the Bahá’í in the household, not Mitrané. Her father is a Bahá’í, but she has remained skeptical. Èjnësu has no governing experience at all. And Mitrané’s a woman; I want at least one woman on the board, so that we remember that governance is not just the concern of men.”

“I see. Suit yourself; I’ll explain all of this to Her Majesty. She also wants Estoiyaju and Prince Mëmëjékwu on the Board.”

That was a big request. Chris knew Estoiyaju was difficult and Méméjékwu often spoke authoritatively from a position of inexperience. But with Wëranobëru, Estoiyaju's brother, within earshot it was difficult to object. It would be difficult to object effectively regardless. "Very well, I accept."

Kandékwes looked relieved. "Good. What about Përku or Modobëru?"

"Yes, they'd both be good. Could we really get Modobëru?"

"Estoiyaju suggested his name. He's doing a good job as acting governor of Sumilara. Përku won't be governor of Rudhisër much longer; he prefers active duty. But he has excellent experience."

"So, that's nine names. They would be excellent. In fact, the Board would be extremely prestigious with them!"

"It would. Remember Her Majesty's call to the Consultative Assembly to draw up principles of good governance? That was never accomplished. This group will be given that job. Her Majesty wants to appoint the Board of your School of Governance herself so that they will also serve as a permanent advisory committee to the palace on good government."

"So, the School of Government will be part of my génadema, but run by a Board appointed by Her Majesty?"

"Exactly. It is a partnership. It is also a risk for you. You don't have the right to set up a School of Government on your own. If you had suggested this a few years ago, it would have been rejected without further discussion. But all of us are coming to trust you, Kristofëru. We don't always like your ideas, but we know you are not trying to conquer the realm or corrupt its morals. Your motivations are pure, or as pure as anyone's

can be. The results of your ideas have mostly been good, in spite of the riots that at least indirectly resulted from them. If you accept this Board, then we accept the School of Government.”

“And I will accept the Board,” said Chris, nodding.

[Oct. 15, 2006; reread and edited 5/29/13, 8/9/17, 11/11/24]

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Councils

Third week Génmému

The nine members of the Central Spiritual Assembly rose from their conference table with some relief. They needed to stretch their legs; they had been sitting for three hours listening to reports from all around the realm of classes that were enrolling new believers or letters asking all sorts of questions. Modolubu had exhaustively outlined answers for each question, but they debated the contents nevertheless; a good chance to deepen everyone's knowledge and resolve how to apply spiritual principles to a variety of situations.

With lunch still a half hour away, most of them decided to go for a quick walk. Mëddwoglubas had a sunny autumnal afternoon, pleasant with a heavy shirt, jacket, or cloak on. They went out of the old castle on top of the cliff above town and walked over to the grounds of the House of Worship, which were beginning to be landscaped.

Chris pointed to a cluster of houses at the edge of town west of them. "That's new, isn't it?"

Lord Estodhéru nodded. "Indeed, it is another housing development; fifty houses and another two or three hundred people. Mëddwoglubas now has 3,200 people, almost double the 1,800 it had eight years ago. And Lëwésipa has increased from nine to twelve thousand. Half that increase is from births."

“That’s impressive,” said Chris. “I know this area is conservative about receiving immigration; even Pértatranisér’s that way, and immigrants from outside the province get the cold shoulder for a while.”

“The new knowledge, especially the new medicine, is now saving the lives of 3,000 per year, worldwide,” said Dr. Mitretu. “That’s the latest estimate by the royal census and it’s based on the fact that about half the people in the hospitals at any particular time would have died without medical assistance. Most of the saved lives are babies, from diarrhea in particular. But the other estimate that’s interesting is that the birth rate is up by 2,000 per year, mostly because improved nutrition is reducing miscarriages and increased income is making people more willing to have children.”

“So, the population is now increasing by 5,000 per year?” asked Chris. “That’s two percent a year.”

Mitretu nodded. “That’s the estimate.”

“I guess I can open more farming towns after all!” said Chris.

“How is Pértatranisér?” asked Estodhéru.

“Well, I have to thank you yet again, my friend, for the help from your Police Department. Without them, nothing would have been possible. And now Brébesu has agreed to move to Pértatranisér, where he has already helped train local policemen, so the town is safe, at least.

“Now that the harvest is coming in, I have been able to stop my grain subsidy; that’s a huge relief because it was very expensive. One month after the village got started, we stopped issuing new ration cards, but people kept bringing in relatives and some very poor people came from Néfa town to the village and eventually we decided to feed them

as well, so the rolls had been growing. But now everyone has farmland and is a member of the grange, and they can get grain from the grange in return for work, and there is still plenty of work to set up irrigation ditches and rice paddies, so food is available without my assistance.

“Phase two has started, which involves non-agricultural work. Last week the grange started allocating one steam truck and a team to clear a dirt track down the river to the sea and clear all trees on the river bank so that a vehicle could drive up the river towing a raft of timber. We’re negotiating with Owyapéla, the Fish Eryan village at the mouth of Rudhisér, for boats so we can cut timber that has been partially submerged and haul it to shore. In another month the grange should have a very strong wood-hauling business established and at that point we’ll start copper mining and refining.”

“What did Lord Mitru think of the timber business?” asked Stauréstu, curious.

“I had a morning-long meeting with him two weeks ago. He accepted it, but grudgingly. I get the impression that no one in Ora thinks their timber cutting business can expand much more, even though they’re even using a steam boat to haul the wood back. Of course, they have a very powerful river current to deal with; it has limited Ora’s ability to utilize the drowned forests and to trade with Sumilara.”

“I get the impression there’s a charcoal shortage in town,” said Stauréstu. “A certain number of people are cutting trees in the highlands, reducing them to charcoal there, and hauling it to the city on horseback. Firewood arrives that way as well.”

“Maybe we can sell to Ora, then,” said Chris.

“What are you doing about elections and a council?” asked Brébéstu. “I’ve been debating about setting up a Council for Deksawsakela and maybe one for Tripola. It’s

certainly easier running things without a council, but `Abdu'l-Bahá stresses them so much in *The Secret of Divine Civilization* that I have felt guilty about not establishing one.”

“I have similar concerns,” added Estodhéru. “The informal council that allocates Ləwéspe’s taxes has complained that it should be formalized, and several people in town are complaining that Məddwoglubas doesn’t have a city council.”

“We should probably consult the writings about the matter,” said Chris.

“I can give you the quotation,” replied Brébéstu. “I’ve memorized most of it. ‘While the setting up of . . . assemblies of consultation, constitutes the very foundation and bedrock of government, there are several essential requirements which these institutions must fulfill. First, the elected members must be righteous, God-fearing, high-minded, incorruptible. Second, they must be fully cognizant, in every particular, of the laws of God, informed as to the highest principles of law, versed in the rules which govern the management of internal affairs . . . skilled in the useful arts of civilization, and content with their lawful emoluments.’ He calls assemblies of consultation the ‘foundation and bedrock of government’; very strong language. Later he refers to permanent and nonpermanent members and says in his opinion, the nonpermanent members should be elected by the people because they will ‘be somewhat inclined to exercise justice, lest their reputation suffer and they fall into disfavor with the public.’”

“It’s fascinating to see the realm gradually moving in this direction,” said Stauréstu. “Məlwika City Council is a mix of elected and non-elected members.”

“It’s the only one, though,” said Brébéstu. “All the other consultative assemblies consist of appointed members.”

“My impression is that the longer we wait to establish such consultative bodies, the harder it will be for those bodies to function harmoniously,” said Chris. “Because as the idea of representation spreads, some people will come to advocate it forcefully, and they will be polarizing figures if they are elected to these bodies. Better to form the bodies with only a few elected members and gradually increase the number. It is harder to govern when a body of this sort must be consulted, but the extra time and hassle is worth it.”

“I think that’s true,” agreed Brébéstu. “Certainly, the South Shore has so many strong personalities, and a history of demanding consultation—even before Kamëru and his newspaper—that I think a Council is necessary. But I’m not sure, as appointed Governor, that I have the authority to establish one.”

“I am sure I have the authority, but I feel less inclined,” added Estodhéru a bit defensively. “This city has always been governed by a Lord, and he has always had to listen to the local people. In a sense, they are the consultative body.”

“But is that enough, now that Mëddwoglubas has doubled in size?” asked Aréjé, very gently.

“I don’t know. Probably the place to start is with a formalized regional council to advise Mitrané about the budget and development plans,” said Estodhéru.

“I think we should start somewhere,” exclaimed Chris. “When this meeting’s over, I’ll be on my way to Pértatransiér, and one priority will be establishing a city council.”

Two days later Chris was on his way in a rover to Pértatranisér. He drove up Route 2, which had been widened, graveled more, and smoothed over the summer for the entire fifty kilometers to Ora. It was a drive from temperate to tropical; as soon as he crossed the Trinénasisér and entered Vésa Province he could feel the air grow warmer. Route 2 became a concrete surface as soon as he entered South Ora, the town that had sprung up across the flood. He drove over the new suspension bridge—the old one had finally washed out after five years of battering by a flood half the size of the Mississippi River—and across Ora, then followed Route 2 thirty kilometers to Pértatranisér. As he drove into town, he passed a road crew that was beginning to concrete the highway.

Even more of the new house was finished; Váranucharu gave him a tour. Estoipuru had moved the “town hall” into two of the rooms so that the tent could be used for another classroom. He was very pleased to see Chris. “Lord, I’m so glad you’ve come! I need to give you a walking tour of town. There’s so much to see.”

“I noticed that a lot of buildings appear to be finished.”

“Exactly. Now that farmers have their own food, they’ve postponed the next planting a few weeks to work on their houses. It’s just as well; the tractors still have too much work to do to break the sod for additional farmland.”

“Are most people comfortable with the machines now?”

“Mostly. They’re grateful they have less physical labor to do. Without the machines, this village would have taken twice as long to establish, and people would have died or been injured from the work. I think people understand that.”

“And the timber business; is that accepted?”

“As an optional way to make more money, yes. If the grange required people to work on it, there would be resistance.”

“The timber business makes money, so the payment must be in dhanay. Everyone likes that, right? Estoipuru, I want to call a meeting of all adults for tomorrow night. It’ll last about an hour. Is that possible?”

“Of course. But I don’t know how many will come. What’s the subject?”

“Establishing a City Council for Pértatraisér. A week from tomorrow, I want everyone to go to one of the schools some time during the day and write down the names of two people—men or women—they want to serve on the Council. The school teacher should write down names for people who are illiterate, or ask a student to write the name down. Then I will count the ballots with help from you and Amos and May. In addition to the two the villagers elect, the Council will include you as headman, Váranu, and Amos.”

“Not you, Lord?”

“I’ll serve in place of Amos when I am here.”

“So, the Council will have five and the people will choose two?”

“Correct. I will ask everyone to chose the two who are ‘righteous, God-fearing, high-minded, incorruptible, fully cognizant of the laws of God, informed as to the highest principles of law, versed in the rules which govern the management of internal affairs,’ and ‘skilled in the useful arts of civilization.’ They should vote without talking to others about their choice; the week is to give everyone time to pray and meditate on the choices they will make.”

Estoipuru was startled. “Is this how Gedhéma is governed?”

“It should be! No, it is `Abdu’l-Bahá’s advice, and as a Lord who is a Bahá’í, I will follow his advice.”

“I see. It sounds rather like the advice of Widumaj in the Hymn to the King. The custom you propose will be strange to the people. No doubt many will not try it.”

“That’s fine, I am not requiring it. The town meeting will be a chance to explain it. We’ll also elect a Grange Council in another month, but we’ll start with the Pértatranisér Council.”

“I see. And I will consult with the Council about what?”

“We’ll have to decide. Someone needs to make day-to-day decisions about the village; five people can’t do that. The Council will meet monthly and will do things like approve the annual budget, finalize village regulations—how tall buildings can be, who can sell things—and resolve complaints. Melwika is run this way, and it works very well.”

“Then we’ll try it,” replied Estoipuru. “Lord, you had a visitor two days ago. Amos will tell you the details; he entertained him. Lord Lukásu of Jathisérvika.”

“Oh? So, he’s finally established.”

“So it would seem. It took several months, for some reason. He was disappointed you weren’t here; he thought you lived here all the time.”

“Then I’ll visit him tomorrow morning,” replied Chris.

Jathisérvika was just eight kilometers south of town on Route 2; less than a two hour walk, and in the rover a ten-minute drive. It was built on the southern bank of the Jathisérv or “Perch River,” but rice paddies and pastureland extended northward two kilometers

into the buffer zone between the provinces. The village of seven hundred souls—120 households, according to Thornton’s research—was just five years old. The buildings were wood-frame, with thatched roofs providing very wide overhangs to protect the walls of wicker and red clay stucco from the rain. The village appeared fairly neat and orderly. Stacks of firewood and numerous private grain storage silos spoke of a reasonably comfortable life. It was also fairly traditional; the village had a very small area for a weekly market, but no village store and no schoolhouse. A parking area for a mobile clinic showed that it did benefit from the new medicine.

Chris hoped to find the lord’s house by following the telephone line, but he soon realized there was no branch line to a local phone. He asked and was sent up a rather narrow alley to a fairly large house near the edge of the village. He parked and knocked on the door and a man in his early thirties, wearing an old army uniform, answered.

“Are you Lord Kristoféru? I am Lord Lukásu.”

“I’m very pleased to meet you and apologize that I wasn’t home when you visited. As soon as I heard, I came.”

They shook hands. “You are very kind. Please come in.” Lukásu stepped back and beckoned Chris to enter. He walked into a very large common room, able to accommodate thirty or forty, with two sleeping platforms along two walls. A door between the platforms led to the bedroom for the lord and his wife. The third wall had a large fireplace for cooking; the fourth wall near the door had a very nice new wooden table and a pile of papers on it. Chris looked at it for several seconds, pleased to see that Lukásu could read and write.

“Please, let us sit.” Lukásu directed him to a round rug and several pillows, one of which sat on a wooden frame that had a vertical backrest. He directed his guest to that “chair,” the most comfortable one in the house.

“I’ve been wanting to visit for several months,” said Chris. “But I gather you were not here.”

“Correct. My father, the late Lord Luku, passed away five months ago. At the time I was a Colonel in Her Majesty’s army.” He paused and switched from a western shore dialect to an eastern shore dialect, to make it easier for Chris. “As soon as my father’s funeral was over I notified the army of my new duties, but a discharge took a few months, and moving here from Endraidha took time as well. I’m afraid this place was a bit of a shock for my wife and two children.”

“Endraidha is quite a nice place; good schools.”

“That’s why my family’s at our house in Ora, which is much more comfortable.”

“I gather the Lord of Nuvika is in the city most of the time as well; I haven’t been able to meet with him yet.”

Lukásu waved his right hand dismissively. “Forget it. You’ll have to go to Ora to talk to him, and he won’t give you anything anyway. So, what can I do for you? There’s no reason to talk about the border because the Queen has set it.”

“We should survey it some time, though, and mark it. That may be a matter for the provinces, though.”

“Then let them pay. This is not a prosperous place. Most of my people came from drowned villages downstream from Ora, mostly Purapéla. That was our village, and my

father was faultlessly loyal to Lord Mitru, so he gave us this township. The land here is rich enough, and there's plenty of water thanks to the river, but it's hillier, so the rice paddies have required years of work to set up. We're finally getting to the point where we have enough for food and taxes. I think that's one reason dad died; too much hard physical work at age 48." He said "48" as if his father had been ancient.

"I gather you have no school."

"No. About a dozen kids take the bus to Ora every day; their parents pay. We don't even have a telephone connection yet."

"We'll be building a school, probably a large one for the region; and by 'region' I mean 'near Pértatranisér,' not a particular province. It would be a great assistance to your village if many of its children could come to our school because we are so close."

"It would be easier, true, but what this village needs, lord, are jobs and money. A school is valuable; I've seen the results among the army kids. But we don't have a lot of money for a school. I don't know you, but I know your reputation. The rumor among my friends in Endraidha is that Melwika's the largest city in the world. Pértatranisér is already twice the size of this place and must have four times the farmland. If you want our cooperation and collaboration, we need some of those jobs. I saw when I visited Pértatranisér that you are logging. That's something we could do."

"And Ora needs timber, I think. The new cement plant in Bruagras needs a huge amount of wood every day, especially if it starts to produce charcoal for sale. Let me ask you a question if I may, Lord Lukásu." Chris paused and slowed down his pace of speaking. "I mean absolutely no offense. Indeed, I am impressed by what I see. You can

read and write. You are a retired army officer and a leader of men. You are trained to inspire men. What does Jathiservika need, to go into the timber business?"

Lukásu was taken aback at first. Then he considered the question. "If you are asking, what do I need to develop this place. . . I think the village needs a sense of direction, and some confidence it can go there. But that must be demonstrated, and a retired army officer can't do that alone."

Chris nodded. "Direction and confidence: that's what most villages need. Let me suggest this: I can loan your village a trailer for hauling wood to Bruagras. It's four meters by 2.5 by three and holds about twenty tonnes of wood. It takes about ten men to fill it in one day. Bruagras will pay fifteen dhanay. I can send a tractor down to haul it to Bruagras for three dhanay or you can talk to some of your army buddies about borrowing army equipment."

"The army? They won't help us."

"Why not? The army uses its equipment in Endraidha all the time, and in Sumilara. It's time they helped villages as well."

"I have friends in Ora. Can we borrow tractors to help with our plowing and digging irrigation ditches?"

"We have five now; we just started renting a fifth one, for ten dhanay per day. They are expensive. But we might be able to help occasionally."

"We cannot afford ten a day."

"Lord, your village would have completed its farmlands years ago with steam power, and would be much wealthier now. You can't afford not to use them. Tell you

what. I'll see whether the Development Corps can get you a steam tractor for a week. That way, you'll get an idea what you can do with it."

"I suppose that's better than nothing. You're right; it takes time to learn how to use them."

"It may be that you can find some money from your village's taxes to rent one occasionally, and gradually get to the point where you can buy one. We can help train local people how to use it; Pértatranisér now has twenty-five men certified to use the equipment. They have actual pieces of paper stating what they can do."

"I can look at our budget again," replied Lukásu cautiously.

Chris nodded. "There may be some flexibility to be found." He didn't dare push any harder; he didn't know Lukásu. But he could calculate that the village paid him about 100 dhanay in taxes per household, which meant Lukásu received 12,000 per year. No doubt, he helped feed a few very poor families and paid for some hospital bills, spent a thousand or two paying people to make improvements and a thousand or so on sacrifices at Ora's temple. But that still left him six or eight thousand; a lot to support a family.

"If they make our ditch and levee work go faster, we may have some money," he agreed. "What is this 'Development Corps'?"

"A new organization that a group of us are starting. It mostly operates by giving matching grants or small loans to villages or groups of people. I'll suggest Widubéru Markdhunai come visit."

"He's involved? I know him slightly, from Ora."

"He is the Director."

“I see. Well, Lord, I feel I have taken from you but not given back. I will pledge to refer the local children to your school, though. I doubt they will want to switch until the current term ends.”

“That’s fine because we’re still building the school building. It sounds like you won’t be pledging any large number of students soon, so we won’t plan to accommodate them yet. We don’t want to build empty classrooms.”

“I understand, and I don’t see a way to pay for our students to go there. We haven’t been able to hire a teacher to come here, either.”

“I can help with that.”

“I’ll keep that in mind, next time our budget might include a teacher.”

“Alright. Whether you have given or not, Lukásu, I’m pleased to meet you. I can see you are a practical man, and I appreciate that. As you can imagine, I have a fair amount of money. That has become possible because I don’t give away too much of it. I am a businessman. There are two kinds of deals I like: The first is when I can help people help themselves; if I just give to people, they sit back and wait for more. But if there is a partnership where I contribute something that is unique and needed, the local lord makes an essential contribution, and the people contribute their time and energy, then the results are the best for everyone. The timber deal may prove to be an example of that. The other type of deal I like is when everyone makes money; the people, the local lord, and myself. On the eastern shore that has involved establishing granges and selling land granted to me. I do not expect to do that on the western shore, but there are undoubtedly businesses that need establishing where I can serve as a partner. I don’t know whether Jathisérvika

will offer any of those opportunities; regardless, my assistance with development is entirely separate. That gives you an idea of where I am coming from, perhaps.”

“Do you plan to relocate to Pértatranisér?”

“No. My son in law, Amos, is there for the next month, and my son will be there for nine weeks after that, then my wife and I for a month. We are keeping someone here able to make decisions, but our home is Melwika. Our goal is to contribute to Pértatranisér so that it becomes a prosperous and possibly a large city, but we will contribute to Ora and Néfa as well so they will grow in size and wealth. We do not want to displace either of those cities. There are at least four villages in Vésa and four in Rudhisér that are closer to Pértatranisér than to Ora or Néfa and we want to help them grow as well, because they are close. Rudhisér has suffered and we will particularly help it; Lord Mitru and his friends are helping Vésa advance fairly well. So, that is our plan. I hope we will be able to collaborate on many projects of mutual benefit to our townships.”

Lukásu nodded. “I hope the same, lord. While my family lives in Ora and I must spend some time there, I am dedicated to helping my people. So please do not misunderstand my hesitations to spend money. It must be used wisely.”

“On that I agree.”

“Come, let me offer you some bread,” added Lukásu. He picked up a small loaf of cornbread—much to Chris’s surprise, for corn was still rare in Vésa province—broke it in half, and they both took a chunk. Chris asked about it and Lukásu explained he had introduced the crop to the village and that it grew better in the tropical climate than did wheat. Consequently, when Chris got in his rover and drove away he left with some information he hadn’t had before.

Amos and Váranu were pouring over lists of workers and teams when Chris returned to the house. Chris noted the shaky, amateurish handwriting. “We’re reviewing how to draw up day assignments and maintain the pay records,” said Amos.

“So, you’re ready?”

Váranu nodded. “I’ve got the hang of it, now. The trick is writing down all the names well enough so they can be read!”

“That takes practice,” said Chris. “Most of the team leaders can’t read yet, so you have to call the names out loud anyway.”

“No, half or more can now read names,” said Váranu. “And with the school painting wooden signs and putting them all over the village, there are things to practice on.”

“And there are the big panels that teach reading,” added Amos, referring to a series of six two-by-three meter wooden panels that contained the entire alphabet, complete with pictographs to help people remember the signs and a series of readings of increasing complexity. They had posted them by the old Sumi bridge.

“I’ve seen men stand in front of them for several hours, figuring them out,” said Váranu. “So, how was your trip to Jathisérvika?” He said the last sentence with some suspicion.

“Pretty good. Lukásu’s an interesting man; a retired army officer, he can read, he’s traveled the world, and he’s in the village three or four days a week. His wife and kids are in Ora because she won’t live in Jathisérvika! He drove a hard bargain. We’re going to help them go into the timber business as well.”

“Lord, one thing we don’t need is competition!” exclaimed Váranu, affronted by the news. “For the first time in our lives, we have the possibility of getting rich! We don’t want competition and we don’t want dilution! Please, Lord, you must understand this point!”

Chris had expected some complaint, but was startled by the vehemence of Váranu’s comment. “Honored, we won’t get rich cutting timber. The people of Pértatraniséer can get prosperous; that is, comfortable, having a surplus, no longer facing desperate choices. Helping Jathiséervika will not prevent that, either.”

“Honored, Bruagras will continue to expand its production of lime and the next furnace that is finished will be designed to make charcoal as well for sale,” added Amos. “Right now we’re cutting ten tonnes of wood a day. In three months they might need a hundred tonnes a day.”

“Then let us cut it all! Why should Jathiséervika get any of the business?”

“Because they are human beings too,” replied Chris. “Because if Pértatraniséer is much more prosperous than its neighbors, there will be jealousy and trouble. Let the prosperity reach out to others.”

“Where will the money come from to make so many people prosperous! There is only so much money!”

“No, wealth can be created,” replied Chris. “The kingdom is a fifth wealthier now than it was eight years ago. As Pértatraniséer gets wealthier, the rest of Rudhiséer doesn’t have to get poorer.”

Váranu shook his head. “People will not understand these arguments, Lord.”

“Then I ask them to trust me in this one thing,” replied Chris. “Mēlwika is large and wealthy. So are the villages around it. Now, all of Arjakwés is growing wealthier. Twenty years from now—and you will be alive in twenty years, Honored—Pértatranisér will be a city at least as large as Néfa is today, but Néfa and Ora will be even larger, and everyone on the western shore will be twice as wealthy as they are now. That’s what is coming. And if we help our neighbors from the beginning, they will remember, and we will benefit from that as well.”

Váranu shook his head. “I hope you’re right, Lord.”

Reread and edited 5/29/13, 8/9/17, 11/12/24

231.

Development Plans

Fourth week Génmènu/late Nov. 626

Chris walked into the lobby of the Melwika Palace Hotel. He spotted the manager, who nodded a greeting to him and pointed to the back, so Chris walked past the front desk and into the office area.

Awsé was there, scanning a list of guests and what they had paid over the last month. The hotel only had a dozen rooms, but they were now full most of the time; an addition was being planned. She looked up when she saw Chris. “How are you today?” she asked.

“Tired; my body is still on western shore time. I’m glad I’ll be driving back in a few hours.”

“You had the first meeting of the School of Government’s Board of Trustees? They were good customers!”

“I’m glad. Are Sarédatu and Glosé waiting for me?”

“With Mènu, Mitru, and Tritu, in the meeting room.” She pointed. He nodded in thanks and walked in.

Mènu was showing them a list of construction items he had been purchasing for use in Pértatraniséer over the last three months. When Chris entered, they all looked up. “You made it; excellent,” said Glosé. “I’m glad you suggested this meeting.”

“I’m glad a ‘Home Improvement’ Store is a possibility. As Mitru will tell you, Pértatraniséer is just half an hour from Néfa and Ora; one dontay each way on the bus.

Ora's a big city, Néfa's good-sized and undergoing a construction boom, and Pértatranisér's on the verge of reasonable prosperity because the farmers all have twenty agris of farmland. They're still building their houses, and they're building pretty simple structures; but the harvest is beginning to come in, five agris at a time, and in a few months when their third and fourth five-agri block is harvested they'll find they have a surplus income. That's the time to have a store with door frames, window frames, glass and plastic windows, copper pipes, rugs, furniture, mattresses, bedding, curtains . . . I think there's a lot of money to be made, starting in about three months."

"I know what I need to know to buy over the next two months," added Ménu. "I'm willing to pay the extra to buy it from their store because I'm never completely sure of the inventory I need to keep, and I'd rather have some surplus available."

"Your business alone is almost enough to do this," said Sarédatu. "But Pértatranisér is a risk, Lord Chris. It's too small to support a store long term."

"I run seven buses a day through Pértatranisér," added Mitru. "There is a lot of service. I can try adding a mid-day run."

"But how many people are going to take a bus to shop in our store?" asked Sarédatu, skeptically.

"How much does the average customer spend in your store now?" asked Chris.

"The average bill?" Sarédatu thought for a moment. "About eight dhanay, I'd say."

"Eight dhanay. Well, how's this: publish coupons in the Ora and Néfa newspapers that offer a two-dontay round trip bus ticket for every six dhanay of purchases in the store."

“That’s clever,” said Glosé, looking at her husband.

He was calculating. “That’s three percent of the sale. That eats seriously into a profit that may be too small in the first place.”

“I think you could market your store in the newspapers that way. The Ora paper has a pretty good circulation now, and coupons will boost it further. Néfa’s paper has just started up, thanks to May.”

“Coupons have really boosted sales here and in Mèddoakwés,” agreed Glosé.

Sarédatu shrugged. “It’s a risk.”

“I’ll work extra long hours to make it happen,” promised Tritu. In the last year his stable had fallen on hard times, and ice was now so widely available that his profit margin had shrunk. So Miller’s third son was ready to try something new, and Pértatranisér was a chance to get away. Besides, he and Glosé, five years younger, had always been close siblings.

Glosé looked at her husband. Sarédatu looked back, not wanting to say no.

“Tell you what,” said Chris. “I collect a ten percent tax on all sales profit as the local Lord, but the Queen also said I could keep the three percent regional tax. Why don’t I waive that on all of your sales. That will give you three percent more.”

“That would help a lot,” said Sarédatu, considering.

“Can you do that?” asked Glosé.

“Of course! As long as the Réjé says I can keep it, I can waive it. And in this case it is to my advantage. Let us say you can manage to attract an extra five hundred dhanay a month of profit to your store in Pértatranisér because the three percent reduction in

taxes allows you to advertise and offer rebate coupons of some sort. I'll still get ten percent due as the local lord, or fifty dhanay."

"It is worth it," agreed Sarédatu.

"And I'll get more business," added Mitru. "I like that. I bet other retail businesses in Pértatraniséer will benefit, too. People will come to the Home Improvement Store, buy enough to get the return bus ticket, and do some of their weekly shopping while waiting for the bus home."

"Can you put a bus stop in front of the store?" asked Sarédatu.

"I can if you put the store in a good spot. Frankly, Pértatraniséer needs a proper bus station anyway. Let's build them next to each other."

"And I'll invest in a marketplace," said Chris. "Put it all in one place."

"So, you will make some money off the place!" said Mitru.

"I never said I wouldn't! Developing a retail district is a perfectly legitimate way to invest my money. A bus station and a Home Improvement Store will provide anchors. And there's a big piece of land on the east side of Route 2 between Third and Fourth Streets that we can use for this purpose. The entire strip of land east of Route 2 has been left unsold so that it can be developed commercially."

"Good thinking," commented Sarédatu. "Alright, I'll take a chance on this, especially since Ménu will get the contract to build it all anyway!"

"I think I'll be employing half of the town on construction pretty soon," he quipped.

"Don't forget all the day laborers in the neighboring villages, especially to the south," replied Chris. "I'm driving to Pértatraniséer in a few hours and will be there for

three more days, then I'll be back here. If Tritu can visit while I'm there, I can show him around. You're welcome to stay at our house."

"Give me two days and I'll be there."

"I think I can come as well," said Sarédatu. "Then we can draw up the contracts and sign them here."

"Excellent," said Chris, with a broad smile on his face. He offered his hand; they all shook. Then the meeting gradually broke up.

"Mitru, I have a different matter I want to ask you about," said Chris, as he stepped out of the meeting room.

"Sure," he replied. "Where; the lobby?"

"Good." They walked to the lobby, which was empty at the moment, and sat on a couch that faced out the window toward the Arjakwés River. "A few days ago I visited Jathisérvika, the village just south of Pértatranisérv. Like two thirds of the villages in this world, they have no steam vehicle and need one. They know they'll benefit from one but think they can't afford ten dhanay a day to rent one. You had tried a rent-to-buy program once, right?"

"Yes. It worked fairly well in that it boosted sales. The problem was that the villages still didn't know how to use a vehicle and often damaged or wrecked one while learning to use it. As a result, I lost a lot of money. If I had had a reliable crew to rent with it, they could train the villagers, but I didn't have enough such crews."

"I understand. What about this: the Development Corps trains a crewman to take a steam tractor to a village, operate it for a month, and train the villagers how to operate it. The Corps also pays part of the leasing cost; say, four or five dhanay per day. The village

would have to pay some as well, and maybe you or the Foundry would absorb some of the cost.”

“If it led to a sale, I’m sure that’s possible. The problem has been that it didn’t; it led to damaged, unsellable equipment instead.”

“But I think times have changed now because there are a lot more trained operators. The Development Corps can partner with the granges to find operators. Pértatranisér didn’t have any, now has five, and we didn’t have any crashes. We broke several plow blades and had a few minor accidents, but that’s to be expected.”

“Then let’s give it a try, Chris. I want villages to develop, and I’m willing to risk losing some money. I’ll talk to dad. Maybe we can get one or two machines; demand always drops in the winter, so production gets ahead of sales. If the Corps can arrange and supervise the rentals, that may solve the problems we had before.”

“Great!” said Chris. “Thank you, Mitru. I think this is a key to pushing demand for steam engines even higher. If agriculture were completely mechanized, it would require at least 250 steam engines. Add engines for grinding grain, sawing wood, and other manufacturing processes, and buses, trucks, and personal transportation, and there’s no reason why this world won’t need over a thousand vehicles. And what’s production now?”

“Seventy-five per year, but it’ll be one hundred thirty per year—two per week—by spring. Ora’s producing twenty-five per year, and they’re good vehicles, too; big engines and heavy construction, perfect for the army, moving earth, and logging.”

“And Yimu and Primu keep coming up with new efficiencies, so the prices keep going down. All this mechanization is pushing up productivity, too. It’s very encouraging.”

“It is.” Mitru rose. “Good to talk. By the way, Diné and I plan to visit Pértatranisér for a week when Thornton and Lébé will be there, and we may build a house there. I could use a western shore headquarters, and the location is good.”

“Great! I may see you there, then.” Chris rose as well and they shook hands. Then Mitru headed out and Chris walked to the front desk. He asked a bellhop to run upstairs to ask Perku and Modobéru how long they’d be. He had promised to give both of them a ride. The bellhop directed him to the dining area.

When Chris walked into the dining room, he immediately spotted a table full of laughing young people: Perku, Modobéru, Brébéstu, Mitrané, and Ejnésu. He was suddenly struck by how the new knowledge had raised up a new class of leaders, all in their late twenties and early thirties, and how he had played a role; Perku, the young captain in charge of Melwika’s garrison; Modobéru, the half-Sumi accounting student who had become his first chief accountant; Brébéstu, younger brother of Stauréstu and an innovative merchant; Mitrané, the one he knew least, the intelligent daughter and heir of his friend Estodhéru; and Ejnésu, her husband, who was proving very capable and rather like his father in law.

“Ah, Chris!” exclaimed Perku. “There’s been a change of plan. We’re all going to my place first, and we’re inviting Yusbéru of Isurdhuna to come down and chat.”

“And I’ll take the ferry from Néfa to Anartu, rather than from Arjdhura,” added Modobéru.

“And we’ll see Bellédha for the first time; never been there before,” quipped Əjnésu. “It’s the long way around to Məddwoglubas, but I like driving.”

“I’m supposed to pick up Widubéru in Bellédha,” said Chris. “But that’s alright; Luktréstu will be along as well, making the party eight, but we have two cars.”

“Déolu!” exclaimed Brébéstu. “We should invite him along as well.”

“It’ll look like a conspiracy of governors,” commented Pərku, but he smiled at the idea. “Problem: it’s the middle of the night in Bellédha. We can’t call him now, and we’ll drive through town about dawn.”

“Nah, I’ll call and wake him,” replied Brébéstu.

“It’ll make the fit a bit tight, but the rover can seat three across the back, right?” asked Əjnésu.

“Yes,” replied Chris. “And I can have Luktréstu drive him home afterward.”

“Then the plan is made!” said Pərku.

They finished their breakfast and grabbed their luggage. Əjnésu and Chris brought the rover and steam car around and they loaded up and were off. Chris loaned the other vehicle their second cell phone so that the two cars could carry out a lengthy chat about the informal meeting they were planning.

It took a while to get to Néfa. They had to stop in Bellédha almost two hours; Déolu took some time to handle an emergency and wanted to be formally dressed, even though the others weren’t. Mitrané walked around the marketplace and was surprised by

its limited selection; Mëddwoglubas was smaller but more prosperous, so its marketplace was much better. Then the nine of them squeezed into the two vehicles and drove the 140 kilometers to Néfa in two hours.

They rested and ate a supper-breakfast, depending on the time zone of their departing or arriving city, chatting about all sorts of things; the seven hour trip had been a lot of fun and the phones, plus alternating who was in which car, had bonded them together.

Yusbéru arrived not long after they finished eating. “I was a little worried; my driver said the snow might close the road!” he said as he shook hands all around. “But it wasn’t much and we just had to be careful. At least there are no robbers any more.”

“We hanged them last month,” replied Përku. “Thanks for coming.”

“So, what is this; a clandestine meeting of governors?” asked Yusbéru, and there was some worry in his voice.

They all laughed. “No, no,” said Përku. “You heard about the meeting we attended?”

“You said it was the Board of Trustees of the Royal School of Government.”

“It was, but so much more,” replied Përku.

“I think we finally know where a lot of things stand,” added Modobéru. “We spent most of the time talking about how the kingdom should be governed; we actually did very little to design the school.”

“That has to come later; we have to lay the foundation,” said Chris.

“The real key is that Méméjékwu, Estoiyajju, and Kandékwes all came to accept some basic principles,” exclaimed Perku. “They were not enthusiastic, but they ended up being skeptical but positive; wouldn’t you say?”

The others nodded. “But we have to be careful not to go too far with that consensus,” warned Brébéstu. “We don’t know where it’ll go in practice or what the Réjé will say.”

“And it’s easy to try to extend the consensus into areas where there was none,” added Mitrané cautiously.

“Alright,” said Yusbéru. “What was the ‘breakthrough’?”

“Consultation,” replied Perku. “‘Oh king, consult with the representatives of the people about the needs of the kingdom and the maintenance of justice, for it is beloved in my sight.’ We all know Widumaj said it, but implementing it has been difficult. Everyone is hesitant to start a regional consultative assembly from scratch; it is not clear such a thing is needed or what it will do. But in discussing—arguing about—this point at the meeting, we hit on the idea of starting with regional development conferences instead that could be open to almost anyone. Anyone wanting to attend must apply, and they will be accepted unless they are a known troublemaker; and even the troublemakers can write letters to the conference if they want. We’ll shape the agenda carefully to keep the discussion focused, but let the ideas flow. Then the governor appoints a small group to shape the conference recommendations into a report, which we try to implement. Finally, a year later the governor or Duke appoints a consultative assembly based on the people who were effective leaders at the conference. Then we gradually introduce elections as we see fit.”

“Interesting,” said Yusbéru. “Of course, I don’t know that I want a consultative assembly, or even a development conference. But I do want a development plan.”

“Every region needs a development plan,” agreed Chris. “But every region’s different, so one plan won’t do it. We started out with very simple plans five or six years ago, and everyone has implemented them in outline: each region gets a génadema and hospital, establishes village schools and now several high schools, obtains a mobile clinic or two, sets up regional fire departments and now regional police forces, gravels key roads, and acquires at least a main electrical line and a main telephone line. Those are now completed or at least started. Regions are building up their central cities. Many are acquiring a regional newspaper. Granges or systems for sharing agricultural equipment are being set up. But the development needed now is different. Manufacturing has to be stimulated, but that requires specialized knowledge and development of markets. Some regions will specialize in some industries, others in others. Banks have to be established. Contract law has to be reformed. Courts have to be strengthened. Villages have to be assisted to develop themselves based on their unique strengths. It’s much more complicated.”

“Maybe for some regions, but Chárda still has simple needs. We have forty kilometers of gravel road and twenty kilometers of electrical and telephone lines; we need two hundred of each. We have no high school, no police department, and only one fire engine. The valley has maybe three steam tractors for agriculture. Our hospital still has no permanent doctor. And I don’t have the budget of other regions, either.”

“Oh, don’t be so sure,” said Déolu. “Bellédha yields me 50,000 in taxes in a good year, and the rest of Ləpawsakəla yields 15,000 in provincial taxes, but this year the total was half that.”

“Tripola and Deksawsakəla have 110,000 of city and provincial taxes in a good year, but we have had two bad years as well,” agreed Brébéstu.

“Rudhisér’s should be 250,000,” added Perku. “I’m still not sure what tax income I’ll get because the courts haven’t settled it.”

“Even Ləwəspa’s provincial tax is similar, because of textiles and the silver mine,” noted Mitrané. “It’s about 185,000 dhanay, even though the population is half the other regions.”

“Well, you are similar, then,” conceded Yusbéru. “I get 180,000 from Isurdhuna and 300,000 from the region, since the Duke’s tax for the region is a tenth rather than a thirtieth. But I have to pay almost 300,000 to the temple and the priests every year, and the palace costs 20,000 to run.”

“Your temple is much more expensive than average, but we all have palaces and charity,” said Brébéstu.

“I’d recommend freezing or slightly cutting the temple every year,” said Perku. “Those priests make a huge amount during pilgrimage every year! They can raise their fees to pilgrims.”

“School fees,” added Brébéstu. “They didn’t go over very well in Tripola at first, but they have been accepted. Our villages have started charging one dhanay per month per child and the families find it somehow. Chárda is relatively prosperous; its families can afford more.”

“That’s an interesting idea,” said Yusbéru, nodding. “I want to start a high school for Isurdhuna, and eventually one for the northern end of the valley and another for the southern end. Half the villages have at least a one-room schoolhouse. I want to improve the hospital; it has saved many lives. I plan to buy another fire engine and start a police force. We do have soft coal and it is now widely used across the valley; it has improved life quite measurably. We haven’t been charging a tax on it and maybe we should start; a ten percent charge would raise six thousand dhanay. I figure I can slash a lot of my grandfather’s expenses over the last two years and redirect fifty or sixty thousand, on top of the twenty thousand he let me spend on development.”

“That’s more than I have!” said Déolu.

“But Bellédha has copper; you’re making twenty thousand a year on it,” said Chris. “That should increase. Bellédha’s now making cement, which the army is about to start buying in huge amounts. Both cement and copper require a lot of timber to prepare. So Lepawsakela has a growth plan of sorts. Isurdhuna has the annual pilgrimage which has now grown to thirty thousand people, spending at least ten dhanay each. That’s a huge potential tax source. Deksawsakela has agriculture, ice, and light manufacturing; the agriculture’s beginning to respond to mechanization, demand for ice is growing steadily, and light manufacturing is expanding every year. Lewéspa’s income has more than doubled in a few years because of textile and clothing manufacturing. Rudhisér has excellent agriculture and limited mechanization, will soon have copper and cement making, and I’m bringing manufacturing over the next year. This is what I mean by a development plan tailored to each region. When my son visited Frachvála back in the

spring, they developed quite a local development plan, and they are slowly implementing it. Khermdhuna has started on a plan as well, as Widubéru can report.”

“That’s the value of a development conference,” said Perku. “Because no one man can know all the strengths a region has. I’m going to hold one in about a month. The rest of you are welcome to come as observers.”

“Sure, I’ll come,” said Brébéstu. “I want all the ideas I can get. I’ll plan a conference for a month or two after that.”

“I better wait until spring,” said Déolu. “Too hard to get people together if there’s a bad snow storm.”

“And I plan to hold a conference on Sumilara,” added Modobéru. “I’ll wait till the spring, to make sure the army’s satisfied.”

“I’ll come to at least one,” said Yusbéru. “Maybe I’ll plan one afterward, too. But I am grateful you invited me; you’ve given me some good ideas.”

“Let’s pull out some paper,” suggested Chris. “I have some ideas about budgeting. There are crown funds that need to be used; the money allocated for post offices is not yet completely spent, for example, and that can help subsidize local teachers. The army will gravel roads, as we’ve seen in the northern and southern shores, Néfa’s about to get a lot of help from the army, so Chárda can probably get army assistance over the winter with graveling as well. The army will pay for installation of utility poles. That cuts the cost of installing electrical and telephone lines in half and makes it much easier for the electric and telephone companies to obtain private funding to finish the job. There is crown money to support mobile clinics and hospitals; the Queen has been very generous. But all regions haven’t claimed their fair share. There is now crown money to establish a system

of weather reporters, and it can help a village school quite a lot. I think the regions should ask for more help to set up police and fire departments. A new concern of the Development Corps is village water systems; a few pipes can greatly reduce sickness. Villages will often scrape up cash to match grants, and the Development Corps is now another source of funding, so provincial funds can be stretched.”

“Let’s review all that,” agreed Perku eagerly. “All of you have made it fun to be governor again. For months I’ve had to deal with powerful and rich men who want their way in this province and refuse to take no. But to have helpful and supportive colleagues; it makes me want to stay on as governor a while longer!”

[Oct. 18, 2006; reread and edited 5/29/13, 8/9/17]

Changing of the Guard

Mid Prusménu/early Dec. 626

Thornton drove the rover into the house's private courtyard and hopped out to close the gate behind. Lébé, holding Jonkrisu in her arms, opened the passenger door and got out, stretched her legs, then opened the back door to let Jalalu and Kalé bounce out. The area behind them and the rover's roof was piled high with luggage and trunks of work materials.

Amos and May came out at the sound of the rover and hurried over. "You made it!" said Amos. "You made good time, too; it's barely dawn!"

"We made no stops; we peed in the car. The back seat has a new stain to prove it." Thornton glanced at Kalé disapprovingly.

"Four and a half hours; a new record, I think," added Lébé. "And I do hope we didn't run over that chicken in Domamitrui."

"I want to use the bathroom!" exclaimed Jalalu urgently.

"Me too; come on. You too, Kalé," said Lébé. She handed the baby to Thornton and led the older kids away.

"You brought a lot of stuff," said Amos, inspecting the car.

"We're here for ten weeks." Thornton looked around at the house. "Is it finished?"

"On the outside. There's a lot to finish on the inside." Amos pointed to the western and southern sides of the courtyard. "The main part is finished; a very nice living room, a dining room, a big kitchen, a bathroom, and seven bedrooms. The bedroom on

the northern side next to the garage and vehicle entrance is roughed out but unfinished; it'll be done in another two weeks, though." He turned to the eastern side of the courtyard. "The three bedrooms here are completely unfinished. The only part that's finished is the caretaker's apartment. The public side of the house around the other courtyard will have a big meeting room, two bathrooms, and six smaller rooms suitable as bedrooms or offices on the first floor, and twelve rooms of various sizes on the second floor. They're all unfinished right now."

"So, we're on the second floor?"

"Yes, which is where Lua and Behruz and their kids will be as well."

Thornton nodded and grabbed his computer and a suitcase. Amos grabbed two bags and they lugged them up the stairs and straight into a small family living room, onto which faced a master bedroom, bathroom, and two bedrooms. They put down the items in the living room and headed downstairs for more. "So, when are you leaving?"

"Tomorrow before dawn, weather permitting."

"It's getting cold and cloudy at Belledha."

"We figured we should overlap with you for at least a day."

"The changing of the guard. The town looks bigger since I was here last."

"It keeps growing, partly because now there's a construction boom. We're building a school, there are two Miller houses going up, the bus station and Home Improvement Store are about to start construction, a bank building has broken ground, the town council has borrowed money from the bank to build a town hall, a sawmill has opened, grain storage silos are being built, the copper smelters are being built, we'll be starting on the plastic extrusion facility in another month. . . I think 150 men are

employed building right now. The wheat, corn, rice, and bean crops are coming in steadily, about 25 agris a day, and vegetables are constantly available now. The grange now has 275 members and almost all have twenty agris planted, so we have over 5,000 agris of farmland. The town population's about 1,500."

"Wow, that's a lot more!"

"Growth is slowing down, fortunately. You'll have to devote two hours almost every night to town and grange business. I'll be back on flying visits every two or three weeks to check on the copper smelter and cement plant, because they're both trying some new labor-saving designs."

"I bet you're glad to be getting back to the School of Engineering."

Amos shook his head. "Actually, I'll miss this place. I've really enjoyed being here. The people here are nice and we have a really unique effort going."

"I'm not sure I'm ready to serve as acting Lord. Your shoes will be hard to fill; I don't have the knowledge you have."

"One reason for the day-long overlap is to give you a tour and a thorough briefing. There's a lot to pick up. And your classes will start next week?"

"Yes, Dwodiu and Kwéterdiu mornings I teach in Néfa, while Tridiu and Penkudiu I'll teach a course in ore geology for the first time in Ora; it'll be quite a challenge. Néfa gets geology and ecology courses for teachers that I've taught several times. Lébé teaches in Néfa Dwodiu and Kwéterdiu afternoons and gives a seminar on Eryan children's tales and literature on Suksdiu."

"Our presence in Pértatranisér has certainly helped the local génademas. I guess Melwika Génadema has suffered, too."

“Only a little. We have so many graduate students there, they can teach the things we’ve been teaching. As soon as we get some of the guest rooms in the house finished, we need to bring some students here, so they can accompany us to class and then teach at the schools in the area. Since I’ll be here Primdius, I may start an agriculture class for local farmers. Behruz has synthesized a new insecticide that works very well against leaf and corn borers.”

“That will help a lot, we have a lot of insects in this semitropical climate. That could raise yields significantly. Are you bringing any survey personnel here?”

“Maybe for a week between terms; they’ll want an escape from the cold by then! We had three centimeters of snow in Melwika the other day.”

“I hear it’s a cold winter. Another reason to stay here; it’s a lot more like Kenya!”

“That’s for sure.”

They deposited a second load of stuff in the living room and headed back down. Thornton was able to hand the baby to Lébé as well, and she was able to put him down on a bed while she started to unpack. Meanwhile, Jalalu and Kalé had found their cousins Bahiyé and Marié and were running around the courtyard with them.

Fithu, the house’s caretaker appeared and introduced himself to Thornton, followed a moment later by Chalésté, his wife, the cook, and Déidaté, their teenage daughter, who served as nanny. They helped unload and unpack and Chalésté played with the kids so they would get to know her. Then Amos and May took Thornton and Lébé for a walk around town, introducing them to practically everyone. The warm smiles made it very clear that Amos had become a popular figure in town, and many inquired when he would be back.

By 4 p.m., Thornton had to take a two hour nap; it was 1 a.m. Mēlwika time, after all. He got up four hours later instead, feeling a little less tired, and was able to meet with Amos and the Town Council, which had been elected a month earlier. For two hours they briefed him about just about every imaginable detail of town administration.

It was now 10 p.m. locally and 7 a.m. in Mēlwika and he felt exhausted, but not particularly sleepy. He walked around the house again, then called Gwiwēru, the head meteorologist. “How are you this morning?” he asked.

“Pretty good. Where are you; Pértatranisér? Clear and ten Celsius, I bet.”

“That’s about right. You’re getting good at this!”

“We now have fifteen reporting stations with radios. You should turn Amos’s on and listen; it’s quite something. All day and all night there is a parade of voices on channel 1; I leave my radio on just to listen to them. One thing I didn’t anticipate: the weather reporters are getting fascinated listening to each other. So when one finishes a report, you might hear a ‘Mitru, this is Yimu in Wērétradentes. Sorry it’s so cold there, take care of yourself!’ They’re getting to know each other.”

“Have there been any emergencies reported over channel 1 yet?”

“Not yet, but there has been the occasional ‘can you take this order from our village store?’ and then an order is dictated. Right now, weather reporting is taking about 15 minutes per hour, so we permit some messages of that sort, and we charge the standard fee telephone operators charge for relaying messages.”

“Have you started issuing weather forecasts over the radio?”

“Yes, yesterday. It encourages the weather reporters; many listen to the same data as I, so a forecast helps them read the data as well.”

“Anything on channel 2?”

“I don’t know, I don’t tune into it. The Weather Bureau central office next door has someone available day and night listening to channel 1 and recording the data on big sheets that cover two tables. I suppose the army monitors channel 2 for subversive activity, but I’m sure there’s none!”

“Amos and May are leaving here for Melwika in about six hours. Any problems?”

“Yes; tell them not to head north, via Belledha! They have to drive around the southern end of the sea. The temperature and the air pressure in Belledha have been dropping and the wind is picking up from the north. That means we’re seeing the breakout of a polar air mass; it happens every week or so in the winter. The hourly weather reports from Sumiuperakwa and Akeldedra indicate this is a typical outbreak. The polar air flows out of the polar basin over the lowest edge, which runs from twenty kilometers east of Belledha to forty kilometers west of town. The air south of the ridge is warmed and moistened by the sea. The cold air pushes it aloft, producing rain or snow, then the Coriolis effect deflects the air mass westward and it runs down the western shore, bringing snow to Sumiuperakwa and rain about as far south as Pértatranisé. After that some of it flows up over the Snowys, spreading snow and rain westward. The rest gets diverted eastward along the equator, which sets up a counterclockwise gyre over the northern half of the sea, bringing warmer and moister air to Akeldedra. If there are weak high altitude winds, which is the usual case in the winter, the gyre sends warmer, moist air as far east as Melwika, which eventually gets displaced upward by cold air flowing from the north or east to produce snowstorms over Arjakwés. Sometimes it seems to

stimulate a gyre around the southern half of the sea as well, bringing snow storms to both shores—”

“Gwiweru, will there be snow along the southern route?” Thornton said, impatiently interrupting the man’s enthusiasm.

“In six or eight hours? No, but that may change in two or three days. I’ve warned Mitru’s dispatcher that all equipment operating from Akeldædra to Néfa has to be equipped with a plow.”

“I’ll tell Amos; that’s what he needs to know. Thanks.”

“Sure, any time. Sorry for the lecture, but now that we have real data on an hourly basis, it’s all beginning to make sense!”

Thornton laughed. “That’s okay. You’ll have to walk me through the whole thing when I get home. I’ve got to get to bed now, Gwiweru. Goodbye.”

“Bye, Thornton.”

Thornton hung up the phone with a sigh, then went to tell Amos the weather forecast. After that, he finally felt able to go to bed.

Prince Meméjékwu brooded angrily at the news. He paced about the main room of his new palace in Mæddoakwés, turning occasionally to stare at his seven-year old son Gésélékwes, who cowered behind his mother’s throne. He turned and stared at Soru as well, then paced a bit more.

“So, Dr. Lua can’t just give him a pill or anything?”

“No, your Majesty. Dyslexia is not a curable condition even on Gædhéma. I know enough English to read the literature about the subject. It is an inherited condition and reasonably common. It can be mild or severe. His form is mild.”

“You can’t fix it?”

“Your Majesty, your son will learn to read. It is just more difficult for him. It isn’t a question of laziness. Beating him won’t change it; it hasn’t helped yet. It also is not a question of intelligence; your son is smart. He will learn all sorts of things. But he will find reading to be a difficult task.”

Meméjékwu spat on the floor. He was used to getting his way. Soru wasn’t afraid of him, either; that irritated him. The educator just stood there humbly, relaxed, looked down in respect. Even that irritated him.

“Who else can I ask about this?”

“Dr. Lua. We didn’t consult with her about this case. If you ask her, she will probably refer you to Kanawé and myself. Kanawé is the real expert on dyslexia; she’s learned how to test for it. You can also ask Estodatu to check the literature in English. I can provide him with the texts I have read. You can also speak to Ornéstú; he is familiar with the subject as well.”

“Widéstu?”

“Ask him. But I think the responsibilities he has managing her Majesty’s education and health efforts have made it difficult for him to read about dyslexia.”

“How much is translated or written in Eryan?”

“A page or two, Lord.”

“I will talk to Estodatu; I want more, so I can read about this myself. The brain reverses the shapes of letters?”

“It’s more complicated than that; some of it involves confusing the sounds themselves. Many of our letters can be confused with others. Your Majesty, your son can learn to read and write. His tutor did not know about the condition and thus did not know how to work with it. Kanawé and I can help him.”

“You, not your wife. I don’t want my son tutored by a woman.”

“As you wish, your Majesty. But my wife is the real expert. Perhaps she can accompany me when we talk to the tutor.”

“That’s fine. When can you start tutoring my son?”

“Me? Lord, Kanawé and I have a school to run! I have six deaf children and they are learning how to read, write, and they will be able to work like anyone else. Kanawé and three assistants have twenty children with a wide variety of learning disabilities and we are teaching them well. Furthermore, teaching them is *how* we know what to do with your son.”

“My son, the heir to the throne, King Gésélékwes Tri! We can figure out a way to do this. You don’t teach all day and night. You can tutor the tutor and my son. I’ll pay you well; that’ll help your school.”

“It would, your Majesty. Very well, I accept. I was planning to take a course at the génadema this coming term, and teach one the next term. But I can give that up. Two hours a day, five days a week.”

“That is fine, and I’ll pay you a hundred a month for as long as it takes.”

“And Kanawé can come along?”

“That is fine, too.” Məməjékəwu looked at his son. “We’ll start next week. Thank you, Honored.”

“Thank you, your Majesty.” Soru began to back out of the room. He realized his hand was trembling a bit. The crown prince was mad, and he was known to take out his temper on people at times, though he never executed or imprisoned anyone.

As he reached the main entrance, the attendant began to open the door for him, but just then a man flung it open from the outside and dashed in. “Yusdu is dead!” he exclaimed.

Məməjékəwu jumped up. “Great uncle Yusdu! May Esto bless and receive him!”

“He clutched his heart and collapsed! They called the hospital, but it is already too late!”

Məməjékəwu headed for the door to hurry to his great uncle’s palace. Soru hurried out and fled for the school.

The funeral was two days later; Eryan funerals were usually held the same day as the passing, but in this case it was delayed for lords to come from the western shore. Chris, Liz, and Lua came to the funeral; General Roktekester was pleased to invite them because of all they had done for his father.

“You gave him a new lease on life,” he said to Lua at the reception, after the funeral service had ended and the pyre had been lit. He was slurring his speech a bit; he had drunk a lot of wine. “I think he would have died within a few months, if you hadn’t given him eyeglasses and aspirin.”

“And as a result, he was able to breathe life into the justice system,” said Chris.
“We wouldn’t have a law school without him.”

“But you helped him and reinvigorated his involvement,” replied Roktekester.
“And it brought him great satisfaction that my nephew, his grandson, took over the task.”

“I am very sorry, my friend,” said Chris. “I will keep your father in my prayers. I am sure Esto is pleased with him and will give him a great reward.”

“Thank you.” The general sighed. “How things could have turned out differently. I think perhaps better, too.”

Chris looked around. “Let us trust in Esto’s will. Your father will go down in history as the renovator of our laws, and you will go down in history as modernizer of the army. These are great and important contributions to the realm.”

“You are right, my friend,” said Roktekester, though he didn’t look altogether convinced.

Chris offered the general both hands again and they shook. Since others were waiting to give condolences, Chris, Liz, and Lua moved on. “What was that all about?” asked Lua, whispering.

“When Géselékwes Dwo died, his daughter Awster had just turned eighteen. The king’s three sons had died, one in combat, one from pélu, and I think the third drank himself to death. Eighteen is two years short of the age of majority and Yusdu argued with the Queen Mother and other members of the family that an eighteen year old girl cannot ascend the throne. If Gawéstu had not gotten involved, Awster would not have become Queen Dukterésto I; she would have been succeeded by her uncle, the king’s

younger brother, Yusdu. If that had happened, Prince Roktekester would now be on the throne.”

Lua’s eyes grew wide. “Oh.”

“Exactly.”

“He has to be careful saying things like that,” said Liz.

“Roktekester’s a drinker. Not a constant one, but when he occasionally drinks, it’s heavy. He’s not an angry drunk; it tends to make him depressed.”

“How do you know about drinkers?”

“You don’t remember my uncle Giuseppe?”

“I heard about him,” Lua replied, nodding.

Liz pointed. “Gurwekester’s free now.”

Chris nodded. They walked to the general’s younger brother to show their respects. After a few minutes of chatting with him—he wanted to thank Chris for helping make Béranta a thriving village of 1,200 people—they moved on to Judge Wérgéndu, son of the late Staurekester, Yusdu’s third son.

“He was so proud of you,” Chris said. “I am sure your grandfather will be looking down on you, protecting and guiding you.”

“Thank you; please pray for him and for me,” said Wérgéndu. “It is a terrible loss for me; I worked with him daily, and I feel terrible guilt for constantly asking him for his opinions of things.”

“You mustn’t,” replied Lua. “You were serving her Majesty together, and that brought him great joy.”

“It did, but he was suddenly stricken working on a case for me. If I had pressed him less, I would have had his wisdom longer!”

“He will guide you,” said Chris. “Be confident of it. And you are a great judge, Wérgédu. The kingdom’s judicial system is in good hands.”

“Well, we do not know that it is in my hands. Her Majesty has not said so. Please pray for me. I feel Esto listens to the prayers of your family.”

“We will pray that your wisdom will be strengthened daily,” promised Liz.

He smiled and nodded. There was a slight slurring of his speech as well; he had been drinking. But then, the bottles were getting drained very fast by the serving staff nearby. Chris extended his two hands and Wérgédu took them gratefully.

“Hey; no influencing the judge!” said Albanu nearby.

Chris turned; he had not realized the Lord of Néfa and Duke of Rudhisér was standing nearby, where he had been talking with his cousin, Lord Mitru of Ora. “Hail, my Lord. We are finishing our condolences, and you will be welcome to greet the judge at that time.” Chris bowed slightly to Wérgédu and the Menneas moved away. But Albanu didn’t approach Wérgédu; he strutted over to Chris, Lord Mitru wobbling along because he was drunk as well. “So, Lord Kristoféru of Pértatranisér, I hope you are enjoying your work with my former peasants.”

“As a matter of fact, your Grace, I have met some very noble and capable men and women among them. I want to thank you for creating such an advanced and sophisticated city as Néfa, a city of great talent. Pértatranisér now embraces five thousand agris of verdant farmland; almost equal to the lands you vacated. How are your lands?”

Albanu was not sure whether Chris was being genuine or sarcastic; probably both, and he found the combination infuriating. “And thank you for the new knowledge that lets a hired hand raise as much wheat as four or five peasants. My six thousand agris will make me more money than your five thousand will ever make you, even if my harvest per agri is only three quarters as much. But that’s temporary. My workers are getting better, and with more machines, we will do even better. Watch out; Pértatranisé may not be able to grow big enough to accommodate all the peasants needing land. And regardless of what the courts decide, I will be richer than ever, Lord.”

“I am sure Esto will be pleased,” responded Chris. “If you are looking for business opportunities, we can talk about it.” Chris turned away and they walked across the room.

“Wow, he’s bitter!” said Lua.

“Considering the new knowledge made it possible for him to evict farmers, I’m not sure why,” said Chris. “I suppose he was expecting them to be docile and starve in peace.”

“Can he evict any more?” asked Liz.

“I don’t know; let’s ask Perku.” Chris pointed across the room and they headed toward the General. “Greeting and peace,” said Chris to Perku. “I am curious; how many more farmers lease their land from Albanu? He just implied he would evict even more.”

“Only if the court agrees; the judgment was scheduled to come out in a few days until the chief justice died. Albanu and four of his friends, who are lords of several villages in the basin, own more than half the basin’s active farmland.”

“That’s lot of farmers! I suppose some is fallow, but it’s still 1,500 families; maybe nine thousand people. It’s not right that they could kick all those people off their land.”

“That’s up to the courts. They can’t do it right away because they don’t have the trained workers and machines to replace them, especially for rice.”

“Where will the people go?”

Perku smiled. “If you were to ask me right now, I’d say Pértatranisér! They’ve all got cousins there already!”

“Not Néfa city?”

“I’d rather that they go to Néfa, but if Albanu keeps his tax money, the governor won’t have much to develop Néfa.”

“True. Maybe the development conference will help.”

[Oct. 21, 2006; reread asnd edited 5/29/13, 8/9/17]

233.

Development Conference

Early Belménu/late Dec. year 8/626

Amos stepped out of the rover and into a downpour of cold rain. He hastily waved goodbye to May and dashed inside Néfa's citadel while May slowly drove away with the kids, heading for Pértatranisér.

He was late for the morning session of the development conference. But as he entered the old throne room—big, drafty, damp, and rather dark that morning—he found quite a crowd gathered and waiting. He spotted Thornton, Estoipuru, Váranu, and other members of the Pértatranisér City Council and hurried over.

“You made it, Lord!” exclaimed Estoipuru, a very large smile on his face. He extended both hands and shook vigorously and enthusiastically. Thornton couldn't help but note that he called Amos “Lord” while Estoipuru never called Thornton anything but “Honored.”

“It's really good to see you,” said Thornton. “You made good time.”

“No, we just left very, very early. This heavy rain was half a meter of snow at Sumiupèrakwa. We had to go around the southern shore again.”

“I'm sorry,” said Thornton.

“And Lady May accompanied you?” asked Váranu. The two of them had become friendly, probably because they both had slightly radical ways of looking at things.

“Yes, and the children. They're on their way to Pértatranisér. What have I missed?”

“Nothing this morning,” said Thornton. “The session should have started half an hour ago, but we’re still waiting. Neither Perku nor Albanu have shown up.”

“Albanu’s here?”

“I think no one dared to turn him away,” said Estoipuru. “But he behaved himself last night.”

“But then, last night the only thing that happened was a lot of chanting of hymns, followed by welcoming speeches,” said Váranu.

“Who do we have here?” asked Amos, looking around.

“Just about every lord in Rudhisér province; thirty-six of them altogether,” said Estoipuru.

“No; thirty-seven, including our town,” said Váranu.

“Well, remember I’m not Lord,” said Amos.

Estoipuru pointed. “Against the western wall are the lords. They’re mostly related to each other. In the middle are merchants and artisans from Néfa and nearby villages. You can recognize the génadema students; they wear the new mechanically manufactured clothes. And this group here—” He discretely pointed to a scattering along the eastern wall. “I don’t know them at all.”

“A few are lords from Véspe and other areas, but most are business people from Melwika, Meddoakwés, Ora, and other places,” said Amos. “I recognize a few of them.” He looked at Thornton. “Can you show me the tea and coffee?”

“Sure; they have plenty.” Thornton was puzzled by that; the table was in plain sight. He led his brother in law over to it and they both poured cups.

“How are things going in town?” asked Amos.

“Well, it hasn’t been easy. I haven’t been able to win their respect. Every time there’s a difficult decision they don’t want to make, they turn to me, and if I recommend a direct attack on the problem they complain it is too difficult. For example, three days ago, six men from Nuvika arrived on the morning bus for day labor. The demand for construction is so high, a lot of men come by bus every morning from the villages to the north, and no one objects particularly. But Véspons? No way! The six men insisted that they were good workers and could do the job as well as anyone else, Estoipuru took them to me to dissuade them, and I backed them up. He was furious! I pointed out to him that we were building good relations with our neighbors by sharing work and we needed to give them a chance, but he wouldn’t agree. The men from Nuvika did get work that day, though, and they’ve come back, but they haven’t brought others.”

“What you did is exactly the position I would have taken and your father would have taken. I’ll talk to Estoipuru.”

“It’s an age thing, partly. I’m 25, Estoipuru’s twice that. You and dad command more respect.”

“I know. I’m sorry this is proving so difficult. You’ve run a lot of your decisions past dad and he has praised them to me. How’s school?”

“Fine. Commuting back and forth on the bus is a pain, but I have befriended a few people, and some have asked about you. The ore geology class is a real challenge because I have to do so much reading *and translating*; but that forces me to read it carefully. Every ninety minutes of class requires about four or five hours of preparation. Thank God for my clunky old laptop; I can print translations in sufficient quantity for everyone in class, and I even use its screen to show a few Power Points and illustrations.”

“I’m sure Lébé’s glad to have the computer around, too. She and May have been emailing a lot of manuscripts back and forth. Well, let’s get back to our friends before they miss us.”

Thornton nodded and they took their cups across the room to the others from Pértatranisér. Váranu gave Amos a quick report about the grange, which was busy planting wheat in what proved to be a very rainy “dry season.” Corn had won a lot of acceptance and was being planted instead, and a large area of potatoes was being tried. Estoipuru summarized all the construction going on; a post office had been started that would also house a switchboard, for the village was acquiring too many telephones to use the Néfa switchboard.

Then suddenly, an hour after the morning session was supposed to start, Perku and Albanu entered the meeting with Prince Meméjékwu and Judge Wérgédu. “Something has happened,” said Amos, observing the arrivals.

“Do you think a judgment has been rendered?” asked Váranu.

Amos nodded.

The entire gathering—some 120 men and a handful of women—rose to their feet and grew silent as the four walked to the stage in front of the room. Prince Meméjékwu walked to the podium while the other three sat. “Good morning and please be seated,” he began. “I am honored to be here in Néfa to attend this development conference, the first of a series to be held around the kingdom over the next few months. Her Majesty has asked me to bring her greetings to all of you and her assurance that she is pleased with the work all of you are doing.

“Two days ago, I attended a meeting between the Queen and the panel of royal judges considering the cases involving various lords and persons in the province, including Duke Albanu. The purpose of the meeting was to resolve a key matter, the meaning of certain royal decrees, which ultimately proved easiest to determine by asking Her Majesty directly. The Queen confirmed the recommendation of the judges, that her decree turned tax collection and expenditure over to the governor, therefore all contracts that changed the rate of taxation were null and void. Therefore, all tax collection normally due the governor must go to him forthwith, both in his capacity as governor of the province and as governor of the city of Néfa. We have just met with Duke Albanu about the matter and he has agreed to accept the judgment.”

The prince paused; the audience murmured, largely in approval. “Regarding the cancellation of longstanding leases of land to numerous farmers, this was found to be a matter unrelated to the reorganization of the realm last summer. Landowners have the right to decide who will lease their land and for how long. Lord Albanu is within his rights as a landowner to change the leasing arrangements. The court, however, recommended that considering the extent to which the changes will disrupt the province, further cancellation of leases must be spread out over a period of several years, rather than be implemented all at once. Lord Albanu has agreed to that and to restore a small number of leases, but only for the one upcoming growing season.

“We can all be thankful that this matter is now resolved peacefully and in a manner that benefits the province. I look forward to seeing positive results from this conference.”

Meméjékwu stepped down to strong applause. Estoipuru stood there, fuming. He turned to the others from Pértatraisér and whispered angrily, “Restore a few leaseholds? That’s a token concession! He plans to kick everyone off his land! Now it’ll just take a little longer!”

“No, I doubt it’ll take longer, because he can’t kick everyone off at once anyway!” replied Váranu, disgusted. “This is unacceptable. What will people do?”

“Come to Pértatranisér,” replied Amos. “Now we know we have a few years to prepare.”

“That’s impossible, we can’t accommodate that many people!” replied Estoipuru.

“Some will move to Néfa, if it undergoes development. I was afraid this would happen, but at least General Perku now knows how much taxation he’ll get,” said Amos. He shook his head to indicate they shouldn’t talk further, because Perku had stepped to the podium.

“We can now proceed with discussion of the needs of our province,” he said.

“And the discussion will be informed by an awareness of how much can be spent. The taxes from the city of Néfa itself for the year just ending total 75,000 dhanay; those from the entire province, 150,000. Those are the figures we will be using today and tomorrow to put together possible plans for development. We do not need to consider improvement of the roads because the army has agreed to devote 200,000 dhanay over the next year to concreting roads in this province and 35,000 to graveling outlying roads and installing utility poles along them, especially those with route numbers. We can be immensely grateful for the army’s generosity. We should also remember that local taxes in the province’s villages total another 400,000 dhanay. We have a report about ways to develop

the region's schools prepared by Brébalu." Perku nodded to Brébalu to step forward and the man rose with a sheaf of papers in his hand. In the last month he had become Perku's full-time assistant and was doing a good job. But before he could reach the podium, Albanu rose and strode to it instead.

"I want to thank so many people for coming to this conference as well," he added. "It is heartening to see so much support for *development*." He said the word as if it were a complete neologism. "Rudhisér must and will advance to become a leader in the kingdom. It is the main door for trade to Sumilara, a trade that greatly enriches us. But we need to have a realistic measure of the available tax, for some of it always has and will continue to support the first family of this province."

Perku rose from his seat on stage, angry. "Duke Albanu, I have stated quite clearly the amount of tax money available for this city and province. That is a matter that falls in the realm of the governor to decide."

"Governor, you cannot cut me entirely out of my hereditary rights." Albanu waved a finger at him. "I will get my due."

"I submit, your Grace, that you are getting all you are due, thanks to your vast estates."

Albanu stared at Perku a moment, then turned and walked off the platform. He headed for the door and left the conference entirely.

The entire audience watched in shocked silence as he left. Then, one by one, other lords headed for the door as well. Twenty walked out; sixteen remained.

"Now what," whispered Estoipuru. "It'll be hard to accomplish much without them."

“Let the greedy bastards go,” replied Váranu. Amos scanned the hall; the same sort of conversation was being repeated everywhere. Thornton shook his head and looked at the floor, distressed. Then Perku banged a staff up front.

“We will not let this disrupt our proceedings. We have a lot of talented people here and many ideas for developing this province. Brébalu, please come to the podium and give us your report.”

Brébalu nodded and stepped forward. He spoke about a plan to establish high schools in Néfa and Pértatranisér, then a third high school at a location on the northern side of the basin, still to be selected. Each would start with a capacity for 120 students and would expand to as many as a thousand, able to serve all of the region’s approximately three thousand high school age students. But the distracted audience was unable to pay attention to his words; there was almost no discussion, and certainly no argument over whether high schools were needed and how quickly they should expand to meet the needs of all students.

Perku was obviously disappointed and noted that villages would have to start their own schools for kids aged 6 through 13, which were simpler and required no transportation, and thus were much cheaper. That generated no enthusiasm or comment either. “Very well,” he said. “I see this morning’s session should end early, so we can think about the new situation. We are adjourned until 1 bell.” He banged his staff on the floor again and left the podium.

Amos turned to the others. “Well, let’s talk to people and find out what they are thinking.”

“To what end?” asked Estoipuru.

“The benefit of Pértatranisér and the province.” Amos looked around, then pointed. “Estoipuru, there’s the headman of Nuvika. Why don’t you talk to him about the day workers.”

“And say what?”

“We have a lot of construction work right now, so some of his people are welcome; otherwise we’ll have people move to town and we won’t have work for them later. I’d give him a number.”

“Okay; six.”

“Let’s be a bit more generous than that, especially since I think we’ll have more work after this conference.”

“Alright, a dozen, then.” Estoipuru nodded and headed across the floor, clearly unhappy by the assignment. Thornton looked at Amos, surprised. His brother in law simply shrugged. They headed across the room to the “foreigners” along the eastern wall, Váranu following along. They headed straight to Ménu Miller and Déru of Sumiupërakwa, who operated a major sawmill.

“I can help you get another saw if that helps,” Ménu was saying. “You can spin it with electricity rather than steam or water power. Mitru can find additional trucks to haul the timber. Your quality is better than anything I can get in Pértatranisér, Déru. It’s worth a bit more.”

“How much construction do you have left?”

“Come see! Months and months. A post office is the latest contract.”

“We have a huge supply of seasoned timber. Whenever we need it, the Fish Eryan village nearby goes out and cuts dead trees standing above the waves and hauls them back. That’s our trick.”

“Déru, we’re almost ready to access the dead trees downriver from town,” injected Amos. “We’ve been clearing the river bank all the way to the seashore and using that timber for the cement plant and for local construction. We’ve also cleared five thousand agris of parkland, and the piles of trees are rapidly being hauled away. If we can’t get enough sawed lumber, we’ll have to start making it ourselves.”

“I am not afraid of competition,” replied Déru. “We’ve learned how to make some very good products and they are in demand everywhere. I’m happy to expand production if I can be sure I can sell the result. I’m also happy to partner with you. You see those dark-skinned fellows over there?” He pointed to two men against the western wall.

“Those are the lords of Jérkenta, the Fish Eryan village near me, and Owyapéla, the Fish Eryan village at the mouth of the Rudhisér. They are talking about Owyapéla harvesting dead tropical trees for me, like mahogany. They don’t grow near me. Owyapéla can help you as well, I don’t care. I’ll even buy trees from you if you can help the Fish Eryan select and move them. They can cut trees and paddle back to shore with them, but they grew up in a desert and can’t tell one kind from another.”

“We can help them!” said Váranu, excitedly.

“I’d rather work with Pértatranisér, frankly, especially after that senseless outburst this morning. I trust Lord Kristoféru and Ménu, but if timber has to be hauled up the Rudhisér to the port of Néfa for trucking to my saw mill, what do I do?”

“The army will be fixing up the road to Owyapéla some time,” said Thornton.

“But when?”

“Let’s talk to Oyapéla about floating the wood to the mouth of the Atranisé instead, then,” said Amos.

“Amos!” exclaimed a man nearby, who had been listening to the last part of the conversation. “I’m Bèbru; you may remember meeting me in Mèlwika a few times, my wife is one of John Miller’s daughters. Ménu, here, is my brother in law. I live in Néfa; I’m a merchant and I sell a lot of things to Mèlwika. My concern is like Déru’s. I want to help out Rudhisér and see it develop, but I fear that Lord Albanu will make trouble. I know him. He can be ruthless.”

“What do you have in mind?” asked Amos.

“I want to replace my mattress and futon making operation with a real manufactory. Néfa has excellent rice straw. Rice hulls make excellent mattress filling. And we have plenty of cotton. With mechanization of the farm work spreading, rice hulls will be easier to purchase; right now it’s hard to get a good supply. Mèlwika has been selling absolutely every mattress and futon I can make; as more people earn a larger income, they want mattresses and futons. But I was just saying to Perku that I don’t want to build the factory in Néfa. Albanu might try to extort money from me and he might precipitate another riot.”

“I understand,” said Amos. “Pértatranisé’s interested, of course. We can get you a big piece of land; the village council has a policy of giving away land to anyone who will bring jobs to the village.”

“But . . . money—”

“Bèbru, dad can loan it to you, and I can build the factory,” said Ménu.

“I suppose I can ask him.” Bèbru was hesitant.

“We can talk to him together,” said Ménu.

“And Lord Kristoféru has authorized Thornton and I to make deals to get jobs in Pértatranisér,” said Amos. “That can include a reduction in the Duke’s tax for up to five years. The Queen gave the Duke’s tax to Lord Kristoféru indefinitely, and as long as it is his, he can reduce it.”

“So, Albanu has no power over Pértatranisér at all.” Bèbru considered that.

“Excellent. You’ve got a factory.”

“Thank you.” Amos extended his hands and Bèbru shook. “We’ll draw up paperwork whenever you’re ready. Would you like to come with us while we talk to the Lord of Owyapéla?”

“Sure.”

They all started to walk toward the two Fish Eryan lords. But then Amos saw Perku, who had been occupied talking to a long succession of complainers and advice-givers, turn and head toward them. He watched and was sure the general was heading their way. “I’ll catch up to you,” he said to Thornton.

Perku was striding quickly and purposefully, so Amos walked toward him as well. “Amos, I need your help,” he said in a low voice, as he approached close. “No deals for Pértatranisér, please. Assure people Néfa will be a good partner for development.”

“Okay; I won’t make any more deals. I think you need to offer free land. Do you have any?”

“Yes, I have control of some land, and I’ve thought of that. I’m offering tax breaks and can even offer some public financing or loan guarantees. And I want to offer deals that will get more money to Albanu via resale of his land or services from him.”

“I can’t believe Albanu did that.”

“I was shocked. We had a long meeting with him this morning where we went over the details and he seemed accommodating. He never raised the subject of receiving part of the tax receipts, so I didn’t bring it up, either. Now I have to wonder whether he was planning to raise the matter in public and walk out so he had an excuse to break the rest of the deal.”

“The Réjé will not be happy.”

“Estoiyaju went to call her right away. He was livid. She wants this conference to succeed, and now that will be difficult. But it’s not too late. This afternoon we’ll turn to expanding businesses and we’ll deal with the issue of opposition directly. Can we broadcast the queen’s voice loudly enough so everyone can hear her?”

“Sure. Use channel two on the weather radio.”

“Of course! I’ll have someone bring Néfa’s here. Thank you.”

Not everyone returned from lunch; the crowd was noticeably smaller. One of the lords supporting Albanu stood outside the citadel and discouraged participation.

Perku gave everyone a few extra minutes, then called the chanter forward to chant the opening hymn. When silence settled on the crowd, Estoiyaju stepped to the podium.

“All rise for the Queen!” he announced.

“The Queen?” exclaimed almost everyone in the crowd, but they knew what to do; they rose. Estoiyaju stepped to the radio that no one had paid attention to, next to the podium.

“We are all standing and at your service, Your Majesty.”

A pause. “Thank you, Estoiyaju. All of you may be seated.” She paused again. “I am pleased to be addressing all of you today. I want to thank everyone for coming to this very important conference where the future of Rudhisér province will be discussed.

General Perku, please send me a list of the names of those who are present for the deliberations this afternoon. If any decide to join it this evening, send that list as well. I want to read the names personally. In particular, I want to thank the lords of villages in Rudhisér for their support. I want to thank the merchants, artisans, and makers of useful items, whose efforts will enrich the province. And I want to thank the guests who are attending to watch and lend their ideas and investments to the advancement of Rudhisér.

“Rudhisér province is at a crossroads and the crown lends its full and complete support to it. Many changes have come in the last eight years and many more will come in the next eight. Protecting and supporting the health of your people is of great importance to this queen and is the reason you have a hospital and mobile clinic. How you will expand the protection of your people’s health is a high priority of your conference. Your génadema is one of the best in this world in terms of teaching business courses and your province has many people trained in accounting and other important practices. General Perku tells me he has found many young men able to serve on his staff there. Developing the génadema must be another focus.

“One thing you do not have to worry about is your road system. As you know, about a year ago we approved the request of the army that it become the chief developer and maintainer of the roads. This is a logical task for the army because it has many men and machines that otherwise are little used. The South Shore was the focus last year and early this year; the North Shore, the spring and summer of this year; now Rudhisér will receive our attention. You will also be a center of the three-year effort to concrete the entire road from Néfa to Tripola, which will cost over a million dhanay and will be the single largest construction project ever attempted in the kingdom.

“Excellent roads, however, present you with an opportunity for growth: how will you take advantage of it? In the next few years, the province will see a great increase in the number of farm machines. This means a lot of farmers will need new work, just as they did a few months ago. Some will farm new fields cleared from the forests. Others will work in new industries. They will need education. This is the lesson of Mēlwika, where a few thousand people are earning twice as much money as the average farmer and the city is paying two or three times as much taxes as Mēddoakwés. How is this possible? They are educated. The workers can read and write and therefore can learn how to do complicated tasks. Other important tasks of this conference, then, will be to discuss how to educate more and more of the province’s children and how to train more and more of its workers to do new work.

“Yet education only lays foundations; there must be new jobs for the workers to do. The crown is committed to make those changes in the kingdom as well. This is one reason why we have designated dukes and appointed governors: to provide each province with the continuity of aristocratic leadership and the efficiency of modern administration.

Rudhisér, for the next few years at least, will have an appointed governor who reports to Crown Prince Meméjékwu and myself. We have high expectations for the governor and will hold him to them. We will accommodate Duke Albanu as well so that he is free to pursue, at a reasonable pace, the agricultural reforms he contemplates, but he will have no role to play in the development of the province if his approach and philosophy are at odds with those of the crown. The crown has set the course; we invite everyone to contribute to it; we require no one to participate; but we expect that no one will oppose the path the kingdom has embarked on. We are confident the city of Néfa and the province of Rudhisér will take its place and make significant contributions to Éra's progress."

No one responded for a moment, then Estioiyaju said, "Thank you, your Majesty," and everyone began to applaud. "Wow, that's incredible!" said Amos.

"About half of it was lifted from Perku's welcoming speech of last night," said Thornton.

"Even so, this time it was said by the Queen, not by a governor. That's very important!" said Amos.

"It's the first time she came out so strongly endorsing development," agreed Thornton.

"I guess this conference is back on track," concluded Amos.

[Oct. 22, 2006; reread and edited 5/29/13, 8/9/17]

Loaded with a satchel of papers, Thornton headed for the dining room of the Pértatraniser house for a fast lunch before jumping into his father's rover and driving to Ora to give his final exam. As he entered the room, he was pleased to see that lunch was served; Chalésté was a fast and efficient cook. But he was surprised to hear the Queen's voice.

It was coming from the weather radio, which was set to channel 2. Chris, Liz, and Lébé were already there with Widubéru, head of the Development Corps, listening.

"What is it?" he asked, puzzled.

"It's her live address to the Kërda Development Conference," said Chris. "From what I hear, it sounds like it's covering the same ground as her talk to Néfa a month ago."

Thornton sat at the table and listened. "Yes, it's repeating some of the same phrases. We never got a transcript of that speech, did we?"

"The palace refused," replied Widubéru. "Though they never denied the summary published in the newspapers."

"It'll be easier to know what she said this time," added Chris, with a smile. "Because if all goes according to plan, Amos will record it."

"Really?" exclaimed Thornton. "He's that far along?"

Chris nodded. "He's devoted most of the last nine weeks to the cylinder recorder; a team of up to ten have been working on it, and Behruz has had six chemists working on

the vinyl recording surface. He'll be able to record only four minutes at a time, but it'll be a start."

"How can we use four-minute recordings?" asked Thornton.

"Two machines alternating can record or playback forever," replied Chris. "It'll take a lot of cylinders, though. We can also use the two computers to store and play back the master recordings."

Thornton sat and listened to the queen as he ate a stew of vegetables, rice, and pork. It was indeed a very similar speech. "She's more cautious in tone and gives fewer specifics," he said at the end.

"Except about Melwika," said Chris. "Amos told me she was very general about Melwika's development last time, but this time she gave a lot of numbers."

"That's true. It sounds like she's making an economic argument for development; everyone will be twice as rich."

"You're right. I hate to be a bit cynical, but taxes are the bottom line: her Majesty wants her people to be healthy, but she also wants them to pay more taxes, and the Old Houses are no longer a strong conservative, traditional counterforce because of the new army. The army wants big projects, too, so they can ask for more money."

"I thought she was pretty specific about development priorities, though," said Widubéru. "I'm very encouraged. We'll have to study the speech and make sure the Development Corps' priorities are aligned with it. I just wish the pass was open and I could get to Kerda."

"Maybe in a few days, or a week or two," replied Thornton. "The so-called dry season has been very wet this year and the mountains have a lot of snow."

“While the eastern shore is in drought condition,” said Chris, with a sigh. “This little world has amazingly variable weather.”

“I might try to get to Kërda later,” said Widubéru. “Like Chris and Liz, I plan to stay the entire month of Plowménu. Besides several projects in Pértatranisér, the Development Corps hopes to start three projects in villages north of here, and I am fund-raising in Ora and Mëddwoglubas. Strange to say, Lëwésa’s more generous than Vésa.”

“I’m not surprised,” said Chris.

“I think we’ll manage to break a hundred thousand dhanay in pledges,” said Widubéru. “With matching funds, that can do a lot.”

“That’s really impressive!” exclaimed Thornton. “How are the greenhouses working in Khermdhuna?”

“We got a letter last week,” said Widubéru. “They have three greenhouses. Plants are growing slowly because of all the cloudiness this winter, but heating them has not been difficult, and the vegetables have proved popular and profitable. The electrical and telephone lines are scheduled to be installed to Khermdhuna and from there along the main road in the Polar Basin, once spring starts. By summer every village there will have power and a phone. Of course, they have no idea what they’ll do with them yet!”

“They’ll figure it out,” said Chris. “Thornton, I walked around the village today. I’m very impressed by all the changes that occurred in the last nine weeks, under your watch.”

“Thanks, but the village did most of it, and you and Amos arranged for most of the investment.”

“Don’t be modest, son. Several people told me about the plans for a dam across the Atranisé; they’re excited about it.”

“I’ve proposed a site six kilometers upstream and it’ll store enough water to increase the area covered by rice substantially. But Amos and the Army Engineers need to check out the site and approve the plans. It’ll cost about 3,000 dhanay; it’s not a high structure. The ditch eastward along the river valley will cost twice that. I doubt the electric company will want to make hydropower from it.”

“And what are the details about rubber?”

“That’s important, and I’ve been wanting to fill you in. The ecology class at Néfa Génadéma had, as a class project, the identification of useful plant species and consideration of how to protect and preserve them. There’s a belt of tropical to semitropical forest that runs from Ora to Néfa; it’s confined to the lowlands at the northern and southern ends and here, on the equator, it extends into the foothills as high as five hundred meters above sea level. The rubber tree is one of the native species. Some villagers tap the trees and make rubber shoes of sorts by sticking their foot in a shoe mold until the latex around them solidifies! They also waterproof clothing with the stuff. The region also has gutta-percha trees; when you tap them, they make a latex that’s an excellent insulator, even under the sea, and the rubber from them is very elastic. And we have identified balatá trees, which oozes another kind of latex with other properties. I should add that gutta-percha and balatá are also excellent hardwoods for furniture and the balatá has edible fruit. The class identified a dozen other species of trees that could be commercially useful and that are not currently being used. It made a lot of them sensitive

about the issues of clear cutting. Melwika's been importing rubber from Sumilara, but there's plenty of it here. The hills northeast of Pértatranisér are full of rubber trees."

"Are those hills in the township?"

"Mostly. Some are in Nuvika. There are some foremen in the grange who have proved good leaders and organizers. I can give you names and so can Váranu. I'd approach one or two of them about forming a partnership to tap the trees and collect the latex. Someone will have to start a latex plant in town to make objects from the stuff; gloves, condoms, waterproof clothes, insulation for wire, rubber balls, erasers, etc."

"I'll set that up," agreed Chris. "Miller will buy a lot of rubber, too. How are your relations with the council?"

"They eventually got used to me, but they like Amos better! That's alright, I don't feel ready to run a village. He does a good job."

"He does. I saw three new small businesses in town; a tailor, a butcher, and a hardware store. The print shop's going up, too."

"And there will be more, because in spite of all the reassurances at the development conference, most investors were too afraid of Albanu to invest in Néfa."

"That's unfortunately true," agreed Chris. "I talked to Perku this morning and he said that Albanu is suing over plans to use a plot of land at the edge of town for Néfa High School. He claims it's his land. Wérgéndu's coming for an entire month in the spring to resolve forty conflicting land claims filed by Albanu or his friends; they're trying to obtain about five hundred agris of land. Yesterday morning, right before I left Melwika, John told me Albanu has ordered five more steam tractors, to be delivered by late spring, which will allow him to displace several hundred more workers, in violation

of the agreement he made with Estoiyaju and Wérgédu. I also understand he has ordered five hundred tons of guano, so he's fertilizing and improving his land. He must have noted all the corn we planted here this winter, too; Perku said he planted a lot of corn."

"He's smart," conceded Thornton. "And a good agricultural manager; he'll do fine even if farm prices drop this year. Will this delay the high school?"

"Of course! The ground was supposed to be broken next month, and now it's delayed at least four months."

"Meanwhile, Pértatranisér High School's going up fast; the auditorium, offices, library, and four classrooms out of eight are enclosed," noted Thornton.

Chris nodded. "Tomorrow I'm visiting four lords north of here and the day after, three south of here. We've got 120 kids of high school age here, and I'm sure we can double that number."

"Thornton, how many village teachers will Néfa Génadema graduate this summer?" asked Widubéru.

"Maybe thirty. Talking to the students, I get the impression that about sixty are coming one term or another to take classes, and most are already teaching, at least part time. The Plowménu intensive term will be packed because it's so short; I think eighty have registered, mostly teachers or people who want to be teachers. That doesn't include the students of your government class, dad."

"That's good," said Chris. "I think I have forty in that class. It went well in Melwika and it'll be easier to teach the second time around. I'm also teaching a free business class here, if I can get the students. But if I offer partnerships, I think I'll have plenty of takers."

“You’re opening a tomi office here?” asked Widubéru.

Chris nodded. “Two accountants are already working here and I plan to hire at least two more. During the next five weeks when I’ll be here, I want to set up several business partnerships, where I provide the money, the partner does the work, the tomi oversees the finances, and we split the profit. And as Thornton said, the grange has now been operating for quite a while, so it shouldn’t be hard to identify potential partners.”

Thornton scraped the last stew from the bottom of his bowl. He glanced at the pot, but decided he didn’t have time. He rose from the table. “Say, Thor, we still need to talk,” said Chris. “You briefed me about this place, but I didn’t brief you about stuff at home. I want the Survey to map the land between the Arjakwés and Swadlëndha. And Tritejna has decided to set aside a park and they need the Survey to help finalize and mark the boundaries. I said I thought it’d make a good exercise for your ecology course.”

“Okay; that’s two good projects for the spring. Thanks for letting me take the rover, dad.”

“Can I get a ride to Ora with you?” asked Widubéru.

“Sure.”

“If either of you see Lord Mitru, tell him I’ll be down in three or four days to see him.”

Thornton nodded. He kissed Lébé and the baby. Just then Jalalu and Kalé trooped into the room with their nanny to eat lunch; he kissed them as well.

He and Widubéru headed across the courtyard to the “garage,” a room-sized area for a rover. Widubéru opened the heavy wooden gate and Thornton drove into the alley. Widubéru closed the gate and jumped in, and they were on their way. At the corner of

Second Street and Route 2, they paused to wait for a truck laden with timber to barrel by, going north; it had barely slowed for the settlement. Then they waited for a concrete truck heading south.

“Dangerous,” said Widubéru. “The speed limit needs to be marked better, or speed bumps have to be installed.” He pointed to a growing tower across the road and changed the subject. “Is that going to be a clock tower?”

“Yes; it’ll be done next month. A thousand dhanay; the Council wanted one because it’s prestigious, but we need it anyway.”

“Definitely. A nice addition to the commercial center.” He glanced at the brick buildings going up along the access road paralleling Route 2. The Home Improvement Store and Post Office faced the street and were connected by an attractive brick portico, then there was a long loop—soon to be paved—for buses to pull off, stop to load or unload, then get back on Route 2. The side of the post office and Home Improvement had a long building with commercial rental space that Chris was paying for, running along the side of the loop. The rear and opposite side of the loop were still undeveloped, but the space surrounded by the loop was the site of the clock tower and was already being cobblestoned; it would be a place for small booths. Widubéru nodded. “An ambitious commercial project; I wonder how long it’ll take to make money?”

“I don’t know. But they have a new gimmick: air conditioning for all of the stores. It gets really hot and humid here in the summer. They figure the complex will need ten tons of ice per day, but the new trucks can haul forty tons for ten dhanay total, and the air conditioning pits will be designed to hold an entire load.”

“Wow, we’ll melt the south polar glaciers pretty fast! I’m arguing for a large public bath. If people are going to come here by bus to shop, let them get a free bath, too, before they shop. The stores can offer bath coupons, or if someone pays for the bath they can get a coupon for purchasing stuff in the stores.”

Thornton nodded. “Why not. The commercial center will need a place to check bags, so people can get several loads of stuff and shift them to the bus one load at a time. Mitru’s planning to build a package storage area at the Ora and Néfa bus stations.”

“The cities will be furious.”

“Hey, Ora’s got a pretty advanced commercial center. I doubt they’ll suffer very much. Néfa, though, has an old and traditional marketplace; they’ll lose business.”

They had turned onto Route 2 early in the conversation and had been rolling down the smooth new concrete surface. As they reached the edge of the town, the width of concrete abruptly narrowed from ten meters to three; a narrow lane of concrete down the right side of an eight-meter gravel road. Widubéru shook his head. “How far down does this go?”

“Only five kilometers out of thirty. But they’re advancing really fast; three hundred meters a day. They have several hundred men digging up the gravel road, resifting it, adding new sand and gravel to the concrete, laying ‘cages’ of iron reinforcing bars, pouring and smoothing the concrete; you’ll see.”

Widubéru nodded, and sure enough, a few kilometers later they reached a two-kilometer stretch that was under construction. They had to proceed very slowly as they passed men wearing bright orange shirts digging with shovels and filling trucks with gravel from the roadbed and laying “cages” of nickel-steel reinforcing bars. It was even

harder to pass the cement mixing truck as it blocked the entire highway and poured its load onto the new surface; two flaggers directed him slowly around the big vehicle with its turning cement container in back. He caught a brief glimpse of workers smoothing the fresh surface.

They reached Jathisérvika and rode back onto concrete, for the village's section of the highway had been completed first. As they came out the far end of the village, the road surface narrowed again to three meters, and Thornton was immediately confronted by a bus coming straight toward him.

"Hey, I have the right of way!" he yelled uselessly. He slammed on the brakes and steered onto the gravel right shoulder just as the bus veered to the left and continued its way without slowing practically at all.

"That was close!" exclaimed Widubéru, shaken up.

"He's supposed to yield to me. The south-bound lane is concreted, not the northbound lane. Anyone can see that."

"But everyone wants to drive on the concrete surface. This is very dangerous. The army should concrete the entire width, rather than just part!"

"I think they want to show rapid progress. They'll reach Ora in a hundred days; meanwhile, another team will have concreted from Bruagras northward to Néfa and then westward to the western edge of the Néfa basin, toward Isurdhuna. Then that team will concrete back southward to Bruagras and keep going south, concreting the northbound lane."

"But surely this is both dangerous and wasteful! They have to set up local gravel recycling facilities more than once. Someone will get killed!"

“I suppose it’s a political decision.”

“Well, I’ll work on that!”

Thornton didn’t know what to say about that. They drove on in silence. Soon they passed the next village south, Párchimánja or “Oakgrove,” an old village that had been doubled in size as a result of arrivals escaping the rising sea. The new houses looked almost as dilapidated as the old, though. “I know people here,” said Widubéru. “The Lord’s reasonably enlightened; the reason the village doubled in size is because he argued with Lord Mitru for two steam wagons very early on, got them for a discount, and used them to help farmers settle in the oak groves farther from the village. They’ve cut down all the groves, though; you won’t see any.”

“But the place looks a bit more prosperous; more than Jathisérvika, anyway.”

“I think so, and it has a four-classroom school, too. I’m hoping to see Lord Mitru in the next day or two, and I want to suggest that he set up a special program like the one Miller Industries has agreed to. It would encourage Véspe villages to buy his equipment at a discount, maybe with subsidies from the Development Corps or support to train the villagers to use them. The entire province could mechanize its agricultural and timber sectors very rapidly as a result, and that would pay him back. And Párchimánja can provide the trained operators to make the program work.”

“Good; competition. And then they could extend the program beyond Véspe.”

“Exactly. Ora’s heavier, more powerful vehicles have a niche to fill. Even in Melwika, one tenth of the vehicles for heavy use are from Ora.”

“Say, I’m curious; how did Lord Mitru end up in the position to set up so many villages?”

“Ah, that’s a long story. But here’s the short version: before the flood, almost three quarters of the population of the region lived on the rich plains downstream of Ora. Ora is built on the first foothills of the Snowy Mountains, and they rise pretty sharply just west of the city. All that population wanted access to the common land in the hills for hunting and timber, so the city controlled the commons and decided who could use what. When the flood began, Ora could decide what to do with that common land, and they extended their control north and south by building roads into the foothills about fifteen kilometers west of this road, where there is a long valley that was too remote and thickly forested to be populated. The villages on the Royal Road rarely used land more than fifteen kilometers inland and weren’t in the position to complain, the land would be considered royal property, and the Queen was glad to let Mitru assign it.”

“And Mitru granted the land selectively.”

“Very selectively. My father was a fourth cousin of Mitru, and my mother a first cousin of his wife, but that wasn’t close enough. The terms were simple: rather than the usual fifth for the queen and tenth for the local lord and twentieth for the Lord of Ora—note, he got more from the local villages all along—for the next twenty years the local lord would get a twelfth and he would get a twelfth. So the total take was 51.7%, leaving the local farmers with 48.3%.”

“And the farmers accepted that?”

“What choice did they have? Their farms were being inundated and they didn’t want to leave the area. Besides, before the flood, this area was getting a meter and a quarter of rain annually; plenty for three crops a year. The Arjakwés was too cold and dry for more than one crop per year, where the farmers were taxed a third of their crop. That’s

why this area, Néfa, Kerda, and Sumilara are generally more prosperous looking than the other shores; or they were, at least, before the new knowledge arrived.”

“I see what you mean. The high tax burden also explains why almost a third of the province’s population lives in Ora; the tax surplus is spent there.”

“Exactly, and they can earn more there with less work. And everyone likes to live in a city.”

“This also explains why Néfa never developed as much as Ora.”

“It sits in the center of a basin and the ring of villages on the outer edge controlled their own commons, so Albanu had no land to play with. He also had only two villages downstream that got flooded, so he had less resettlement to deal with, and he owned a lot of the farmland in the basin personally.” Widubéru contemplated the situation. “Frankly, sometimes I despair for both provinces; really, for our entire world. It is very hard to develop this place economically. It is even harder to develop it socially, and when I contemplate the difficulties in reforming the individuals I feel complete helplessness.”

“I understand. I do what I can, but really, I pray for all three reformations.”

Thornton decided not to say anything more, since Widubéru already knew he was a Bahá’í and had not asked about it.

The thirty-kilometer drive, in a vehicle with relatively good suspension, took only twenty-five minutes. Thornton parked the rover in the city parking lot—a corner of Central Square—and paid a man missing an arm and a leg five dontay to watch it and wash it at the same time. Widubéru headed for the palace while Thornton entered the Mitrui Génadema.

He was an hour early for his final examination, which was fortunate, because three students were waiting to ask him for help. He went to the classroom—which was empty—and spent the next hour tutoring anyone who arrived early, which ended up being almost everyone. Finally he closed the door, handed out examination books, and wrote the exam on the blackboard. The last student left just a few minutes before five bells when the exam was scheduled to end.

He went back to his office to pack up books and papers, for he would not be using it next term. He headed downstairs and outside. Quite a crowd was gathering in Central Square, facing the palace. Thornton spotted Sulu, the génadema's chief professor of engineering, standing and watching. "Sulu, what is it?"

Sulu looked grief-stricken. "Thoru, they say Lord Mitru just died an hour ago."

"Really? How?"

"They haven't said. The ambulance came and rushed him to the hospital, but some in the crowd say he was blue when they brought him out."

"Esto protect us!" exclaimed Thornton. He was shocked, but he also knew what to say to express it, complete with western shore accent.

"Protect us, indeed. And protect Lord Mitru, who, some say, believed neither in Esto nor in Widumaj."

"Do you think that is true?"

Sulu considered. "Yes, I do think so. He said so to small groups of people on several occasions when I was present. And you know how much he opposed the priests and teaching the hymns in the génadema."

"Indeed. But I will pray for him anyway."

“Perhaps Esto listens to your prayers, Honored! But if I pray at all, it will be over the succession.”

“I’ll pray about that as well.” Thornton knew all four sons—Mitruiluku, Mitrulubu, Mitruidatu, and Mitrubbaru. Their names meant “Mitru’s light,” “Mitru loves,” “Mitru’s gift,” and “Borne for Mitru.” He knew their rivalries as well. The oldest and second oldest were organizers and served as their father’s provincial governor and Ora mayor respectively. Mitruiluku was also a philosopher in his own right and an agnostic like his father. The third son taught literature in Mēlwika Génadema and the fourth son ran Mitrui Génadema. Mitru’s brother, Yimu, ran the iron and steam works, two of his sons were lords of villages nearby, and the third son—Molanu—was the commander of Ora’s army garrison. Finally, one couldn’t forget Mitru’s two daughters; one, Sugé, was married to Crown Prince Mēmējéstu, and the other was the second wife of Albanu.

Thornton stood and watched for fifteen minutes. Nothing happened. Finally, Widubéru spotted him and walked up. “You heard the news?”

Thornton nodded. “They say Lord Mitru’s dead.”

“It’s true.” Thornton heard the certainty in Widubéru’s voice and turned to look at him. “There’s nothing more to do here, so let’s head back to Pértatranisér.”

“Ah . . . okay.” Thornton sensed something, so he nodded and they walked back to the rover. Getting out of the crowded square was slow and difficult, and since the crowd was growing by the minute, it was hard to drive down the street.

Once they were out of Ora, Widubéru said, “I was waiting to see him. He was arguing with Mitruiluku and Mitrulubu about money; I couldn’t hear it all since the door

was closed, but the voices were loud enough to be distinctive. Then suddenly, silence. Then they rushed out, telephoned Dr. Stauréstu, threatened him with death if he couldn't revive the Lord, he ran over, and he ordered the Lord be taken to the hospital immediately. Probably to get out of the palace; I suspect Mitru was already dead. I saw him when they took him out of the office; he was ashen and his face was covered with vomit."

"What a terrible story." Thornton pushed down on the steam pressure pedal to get home faster.

When they reached home, they found everyone in the dining room listening to a call. Liz saw their faces and said, "Thank Esto you're here. You must have heard."

"Is Lord Mitru dead?"

She nodded. "And Stauréstu has a stab wound in the shoulder, inflicted by Mitruiluku! Aréjé's driving him to Mæddwoglubas Hospital. She's very upset, but says it isn't life threatening. He's in a lot of pain, though."

"Mitruiluku's intellectual, but has a bad temper," said Chris, hanging up the phone. "Estodhéru says Stauréstu's now at Mæddwoglubas Hospital, and half the city police force wants to go to Ora and arrest Mitruiluku."

"Now what?" asked Thornton.

"Well, there will be a funeral," replied Chris. "After that, who knows? This has been a bad year. First Gnoscéstu, then Mitru . . . if you add the sacking of Spondu and then Spondanu, Gugéndu, and Albanu, the only lord of a royal city who's left is Kandékwes!"

“And the world lost Yusdu and Gawéstu,” added Liz. “That’s a lot, even on a world with a high death rate.”

“Esto’s ways are mysterious,” concluded Chris.

The funeral was on a bright, sunny, warm afternoon three days later, with no explanation about the delay. Three hundred lords, their wives, and children showed up; the entire city joined the funeral procession from the palace on Central Square to the new temple on a hill about a kilometer east of the city. There, everyone listened to two hours of hymns, elegiac poems, and orations. Then the funeral pyre was lit.

Back at the palace, the four brothers and their families formed a line to be greeted by everyone. It was a long wait to reach them. “I am grief-stricken at the thought of your father,” Chris said to Mituiluku, using a common Eryan funeral expression. “He was a strong leader for Vésipa and had a remarkable vision for where Ora could go. We are all diminished by his passing.”

“Thank you, Lord,” replied Mitruiluku rather mechanically. He seemed uncomfortable around Chris, possibly because he knew of the family’s friendship with Stauréstu. “We very much appreciate your coming and supporting us at this time.”

“His appreciation of the new knowledge was particularly dear to my heart, as you know. Ora became great, beautiful, and strong because of him.”

“Thank you, Lord. Alas, the new knowledge didn’t help him in the end.”

“Sometimes that happens. It didn’t help Stauréstu either, I fear.” Chris said it sadly, his eyes looking down at the floor, and at first Mitruiluku was startled, as if Chris were saying Stauréstu was dead. But then he nodded.

“Perhaps it didn’t.”

“I am confident about your leadership, Mitruiluku. Vésa is in good hands.”

“Thank you, I appreciate that.”

Chris nodded and moved on to Mitruiluku, complimenting him on his efforts to guide and develop his father’s city.

They mixed with the other guests, talking to the ones least inebriated until it was possible to depart. Then they headed home.

“I have a bad feeling,” said Chris to Liz and Thornton that night, after they got home.

“Why?” asked Thornton. “Mitruiluku’s the heir. Do you think someone will try to poison him?”

“I don’t know. I suppose nothing will happen soon; they’ll be in mourning for forty days. But I’m glad you’re not going to Ora to teach any more.”

Just then the phone rang. Chris looked at it, then got up and walked over. “Hélo?”

“Greetings Chris, this is Stauréstu.”

“Stauréstu, how are you! Are you still in the hospital?”

“No, I got out yesterday, and I could have gotten out the day before, but everyone was afraid of bleeding and infection. The blade missed my lungs by four centimeters. I’ll be able to resume my practice half time next week, but I won’t be traveling for maybe a month. Did you go to the funeral today?”

“I did. It was very moving. The reception afterward was pretty coldly formal, though.”

“Did you . . . talk to Mitruiluku about me?”

“I . . . when he said the new knowledge hadn’t helped his father, I said very gently it hadn’t helped you, either.”

“Oh, is that what happened? I just got a call from his chief assistant a few minutes ago. He wanted to let me know that in appreciation for my services to the city and province, Mitruiluku is giving me a steam car!”

“Oh?” Chris laughed. “Isn’t that interesting. I guess he felt bad.”

“I guess so. Thank you, Chris, for somehow saying exactly the right thing.”

[Oct. 23, 2006; reread and edited 5/29/13, 8/9/17]

Mass Teaching

Early Eɟnaménu/late Feb., 626/8

Thornton unrolled the map of the lower Arjakwés valley across his father's desk. He had been waiting anxiously to show it to him for several weeks; this was the first chance since Chris had returned to Mɛlwika from Pértatraniséɛ. Chris put on his reading glasses and shook his head in disbelief. "You did this yourself?"

"No; just the design. I had the Survey's two mapping assistants transfer the basic geographical features from aerial photographs to paper and do the calculations from the stereo pairs to add the contour lines."

"But so many of them!"

"Every ten meters. This is the most exact map we've ever made. Then the colors were added based on aerial photography taken last summer; agricultural fields are very light green, grasslands a darker green, forest the darkest green. We've put every river, ditch, road, dirt track, and building on the map as well; at 1:10,000, or 1 centimeter equals 100 meters, we can easily represent them all. We worked on a series of small maps, thirty-three by fifty centimeters. Each took several person-days of work. Then each map was photographed with the digital camera, transferred to the computer, touched up, pdf-ed, and printed out in color with the ink-jet printer. Quadrangles are a meter by a meter and a half, made by gluing nine smaller maps together. We could extend this map indefinitely all over the planet. We plan to work our way up the valley at least to Mɛlwika."

“How big would such a map be?”

“From Nuarjora to Mēlwika? Well, that’s sixty-five kilometers, so the map would be 6.5 meters long. A map all the way around Éra at the equator would be 54 meters long. It’d have to cover 900 square meters.”

“And how much would it cost?”

“Hum.” He thought for a moment. “Ninety thousand dhanay based on these maps, though we probably would get more efficient and it’d be a lot less than that. Give the Survey a decade and we’ll do it, but we can do the important parts of the planet in two or three years. And the army will pay, I’m sure.”

“I’ll pay for Mēlwika and Pértatranisér.”

“I figured. I started with the lower Arjakwés because this is the kind of map we need to mark boundaries, and I’ve put tentative boundaries of the lower Arjakwés townships on here.”

“Really?” Chris looked closely and saw dashed brown lines. He ran his finger along the border between Naskēpēda and Tritejna; that was a well established boundary. But the two townships’ northern and southern boundaries were unofficial, based on preliminary claims extending ten kilometers from the Arjakwés River. He ran his finger along a dotted line separating Tritejna and Nuarjora. “How did you settle on this?”

“In a way, it was pretty simple, because each town’s farmed land almost connects along the Arjakwés River. So I split the unfarmed land in half and projected the line northwest to southeast at an angle perpendicular to the river. The survey did its field work along the line and we checked the details, drove a few steel pins into the ground, and established a few surveyor’s benchmarks. We did the same thing for the boundary

between Nuarjora and Arjdhura, but I extended the latter farther north on the map because their claim is so narrow. Of course, these are just our suggestions. We have no power to decide.”

“But I think this will help! I’ll take it to Kandékwes. Of course, he has no influence over these townships, but the Réjé does because unclaimed land is hers. He can talk to her. I’d like to see these disputes settled.” He looked at the map again and saw a green line. “And this is the border of Tritejna’s *rua*?” He used the word they had settled on to represent “park,” referring traditionally to open land that was a mix of trees and grasslands.

“Yes, that was what they finally decided on. Naskæpæda’s close to deciding their park boundaries as well, but neither village has decided on what uses to allow.”

“That’s the hard part, but at least they have boundaries. I hope we can get provincial and royal parks established as well. The commons need to be regulated; with longbows, the wildlife is being decimated, and steam power allows faster cutting of forests than ever before. You definitely need to make a map like this of Pértatranisér.”

“How are the plans there?”

“This fall when the rain decreases and the summer harvests are in, we’ll have the time and money to erect a dam across the Atranisér at the spot you identified. The electrical company does want the hydroelectric power; they need it during the eclipse, and they’ll pay to build a second, lower dam to catch the flood released during the eclipse so that the river will have a more constant flow. I pledged ten thousand to establish a plantation to grow rubber, gutta-percha, and balatá trees in the hills southeast of town, and ten thousand more to build a modern latex plant, which has already started collecting

latex from wild trees throughout the area. Miller wants all the rubber we can sell him, of course.”

“For their new pneumatic tires,” agreed Thornton.

“Exactly; production has been limited because of lack of materials, so they’re putting pressure on us. Lua wants latex gloves for the hospital and condoms. The latter will not go over well in this society.”

“It’ll take a lot of quiet education.”

“It’ll be controversial; let’s not fool ourselves. The other development is that the marketplace will be finished at the end of ejnaménu, in time for the new year’s celebration. We’re planning a big ‘Come Celebrate in Pértatranisér’ campaign, which involves cleaning up the town, planting lots of flowers, stocking all the stores, and providing free round-trip bus service to Pértatranisér from as far south as Tripola and as far north as Sumiuperakwa. We want people to come, see the place, walk around, get an idea of what a nice, modern town is like, and of course eat and shop.”

“Who’s paying?”

“The council’s paying for the beautification and the informal chamber of commerce is paying 300 dhanay for the thirty buses. It’s excellent public relations. Even the public bath will be open by then—at least part of it—and the high school will be available as a place to rest.”

Thornton nodded, impressed. He was about to ask another question when the phone rang. Chris picked it up. “Khélo? Yes, Modolubu, he’s here . . . okay, I’ll tell him you want to talk, come on over . . . bye.” He hung up. “Modolubu’s in town today

handling business for the Central Spiritual Assembly and needs to talk to you. Why don't you greet him downstairs and go into the conference room to talk."

"Okay. See you later." Thornton rose and walked out of the office, wondering why his father didn't say what the meeting was all about. He glanced around the top floor of the tomi building again; he was still getting used to it. His father's office in the northwest corner had windows looking northward at their house across Foundry Street and westward at the Citadel and Hospital. Next to his office, facing west, was that of his assistant Luktréstu, followed by that of the tomi's chief accountant, Méndhrubéru. In front of the three were desks for secretaries, though they only had two. Méndhrubéru's office was followed by a stairwell, then the southwest corner held a five by eight meter conference room, with large windows giving a view of Ménwika. That was the western third of the twenty by twenty-five meter building; the eastern two thirds was mostly an open space filled with desks and dividers able to house sixteen bookkeepers, secretaries, clerks, and accountants with their filing cabinets. There were also two more offices, for the chief financial officer and the human resources coordinator. The operation handled health care, retirement savings, taxes, auditing, and some accounts receivable and payable for the Mennea family and its businesses, the génadema, six granges, Prosperity Bank, most of Miller family businesses, and about thirty other businesses all over the world with a cumulative cash flow of five million dhanay annually. It received a third of Melwika's mail and made close to half of its telephone calls.

He hurried downstairs to the first floor, where there was a grand entrance on the north side, a receptionist, a large room with a typing pool—many of whom were génadema students working part time—another meeting room that also served as a

classroom, more filing cabinet storage, and two offices for lawyers who worked part time for the génadema and part time for anyone wanting their services. The basement floor, which faced Icehouse Street one level farther down, had a kitchen, lunch room, garage for the Menneas' two rovers, and a storage area.

Modolubu was just crossing the street from the Mennea house. Thornton gave him a hug and an "Alláh-u-Abhá" and they hurried upstairs to the conference room. "How are you doing?" Modolubu asked, as they walked up.

"Very well. I taught some very enthusiastic students during the winter intensive term; they're usually here for a short time to make the most of the opportunity, and they were quite good in class. And the survey got some very good work done in the lower Arjakwés. How's your family and business?"

"We're well. Bidhé's pregnant with our second child, you know. So we're getting ready for that. The paper business keeps growing and growing, too. We're opening a second plant in Mëddwoglubas this summer."

"Oh? Not Pértatranisér?"

"No, because the Central Spiritual Assembly has decided it wants its secretary to live near the temple and start a formal national office there. That will take five mornings a week of my time. I have a reliable manager who can run the Ejnopéla plant, which I will visit monthly. The tomi oversees the finances for me—at quite a cost—so it's a reasonably stable operation right now."

They entered the conference room and Modolubu closed the door. "We can sit, but this isn't frightening or worrisome, or anything like that." They sat. "I was wondering whether you could accompany me to Sumilara three days from now for three days. Bilara

is having ‘entry by troops.’ The eruption disrupted everything, but the Bahá’ís were exemplary in their efforts to serve others, and that was noticed. In the fall they had a reflection meeting and set goals. They started offering free literacy classes using the Ruhi study books, and that effort has mushroomed. Five hundred people have taken the classes and several hundred—exactly how many is not clear—have declared themselves Bahá’ís. I have to go meet with the local spiritual assembly and give a series of classes. This year, rather than come to the big Eǵnaménu Bahá’í school in Mëddwoglubas, the Sumis want to do their own in Bilara. You’ve been there, you know the place and the people, and you even know some Sumi. So I was hoping you could be my traveling companion.”

Thornton could see that Modolubu was frightened about going to Sumilara. He understood; it was a taboo place for Eryan, with an incomprehensible language and a history of warfare with the Eryan. “I’ll have to ask Lébé. It sounds like we’ll miss a bit of the Mëddwoglubas School.”

“Just one day. I’m sure with three small children, it will gravely inconvenience her to travel without you, but the rest of the family will help. It’s Bahá’í business.”

“I’m willing to do it. I haven’t visited the island for six months, now. I gather we’ll take a rover.”

“Yes, if possible, on the ferry boat from Arjdhura to Anartu, then we’ll leave on the ferry from Anartu to Néfa. I’ll make the reservations and arrange payment. We don’t need army permission to travel to the island any more; that was dropped last month.”

“That’s quite a change. Okay, I’ll ask Lébé.”

“Go ask her now; she’s at home, and I think she’ll have something to tell you about, too.” He rose. They exchanged parting words as they walked down the stairs, then said goodbye outside the building.

Thornton crossed the street and entered the Mennea house. Lébé was at the dining room table with Liz, talking very seriously.

“Did Modolubu tell you?” she asked.

“No; what?”

“The Central Spiritual Assembly has asked me to run the Bahá’í Publishing Trust.”

“Oh? Wow, that’s a big job!”

“Full time. Modolubu said I could continue teaching at the génadema, but that the Central Spiritual Assembly wants a serious commitment because Bahá’í literature requires systematic translation and publication, and that can’t be done part time.”

“It really can’t,” Liz echoed. “We’re translating and publishing something every year, but we need a lot more. The community is growing fast and it needs access to the sacred texts. The community of followers of the hymns of Widumaj is not getting very much new literature. We need to grow as fast as we can manage now, because grow rates are likely to slow later, and a rich, diverse literature is an essential part.”

“We need more introductory books and pamphlets,” said Lébé. “Children’s books would help, too. This world has almost none, so Bahá’í books would be used widely in schools.”

“Exactly,” said Liz. “But ten years from now there will be so much of everything, our potential advantage will be lost. If we can grow now, we’ll be in the position to produce more books for a bigger and more complex book market later, also.”

Thornton looked at Lébé. “That means no more novels for a while.”

She nodded. “I’m afraid so, and research to collect folk tales will have to slow down.”

“Unless we can pay someone to help. We’re in the position to do that, now.”

“That’s true.” She sighed. “What did Modolubu want with you?”

“He wants me to go to Sumilara with him in three days for three days. Bilara needs his input and they’re planning a Bahá’í school, so I suppose that means he and I will give classes.”

She sighed again. Liz reached out to take her hand. “We’ll help with the kids.”

Lébé nodded at that. “Alright, let’s say yes to both of these avenues of service.”

Three days later, Thornton drove the rover to εjnopéla early in the morning. The town hadn’t grown much in the last two years, except through natural increase; it had about 1,500 people living in about 250 houses. Two fifths of the population were farmers for the grange, two fifths were wealthy members of the Old Houses and their numerous servants, and the other fifth were merchants, teachers—εjnopéla High School served a region with 700 high school age students, and 450 were attending classes there—or workers at Modolubu’s Paper Plant or the brick-making factory. The newly renovated temple to Mitro-Esto crowning the pinnacle around which the town was built—its name

meant “Sacrifice Hill”—featured an eternal flame whose bright orange blaze and thick black smoke spoke of a new use for Khermdhuna’s tar-soaked wood. West of the hill stretched a ribbon of concrete that served as the town’s airport, for Okpétu, the army’s chief pilot, was the son of Lord Aryékwes.

The paper making factory, a large brick structure with a deep well and a stagnant, lifeless effluent pond, was on the northwest side of town next to Modolubu’s large house. Thornton waited around for an hour for Modolubu to handle an emergency and got a tour of the place, then they were off to Arjdhura. The bustling little port now had one ferry a day to Sumilara; they reached Anartu by late afternoon local time, and after an hour of carefully driving the rover off the ship’s deck, they were on their way to Bilara.

“Wow, everything is green again!” said Thornton, as soon as they were on their way from the docks. “The eruption buried everything under ash, but a year has been enough time for the vegetation to recover, and the ash is a good fertilizer!”

“It’s beautiful,” said Modolubu. “They raise a lot of rice!”

“It’s the staple, with beans, gourds, ox milk—which is pretty good—and catfish from the paddies. Looks like the rice is particularly verdant this year. I bet they’re getting a good harvest.”

“I see corn, too; that must be new.”

Thornton nodded. “Introduced by Dumuzi. I gather his new village is doing well, also.”

“What did the eruption do to the population of oxen?”

“The island had seven or eight thousand. Maybe a few hundred starved or died of malnutrition-related illnesses, so the import of fodder saved most of them. But a lot of

people near the volcano were desperate and sold their animals, and the increased prosperity of farmers in Vésa, Ləwésa, the lower Arjakwés, and Swadlëndha gave them a market. So there are now a thousand oxen scattered about the mainland that take orders like ‘go’ and ‘stop’ in Sumi from Eryan farmers!”

Modolubu chuckled at that. “Sounds like Widubéru needs to start an ox-buying loan program.”

“They’re thinking of it, but frankly, steam tractors are the future.” He pointed. “We’ll drive through town real quick. It’s interesting; last year the port was three kilometers from Anartu and this year it’s only two. Sea level has risen two meters. I hope it won’t go up much more.”

He drove the rover through Anartu’s southeast gate and followed the old Royal Road across the city, right through the main commercial district, then turned right and gave Modolubu a tour past the citadel, palace, génadema, and the Library of Ninurta the Great. From there they took an eastward-trending main street through the artisan’s quarter and out the north gate, which took them straight onto Route 36, which headed northward along the Anara River. “Ooh, this is smooth and wide, now,” he said. “We can go pretty fast! And note the electrical and telephone lines; those are new.”

Modolubu leaned back in his seat and watched the paddies, ox pastures, and groves fly by at the rate of a kilometer per minute. They were slowing down at the edge of Bilara in just ten minutes.

“Wow! Some new buildings!” Thornton said as they reached the edge of the village. “I guess some refugees from the eruption settled here.”

“Good sized houses. How big is Bilara?”

“It had 1,800 people last year.” He slowed to twenty kilometers per hour as they entered the built-up area; chickens, dogs, and children made a faster speed unwise. People looked; he waved and they waved back. In a minute he reached the central square, which looked cleaner and greener than last year. He pointed to a sign and laughed. “Look at that: ‘33 East, Baleduru 12.5 kilometers’! Last year there was no Route 33, and when I asked people how to get to Baleduru they said there were farmer’s lanes I could take, but it was easier to go back to Anartu instead!”

“And ‘3 West goes to Gireduru in 16.5 kilometers.”

“They graveled a whole new road. Fantastic.”

Thornton turned right and headed east on 33. When it reached the edge of the village, they parked in front of the Bilara Bahá’í Center, a building that was less than a year old as well. “Now, Thornton, what do I do?”

Thornton was startled by that and was uncertain what Modolubu meant. “We show our love for them,” he replied. “We sacrifice for them and serve them. People understand that, whether they can speak to you or not.”

“Of course,” said Modolubu, nodding. That did seem to help.

They stepped out of the rover and walked to the door, where a crowd of faces was rapidly growing as more looked out to greet them with a chorus of “Alláh-u-Abhas.”

“Alláh-u-Abhá!” replied Thornton and Modolubu, smiling. Thornton was happy to see people he hadn’t seen for almost a year; Modolubu recognized some faces as well.

“Welcome to Bilara!” exclaimed Nergalu, waving.

“Thank you!” said Modolubu. “It’s so good to see you again.” The men shook hands, then hugged.

“Come inside and meet our Bahá’í community,” said Nergalu. He led them into the hall.

It was packed to the walls; it was almost standing-room only. Thornton was shocked because a year earlier, Bilara had had less than twenty Bahá’ís. “How many—”

“About three hundred fifty Bahá’ís,” replied Nergalu proudly. “Of course, not all of us are from Bilara, there are twenty or thirty Bahá’ís here from Anartu and other towns.”

“How did you accomplish this miracle?” asked Modolubu.

“The institute process,” replied Nergalu. “We invite our friends and neighbors to devotional programs here and in our homes, and invite their children to children’s classes about God, revelation, and morality. And we now have ten tutors conducting classes using the Ruhi books.”

“Incredible!” said Modolubu. He smiled at all the people who were waving, smiling, and greeting him. The three of them walked to the front of the room and a chanter came forward to recite a prayer.

Thornton bowed his head and contemplated the strange but wonderful tonalities of Sumi chanting. He understood about five percent of the words; enough to recognize the prayer. Several others came forward to offer other prayers; one, Thornton thought, was not a Bahá’í prayer at all, but to the Sumi sky god Enlila. Then Modolubu came forward to chant in Eryan and that prompted Thornton to stand and offer a Bahá’í prayer in English, which fascinated everyone.

As the last sounds of praying died out, Nergalu stepped up to the front. “Welcome to everyone,” he said in Sumi, then Eryan. “This is a very special gathering for the

Bahá'ís of Sumilara. In the past, we were able to leave our island with difficulty to attend Bahá'í gatherings on the mainland, but now it is possible for our Eryan brothers and sisters to come visit us on Sumilara. How this world is changing! Bahá'u'lláh stated that all of humanity comes from the same stock and are equal in the eyes of God. He promised that a world can and will be brought into existence where all humans will be equal in the eyes of the law, able to live their lives in dignity and safety. For the next three days we will study the promises of the Bahá'í Faith together. Helping us, guiding us, will be the secretary of our Central Spiritual Assembly, Modolubu, and the son and heir of the Lord of Ménwika, Thornton.” He pronounced Thornton’s carefully; Sumi had no “th” or “dh” so the initial consonant had to become “t.” “Let us welcome them now.” Nérgalu began to applaud, followed by the entire audience.

Modolubu came forward and nodded to everyone. “Thank you very much,” he began, pausing for Nérgalu to translate into Sumi. “I’m sorry that I do not understand any Sumi at all and that everything I say must be translated. I hope, in three days, I will learn at least a little of your language, so communication will not be limited to smiles and translations.

“As Nérgalu mentioned, Bahá'u'lláh said ‘the Earth is one country, and mankind its citizens.’ That is true of our world as well. Whether we are Eryan or Sumi, we are all humans: we love, we work, we pray to our Creator, we wonder and worry about what will happen to us after we die, and we hope for a better world for our children. Bahá'u'lláh has taught us about all of these things. He tells us how to love and marry, why to work, what the purpose of our life is, He gives us ways to pray and please our Creator, He assures us about the nature of the next world, and He gives us principles for building a

better future. Eryan and Sumi culture are both partial and imperfect reflections of His teachings. We must consult together to make our cultures more and more perfect expressions of His revelation. I think Nérgalu told us that *The Secret of Divine Civilization* will be a central concern of this school.” Nérgalu nodded as he translated that. “It was authored by Bahá’u’lláh’s son, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and was the first major Bahá’í text translated into Eryan because of its obvious relevance to this world. I remember, it was the first Bahá’í text I read, and when I read the book I thought ‘God has given us the blueprint for developing this world.’ The Menneas have made it their main source of guidance in creating first a génadema, then other institutions that we now take for granted, like telephones and post offices. Thornton and I are honored to be here and help teach this school. I hope that one result of the school will be translation of large portions of the text, because many people here, who know both languages, will be immersed in the text together for three days. Let us make that a goal of the school.

“Now, I would like to hear your questions. They can be about any aspect of the Faith: its spiritual teachings, social teachings, organization, the institute process, anything. Everyone is welcome to ask a question: women, men, and children. I really do want to hear what you are thinking because the Central Spiritual Assembly wants a full report. The Central Spiritual Assembly has asked me to assure you of its love, prayers, and intense interest in everything you are doing. No village on the mainland has seen a growth like this, so you are a model and shining example for us. We want to know what you have done so we can learn from you and do the same thing elsewhere. Our hope and prayer is that everyone will learn about Bahá’u’lláh and His revelation, accept them, and

strive to live according to them. In this way we will bring heaven to Éra and make this world a paradise.”

He stopped. It was clear the audience was excited by his words. Several hands shot up. The questions were indeed on everything: Bahá’u’lláh’s view of Enlilu, what it meant that women and men were now equal, why was it that Bahá’ís couldn’t drink wine and beer, did Bahá’u’lláh say everyone had to be educated, was Eryan going to be the world’s universal language, why were Bahá’ís about to start fasting for nineteen days, did the old Sumi religion come from a messenger of God . . . it went on for well over an hour, with Modolubu and Thornton answering the questions as best they could and promising to get back to them about questions they were unsure of. Then they ended the session for supper.

Randu hurried up front to see Thornton. Thornton saw him coming and extended both hands. “Alláh-u-Abhá! How are you doing?”

“Very well, how about you and Lébé?”

“We’re well. Did you know we had a third child in late summer?”

“Really? Congratulations! Nina’s pregnant; we’re going to have another one, too. Alima’s getting big and he has started in preschool.”

“Preschool? You have a preschool here?”

“Yes, here in the Bahá’í Center! It’s for the whole village. We have a hundred kids in here, usually.”

“How big is Bilara, now?”

“About 2,000; we gained two hundred. We had five hundred more refugees, but they couldn’t obtain land, so they moved to Amurueqluma, where I gather they’re doing pretty well. The farms are established and flourishing.”

“So, how did you bring almost three hundred into the Faith?”

Randu shrugged. “Well, they don’t know much, as you can see, but most of them seem committed. The two of you coming here and treating them as complete equals will help a lot, because that’s unheard of. And organizing people to develop this place will also help; they like the prayers, but they also want to see some results. I’m not so sure that’s good. We have maybe fifty more who have declared and become inactive.”

“Any opposition?”

“The priests are upset that we are teaching one God, but some of us are still sacrificing at the temple every month or so, and that helps. Lord Bilgadingira is neutral or even a bit favorable. If the priests were strongly opposed, I think we’d make few converts.”

“Well, keep supporting the temple, then,” said Thornton. “Are you teaching reading when you teach the Ruhi books?”

“Yes, and that’s one reason people are attracted. The school is also getting stronger and is offering more reading classes for adults, and the Bahá’ís are involved, so we aren’t just teaching the Faith and literacy at the same time. People have a choice. We’re also putting up signs all over the village, so people see words; that helps.”

“Very good. I’m really impressed, Randu.”

“We’ve been blessed by a strong spiritual assembly. We meet every week; every Sumi week, I mean, every seven days. We have some problems with drinking, one

divorce—the equality teaching broke up the marriage, I think—and the usual number of inactive believers. But above all, we’ve reminded people that back at the time of Widumaj, there was a philosopher on this island named Kadingiru, ‘gateway of the gods,’ who collected and organized our teachings into the *Four Classics*. Kadingiru was asked often whether we should accept Widumaj. His reply was unchanging: ‘we await a guide from the gods who is not Eryan.’ Ever since, Sumilara has waited. Now, we believe, God has spoken again.”

Reread and edited 5/29/13, 8/9/17

Celebration

A huge crowd gathered outside the Home Improvement store in Pértatranisér, trying to hear the Réjé's New Year's address. But the two radios set up for the occasion were too feeble for most of them.

“My dear people.” she began, from her palace. “I bring you greetings on New Year's Day, 627. We have just completed a year like few in our history. A volcanic eruption blanketed the farmlands of Sumilara and some parts of Rudhisér with choking ash and brought cool weather to most of the world, forcing a delay in or entirely preventing farming everywhere but the South Shore and Lewésipa. It was a year of fear and shortages, marred by the passing of two revered lords and our Chief Justice.

“Yet, in spite of the troubles, the sales of machines continued to climb and more farmland came under the use of steam tractors than ever before. More people learned to read and write than ever before. More people had their lives saved because of the new medicine than ever before; we understand that the realm has five thousand more people than a year ago. More babies were born than in a long time. More people became teachers. A major innovation was the beginning of weather forecasting. And now this new gift, the ability to broadcast news and information to the entire realm at once, via the radio, has been inaugurated.

“We truly live in an era of miracles. It is yet another reason for hope and confidence that our children will enjoy a brighter future. The spring has been favorable to planting and the crop already promises to be bountiful. This year will see the road

connecting Tripola, Mëddwoglubas, Ora, and Néfa—regions with almost half our people—undergo dramatic improvement. Life is getting better for the vast majority of us. With your hard work, dedication, and personal contributions to the future, we can be sure that 627 will be a good year for all of us. Thank you.”

The audience paused to be sure she was finished, then broke out into loud applause. Chris looked at his family, gathered near the radio outside the store. “It was a good speech, and well received,” he commented.

“You need to say something, Chris,” urged Liz. “It’s only fitting.”

He looked at the thousand people. “Alright,” he agreed, and he stepped onto the top of a low wall where he could be seen. “Good morning, residents and visitors to Pértatranisér!” he exclaimed. “We have heard our queen proclaim reasons for hope and confidence that 627 will be a good year. We here in Pértatranisér understand her point well. This time a year ago, our village did not exist. But today 1,500 people live here in a beautiful, flower-filled place set in lush rice paddies and fields of grain, and the fruits of our labor go out to the entire world. And today the world has come to us to see our city and enjoy New Years with us. It is a fitting public inauguration of this world’s newest city. For we are a city. In the next year we will gain a temple, more factories, and people will continue to move here in search of a better life. We welcome them to join us at this beautiful spot, either to live, to celebrate, or to shop. And on this joyous day, be happy, for tomorrow will be better than today. Happy New Year, everyone!”

He stepped down to even louder cheers. “They could hear you, at least,” said May. “Half the crowd was out of earshot of Her Majesty.”

“Amos planned to capture it on an audio cylinder,” noted Lua. “Maybe we should play it back, for those who missed it.”

“That’s a good idea,” agreed Chris. He spotted a bus coming south on Route 2 and turning into the bus stopping loop on the south side of the marketplace. It was a fancy new bus and rode on pneumatic tires. “That should be the bus from Mɛddoakwés; let’s go greet it.” He and Liz walked over to the bus stop while the others scattered to observe the crowd and shop in the stores, all of which were open for the first time that day.

They reached the bus just as it began to discharge passengers. It was a good thing they had gone over; most were connected with the palace, so they had to welcome everyone personally. The first person off the bus was no less than Prince Mɛmɛjékwa, followed by an aide and three bodyguards. “Your Majesty! Welcome to Pértatranisér!” exclaimed Chris, surprised.

“Thank you, Lord Kristoféru. The chance to make a quick visit and see your town was puzzling as well as tempting for many of us.”

“Puzzling?”

“Yes; why are you doing this strange thing, paying people to come?”

“Oh, I understand. Your Majesty, we are making a simple calculation; that people will spend far more in the stores than it will cost to get them here. We have rented thirty buses for the day to travel between here and towns and villages as far away as Tripola and Isurdhuna. Then we decided to add one bus from Mɛlwika so that friends could visit, even though we would lose money on it, and then someone said we had better do the same for Mɛddoakwés. And here you are.”

The Prince frowned. “So, you have done this in order to sell things at the town’s stores? How strange. Why shouldn’t people buy things from stores in their own province?”

“They are free to do so, but they are also free to buy here, are they not? Besides, we have stores here that even Néfa and Ora don’t have. The days when it took two days to travel from Néfa to Ora are gone. Items made in one used to be considered ‘imported’ when sold in the other. But now, those cities are an hour apart by bus. Why shouldn’t people freely travel between them to buy and sell?”

“Lord, you will get the markets of both cities very angry at you!”

“They are free to open stores here, your Majesty. If they are smart, they’ll modernize their marketplaces, offer sales and specials like we do in Mēlwika, and offer much better services to their customers. Mēlwika has more sales than Mēddoakwés because people travel from the capital to our stores. With buses, people could travel the length of the western shore, if they so desire.”

“Hum.” The Prince didn’t know what to think of that idea. “Well, as I said, this will create anger and resentment. But you have a point; we won’t and shouldn’t send out the army to prevent people from getting on a bus and coming here. No one is used to this idea, but perhaps they will get used to it.”

“That is our hope. Can I show you around, your Majesty?”

“No, no. The vast majority of people still don’t know what I look like and I came to tour the town anonymously. If you accompany me, the purpose will be defeated.”

“Then when you are finished, please visit our house; it’s half way up Second Street, east of here.” He pointed to a street across Route 2.

“Perhaps we will accept your hospitality. Thank you for your kind offer, Lord.”

The Prince nodded and stepped back. Chris bowed slightly and formally. Then the Prince turned and started into the Home Improvement store.

Estoiyaju was there as well, with his lead wife, Sarejné; he had two. Chris turned to him and greeted him and had to explain the buses all over again. For the Eryan, traveling a long way to buy things was a bizarre waste, and Chris realized it must have looked seditious to some in the palace. He visited a few others who stepped off the bus, including Wëranu, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and his wife.

“I’d better get home and warn the cook,” said Liz. “We may have more guests dropping in than we expected.”

“And very important ones as well. I’ll stay here to greet the Mëlwika bus and generally keep an eye on things.”

She nodded and headed home. Just then two more buses rolled in from villages outside Néfa, packed with local people; they stepped off noisily and wandered about to admire everything. The clock’s bell struck 9:30, and that impressed them enormously. The buses immediately drove around the loop and turned back onto Route 2 to pick up more people. With people streaming in from Pértatranisér’s houses as well, the marketplace was rapidly reaching its capacity.

Then another bus rolled down Route 2 and turned in. In addition to the “Pértatranisér” sign in front—which had the words and the city’s logo, a picture of an orange tree, a group of wavy lines emanating from it representing a river, and a stylized person walking over it, thereby capturing the meaning “ford over the river of oranges”—it also had another sign that said “intercity.” Chris walked over to see whether

it was the bus from Melwika, and his hunch was confirmed when the first one off was John Miller himself, followed by Awsé.

“John, you made it!”

“I did.” He rubbed his backside. “Four and a half hours of bouncing. I had no idea our machines were so bad.”

“I’m sure the new tires help, too.”

“I don’t know; ask the driver.” He pointed and Chris was surprised to see Mitru behind the wheel. “Interesting trip,” continued John. “So many changes in vegetation and air temperature in four and a half hours. Belledha was picturesque.”

“Is this the first time you’ve been to the western shore?”

“This is the first time I’ve been west of Mèddoakwés!”

Chris chuckled. “Well, it’s nice here.”

“It looks pretty good. Ménu did a good job building the marketplace. Damn hot and humid, though.”

“Let’s get inside, then. All these buildings are air conditioned.”

“All of them? What are we talking about; ten tonnes of ice a day?”

“That’s about right.”

He whistled. “Five dhanay! Better make a lot of sales!”

“Come on.” Chris put a hand on his friend’s shoulder and led him and Awsé into Home Improvement. It was smaller than the Melwika store, but had plenty of room for future expansion because several other stores in the marketplace rented from them. They wandered through the aisles filled with drapes, sheets, blankets, beds, mattresses—made in Pértatranisér and on special sale as a result—towels, tablecloths, underclothing, socks,

and a huge variety of furniture. In the front there was a display of radios able to pick up all ten public channels—75 dhanay each and capable of receiving only—and the two or three holes in the display showed that even something costing seven weeks salary could sell. Two of them were set on channel one so that one knew they worked. The store was so full of shoppers, it was hard to walk through, though most were looking and not buying; Eryan were not used to shopping in a big place where there was no bargaining.

They chatted very quickly to Sarédatu, Glosé, and Tritu, who were very busy answering questions, explaining the no bargaining policy, and handling minor emergencies. The lines at the checkout were rather long as well because people were trying to bargain anyway. The abacuses were busy. John walked by the four cashiers—all young women—and cast a glance at the abacus of each one, because it had a “total sales” section and he could read the beads easily.

“Not bad, considering the store’s been open only an hour or so,” he said as they approached the exit.

“I want to stay and help, if you don’t mind,” said Awsé.

“Sure, go ahead,” agreed John. “I think they could use some.”

“We’re going to my house eventually,” said Chris. “When you want to come, if they can’t send someone to escort you, call us and we’ll send a servant down to escort you.”

“Thank you,” said Awsé.

They walked through the area where the store could expand in the future, which had a bakery and shops for a shoemaker, tailor, ivory carver, leather worker, basket weaver, and potter. The rest of the marketplace had a rival store selling high-quality Sumi

wares, a real restaurant, and a wide variety of food stalls. They exited past the public baths and the package checking area, which already had packages stored in it. “Pretty good,” said John as they headed out of the marketplace. “Not as big as Melwika, of course.”

“This place has an eighth the population of Melwika.”

“An eighth! How will you support such a market! The bus thing; that’s quite a risk.”

“Coupons in newspapers that give a free round trip ride to Pértatranisé, air conditioning in a tropical climate, and free private baths in a society with almost no bathtubs: we’ll see. It’s an interesting formula. My hunch is that the air conditioning and the novelty of getting on a bus and getting away from home for a few hours will be like going to an amusement park. People will shop because the choices will be good and different.”

“Except Ora, I bet.”

“We can’t compete with Ora, that’s true, but I hope we’ll be good enough to attract people from all over Rudhisé and northern Vésa. Based on the experience in Melwika and the marketplace we built in Éjnopéla, this place will make money if it is regularly supported by 15,000 people and occasionally supported by 30,000. That’s achievable; there are over 100,000 people within a two-hour bus ride of here.”

He led John up First Street to the far end of the village, so he could see how long it was. Bébru’s mattress manufactory was located there, next to the new plastic items factory—it had started making toothbrushes, plates, bowls, and cups the week before—and the latex refining facility, where ooze from several species of trees was

converted into rubber and similar substances. A manufactory to make waterproof clothes using latex and another one to make wire were under construction. From there, they walked to Chris's villa. The public part of the house was closed up and hot, but the family's private area was cool. The adults were in the sitting room; they could hear the kids running around upstairs in a warmer play room.

"Isn't it something, dad?" said Mitru, who was sitting with Amos, May, Behruz, Lua, Liz, and Widubéru.

"I am amazed that such a big place could appear in less than a year. Chris, how many non-agricultural jobs does this place have?"

"Between the factories, the marketplace, the copper mine, the high school, the small elementary and middle school, and the village government . . . maybe 100 or 120. There are twenty or thirty construction jobs, and a dozen men go to Bruagras every day to work at the cement plant. The grange has 250 farmers and they also handle the lumbering. But in some households there are two workers. So I'd say we have 300 households and 1,500 people. This place wasn't settled by single men who then married; families moved here."

"I see. And what's coming?"

"You mean, new jobs? We'll see what happens with the marketplace. The wire-making factory opening in a few months will have five jobs, the waterproof clothing factory eight, the rubber plantation eventually a dozen or so. The grange is expanding, especially once we build an irrigation dam this summer or fall. We now have a recognized claim over a strip of land three to four kilometers wide on the northern side of the river, the southern boundary has been surveyed, and the east-west length is fixed at

twenty kilometers, so Pértatranisér's area is 170 square kilometers. We're going to clear a dirt track all the way upstream in a few months, too."

"And relations with neighboring villages?"

"Excellent with Bruagras; due north of us; chilly with Nénaskaita northeast of us, but they're pretty far away and their claim to Atranisér's headwaters is weak; pretty good with Jathisérvika and Nuvika south and southeast of us."

John nodded. "I see the advantage of investing here. The Miller clan could use a second center of activity and a headquarters on the western shore."

"This is the biggest portion of the kingdom," said Chris. "I like the eastern shore and plan to stay there, but I plan to invest elsewhere, and this opportunity is good."

"It is. I'll talk to Yimu; we could open a metal working factory here, I think."

"Think bronze," said Amos. "We've developed steel, nickel-steel, and copper, but not bronze and brass. Those are eternally useful materials and they're still produced and utilized according to traditional methods."

"Good point," agreed John. "I think I have a grandson or two coming along who need a business of their own. I assume we can count on the tomi to provide financial management?"

"I've already got three full time accountants here," replied Chris.

Just then Fithu and Chalésté came in with a large bowl. "Mango ice cream?" he asked.

"You have ice cream? Yes, thank you!" replied John.

"We have a freezer!" replied Liz. "Amos took an ice box and did a little redesigning, so the box holding the ice block can also hold a block of rock salt."

“Salt causes ice to melt as low as fifteen below zero centigrade,” said Amos. “As long as the salt water doesn’t corrode the icebox, it can keep items inside quite solidly frozen.”

The house manager and cook dished out ice cream for everyone, including the children, who somehow heard it was available and ran downstairs to have some. No sooner had Fithu finished serving and left, than he returned. “You have new guests, Stauréstu and Aréjé and son.”

“Show them in,” said Chris.

A moment the family entered. Everyone rose to greet them. “What a surprise!” said Lua. “It’s good to see you’re out and about!”

“Today’s one of the first days!” replied Stauréstu, giving Lua a hug. “I do not recommend shoulder wounds; they’re incredibly painful!”

“But we got the car from Mitruiluku two days ago, and the weather today was perfect for a drive, so we had to give it a try,” added Aréjé, who was pregnant and beginning to fill out.

“So he made good on his promise; excellent,” said Chris.

“He’s a man of his word,” said Stauréstu. “Of course, he has never come to see me. This is a rather expensive and elaborate gesture, but it isn’t an apology.”

“It’s a shame there are no further consequences,” exclaimed Widubéru. “If a peasant had stabbed you, he’d be facing years in prison. A Lord can pay you and get away with it.”

“A steam car is a pretty big fine,” said Stauréstu. “And it is so nice to have one! It will make my medical commuting a hundred times easier. The car was made last year, so

it's pretty new. The Mæddwoglubas garage looked it over for me yesterday and said it was in pretty good shape."

"By the way, there was an important announcement in Central Square just before we left; we saw the gathering and asked about it," said Aréjé. "Mitruiluku announced that Mitrulubu would no longer be Mayor of Ora; he's giving the job to Mitrubbaru."

"Really?" said Chris. "That sounds like a power struggle within the family. Mitrulubu's done a pretty good job, too."

"They were quarreling the day Lord Mitru died," noted Stauréstu. "I fear Duke Mitruiluku was jealous of the Mayor. Mitrubbaru is bright and should do a good job, though."

"I hope the struggle in the family stays peaceful," said Chris, worriedly.

There was silence as everyone contemplated that problem. Finally, Chris changed the subject. "So, how are the buses, now that they have pneumatic tires?" he asked Mitru Miller.

"You wouldn't believe the difference!" replied Mitru. "It's like night and day. Busses are much easier to steer and they bounce a lot less with pneumatic tires. The old steel-edged metal wheels make an incredible roar on a concrete road; rubber tires are much quieter."

"I can't imagine trying to drive between here and Melwika without them," said John.

"Once the roads are concreted, driving on pneumatic tires, I'll need to design a whole new bus schedule for the western shore."

"I'll have to get some for the steam car," said Stauréstu.

“Tell you what,” said John. “It’s new years, and I am very impressed by your medicine: I’ll give you four new pneumatic tires.”

“Oh, no, you are too kind!”

“I insist. I want you to get around and be safe.”

“Such generosity! Thank you, Lord Jonu.”

John smiled. He was enjoying being generous. He turned to another man in the room. “Widubéru, I need to thank you. The Development Corps’ efforts to train villages to use steam tractors is paying off. Orders were running behind production during the winter, but now it has accelerated again.”

“I’m glad to hear it. What is your production now?” asked Widubéru.

“Two per week; 130 per year. By the end of summer, if demand grows, we can push it up to 150 per year. We’re constantly developing ways to improve efficiency.”

“Isn’t all this growth amazing,” said Chris. “Amos, didn’t you tell me the telephone company now has a thousand customers?”

Amos nodded. “Yes. Almost a quarter of them are in Mēlwika, but a third of all villages have access to a phone now, and that will increase a lot this summer. Even Pértatraniséer now has a switchboard and twenty phone customers. The electric company has even more customers; probably five thousand.”

“Are you switching to electrical meters soon?” asked Miller.

Amos nodded. “It’s a question of manufacturing and installing five thousand meters, formalizing the accounts, making sure someone pays, and making sure the power stays cut off if someone doesn’t. We’re manufacturing fifty thousand light bulbs per year and the factory will double its capacity this summer. Every bulb will come in a cardboard

box with a dated 1-dhanay coupon printed on it; once you have a meter you'll be able to turn in coupons for cash when you pay your bill."

"Oh, so that's how you'll avoid double charging customers."

"It's the only way, since the cost of the bulbs includes the electricity to run them. It'll be ten years before everyone will be paying a monthly electric bill. As electrical appliances go on sale—fans just went on sale at Home Improvement today—they'll come with annual coupons printed on their boxes as well."

"What if people who don't have a meter give their coupons to people who do?" asked John.

"It doesn't matter; a coupon means a certain amount of electricity has been paid for. It doesn't matter who uses it. And you can't turn in more coupons than the value of your electric bill."

"Oh, of course," said John. "I guess we'll have to start a coupon drawer."

"That's the big disadvantage."

Just then Fithu entered to announce General Perku. The General, his wife Sháré, and his oldest daughter walked in and they all rose to greet them. "What a surprise!" said Chris. "Welcome to Pértatranisér and to my home."

"Thank you, Lord. It's a strange coincidence that we would end up working together twice on opposite sides of the world. And we even have Lord Jonu with us."

"It's good to see you, Perku." John shook the General's hands with a respectful nod.

"Thank you for coming," said Liz to Perku but particularly to Sháré.

"Thank you; you have marvelous shopping!" said Sháré.

“You’ve virtually saved my marriage,” murmured Perku.

Sharé elbowed him in the ribs. “Not until they can get better clothing shops.”

“Melwika and Meddoakwés can’t be beat,” agreed Liz. She looked at the daughter. “If you want to play with Skandé and the other kids, they’re upstairs.” The girl knew Skandé and had played with her when they were younger; she nodded, so Fithu led her out. Perku and Sharé sat—the men and women were in the same room, but on opposite sides, as was the Eryan fashion, which facilitated separate conversations—and Kalésté gave them bowls of ice cream.

“So, how is your new year’s?” asked Perku.

“Very good,” replied Chris. “Full of work.”

“Yes, so I see. I was asking your chief of police, Brébesu, how things are going, and he said ‘We may have more money in Pértatranisér, but we have to work on holidays!’ I think a lot of people are grumbling about that today.”

“Yes, probably true. I guess we won’t do this next year, then.”

“A week later,” suggested Mitru, and Chris nodded.

“How is your work, General?” asked Widubéru.

Perku rolled his eyes. “Leases on 4,000 agris of land expire next month, when the rainy season starts, and 250 more families will be landless. But we can’t build practically anything to help them; Albanu and his friends have slapped a claim on every lot we’re considering, and they won’t let us build on their land. There’s even a stretch of Route 2 south of town that can’t be concreted because they claim it infringes on their land. Wérgéndu will be here next week to resolve seventy land claims. I think we’ll be hiring every surveying team in the world to help mark boundaries, in the next few months.”

“Two hundred fifty families, huh?” Chris pondered that.

“And half of them are walking around here today, admiring and window shopping,” said Perku. “I dare say a lot of them are looking at vacant house lots.”

“A wave we can’t handle,” observed Amos, who was about to take over as acting Lord.

“I hope you can hire a lot of them on the roads,” asked Chris.

“Some of them. A lot of the winter crew has gone home to the north shore to plant their fields. I’d start getting ready, but don’t tell anyone you are.”

“A good time to invest in factories,” said John. “Assuming you’re hiring more police, of course.”

“Amos is running a police academy for the whole area at the citadel,” said Perku.

Amos nodded. “No engineering for the next nine weeks.”

“I’ll keep the engineering going as well as I can,” added Behruz, who was pretty good with engineering matters and preferred to stay in Melwika and in a lab.

“And if he can’t help us, we’ll call you!” said John.

Fithu and Kalésté brought in iced tea for everyone, so that interrupted the conversation. Afterward, Perku said, “So, Mitru, are you planning for the Isurdhuna pilgrimage already?”

“We have started planning. I’m going to Isurdhuna next week to talk to Lord Yusbéru. They’re opening another field for camping and we’re planning free bus service to move people to Stēja and back.”

“Good, that’ll spread out the crowd. It’s stinky, smoky, and noisy,” noted Perku.

“Do you think Awsé should open a hotel there?” John asked Chris. “She was bugging me about that on the way here.”

“I think a fancy hotel with cheap rooms for regular pilgrims and some very expensive rooms for the wealthy will make money, especially if you jack up prices during the pilgrimage,” said Chris. “Build it in Isurdhuna. There’s also a spa going up about fifteen kilometers from Isurdhuna at a hot spring and it’ll be open in a few months. I can introduce you to the owner.”

“Sure. We’ll plan to visit Kerda in a few weeks, then.”

“By Esto, he leaves Melwika once and now he’s touring the world,” teased Chris.

“I have a question for everyone,” exclaimed Stauréstu. “What’s the rule about driving on the concrete road? Driving here, I came up over a hill just south of Jathisérvika and suddenly saw a bus in my lane bearing down on me. I swerved sharply to the right and got out of the way, but it was close.”

“Very close!” added Aréjé.

“The problem was that the bus wasn’t in your lane; you were in its lane,” said Perku. “We’re concreting the southbound lane first.”

“This is a serious problem,” announced Widubéru. “General, you must do something about it. Someone will get killed!”

“It is very dangerous,” agreed Mitru. “Last week one of my buses, full of passengers, was heading south up the basin edge by Bruagras. As it almost reached the top, one of my trucks, heading north with forty tonnes of ice, suddenly shot over the brow at a high speed. They both almost collided; avoiding each other, they both almost flipped over.”

“Well, what can I do?” asked Përku. “We have a plan for paving a very long stretch of road. Everyone has agreed to it. The late Lord Mitru pushed hard for a rapid phase 1, so traffic can start moving faster. Mitruiluku has already reminded the army of its commitment. You need to remind your drivers to be more careful, Mitru.”

“It’s not just my vehicles, though,” exclaimed Mitru, raising his voice. “The concrete encourages farmers, used to country lanes, to drive to new places. They don’t even know they’re supposed to keep right. And now bicycles are going between cities, and city to village. They don’t want to drive off the concrete.”

“Look, we have a plan—”

“And what if a busload of innocent people get killed?” persisted Widubéru.

“That’s not your business!” exclaimed Përku, exasperated.

There was a moment of silence after that. Finally, Chris said, “Well, this is a happy occasion, so let’s not discuss this further. We can all give the General suggestions later. I suspect that painting warnings on the concrete would be cheap and effective.” He turned to Stauréstu. “So, have you resumed your crazy schedule?”

“I will next week: three days in Ora, one in Néfa, one in either Isurdhuna or Tripola, and one in Mëddwoglubas. But now that I have a car, it’ll be much easier.”

“Unless he falls asleep driving or collides with a truck!” said Aréjé.

Fithu opened the door of the room. “Prince Mëméjékwu, Honored Estoiyaju, and his wife, Sarejné.”

They all rose for the guests. “Welcome to our home!” said Chris. The three arrivals went around shaking hands with everyone; the Prince was not averse to shaking hands. It took several minutes to go around the circle and seat everyone properly.

“So, will you double this place by next year?” asked Estoiyaju skeptically, after they sat.

“I think the question is, will Albanu double this place for us?” replied Chris. “General Perku tells us that 250 families must leave their leases next month. And the Lord told me at Yusbéru’s funeral that he and his friends planned to vacate all leases and switch over to mechanical agriculture.”

“He is following a new way, and one that I am sure does not please Esto,” said Estoiyaju.

“So what do we do?” asked Chris. “Should I not make money, just as Albanu does, but help people at the same time?”

“I suppose,” said Estoiyaju. “Widumaj wants us to help and serve everyone, but I wonder whether he really expected people to do it!”

“I suppose the question is, how to help the mass of the people but preserve the old order,” said Prince Meméjékwu. “I have no problem with the peasantry living a comfortable life, as long as they respect and obey the lords.”

“And what if the lords are unjust to them?” asked May. She knew she shouldn’t speak up, but the subject angered her too much.

The Prince glared at her. “Then they appeal to the queen.”

That ended the question, since no one could ask what to do if *she* were unjust.

“If we follow Widumaj, I think we will be alright,” said Chris. “Because He says to consult with the people. That’s what Her Majesty has done, and that’s what we’re doing here.”

They turned to other topics. About the time the prince began to express his thanks for their hospitality, the telephone rang. A moment later, Fithu came to say it was for Mitru Miller. Since his conversation included the word “police” and he looked grave when he hung up the phone, Chris was prompted to say “Trouble?”

Mitru nodded. “It was my dispatcher in Ora. There’s a big, yelling crowd in Central Square, so he was calling to say that we can’t get buses through. I approved an alternative route.”

“Yelling?” asked Məməjékwu, surprised.

“This morning, Duke Mitruiluku announced that he was replacing Mayor Mitrulubu with his younger brother, Mitrubbaru,” explained Stauréstu.

“He did?” exclaimed Estoiyaju. He looked at the Prince. “I don’t think he can do that. Her Majesty has referred to Mitrulubu as ‘Mayor.’”

“Did she appoint him mayor?” asked Chris.

“All she has to do is refer to him, and he is appointed!” replied Məməjékwu.

“I don’t think Mitruiluku has thought of it that way,” observed Stauréstu, rubbing his shoulder.

“Then he is a fool,” replied Estoiyaju.

“Were the police going to the square?” asked Chris.

“My dispatcher didn’t think so because the crowd is way too large and because the police chief is loyal to Mitrulubu.”

“I wonder what Molanu will do,” said Estoiyaju. The head of the garrison was the son of Yimu, the deceased lord’s brother.

“We can’t intervene,” exclaimed Məməjékwi. “Not yet. Lords have a certain sphere of freedom, and I don’t think either of them has crossed the line yet.”

“Perhaps that’s true,” said Chris. He wondered; Məməjékwi’s wife was the daughter of Lord Mitru, so the prince was probably willing to give them lots of freedom. “But consider Lord Albanu’s behavior. When did he cross the line? If something had been done sooner, perhaps he wouldn’t have.”

“Your school of government will have to help all of us decide what the sphere of freedom is and what behavior crosses the line,” said Pərku.

“No, Her Majesty does that,” responded Estoiyaju, quite emphatically.

“Then the school of government can provide her with systematic recommendations.”

“This is a useless, abstract discussion,” interrupted Məməjékwi. “Lord, is there a place where I can make a telephone call in private.”

“Of course; my office.” Chris rose.

“May I assist you?” asked Estoiyaju.

“No, I’ll handle this, Estoiyaju.”

[Oct. 28, 2006; reread and edited 5/29/13, 8/9/17]

237.

Troubles

First week Bolérenménu, year 9/627

A telephone call by the Prince to Molanu and Mitrulubu was enough to end the demonstration, though buses had to avoid Central Square for several hours, and that night there was petty crime and vandalism across the city. The Queen requested written statements from all four brothers about their positions. Chris crossed his fingers.

After another day in Pértatranisér—while the village recovered from the tiring but very profitable New Years—the Mennea family, except Amos and May, headed back to Melwika in the two rovers. They left at sunset and got home five hours later, at 9 a.m. the next day, a timetable that gave them twilight for the first hour of the trip, twilight and sunlight for the last two, and a brilliantly full Skanda in between. Once the kids were put to bed, and the luggage was unloaded from the roofs of the two rovers, Chris was determined to get a little done before taking a nap. The pile of telephone messages and letters included a note that Lord Primu of Tritejna had called about an urgent matter the day before. Considering that the lower Arjakwés villages were not used to and still disliked telephones, and were averse to making expensive long-distance calls, that was saying a lot. Chris picked up the phone and called back.

“Lord Kristobéru, thank you for calling me,” said Primu. Chris had waited ten minutes; Primu had to be found and brought to the phone. “We really don’t know what to do. The day before New Year’s, one of our hunters encountered a hunter from Nuarjora on our land. He told the man he couldn’t hunt on our land and the man said, basically ‘who says it’s your land?’ They got in a fist fight and the other man ran away. Now we fear possible retaliation and we worry whether the boundaries will be respected.”

“Have you talked to Nuarjora’s lord at all? There has been no negotiation about boundaries yet. For that matter, I don’t know that your village has agreed on a western boundary with Nuarjora.”

“That is all true, but this hunter was practically in Naskerpēda; he was all the way across our land.”

“Lord Primu, the best I can suggest is that we set up a meeting and talk about boundaries. Thornton and his geologists made an excellent map, based on their visits last month. We need at least four, maybe five lords to attend, and it would be helpful if Duke Kandékwes attended as well.”

“Kandékwes? Absolutely not! He has no jurisdiction over us!”

“My lord, I believe Her Majesty has said he does—”

“No, never! We will not accept such a conclusion! He is not welcome in my village, and I will not attend a meeting that he attends!”

“Very well, my Lord.” Chris paused to wonder what to do.

“Lord, I want you to come down and walk all of us through the possible boundaries. Everyone knows you; you are neutral. Can you do that?”

Chris sighed. “I can’t today, but I could come down any Suksdiu or Primdiu.”

“Excellent; but I can’t call Lord Estoséru of Nuarjora or Lord Mitrusaju of Arjdhura.”

“Alright, I’ll see what I can do, then. I’ll get back to you.”

“Quickly, lord, we fear there will be retaliations both ways.”

“Very well, I’ll see what I can do.”

“Thank you, Lord.” And the phone line went dead. Chris stared at the phone and realized that Lord Primu had no idea how to end a telephone conversation.

He sat at his desk and contemplated the mess that his willingness to help and his fatigue-impaired judgment had landed him in. The palace and Duke Kandékwes would not appreciate his involvement; furthermore, he had no way to make a binding decision, which means if one party held out, the result would be worthless or even counterproductive. He picked up the phone again to call Estoiyaju. He had to get the palace involved.

He called the palace and left a message for Estoiyaju to call him back. He rose from his desk to go home and go to bed when the phone rang. He was startled that Estoiyaju had called back so fast.

“Khélo?”

The line had a lot of static; Chris immediately knew the call wasn’t coming from Estoiyaju. But it was midnight on the western shore; an unusual time to make a call.

“Hélo? Lord Kris?”

“Yes, is that Këkanu?” His rich, deep voice was distinctive.

“Indeed, my Lord. Are you well? Did you have a good New Year?”

“We are all well and we had a marvelous New Year. How are you, Honored?”

“My family and I are well, very well. I am curious, lord . . . I very much enjoyed being associated with your génadema last fall for two terms. It was a marvelous opportunity to be in Mëddoakwés, also. Is there any possibility I could come this spring term as well?”

That was uncharacteristic of Kεkanu, a native of Ora and extremely proud of his city. It had been very hard to convince him to come several years earlier, and he always rushed back to Ora when the term was over. Last fall was no exception.

“Kεkanu, you are always welcome to come here, but we have no courses scheduled for you and term begins tomorrow.”

“Perhaps we could add some courses. Mine have always been popular. I have learned a lot about teaching singing.”

“Don’t you have a course at the Mitrui Génadema?”

A long pause. “One is scheduled, but I doubt it will happen. Frankly, Lord Chris, trouble is brewing here. With Mitrubbaru trying to wrest control of the city from his brother, he has no time to run the génadema.”

“Is there trouble in the city now?”

“Yes . . . I think so. There are several fires. The fire department is busy.”

“Kεkanu, do you feel unsafe?” Chris had heard a tone in the man’s voice that worried him.

“Lord . . . I think so. The palace itself seems safe from outside disturbance, but there is internal trouble as well. I worry for my wife and child.”

“Very well, Kεkanu, can you get to Pértatranisér? Amos and May are there, and you are welcome to stay as family guests for a few days or a week. It’s a chance to see whether Ora stabilizes or not. If not, come here.”

“Oh, Lord Chris, that would be a perfect solution! I really want my family out of the palace; this is not a good environment for children right now. But we would be close

enough so we could wait and see. You are so generous to us, Lord! I will be honored to sing at events in Pértatranisé or anywhere you wish, Lord!”

“Thank you, Kekanu, we will be honored to have you chant the hymns for us. I’ll call Amos and let him know to expect you tomorrow morning.”

Amos and May were up before the sun. It was rarely possible to get much sleep because everyone in Melwika who wanted to call them started work about 11 p.m. Pértatranisé time and left for home at 8 or 9 a.m., so the phone rang late and started again early. While May was getting Bahiyé ready to go to school—first grade—and Marié ready for daycare, Amos had to run up to the latex plant to investigate a chemistry problem and call Behruz about it while his chemists could still give useful advice.

On his way home, he decided to walk a bit farther and went down First Street all the way to Route 2 and the new marketplace across the street from it. The village hall was there as well on the north side of Route 2 and he saw two dozen women and children laying on the grass in the building’s shade—for it was already hot and humid—with piles of life possessions around them. Arrivals looking for land, no doubt. Amos decided to go inside.

Six men stood in line at the village clerk’s office. Estoipuru and his assistant were busy assigning them house plots on North First Street, their first street on the north side of the Atranisé. Váranu came in a moment later.

“Six today,” Amos said to him. “And yesterday we had what: three?”

“And one the day before. It would appear we’re beginning to get another wave of people.”

“How much surplus does the grange have?”

“We can feed maybe fifty extra people for three months with it, as a loan of course.”

Amos nodded. “As you’ve probably heard, Lord Albanu’s throwing 250 families off their long-term leases in the next month. Half or three quarters of them could head this way.”

“I’m worried about that. The grange is in a difficult position because with mechanization, the average farmer can handle twenty agris of mixed crops; if you just raise corn, wheat, or rice, it’s closer to forty agris. So everyone who loves farming wants more and more land. That means more and more equipment. So we’re stretched to expand fast enough to meet the demands of the people we already have.”

“Well, we’re going to have to accommodate more people somehow because they’re coming. I think we’ll want to move up the construction of the dam and irrigation ditches for the next few months. We’ll probably have the labor.”

“Where will we get the money for that?”

“I’ll ask Lord Kristoféru. The harvest has come in on lands he has sold in Swadlendha, and in six weeks the lower Arjakwés lands will be harvested and pay him mortgages. The marketplace building is yielding pretty good rents, also. I think we can get the money.”

“We could borrow it from the bank, too.” Váranu was getting pretty experienced with financing; Amos nodded at that.

“You ask the accountant what the income looks like over the next three months. I gather the crop prices per bushel are dropping.”

“Quite a lot, but our volume is good. I’ll try to get some better estimates of the grange’s income. The wheat and corn harvests are rolling in daily. At least we can feed new arrivals in return for labor. But Honored: when will this town *stop* growing?”

“I don’t know, but I see no reason why we shouldn’t grow to be as large as Néfa in the next few years. Mēlwika’s as big as Mēddoakwés, after all.”

That thought surprised Váranu. He nodded. “Well, 250 more families and we’ll be close. But I don’t think we want all of them farming! You need to get more factory work.”

“We’re working on that. See you at the Village Council meeting tonight.” Amos nodded goodbye and headed home.

As he entered the house’s private courtyard, he saw a steam car parked there, and a driver hauling trunks of stuff into the guest rooms. When he entered the sitting room, he found May there with Kēkanu, his wife, and their daughter.

“ . . . Because the palace school’s reasonably good,” Dárásé was saying.

“The elementary school here is good as well. We send Skandé to it,” replied May. “It may even be better than the palace school, if the teacher there isn’t using the latest teaching materials.”

“They aren’t; the education is heavily classical,” said Kēkanu. “It guarantees the children know excellent Eryan—classic poetry anyway, not so much the hymns—plus some science and math. So, what are you going to do here, over the next nine weeks? Teaching?”

“Some; a Basic English course in Néfa,” May replied. “It’s rather frustrating because I was teaching advanced courses in Mēlwika and here that’s largely impossible.

Pértatranisér's something of an exile for me. But I am finishing up my research on Eryan as it relates to other Indo-European languages and I have some theories I'm formulating. Amos is doing only a little lab work this term."

"I'm glad he's not going to Ora." Kekanu looked up and saw Amos entering the room. "Ah, and here he is!"

"I'm sorry I wasn't here to welcome you, but I had to take care of an emergency at the latex factory," said Amos, stepping in. He offered both of his hands. "It's very good to see you again, Kekanu."

"Thank you. We are very relieved to be here and grateful for your accommodation."

"We're delighted to see you all." He turned to Dárásé. "I don't think I've met you before."

"It's a pleasure to meet you, Honored Amosu."

Amos nodded and they shook one hand, as was the Eryan custom between a man and a woman. "And this is our daughter, Kanésté," she added.

"'God's song; what a beautiful name.'" Amos nodded to the eight year old, who smiled shyly. It also reminded him that "Kekanu" was a title bestowed on the singer, rather than his given name.

"I apologize that I don't know how long we will reside with you," said Kekanu. "I feel like a refugee! I hope we can go to Melwika, if the troubles in Ora don't end. We'd rather go home, but I don't think the palace will be a good place to live for a while."

"Do you have family elsewhere?"

“My parents are dead, my brother is a carpenter in Ora, Dárásé’s parents are dead, and her two sisters can’t take us in. I’m afraid the options for singers, even famous ones, are very limited. As you might imagine, I’d rather not go back to being Wəranoikordu the carpenter, especially at age 36; that’s work for younger men. My brother is missing a finger on one hand and limps from a deformed leg; he fell off a roof nine years ago and his broken leg healed badly.”

“I understand,” said Amos. “By the way, Kəkanu, I am also 36, in Eryan years.”

He smiled. “We are brothers of sort, then, Amosu.”

May looked at Dárásé and suspected she was about two years younger than her husband, as was she. “What has been happening in the city over the last few days?”

“Since the announcement? It’s been terrible,” replied Kəkanu. “Fighting every night between gangs loyal to Mitruiluku and Mitrulubu, and fires.” He quoted a line of classical poetry to illustrate his point.

“I saw a Néfa fire engine head home this morning, when I was at the village hall,” said Amos. “They were accompanied by a Néfa police car, which surprised me; the fire engine felt the need for extra protection. The Pértatranisér engine is still there, and I worry about them because our police have no steam car. We’ve been without a fire engine for three nights now.”

“At least there has been no conflagration. Without the fire engines, I think half the city would have burned by now.”

“And what’s the situation in the palace?” asked May.

Kəkanu looked worried, even frightened, by the question. “He can’t tell you, but as we know, he can’t control his wife’s tongue,” replied Dárásé. “Yesterday Mitruidatu

went back to Məlwika to teach and escape the arguing, and urged Kəkanu to do the same; that's why he called Lord Kristoféru. Mitrulubu refuses to back down, insisting that Her Majesty considers him mayor. He and Mitruiluku have fought over everything since their father died: who could use which rooms of the palace, who would take care of their mother, even how many telephones each brother has access to. The basic issue is how to run the city; Mitruiluku ran the province one way under Lord Mitru's supervision, Mitrulubu ran the city a very different way under Lord Mitru's supervision, and now these two ways clash."

"My impression is that the family collected money from the province to build up the city," said Amos.

Kəkanu nodded. "Exactly. Mitruiluku collected most of the taxes and Mitrulubu spent most of them. But now Mitruiluku wants to spend them, instead."

"Mitrubbaru, as head of the Mitrui Génadema, always struck me as a compassionate man; maybe more than Mitrulubu," noted May.

Dárásé shook her head. "Now, power is more important than compassion. In the last two weeks the relationship among the brothers has deteriorated very, very badly. I think they have even forgotten the Réjé's power to appoint governors! They are letting their city burn to see who will control the ruins! In the palace they were throwing things at each other; I was frightened we would get caught in the middle and that the violence would disturbed Kanésté. In the last two days, Mitrulubu has had no access to a telephone. He has sent servants out with messages and they often have not been allowed to return."

"Why can't the police or the army control the gangs?" ask May.

“Molanu obeys the orders of the Duke and the police still obey the orders of Mitrulubu,” replied Kekanu. “That course of action would result in the army battling the police. So they fight by proxy with gangs. I don’t think the fires are intentional, most of the time.”

“Except when the house being burned is that of someone’s strong supporter,” exclaimed Dárásé.

“You should tell all this to the Réjé,” said Amos. “She needs to hear it.”

“No, Honored, I’d never be able to set foot in the city of my birth again! I’d rather become a carpenter again. No, I have no confidence that Her Majesty will act. The House of Kérékwes is venerable and powerful, and they’re closely related to the royal family. It isn’t just Meméjékwu’s marriage to Lord Mitru’s daughter; he and the Queen are second cousins. The families have intermarried a dozen times in the last six hundred years. She will feel they have to solve their own dispute. I suspect in a month or two, Mitrulubu will have no choice but to flee the palace, and that will be the end of it. He won’t be able to retain the loyalty of the police. On the other hand, if he does retain the loyalty of his supporters in the city, Mitruiluku will have to flee eventually. At that point, the palace will ‘act’ by endorsing the result.”

Amos looked at May, wondering what they could or should do. “Stay out of the matter entirely, honored,” said Kekanu, gauging Amos’s reaction. “It will just complicate things and call vengeance down upon the House of Mennea.” He said the last sentence with great drama.

“Alas, that’s probably good advice,” replied Amos.

“When this ends, with any luck, we’ll return to the palace of the Kérékwes,” added Dárásé.

Just then, Fithu entered and said the driver was finished unloading the family’s trunks. Amos went out to pay the man—the servant of an Ora merchant—two dhanay for driving Kekanu and family to Pértatranisér, for the singer was dependent on patrons and virtually penniless. The family retreated to their two rooms to unpack. They reappeared at lunchtime.

“I really would like to sing for you, for the village, for anyone you request I sing for,” reiterated Kekanu as they ate. He preferred to talk than to eat, because the fare was rather plain that day. “I have to practice my voice daily anyway. I understand this village has a beautiful marketplace. Perhaps there is a place there where I could give a concert.”

“That would be great,” said May. “There is no good place, but we should make one. It would help attract people here.”

“I suppose you aspire to make Pértatranisér into a city,” Kekanu said, a bit wary of the idea.

“We do,” replied Amos. “I’ve fallen in love with the place. While this house is Lord Kristoféru’s, I have acquired the deed to five thousand agris of hilly land east of here.”

“What will you do with it? Agriculture?” asked Kekanu.

“It’s rich in trees bearing fruits, nuts, and latex ooze. I’ve hired six men to cut down timber trees and six other men to plant oranges, lemons, limes, grapefruit, bananas, Passion fruit, mangos, Brazil nuts, figs, Amazon cherries, rubber, guttapercha, and balatá. Gradually we’re establishing a forest plantation.”

“The monkeys will love it,” observed Dárásé.

“I’ve hired two men to hunt them full time! That’s another forest product we’re bringing to the market here.”

“So, you aren’t planning to return to Melwika?” asked Kekanu.

“We’ll go back and forth. I’m planning to buy a steam car. The Mennea clan has two rovers, but we really need three or four vehicles.”

“What about your engineering and teaching?”

“The School of Engineering is now very well established and doesn’t need me to run it. I enjoy teaching, but it isn’t my passion. I like working with people and making new devices work.”

“What sort of devices?” asked Dárásé.

“You’ve seen the new radios?”

“Indeed.”

“They were the fruit of my labor last summer. And now I’m working on a *phonograph*. Say, Kekanu, if you want to sing, I’ll show you how the new device works.”

Amos jumped up from the table. “Now?” asked May, irritated that lunch was being interrupted, but he ignored her. He had a phonograph on a table nearby, with a big megaphone attached to it. He brought it over, sat it on the table near Kekanu with the megaphone pointing at the singer, put in a fresh vinyl cylinder, cranked it up, and put the needle on the cylinder. “Sing something short for us.”

“Sing? Now?” Then without waiting for an answer, Kekanu started to chant the “Hymn of the Lamp.” It took about two minutes. When he finished they were awestruck by the beauty.

“Now, listen,” said Amos. He put the needle back at the beginning and played back the recording.

Dárásé uttered a cry of surprise when she heard her husband’s voice come out of the phonograph, loud and clear. Kanésté stared, shocked. Amos suppressed a laugh; he loved surprising people with the phonograph.

“Is that what I sound like?” asked Kεkanu, startled. He was not pleased.

“Exactly what you sound like. How did you do it?” asked Dárásé.

“It’s a phonograph,” replied Amos. “A device that records sound on the surface of a rotating cylinder, then plays it back. These cylinders can be used about 100 times before they wear out. Right now, this world has a total of three phonographs.”

“Honey, Kεkanu wants to do concerts,” said May. “Why not broadcast concerts over the radio and record them for later sale?”

“How do you sell a concert?” asked Kεkanu.

“We plan to set up a factory for making phonographs,” said Amos. “They’ll cost about 50 to 75 dhanay at first, but we can probably get the price down to 20 or 25 eventually. The cylinders will sell for half a dhanay each. Let’s say we sell ten thousand of them; that’s 5,000 dhanay. If we give the artist twenty percent, that’s a thousand dhanay.”

“Really?” said Kεkanu. He looked at the phonograph, pondering what it might mean for him.

“You know,” said May. “We’ve been trying to think of a way to market phonographs and radios. No one buys them because there’s nothing to listen to, and there’s nothing being broadcast because there’s no one listening. Let’s record a series of

daily concerts at the marketplace and broadcast them several times every day on Channel 2. People love Kekanu's singing and they'll pay to hear him at home on a regular basis."

"I would love to help with that!" said Kekanu.

"We should try to get some other music, too," said Amos.

"I can help with that, too, because I know all the great musicians!"

It was a week before all the lords from the lower Arjakwés were summoned to the palace. They came with some trepidation. Kandékwés was there, but no one dared to complain about that. Thornton and Rudhisuru were there, with a huge map of the lower Arjakwés spread out on a very large table. Chris was invited as an observer.

"All rise for Her Majesty!" came the call, and they all stood as Queen Dukteréstó entered. She sat on her throne, which had an excellent view of the huge map. She stared at it with great interest.

"You all may sit," she said. "But I must stand to look at this magnificent work of art." The crowd remained on its feet while she circled the map, examining it slowly and in detail. "So, this is the Arjakwés," she said, noting a large, meandering blue line. "And here the Ornakwés enters it at General Roktekster's village. And here, I see, is the Swadakwés." She pointed to a small blue line half way between the two. "But what is that?"

"A stream, Your Majesty," replied Thornton. "When that area was desert eight years ago, it did not exist, but with the wetter climate the preexisting bed now has a stream in it again."

“I see. Sounds like a good place for townships. Let’s see whether I have anyone to exile.” She left that hanging, as if it were a threat. She pointed to brown lines. “What are these?”

“Township boundaries,” replied Thornton. “As you can see, because of your decree, the boundaries of ɛjnopéla, Béranta, Ornakwés, Swadlendha, and ɛndraidha are very well determined. The dotted lines are suggested boundaries for the other townships.”

“Based on what principles?”

“The border between Naskɛrpɛda and Tritɛjna is by their common consent. That’s why it is a solid brown line. Naskɛrpɛda has seventeen dɛkɛnt of frontage along the Arjakewés. Both townships occupy both sides of the Arjakwés valley and thus have claimed twenty dɛkɛnt—ten kilometers—both north and south of the river. You gave Ornakwés and the other two townships a twenty-dɛkɛnt square of land on the southern bank only. They are claiming twice the width because they are pre-existing villages and have farmland on both sides of the river.”

“I see. Go on.”

“The border between Tritɛjna and Nuarjora is roughly halfway between the lands the villages have occupied. That gives Tritɛjna a strip of land along the river seventeen dɛkɛnt wide. It is two or three dɛkɛnt east of the old, informal border between Tritɛjna and Akanakvéi, before the sea rose and before the Fish Eryan founded Nuarjora on Akanakvéi’s land.”

“Land they used?”

“For hunting, yes. Akanakvéi’s farmland was in a large oasis west of their village. It’s now completely under the sea. Akanakvéi relocated to higher ground two years ago

and acquired Sumi dock workers and farmers, becoming Arjdhura. Dividing the remaining land is quite tricky because Akanakvéi has lost their oasis to the sea and most of their high ground to the Fish Eryan at Nuarjora. Nuarjora consists of three villages formed by the relocation of five Fish Eryan villages: so-called Lɛpawsakhéma, Nuarjora proper, and Dɛksawaskhéma. So we have proposed to give Nuarjora a strip of land from the seashore inland about ten dɛkent, and five dɛkent north of the river by sixty dɛkent south of it. That leaves land for Arjdhuna, which is north of Nuarjora. Arjdhura is on a peninsula that connects to the mainland ten dɛkent north of Nuarjora, so its land starts there and extends north forty dɛkent. It is ten dɛkent wide until it passes the northern end of Tritejna, then becomes twenty dɛkent wide.”

“And why these odd distances, north-south?”

“All the townships have about seven hundred square dɛkent, especially when you account for the irregular shape of the sea shore.”

“I see. That’s a lot of land; very generous. What are the various populations?”

“Naskɛpɛda and Tritejna have about three hundred people each. That does not include another five hundred farmers who farm land in them, but live on the north shore. Nuarjora comes from five Fish Eryan villages, so it has about 1,700 souls. Arjdhura has about 800; the original 400 from Akanakvéi and 400 Sumis and others who have moved in since.”

“Very clever, to rent land to farmers from elsewhere. You get a great increase in taxes, but no increase in people to serve.”

“It’s even better than that,” added General Roktekester. “The five hundred farmers who live on the north shore pay taxes in these towns, but still take home over a thousand

dhanay each to their families and villages. Last year with the very poor agriculture in the North Shore, their income was a large portion of the province's total. They had to pay salary tax because of their high income and that went to North Shore province. They also learned how to use farm equipment, and planting occurs two months later in the North Shore, so this year, after the planting was done in the lower Arjakwés, they rented equipment for use in their home villages. The equipment will return to the lower Arjakwés for harvest there, then head north again to help the north shore's harvest. The result will be a big boost to the agriculture around Belledha."

"Really? My people are very clever." Her Majesty looked at the map again. "Lord Estoséru, are your people able to fish in the sea again?"

"Yes, Your Majesty. Last summer the sea rose high enough to flood the gap in the limestone ridge five kilometers west of us. When that happened, the fresh-water lake just west of Nuarjora became a salt-water body. Now the ridge, except for the part occupied by Arjdhura, has become a chain of islands. We can reach the open sea by fishing boat either by sailing west through the gap or south along the islands and between any two of them. Fishing has steadily improved and we have rediscovered our old skills. This year we will start to sell fish to Meddoakwés and Melwika via ice-truck."

She raised her eyebrows at that, impressed. "Then what is your opinion of these borders, which give you the same amount of land as the other townships, even though you have more people?"

"We . . . can live with these boundaries. We would welcome more land, especially a claim over the limestone islands, since they are the area's main source of guano and we are the suppliers of it. But none of this land was ours in the first place."

“A wise response. Are you farming land right now?”

“Indeed, Your Majesty, about two thousand agris, using three steam tractors. We purchased these with the advice and encouragement of the Menneas for farming, mining limestone—we are Mēlwika’s main supplier—and to help our fishermen. For the last five years, half our men have devoted a large portion of their time traveling to the sea, fishing there, then hauling their catch back. Our men have also broken their backs in the service of the army on its road-building crews. We have hunted much of the land to the north of us. This arrangement gives it to Arjdhura; that is the main injustice of the proposal. Before Arjdhura came into existence, Akanakvéi did little or no hunting to the north.”

“I see. Lord Mitrusaju, what does Arjdhura say?”

“Your Majesty, our concern is very simple: Nuarjora is sitting on our land. They say we didn’t hunt the area to the north of them. That is true because we raised most of our food and grazed our animals west of them, on what today is sea bottom! When we hunted, we hunted east of our village, where they live now!”

“Do you farm now, and where?”

“We farm about a thousand agris just north and east of Arjdhura.”

“In other words, in part of this square of land the survey recommends that you have.”

“Yes, Your Majesty.”

“Since no one is proposing that the Fish Eryan villages of Nuarjora be moved, what land do you suggest they have?”

“We want compensation from them for the land they occupy.”

“Compensation. I see.” Her Majesty turned to Lord Primu. “And what does Tritęjna say?”

“This proposal gives Nuarjora a strip of land in the lower river valley about four or five dekont wide that was originally ours. We never farmed it; it was desert. But we grazed animals on it occasionally and hunted on it.”

“Not that much,” replied Mitrusaju. “We used more of that land than you say.”

“The border was in dispute,” said the queen. “Because, after all, it was desert. But it is no longer desert, and the hill country north and south of the valley is now usable for grazing, hunting, even agriculture. Lord Belękwu, does Naskępęda have a view of these boundaries?”

“Your Majesty, we lost land to the east of us to Ornakwés, but we had no choice but to accept it. Now we hope these northern and southern borders will be accepted, because they will give us plenty of land in compensation.”

“Indeed they will; townships forty dekont long are unheard of. Lord General, what is the perspective of Ornakwés?”

“Your Majesty, the geological survey has proposed something neutral and fair to everyone. If anything, I wish we could extend Ornakwés farther south as well.”

The Queen smiled at Rokękester’s hint. “Who else wishes to speak?”

There was silence for a moment, then Chris said, “Your Majesty, I wish to offer one thought.”

“You are free to speak.”

“Your Majesty, the land assigned to Nuarjora includes the ruin of Lilalara.” He pointed to it on the map. “This is a very special place that traditionally has been avoided

by everyone because of their fear of evil spirits. Lilalara covers an area five times larger than Mëddoakwés does now; it was an enormous city of fifty to one hundred thousand people. That tells you how rich the lower Arjakwés once was, and how rich it can be again. My request is that Lilalara be declared a royal park and access to it require royal permission. That will protect the ruins for a future generation of scholars to study.”

“I see. You’re talking about one dekent by one dekent of land, then?”

“Something like that.”

“I’ll grant that request. Other comments?”

“As I said, Your Majesty, someone must pay us compensation for the land we have lost,” insisted Mitrusaju.

“I heard your point, which was also Lord Primu’s. Other comments? Mr. Prime Minister?”

“I like the recommendation of the survey, Your Majesty.”

“Duke Kandékwes?”

“Like Wëranolubu, I support the survey, Your Majesty.”

She nodded. “Then here is my judgment. First, this entire area is part of the province of Arjakwés. This is not a new ruling by me; I said as much last summer. But the villages of the area east of Ornakwés did not pay Duke Kandékwes a single dhanay of taxes last year. Out of mercy and as part of their compensation for losing land, I will forgive them last year’s tax. But it is their obligation to pay him this year and all subsequent years.

“Second, I award all the villages four hundred square dekent, not seven hundred. Four hundred is plenty for farming and hunting.” That caused shocked looks; she raised a

finger. “*But* to compensate for their loss of land to neighbors—either to Nuarjora or Ornakwés—I raise the total for Arjdhura, Tritejna, and Naskēpēda to seven hundred. That takes care of the issue of compensation for loss of land. All these townships have steam tractors, so it is not difficult to get hunters or farmers to the far end of their lands.

“As for Nuarjora, I award them four hundred square dēkent for now. Their southern boundary should be adjusted northward to decrease their total land to four hundred square dēkent. In addition, I award them all islands offshore of their township except the one immediately south of Arjdhura. Nuarjora has more people than the other townships, but none of this land was theirs originally, and they have the bounties of the sea to give them a livelihood. That said, the land to the south that the survey proposed for Nuarjora will not be rewarded to anyone else. If they can demonstrate a need for that land at some point in the future, I will reward it to them. I doubt the people of Nuarjora will use all four hundred square dēkent for many years, so they have plenty of land for their needs.

“So, the boundaries are fixed. Third, the crown awards the army twenty-five thousand extra dhanay this year and the next to spend on graveling roads in these townships, so the inhabitants can travel easily to their northern and southern ends.

“There is a fourth and final matter. The crown awards the survey one thousand dhanay to complete a detailed study of the area between the Arjakwés and the Swadakwés and of the area north of the Arjakwés to the Pēnkakwés province, with the purpose of determining where additional townships can and should be located. Our kingdom has five thousand more mouths to feed every year, so we will need more

townships. We award the survey, as well, the authority to name the rivers and other geographic features that appear on their maps, assuming those features have no common names.

“Those are the judgments I render today. I am immensely pleased by the progress of what once was a poor, backward part of this area. It has a high school in Nuarjora and a remarkably large number of steam tractors; more, in fact, than all of Rudhisér province, excepting Pértatranisér. It has very useful and growing ties with North Shore Province and an expanding use of the sea. These are amazing developments in eight years. If my calculations are right, this area, which used to pay a pittance to the royal coffers, will pay between a half million and three quarters of a million dhanay this year. All of you should be proud of your progress and must extend my congratulations to your people. And I will add this: if the progress continues and these boundaries are accepted, I will award the area a bonus.”

[Oct. 31, 2006; reread and edited 5/30/13, 8/9/17, 11/12/24]

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The World Table

First week Dhébelménu, year 9/627

The three-string player, drummer, and singer moved rapidly toward the end of their last song about the desired meeting of the two lovers, the crowd smiling in anticipation.

Amos watched the recording cylinder reach its four minute limit and quickly started a second phonograph player to catch the last thirty seconds of the song on a separate cylinder. He hated it when songs ran just a bit too long, but four minutes was an artificial limit that Eryan songs had never had to deal with before.

The singer wailed the last few words, the drum beat rose to a crescendo, then it was over. The audience in the marketplace leapt to their feet and cheered. Amos let the cylinder run; the audience response was exciting to record as well.

Kekanu stepped forward, applauding with the audience, pleased by the group's talent. "I again present to you the Pletleka Brothers. Weren't they fantastic?" He led the crowd in one last round of applause for the Pértatranisér group. That day, the hour-long noontime concert had featured four performers or groups, including Kekanu himself.

The three brothers stepped off the stage that had been hastily added to the marketplace near the restaurant. By opening up a vacant store and moving around a few stalls they had created a large open space, and it was packed with three or four hundred people listening and eating their lunches. "Let me close today's concert with one of my favorite folk songs," said Kekanu. "You all know it; *Asteré's Cry*." He closed his eyes for a moment, then tilted his head back and began to sing of Asteré, the beautiful wife of the

great hero Rostu, and her lament at his death. Amos scrambled to get the first phonograph ready to record the song, even though he already had a recording of it; you never knew when Kẹkanu's voice would be unusually powerful and the recording of rare quality. Darásé was there to help switch cylinders, so he was ready.

The song usually ran over four minutes, but Kẹkanu was now sensitive to the limitations of the new-fangled phonograph and made a few changes; he finished just seconds before the cylinder ran out. The crowd erupted in applause again, Kẹkanu thanked them and reminded them to come again the next day, and the concert was over. Amos reached over and turned off the radio transmitter, for the entire performance had gone out live over channel 2. Kẹkanu hurried over. "Did I make it this time?"

"Yes, you did! It was fantastic!" exclaimed Darásé, kissing her husband.

"Good. I like this version; it moves along more quickly and is more dramatic." He said the last word dramatically; Kẹkanu loved drama.

"We got some good recordings today," said Amos. He picked up a cardboard cylinder box and finished writing the titles on them.

"These three brothers are *very* good," said Kẹkanu. "But they run too long on everything."

"It'll be tricky to rebroadcast tomorrow during the eclipse," agreed Amos. "Now, you understand that I won't be here tomorrow, so you'll have to run the equipment yourself."

Kẹkanu nodded. "No problem, Darásé can help. She understands these phonographs quite well."

“I think our friend Rostésu is coming from Isurdhuna tomorrow, for three or four days,” exclaimed Dárásé. “So he’ll be able to sing in the lunchtime concert.”

“He has an excellent voice,” exclaimed Kekanu. “If I’m going to run the eclipse show, I may do it a bit differently, Amos.”

“How so?”

“Well, all you do is introduce a song, play it, then introduce the next one. But I’m thinking that the eclipse show needs to be more like the concert, with a stronger role for the master of ceremonies. Even more: it needs to speak to people gathering to listen, usually inside while it is dark outside.”

“Excellent. Great idea. I’m afraid I’m not much of an announcer, but you have a sense for these things. While we’re away, feel free to experiment.”

Kekanu and Dárásé helped Amos pick up and carry the two phonographs, the radio transmitter, and the cylinders to the new steam car parked nearby. They climbed in and Amos let Kekanu drive it slowly across Route 2 and up Second Street to the house. As they entered the courtyard, they saw a rover parked there; Chris and Liz had arrived. They headed for the dining room.

May was sitting with her parents already and the table was piled high with hot food, waiting for the concert planners to arrive and dig in. The kids, who were home from school to eat lunch, were almost finished and ready to head back for their afternoon lessons. “Welcome!” said Amos.

“Thank you,” said Chris. He and Liz rose to greet Kekanu and Dárásé. “What a great concert! We heard the whole thing!” He pointed to the radio.

“Thank you; weren’t the Pletleka Brothers grand?” said Kekanu.

“Impressive, for local farm kids,” agreed Chris. They all sat and began to eat.

“You know, the live concert comes on from about 9 to 10 p.m. every night in Melwika. It’s pretty faint and hard to hear. Amos, you need a stronger transmitter. But even so, it’s fantastic. I think there are five or six radios in Melwika now, and they all tune in.”

“I’ve heard from *three* village schools,” said Kekanu. “They all report that they schedule the lunchtime for the kids for the concert and everyone listens, and sometimes parents stop by to listen as well. Some schools east of here do the same for the eclipse show, too.”

“Radio sales have taken off,” said Chris. “The stores are completely sold out.”

“The army’s surprised and they’re making more,” said Amos. “They’re coming in a box with a one-dhanay electric coupon per year for ten years. We hadn’t charged for electricity on the first run, because the radios were few and were for weather reporting, but now we have to!”

“Dad, tell us about the election on Mëddwoglubas,” said May, changing the subject.

Chris smiled. “It went *very* well. Very, very well. I missed the ‘Future of Mëddwoglubas’ forum two weeks ago, but the discussion was lively and attended by most adults, including a surprising number of women. The voting went all day yesterday and twenty of us helped count the votes last night. Perku, Werétrakester, and Lady Awster came to assist; an impressive representation. The voters chose three members of the City Council, Lord Estodhéru chose three more, and of course he serves on the council as its seventh member. He chose the fourth, fifth, and sixth highest vote getters, so all six of the highest getters are on the City Council. Dontanu and Mëmoréstu were both elected, as

were the chief of police, the chief of the fire department, and the superintendent of schools.”

“Two engineers; that’s impressive,” said Amos. “And one Bahá’í; that’s good, too.”

“Estodhéru’s pleased with the result. He was very reluctant to hold an election, but if he had waited and the lack of a council had become controversial, he would have had to deal with critical council members. This way there’s no polarization,” noted Chris.

“Though he’ll still have to get used to people second guessing him and reviewing his budget,” said Liz. “That won’t be easy.”

“Did you have trouble coming through Ora?” asked Kekanu.

Chris shook his head. “No, no trouble this time, but we timed it to accompany the regular bus, and Perku’s steam car came along as well. There were no stone-throwing incidents. There are a lot of burned buildings in town now; maybe one in twenty.”

“Two nights ago, a major store went up in flames,” said Kekanu, shaking his head. “It’s really terrible. The Pértatranisér firemen told me about it.”

“I wish the crown would intervene,” said Chris. “I called Prime Minister Weranolubu two days ago about something else and asked him about it. He said the palace is split over what to do.”

“This is what I predicted,” said Kekanu. “I don’t think anyone expected Mitrulubu to hold out so long and well. He may even be gaining on Mitruiluku, who’s beginning to look dictatorial.”

“That’s what the newspaper articles are saying,” agreed Chris. “Actually, I’m impressed that the *Royal Standard* has carried news about the fighting. The palace may not be acting, but they’re also not suppressing the news.”

“I wonder why,” commented May.

“Possibly they want public opinion to see what chaos is like, so when they act it will look decisive,” said Chris. “Or maybe they’re pressuring the brothers.”

“If that’s the case, they risk looking like ditherers,” said May, and Dárásé nodded vigorously.

“Amos,” said Chris, changing the subject. “Have you heard from Mitraisu?”

“Yes, this morning there was a message asking for the total acreage for each crop and harvest dates. I passed it to Váranu and I think he answered right away.”

“Good. We’re trying to get an accurate estimate of the upcoming harvests.”

“To predict crop prices?” asked May.

Chris nodded. “Tentatively, it appears total acreage planted this year will be three hundred twenty thousand agris. Five years ago, before mechanization started, it was about two hundred forty thousand, including cotton and oil seed crops. It takes about an agri of farmland to supply the average person decently, and with two hundred seventy thousand people, this world was undernourished. The three hundred twenty thousand includes a farm plot twice if two crops are raised on it, or three times if three are raised on it. Two years ago when crop prices dropped sharply, we think two hundred eighty thousand agris were planted.”

Amos whistled. “Wow, that sounds worrisome.”

“Especially when you consider that with guano, better crop rotation, and introduction of corn, potatoes, and tomatoes, yields per agri are up about twenty percent. My guess is that harvests this year will run 160% of what they were five years ago. But farm prices this time may be alright. First, there won’t be a panic, like there was two years ago; the news will get out ahead of time and merchants will be able to prepare. Second and more important, the crops are much more diverse this time. Lewésa, for example, is planting three thousand agris of cotton and may have to import food. The acreage in vegetables, fruits, cotton, and oil seeds has gone way up. The Tutane are exporting more meat and hides than ever and importing more plant foods than ever. People are raising more chickens, pigs, and turkeys, and they need feed. Flax production has expanded for both linen and linseed oil. Olives and olive oil are in high demand. Peanuts are becoming popular. Demand for maple sugar has increased and the North Shore produced almost twice as much this year as last year. So my guess is that the prices for wheat, rice, and corn will be down, but not severely.”

“In other words, a richer population is eating better,” said Liz.

Chris nodded. “Which means they don’t have to spend the winter huddled in their huts around the fire, conserving calories; they can get on the bus to farm in warmer areas or work to earn extra money. They’re also dressing better, using a lot more cooking oil, and eating more meat and sweets. Wine and beer production are up, too.”

“That sounds right to me,” agreed Amos. “Pértatranisér’s population is earning about 1400 dhanay per year after taxes, double the old average for this area. But when a family used to earn 700 dhanay per year, they had maybe 150 or 200 dhanay left for non-food items. Double the income and they have 500 or 600 for non-food items. That’s

one big reason why the marketplace is doing alright; it's as if Pértatraisér were a city with three times as many people as it really has! Mechanization is responsible for the higher income. And the higher income is the reason fifty families have arrived in the last month and they're employed already."

"Well, let's hope the prices of food don't go too crazy in the next few months," said Chris. "That will change everyone's income. But like I said, I'm hopeful we'll do alright this time."

"Especially since the non-mechanized farmers will suffer the most from falling farm prices," said May. "It'll be a disaster for them if their after-tax income drops to 400 or 500 dhanay. They'll be able to eat their own produce, but they won't be able to buy anything."

"But that's why sugar production doubled on the north shore this year," said Chris. "And why a thousand north and south shore farmers want to lease farmland in the tropical zone to farm during the winter. And why a thousand farmers will go to work for the army's road building teams this year. And why two villages on the south shore are going into cheese making. And why the Development Corps can't keep up with all the requests for assistance from rural villages. The farmers are responding to the economic pressures creatively."

"But dad, when have rural farmers ever been able to keep up?" asked May.

"Almost never; I agree. But we've been able to influence things enough to make the situation better for them."

Chris, Liz, Amos, and May departed early the next morning for Mëddwoglubas. They took the rover, leaving the steam car for Këkanu's use to move the equipment needed for the radio program. They timed their departure to accompany the morning bus southward, because the police made sure the bus got through Ora. There were two more burned houses from troubles the night before.

Once past Ora, they moved faster and reached Mëddwoglubas in time to help prepare for the convention, which would be held at the old fortress above town a hundred meters from the now-finished Bahá'í House of Worship. They turned the radio to channel 1 to listen to the exchange of weather data; it was interesting to hear how warm or cool it was, whether it was cloudy or clear, dry or wet, elsewhere around the world. But as Skanda moved in front of the sun and it began to grow darker outside, Këkanu injected an announcement that the "Eclipse Show" was about to begin on channel two, so they switched. Just about everyone around the world tuned in at the time, for they usually were inside during eclipses.

"Greetings to all," began Këkanu. "The sky is growing dark, all around the world, and we all are heading indoors to spend time together. On the western shore, we are gathering for late breakfast, after being up and at work for several hours. On the northern and southern shores and on Sumilara we are cooking soup or bread and preparing to eat lunch together and perhaps to take a nap while the stars come out at midday. In Arjakwés and the eastern shore, we are gathering for a late afternoon meal and nap, or even for supper in Melwika. All around the world there is a *wëredu*, an eclipse meal, though it is at different times of the day. As light appears threatened by darkness and life by death, we come together for love and family, huddle together in our homes, and break bread with

our dearest.” There was a pause in his dramatic declamation, then he began to sing from the Hymn of the Eclipse:

*Skando covers Sulo, just as the dragon Werétra threatened the great Mitro,
The glorious disk becomes a dark circle, it eclipses the majesty of the sun;
But the sun reappears, Rostu slays the dragon, Mitro is saved,
And so light conquers darkness, Werétrakester the Dragonslayer gains a great
victory,*

Good defeats evil as assuredly as the sun reappears

He paused. “As we gather in the deepening gloom, may our spirits be uplifted by this tune from the Plētlēka Brothers, a trio living in Pértatranisér.” And he began to play a lively, purely instrumental piece they had performed at the beginning of a concert several days earlier.

“My goodness, he can be very dramatic on the air!” said Liz.

“He’s very good,” agreed Amos. “It’s his stage experience. He has a fantastic voice for radio, too.”

“He’s mixing voice and music, too; you didn’t do much of that,” said Chris. “He’s a bit of an amateur, but no one here will notice that! He needs some experience with the equipment.”

“We’re still not sure how to use the phonograph effectively,” said Amos. “If we create some sound effects, one could do quite a lot. And we do need a stronger transmitter; this show will be hard to hear in Melwika and impossible at Gordha.”

When the musical piece ended, Kekanu resumed. “It is now growing very dark here. Only a little bit of the sun is left. All the world is gathering around a single, big

table for our eclipse meal together, and one thing we always do around the table is gossip a bit. I don't know what you have heard, but last night I heard that there will be more food to eat this year than ever before. Because of all the steam tractors, farmers are planting more food and toiling less to raise and harvest it. We can now eat strawberries from the northern shore, regardless of where we live; or oranges from Vésipa; or olives from Mæddoakwés; or peaches from Néfa. More wine and beer is being brewed this year than ever before. Have you tried corn, this new crop we got about eight years ago? It's very good boiled and served with butter and salt. They're raising very good peanuts in Béranta this year, and you can buy them anywhere. Our 'world table' is piled high with the bounty of our land. Here is a hymn for us to ponder as we prepare our meal."

He put on a recording of the Hymn of the Peasant, which praised hard work and the plenty of the land. They all paused to listen and had to smile at Kekanu's extended metaphor of the eclipse show as a family gathering. "If he does this every day, he's going to need to do research!" said May.

The hymn ended and Kekanu, as if in response to May's comment, transitioned into a discussion of the latest issue of the *Royal Standard* and read a short article in it about the Queen's activities last week. "There you go," replied Chris with a smile. "Four newspapers appear every week, so he'll have plenty to read over the air!"

"I wonder what that'll do to sales?" wondered May out loud.

"Well, if he mentions any of the ads, maybe the advertisers will pay more!" exclaimed Amos.

“Think what this will do to the sale of radios and phonographs,” said Chris. “Everyone will want one. What a marvelous thing to have come into one’s home every day. And the palace will like the result, too, because they like Kekanu.”

“And he’s politically very careful,” added Amos. “His living has come from wealthy patrons; it’s that or a life as a carpenter, like his brother. So he won’t rock the boat. And that’s one thing we have to avoid when launching radio broadcasting.”

“Let’s see what he does the next few days, while we’re away,” said Chris. “If he’s this good every day, we’ve got to hire him!”

All day, Bahá’ís arrived on buses from all over the world. The delegates met to study authoritative texts about Bahá’í elections under Liz Mennea’s careful guidance. Visitors streamed in, set up tents on the grounds around the fort or paid a small fee to sleep in all-male or all-female dorms that some classrooms had been converted into, and gathered in groups to chat. Thornton and Lébé arrived on the morning public bus from Melwika, visited with others in the conference space—a large tent in the fort’s courtyard—then went out to walk around and visit with friends.

It didn’t take long for them to find Nergalu of Bilara talking to Yagu of Khermdhuna and a young man named Aryéstu from Weranopéla, a small, poor village located where Route 2, descending from the Endraidha, first reached the Dhébakwés thirty kilometers east of Tripola. They walked over and straight into a conversation.

“The fast was a quiet time for us because most of the people ready to become Bahá’ís had declared already,” Nérgalu said. “So Bilara still has about three hundred fifty Bahá’ís, including children. But we did see a flurry of interest during the fast in

Amurueqluma, the new village founded on the west coast of the island. They have twenty Bahá'ís now, and managed to elect a local spiritual assembly last week.”

“Congratulations to them!” said Yagu. “We had a long, cold winter, but we were able to build greenhouses during it and expand winter production of vegetables. It has helped the area’s diet a lot, but it hasn’t been profitable because vegetables can now be hauled in by truck more cheaply. In spite of the greenhouses being a kind of distraction to the Bahá’í community, we had a lot of declarations from the beginning of winter through the end of the Fast; about a hundred, in fact.”

“Wow!” said Nérgalu. “That’s substantial; didn’t you have less than a dozen last year?”

“We didn’t even have enough for a local Spiritual Assembly! We just elected our first one last week.”

“Incredible,” said Aryéstu. “What can you teach us about your success?”

“I’m not sure, because Khermdhuna’s conditions are unique. Our township is Christian, but in the last year we discovered that what we thought was the Biblia—our book of scripture—wasn’t. This was an incredible shock; much of our religion was not genuine. Add to that the arrival of the road, which brought us to the outside world; the loss of last year’s entire growing season, which forced most of our township’s men to work on army road building teams last year; and the arrival of the Bahá’í Faith, which teaches that Bahá’u’lláh is the return of Christ, and you have conditions for rapid growth. Khermdhuna isn’t one village, but a chain of seven parishes spread out along the Yejisrumakwés, and our parish—Tripludha—has about three hundred people. A third of the residents converted over the winter, basically.”

“We haven’t seen anything that dramatic, but we’re pleased with the growth in Weranopéla,” noted Aryéstu. “We’re the village farthest from Tripola and it’s hard for our young people to get to the high school. Our one room schoolhouse can accommodate only forty of the village’s 150 children. And the teacher has never pushed literacy for adults, with the result that only a few adults were able to read. But I am one of them, I’ve been able to go to Tripola High School, and in late fall we began to use the Ruhi materials to teach literacy. People love to get a book with a pretty cover and lessons that help them learn to read while also giving them spiritual advice. So far, one hundred adults have taken the Ruhi books, learned to read basic things, and have declared their belief in Bahá’u’lláh.”

“Out of how many?” asked Thornton, surprised.

“Weranopéla has only five hundred souls, so now perhaps a quarter of our people are Bahá’í.” Aryéstu smiled, pleased.

“Really? Wow, congratulations!” exclaimed Thornton.

“We’ll need to talk,” added Lébé. “I edit the *Bahá’í News*; I also write most of it. I should write up your story. The stories of all three of your villages!”

“Wrétradentes grew a lot over the winter, too,” said Aryéstu. “I think they have fifty Bahá’ís now. Of course, the village is bigger. Now, my people want to know what to do next. We want development and we’re hoping the Central Spiritual Assembly can help us.”

“The Assembly doesn’t have development money,” replied Thornton. “But there’s always the Development Corps.”

“We contacted them; they haven’t gotten back to us yet.” Aryéstu was disappointed.

“They’re overwhelmed with requests,” said Lébé. “Every village in the world wants their help now, even when the villages hear all their rules about matching funds and partial loans.”

“Why *do* they make all those requirements??” asked Yagu. “It was very hard on us to come up with the money, and now we have to pay some of it back!”

“Because if the local people are handed something for free, they often are not committed to it and don’t sacrifice to continue it,” replied Thornton. “But if they have to sacrifice to get it in the first place, they are committed to it. The results are better for everyone in the end.”

“Look, we’ve been exploited by our lord for a century,” said Aryéstu indignantly. “He’s an absentee lord who lives in Tripola who shows up a few days every month, mostly to collect the latest taxes. He doesn’t care about us or help us. If anything, we need to get rid of him and elect a village council, just like our elected Spiritual Assembly. In fact, that’s got to be our Bahá’í community’s other priority for this year. We’ve got to—”

“Wait a minute, wait a minute,” said Thornton, shaking his head. “Bahá’ís can’t get involved in partisan political matters. We have to be loyal to our government, local or regional or worldwide; we can’t oppose or undermine it. Our watchword is unity and if we get involved in partisan politics, we get involved in division—”

“But they’ve already been against *us*—”

“Not *us* as Bahá’ís. This world has two ranks of people: nobility and everyone else. But Bahá’ís come from both ranks and we must heal the division. Bahá’u’lláh defines the rights and responsibilities of both. And we can’t oppose our own lord; we have to try to win him over.”

“If we have Bahá’í lords, which we do, why don’t *they* help us, then?” demanded Aryéstu.

“They will,” replied Thornton. “Have patience with the Development Corps. They’ll get to you in a matter of weeks or months. The Development Corps is actually an arm of the Mēlwika Génadema. It is a general charity that can receive contributions from anyone and can make arrangements with anyone, but forty percent of the loans and grants—they do give grants—are with local Bahá’í communities. The reason is simple: most villagers have no organization whatsoever, but the Bahá’ís have a spiritual assembly who can organize them and can even reach out to the rest of the village. The wealthier Bahá’ís are contributing to the Development Corps.”

“We were one of the first cases, and we have benefitted,” agreed Yagu. “I’m not sure our four greenhouses will prove profitable, because as soon as people have any money they can buy imported vegetables, and the imported ones are usually better in quality. But the grant and loan for high-quality wool production is helping, and the village is now getting a loan to obtain a power shovel to dig and move tar more easily. That will increase our exports. We need the survey to visit again, Thornton. We want a detailed map of the hot springs and tar pits, and better estimates of the tar supply.”

“Okay, I’ll see what I can do.” He turned to Aryéstu. “I’ve been through Wëranopéla on Route 2, but I’ve never stopped. It’s in a very attractive location, with the little waterfall on the Dhébakwés. Do you have a telephone? Have you tried growing corn and potatoes?”

“We have a telephone in the headman’s house, which is also our village store. It’s next to the one-room schoolhouse and the teacher is a weather reporter, so the school has a radio. The school and the store have electric lights. We’ve tried growing corn, but the results were disappointing. We have one or two farmers trying potatoes; they’re Bahá’ís, in fact.”

“Because you’re pretty far south; the Dhébakwés flows southeastward from Tripola. Maybe the climate is about the same as Tripola’s, because they get more cold air from the south than you do. I bet you can’t raise wheat there.”

“Wheat produces very poorly. We live mostly on barley, rye, cabbage, beets, carrots, and dairy products.”

“Your agriculture can be developed quite easily and cheaply, I think; a few classes about how to raise corn and potatoes will help. Both produce twice as much per acre as rye. Have you considered cheese making? Mitrudoma is developing that, and it’s close to you.”

“Could we make money, competing against them?”

“Maybe. This world will need more and more cheese.”

“Perhaps.” Aryéstu wasn’t enthusiastic.

“Well, what do you want? A steam engine factory?”

“Something big like that would be great!”

Thornton shook his head. “Well, if someone leaves Weranopéla, makes a pile of money, and comes back to set up something like that, you’ll have it. But villagers usually view outsiders with some suspicion, the outsiders don’t know the locals and their talents, they have to be sure the lord is supportive, they aren’t sure the local people will support the effort . . . so the stranger will invest in a place he knows or where a lot of other people are investing. That’s the way it works. And if you have a fight with your lord, you’ll make investment even harder because the village will be polarized. Even the Development Corps will stay away.”

“So, honored, we’re stuck. What do we do?”

Thornton looked at Lébé. “Perhaps we could stop by to visit for a few hours on our way home to Melwika. If that works, maybe we could come back and help your assembly put together a plan.”

“We’d welcome that, honored!”

“And we’ve done that elsewhere, so we have experience,” said Lébé, nodding. “Thornton’s conducting a workshop this afternoon about creating a local development plan. You should go to that.”

“I’m planning to be there!”

Thornton changed the subject and asked everyone whether non-Bahá’ís had been enjoying the Ruhi curriculum and got a variety of comments about that. Then Thornton and Lébé headed back into the fortress. “I wish Widubéru would get to more Bahá’í communities,” said Lébé. “I get the impression he’s been focusing on lords and companies, lately.”

“I agree. Partly, it’s because he doesn’t want to look biased toward the Faith; and partly it’s because he isn’t sure what the local lord says. We should talk to dad about this. Maybe you and I should work part time for the Development Corps as case managers for the Bahá’is.”

“I think Widubéru would be relieved if we did.” She put an arm around his arm. “And I’d like to get away with you more often. We don’t have enough time together.”

“It’d be hard on the kids.”

“There are plenty of aunts, uncles, and grandparents around. We just have to time it carefully.”

“I’d like to spend more time with you, too. It’d be an adventure.” He kissed her.

“Then we definitely should talk to dad. He needs to give a talk about development and politics, too.”

“I’d better say more about those subjects in my workshop this afternoon, also.”

They entered the fortress and headed for the public restrooms. Lébé went in and Thornton waited outside. Brébéstu came out of the men’s room just then and waved. “Ah, you made it. Alláh-u-Abhá.”

“Alláh-u-Abhá.” They shook hands. “How are you?”

“Well. I can’t talk now; I have to get back to the delegate’s deepening.”

“Say, do you know Aryéstu of Wëranopéla?”

Brébéstu stopped and turned back to Thornton. “Yes, I’ve had him over for dinner twice. You met him?”

“Yes, he was telling me about all the growth of the Faith in Wëranopéla.”

“He may be exaggerating. The Assembly secretary’s supposed to be coming to convention as well; you may want to talk to him. His name is Rudhékwi. He’s the village teacher.”

“How did Aryéstu learn to read and write?”

“Well, he’s smart, restless, and ambitious. In the south shore, anyone can attend the high school if they’re part of their village’s quota. Wëranopéla pays for five kids to attend Tripola High and he talked his way into the quota. He’ll graduate in a few months with a high school degree. He completed three years of required study in two years by taking summer courses at the génadema.”

“Wow. How old is he?”

“Twenty-two, I think, and anxious to get a good job, earn good money, and get married.”

“Lébé and I just promised to make a quick visit to Wëranopéla on our way home, and I suppose we’ll go back to conduct a development workshop.”

“Good! I can recommend several other villages on the south shore that need a visit.”

“Then let’s talk later.”

[Nov. 4, 2006; reread and edited 5/30/13, 8/9/17, 11/12/24]

239.

Radio Plea

Second week Dhébelménu, 627/9

The rover pulled into the courtyard of the Mennea house in Pértatranisé. Liz, Chris, May, and Amos got out. As they walked toward the door to the sitting room on the east side of the courtyard, Kekanu came out of his apartment on its west side, followed moments later by Fithu, who came out of the custodian's apartment.

“Hail, Lord! I’m surprised you didn’t get here this morning.”

“We couldn’t get through Ora,” replied Chris. “There was a roadblock across the northern side of the bridge over the Delongisé. We waited two hours, then went the other way.”

“You mean, *all the way around the sea?*”

“Indeed; 470 kilometers. It took almost eight hours. That’s why it’s almost sunset.” He pointed at the sky; it was a gesture of exasperation, disgust.

“Oh, I’m sorry. The bus came through about 1 p.m. when I was leaving the marketplace.”

“Well, we waited with the bus for two hours and there was no evidence the bus would ever get through.”

“I told you we should have waited longer,” said Liz.

Chris rolled his eyes. His butt hurt from all the sitting and he was mad about the wasted day.

“I would have thought you’d have gone to Melwika,” said Kekanu.

Chris shook his head. “No, we’re spending the next week here to set up some business partnerships. We never came within a hundred kilometers of Melwika; we drove straight from Endaidha to Ornakwés, then north to Bellédha.”

“How was your convention?”

“It was very good.” That caused Chris to smile and nod. “We announced a major reorganization; we’re appointing coordinating committees for each province and planning province-wide meetings over the summer to set goals. That was well received.”

“You Bahá’is love to plan! No wonder you are growing.”

“And of course the election of the Assembly went off without any problems. It was a spiritually fragrant and uplifting experience. Really beautiful.”

They walked into the sitting room and relaxed in its air conditioned comfort. “I listened to every one of your eclipse shows,” said Amos to Kekanu. “They were brilliant, my friend; really brilliant.”

Thank you. It got better every time, I think. I kept thinking of new ways of developing the idea of a world table and everyone eating at the same time.”

I liked your little live conversation—we would say *interview* in English—with the head of the local bank branch.”

“People don’t understand what a bank is or why it is important. A little conversation over bread and tea; and we really did have bread and tea!”

“I love your title, ‘The World Table,’” said Liz.

“Thank you. Amosu, I have a question. Tomorrow I’d like to call a friend in Isurdhuna, a singer, and talk to him over the air. Can I do that?”

“Sure. I can wire a telephone into the radio very easily. We can try it out tonight.”

“Thank you, that would open up many possibilities.”

Chalésté entered with iced tea and asked whether they wanted supper. They did, so she got to work heating something up while they recovered from their long trip. After his second glass of iced tea, Chris said, “I hope Stauréstu and Aréjé made it to Ora safely.” He picked up the phone. “Isuré, could you connect me to Ora Hospital, please.”

“Yes, Lord.” There was a long pause as she connected him to the Ora operator and passed on the request.

“Ora Hospital.”

“Yes, this is Lord Kristoféru. Is Dr. Stauréstu there? Can I speak to him?”

“He’s in an operation right now, Lord, so I am sure he can’t speak. Shall I take a message?”

“No, I just wanted to be sure he made it safely. He was in his car and I was in mine on the south side of the bridge for two hours this morning; we couldn’t get across the river.”

“I heard about that. About noon time the army garrison broke up the barricade, then the police came and ended the fighting by threatening to fight the soldiers. They didn’t fight, but the men on the barricades who had been arrested all escaped. Six of them were brought here with severe sword wounds.”

“And he’s still working on them?”

“No, I think they’re resting in their rooms, but a half hour ago five more wounded were brought in. There are fights in several places around the city.”

“How many have been killed and wounded now? Any idea?”

She thought about that. “I heard a nurse say that we’ve treated 150 wounded over the last month; some have been admitted twice. The morgue downstairs has at least one body every day.”

“That’s what I thought. Our fire department has been there every night for the last month.”

“Thank Esto for that, Lord. We’ve had one from Mëddwoglubas and one from Néfa every night as well, and our two, and sometimes one from Tripola. We’re getting close to our limit here, but we’re very grateful, Lord.”

“Well, thank you. May Esto bless and protect you. Goodbye.”

“Thank you, Lord. Goodbye.”

Chris hung up and shook his head. “A hundred fifty wounded and about thirty-six dead over the last month in Ora.”

“But they’re safe?” asked Liz.

Chris nodded.

“Was that Chvité?” asked Këkanu.

“I don’t know,” replied Chris. “A nice young woman; well spoken.”

Këkanu nodded. “That’s Chvité; ‘Kwité’ in eastern shore dialect, if you prefer. I’ve called her a few times to find out what’s going on. She has to walk all the way across town to get to work, and at the hospital she hears what’s happening everywhere.”

“If I were her, I wouldn’t walk all the way across Ora right now!” said Liz.

“I think she’s been living at the hospital, lately,” he replied. “A lot of the staff are.”

The next morning Chris rose early and walked around the village, counting houses, sticking his head into shops on First and Second Street, wandering around the marketplace. Then he headed to two appointments in the marketplace with men who wanted to establish business partnerships with him. He laid out his conditions and explained them carefully; he wanted proper accounting procedures and some employee benefits, and the tomi was to oversee them. One man was interested; one was not.

He was walking home when Brébesu arrived from Ora in the village's new police car. He parked it at the village hall, which was also the police station. Chris changed his route to walk over. "What's the situation?" he asked.

Brébesu shook his head in disgust. "Néfa and Tripola have both of their fire engines in Ora; every city on the western shore is unprotected right now! Last night a gang broke into the charcoal and wood storage area at the steel plant and started a fire. All the wood and charcoal is burning. The entire foundry and steel working plant is shut down."

"Is it in danger?"

"I don't think so, but without charcoal, they can't make steel or heat it up to work it!"

Chris shook his head. "The situation is escalating very seriously. They're trying to force Yimu to take sides."

"He already has; he's supporting Mitrulubu! That's one reason he's holding out. This is to punish Yimu."

"I see. What do we do, Brébesu? We can't be paying for our fire and police men to be in Ora all the time."

“I know. The fire fighters haven’t had a quiet night for an entire month, now; they’re exhausted. My men are worn out, too. I’m glad we now have a car so we can protect the firemen, but we’d rather be here protecting our people.”

“This is becoming an impossible situation for the population of Ora, too.” Chris sighed. “I’ll talk to Perku.” He nodded goodbye and headed home.

When he got home, Amos and Kekanu were in the sitting room reviewing some new ways to use the phonographs in radio programs. Chris watched for a moment, then picked up the telephone to call Perku. He reviewed everything Brébésu had told and expressed his frustration.

“Lord, there’s nothing I can do,” said Perku. “It’s affecting us as well. Our fire engines are down there every night. We had a fire three days ago during the day that would have become very serious very fast if it had occurred at night. We have a small number of people living here temporarily from Ora; merchants in particular. We were scheduled to start concreting Route 2 south of the city, but we can’t be sending lime trucks through the city every day, so we plan to concentrate on Route 2 north of the city instead.”

“Now the steel plant will be shut down for days or weeks. No new steel products.”

“That’s a problem, but I can’t act without explicit orders from the Queen. Ora has a substantial garrison. If Her Majesty wants it to do something, all she has to do is order Molanu to do it.”

“I know, I know. Do you think I should call the palace?”

“I . . . don’t know, Lord. I really don’t. Maybe that will make them angry with you for suggesting they don’t know what they’re doing. I suppose there’s a very small chance they’ll act, but I think it’s unlikely.”

“I fear it’s unlikely that a complaint by me will produce anything, too.” Chris considered the situation. “I’ll let you know if I come up with anything.”

“Okay, Lord Chris. I, too, hope they act soon. The city is suffering unnecessarily.”

“Exactly. Thirty-six dead and 150 injured during the last month, General. Probably one or two hundred buildings have burned.”

“I know. I understand.”

“Thank you, General. Goodbye.” Chris hung up slowly and sadly.

“He can’t do anything,” said Kekanu.

“No.”

Kekanu shook his head. Chris headed to his office to see what new messages had come in. Kekanu headed for the studio they had made in one of the house’s many rooms to set up for the “World Table” show. He had some new ideas about using songs as background music while he spoke. He put a very dignified instrumental piece on the phonograph and started the music over the air.

“The sky is growing dark, all around the world, and we are all indoors to spend some time together,” Kekanu began, using the line that he now repeated at the beginning of every broadcast. “We assemble together around our own little piece of the world table with our bread or rice to eat an eclipse meal together while Kekanu tells us stories and sings us music. As light wanes and is replaced by the mystery of darkness, we ponder the world around us.”

*Skando covers Sulo, just as the dragon Werétra threatened the great Mitro,
The glorious disk becomes a dark circle, it eclipses the majesty of the sun;
But the sun reappears, Rostu slays the dragon, Mitro is saved,
And so light conquers darkness, Werétrakester the Dragonslayer gains a great
victory,
Good defeats evil as assuredly as the sun reappears*

He paused to let the inspiration of the hymn sink in, and it suddenly inspired him to change his entire program. “Today we will ponder the difficulties of our friends and relatives in Ora, where there has been much suffering and death in the last month. I was born and raised in Ora, the greatest city in the world, the center of much culture, learning, and sophistication. In the last few years it has also been the most beautiful city in the world, with an elegant, modern bridge, all new buildings, wide streets, and a lot of flowers everywhere. I love my home city and grieve for all my friends and fellow humans there who have suffered so much loss. The Great Prophet teaches us that we are all one.” He started the other phonograph, which had a recording of the Hymn of the Lamp, where the human heart is likened to a lamp and its yearning for God is described. It was a long hymn and Kekanu had chanted the last line repeatedly: “love my servants as you would love me, and serve all to the extinction of your life.” Meanwhile, Fithu, who was helping Chalésté set up the sitting and dining room for lunch, heard the radio and ran to Amos, then Chris, exclaiming “He’s going to talk about Ora!”

“What!” exclaimed Chris, and he ran down to the radio, Fithu explaining exactly what had already been said. Meanwhile, Kekanu had used the recording to pick up the telephone and call Chvité. He chatted with her about the music in the background and

how great phonographs were without telling her she was about to be on the air; that was an ethical detail that hadn't yet occurred to him. As the music faded, he hit a button to reconnect his microphone and the telephone to the radio. "My dear friend Chvité," he said slowly and dramatically, to make the words into an introduction. "As the telephone receptionist at Ora Hospital, sitting at the main entrance, you must see all the wounded people coming in, right?"

She was puzzled by the question. "Oh, you know it, Kekanu. Last night was really bad, too. We had six come in with sword and stab wounds; two died. The others are on the mend, but we are doubling up in the hospital rooms until we can ship some of them to Mæddwoglubas hospital. We had one fireman come in with minor cuts and burns, but he collapsed from exhaustion. We bandaged him and had to send him home."

"All the rooms are full? How many beds does the hospital have?"

"Thirty, and every night we've had to put two patients in the same bed briefly until we discharged a few or moved some to other hospitals."

"Chvité, how many have died in the city?"

She paused and lowered her voice, as if giving away a secret. "The morgue in the basement of the hospital has had almost forty bodies in it, in the last month. We were treating four to six wounded per day, but in the last two days it has been closer to ten to twelve. We've had to call in doctors and nurses from all over the western shore, as far south as Tripola, actually. People are exhausted."

"How is your house? Your neighborhood?"

“I hear the house is fine, but there are houses in the neighborhood that have been burned down. I haven’t been home for four days now because the work here is just too much and it’s too dangerous to walk.”

“Are there any patients who really stick in your mind?”

“Stick in my mind? Well, four days ago there was a little boy, maybe five years old, brought here in the middle of the night. The firemen had pulled him from a burning house. He was screaming because half of him had been burned. He died two days later; there’s not much the doctors can do, other than give him morphine so he doesn’t suffer.”

“Have a lot of women and children been hurt?”

“Maybe a third of the injured. No, not so many lately; many women and children have left for nearby villages.”

“So half of Ora has left town?”

“Maybe half. A lot of people have had to leave.”

“What about the marketplace? What’s happening there?”

“Not much, it’s only open six hours a day. Trucks can’t easily bring in produce and other goods because of roadblocks.”

“And I understand the charcoal and wood at the foundry are burning.”

“Yes, there’s a huge black cloud over the city and the foundry’s shut down, for safety purposes. But if there’s nothing to burn, there won’t be any steel or any work.”

“Chvité, could you have ever imagined that something like this could happen in Ora?”

“Oh, Kekanu, it’s just unbelievable. I don’t know why someone doesn’t—”

“Let’s not worry about who should do what, Chvité. What’s the situation for the average person in Ora?”

“Këkanu, no one can *live*! You can’t leave your house safely, can’t go to work, can’t go to the marketplace, can’t go out to get water . . . you just stay in your house and pray. If you have electricity, it comes and goes.”

“For a month.”

“Thirty-seven days.”

“Okay, Chvité, thank you. I’ll say a prayer for you. Say hello to everyone at the hospital for me and tell them when I can, I’ll come down and sing for everyone, and meanwhile I am praying for them all. I’ll call you again tomorrow. Thanks. Bye.”

“Bye.”

He hung up the telephone and introduced a love song, which seemed a bit out of place.

“He’ll get executed!” exclaimed Amos, shocked.

“Maybe not; he was very careful not to ask about lords and dukes and their fight,” said Chris. “Very, very careful. He stopped Chvité when she started to get into politics. And the opening hymn was uplifting. He’s being wise.”

“Do you think the Queen’s listening?”

“I bet she is by now!”

“Should we stop him?”

“No, let’s trust his judgment. He knows the royal family.”

The phone rang. Chris was near it and picked it up himself. “Hélo?”

“Lord, this is Këkanu.”

“How did you call me?” The house had only one telephone line.

“I called the switchboard and asked her to plug the house line into itself and send the ring signal. Lord, I’d like to interview Brébesu about Ora.”

Chris thought about it a second. “Shall I call him and give permission?”

“That would be marvelous.”

“I’ll call him right now.” Chris hung up and looked at Amos. “I don’t know whether all this is wise, but thirty-seven days is too long. The newspapers have been vague and general about the violence and carnage. Kεkanu made it personal. Let’s avoid all the politics and stick to the suffering. Maybe that’s the way to go.”

Brébesu, with some preparation, was very careful to describe the sacrifice of the firemen, the suffering of the people, and the extensive damage to the city. Kεkanu left it at that; he promised more tomorrow and switched to music.

Then the phone began to ring. People in the palace at Ora, calling secretly and congratulating him. A professor calling from the génadema to describe in graphic detail a huge gang fight outside his house three days earlier. A merchant calling to reveal that he was being shaken down by gangs to support the fight. A shoemaker, complaining about the collapse of business. A policeman, calling to express his frustration that he couldn’t stop gangs at all in neighborhoods that were pro-Mitrulubu. Calls from as far away as Mεddoakwés thanking him for his honesty. The tide of calls was surprising, considering how expensive they were and how reluctant to use telephones that Eryan still were.

Few people were willing to be interviewed live over the air the next day, however. Kεkanu was able to locate a Pértatranisér fireman, resting at home after three days of

continuous duty, who was fairly articulate. And someone referred him to a refugee in Néfa, a Vésipa villager who had lived in Ora only two months and thus was largely unknown there. He was willing to come to Pértatranisér the next day to be interviewed.

During supper, Chris received a phone call from Perku. “My lord, were you behind that program during the eclipse?” he began rather abruptly, though not in an accusatory way.

Chris looked at Kekanu and the others at the table. “Lord General, I fully support Kekanu’s decision to talk about the Ora crisis. It was an excellent idea of his. He said nothing about the Mitru family, he just underlined the suffering.”

“I think Her Majesty agrees with you; now that she has calmed down, anyway. Prince Méméjékwu is on his way here. We head for Ora at dawn tomorrow. I just informed Molanu, Mitruiluku, and Mitrulubu. Your police need to be prepared to keep Route 2 absolutely clear when we come through because we’re not slowing down until we’re on the outskirts of Ora. We also want to broadcast a statement over the radio informing the public that we are coming.”

“Write it down and we’ll read it, or if you want us to record your voice, we can repeat your announcement regularly.”

“You can do that?”

“Yes, with the phonograph.”

“Can you broadcast an announcement regularly? Maybe on Channel One, between the weather information. We want the people of the city to know.”

“It may even cause tonight to be peaceful. Call us back when you have a statement and we’ll record it.”

“About half an hour. Thank you for your help, Lord Chris.”

That night, Pértatranisér’s fire engine made its usual nightly trip to Ora, but it returned three hours later, having spent most of its time slowly traveling up and down the city’s streets announcing the army’s impending arrival. The city was quiet that night; no one wanted to fight armored steam wagons filled with soldiers throwing salt bombs and armed with longbows.

A half hour before dawn, the sky already bright from high clouds, four armored steam wagons and three hundred soldiers roared through Pértatranisér heading south. The village’s police were stationed along the concrete road to keep people and animals clear. The police car had already left to warn the villages farther south. Channel two broadcast their progress live by telephoning the villages along the route to find out when the convoy passed each one. In Ora, people listened to the few available radios—one was set up with a loudspeaker outside the hospital and another one outside the génadema—and followed the news with trepidation. They were sure to welcome the army when it arrived to pacify an otherwise quiet city.

The armored steam wagons encountered no opposition. That night Chris got a call from Perku’s chief governing assistant, Brébalu, that he should present himself at the royal palace in Ora the next morning at the end of the eclipse, about 9:20 a.m. Shortly thereafter he got a call from Lord Lukesu of Jathisérvika, asking for a ride. Three calls later, Chris had a full rover of Lords to pick up on his way south.

He left early to get to Ora early. He waved hello to the Pértatrainsér policeman stationed at the southern edge of town to remind traffic to slow down in town and be

cautious on the one paved lane. The lane, at least, now had a painted line on it giving the northbound traffic only a meter of right of way, with arrows to make that clear. The three lords were ready; they drove south in nervous silence.

Central Square was filling fast with steam cars and the audience hall, to Chris's surprise, had Lord Estodhéru from Mëddwoglubas and Governor Brébéstu of the South Shore. A few minutes later, Lord Déolu of Bellédha arrived, then Lord Yusbéru of Isurdhuna. Even Lord Albanu and his son, Auskandu, were present.

A few minutes after nine General Perku entered, accompanied by Prime Minister Weranolubu, Estoiyaju, Chief Justice Wérgéndu, and other dignitaries. The crowd stirred with surprised comments to see so much of the kingdom's leadership present. Two electricians came in and set up a telephone next to the throne; apparently they planned to broadcast the gathering.

Then the call "All rise for the Crown Prince!" went forth and everyone stood for Meméjékwu. He entered, walked to the throne, and sat. "You may be seated," he said, and he waited for the rustling of clothes to cease. "Her Majesty is appalled by the events of the last month. The full extent of the suffering and destruction has come to light in the last few days. The full count of the dead is more than expected: 47. The total count of the injured will never be known, but is about 200, and some will suffer all their lives. Two hundred buildings have been burned, displacing a tenth of the city's people. Nearly half have fled the fighting. Half the city has been unable to work for much of the month. The memory of Lord Mitru has been blackened. His love for Ora and Vésa has been betrayed. The reputation of his house has been forever stained.

“The extent of this crime has been judged by Her Majesty herself and her decision is swift and final. Mituiluku, Mitrulubu, and Mitrubbaru, rise and stand in judgment before me.”

The three brothers rose. They were visibly shaking before the prince. Mitruidatu remained seated, trembling; he had not been summoned forward, but had been summoned to Ora from Melwika . “Her Majesty has decided to honor the memory of your blessed father by sparing your lives. She has even decided to preserve your aristocratic status. But you are forever banished from Vésa Province, never to return without her express permission. You are to leave within two days and take no more than 100,000 dhanay each. She grants Mitrulubu a rectangular township thirty dekent long and twenty wide north of Swadlendha, using the seashore and that township’s northern border as the starting point to measure the area. Mitruiluku receives land of the same size north and west of Mitrulubu, along the seacoast. Mitrubbaru receives a third quadrangle east and inland of Mitruiluku. The three of you are exiled to these townships, never to leave except for visits to Swadlendha, for at least one year. The Geological Survey is hereby ordered to provide the three of you with maps of your townships and advice about roads and farms. The three of you may be seated.”

Məməjékwu paused to let the shocked and angry brothers return to their seats. “The title of Duke of Vésa is hereby transferred to Aryu, second son of Yimu. He remained largely aloof throughout the conflict. Molanu, third son of Yimu and head of Her Majesty’s garrison in Ora is hereby transferred to Kostakhéma as new commander of that outpost. His abetting the violence in the streets and transmitting reports minimizing the extent of the carnage and damage particularly offended Her Majesty. Honored Yimu

and his oldest son, Mëméju, have suffered severe damage to their property and that is judged as sufficient punishment for them.

“Mitruidatu, please rise.” The Prince paused as the bespectacled youngest son of the late Lord Mitru stood. He swayed in fear. “You chose to absent yourself from the palace and the city when the violence began, and we understand that you counseled patience and reconciliation. For these reasons, we award you the title of Lord of Ora and mayor of the city. By you, your father’s memory is honored. Your father’s palace and other properties in the city are now yours. You may be seated, Lord.”

Mitruidatu sat with an audible clunk as his weight shifted the chair on the floor. Mëméjékwu looked over the crowd. “Vésa province and the city of Ora have been dealt severe blows. Disorder is not quickly and easily replaced by order. People will remember who burned their house or stabbed their brother. The army and the police failed the city. The head of the Ora Police, Pritolubu, is also exiled to Mitrulubu’s township. General Perku is hereby transferred to Vésa as governor of the province, with a special mandate to oversee the finances of the city and be sure that no more than 100,000 dhanay is transferred to each of the three brothers, unless the crown gives special permission. The lifeblood of this province and city—its taxes—will remain here.

“General Perku’s responsibilities in Rudhisér province are hereby transferred to his chief administrative assistant, Brébalu, who is now elevated to the rank of Governor. The responsibilities of Mayor of Néfa are transferred to Awwskandu, son of Duke Albanu.

“The lawlessness in Ora necessitates that Chief Justice Wérgéndu, who has just arrived in Néfa to adjudicate a series of land disputes, come to Ora immediately to prosecute a large number of criminals for murder, assault, and arson. Her Majesty has

requested that the Chief Justice show no mercy to those who have committed provable crimes and who refuse to confess to them. Mercy, however, may be granted to those who come forward immediately—in the next week—and confess to all the crimes they have committed. Similarly, in Néfa there are currently eighty-six disputes over land brought to the court by seven individuals. Chief Justice Wérgédu is authorized to fine anyone 5,000 dhanay per offense for every case brought to him that appears to be spurious. Any such cases must be dropped in the next week if the fine is to be avoided. If necessary, every judge in the kingdom will be brought to the western shore to prosecute criminals and settle land disputes.

“In conclusion, Her Majesty expects order, adherence to the law, and the freedom of the people to support their families. The Western Shore is the kingdom’s mouth, navel, and heart. It must be governed wisely and effectively. The development conferences held over the winter must continue their work and one will be held in Vésa. The Development Corps must expand its efforts here. Route 2’s concreting must receive a higher priority than ever before. This area must and will develop. The crown will ensure that these things happen.”

[Nov. 5, 2006; reread and edited 5/30/13, 8/9/17, 11/12/24]

240.

Uncharted Territory

2d & 4th weeks Dhébelméné, year 9/627

“Wasn’t that something?” said Chris over a late lunch.

“We heard the whole thing,” said Liz. “It was faint; the Prince was not close enough to the telephone.”

“I turned up the sound as loudly as I could,” said Amos. “I hope it was audible on the eastern shore.”

“You should have seen the faces of the three brothers,” said Chris. “I think Mitruiluku would have preferred death. The thought of moving to a stretch of scorpion and snake infested prairie shocked him profoundly. But it served them right, for letting gangs destroy the city as proxies for their power struggle.”

“Now you’ll have to deal with them asking your help to settle their townships,” said Amos.

“And I’ll give it! I’d like to see the townships settled. That area now gets really good winter rain and has a lot of potential. Frankly, I coveted the area myself and would have loved to have gotten a township grant there.”

“As if you don’t have enough townships already!” grumbled Liz.

“It wouldn’t have been practical, I agree. And my help won’t come cheap, either; I’ll want a big land grant. It won’t be easy to settle that area because there isn’t a lot of spare population. Véspans will be uninterested. They’ll have to be generous.”

“Good,” said Liz.

“I am immensely relieved that the violence and vandalism are over,” said Kekanu. “It’ll take months for Ora to recover. Meanwhile, this place keeps getting bigger and bigger. Tomorrow I plan to interview three new arrivals.”

“Immigration has picked up in the last week,” agreed Amos. “Houses are going up all over the place and irrigation ditches are being dug in three places at once. We’ll start on the dam next week.”

“Good; we need to use the labor,” said Chris. “Kekanu, you have a natural gift as a radio program host. The *World Table* played a role in the decision to end the chaos in Ora, and your wisdom was the key to that accomplishment.”

“Thank you, Lord Chris. I can’t tell you how exciting it has been for me. My favorite activity every year is the Hymn Festival at Isurdhuna, and it is partly because I play the role of host, and of course I am a lead singer. The *World Table* is sort of like a small Isurdhuna festival every day!”

“Well, you still need to go to Isurdhuna and a few other places, but how would you like to host the *World Table* every day?” asked Chris. “I’ll pay you five thousand dhanay per year.”

Kekanu was startled. Liz’s mouth dropped; that was more than one paid most professionals, except a few high-end physicians like Stauréstu. “Five thousand! I’ll have to think about that very seriously.”

“Think about it. Commercial radio has to be developed on this world. People need a reason to spend fifty dhanay for a radio, and your show, Kekanu, is a reason. Commercial radio has a huge potential to inform and educate the public, and as we just saw, it can positively influence events in the kingdom. It has to be developed by someone

I trust and by someone the crown trusts. You're the one. I'll sink money into building a studio, getting a stronger transmitter, and fixing some of the other problems we've already identified."

"I agree, Chris," said Amos. "This is the way to go forward."

"Let's talk tomorrow afternoon, then," said Kekanu. He looked at his wife. "I have to talk to Dárásé, too."

Chris, Amos, May, Kekanu, and Dárásé devoted most of the afternoon, after the noon concert, to a discussion of the radio station. They emerged from Chris's office pleased with the results and surprised to see Dr. Stauréstu and Dr. Aréjé in the sitting room drinking iced tea with Liz and May.

"What a pleasant surprise!" said Chris. "What brings you here?"

"We had to get away from the city," replied Stauréstu. "The emergency room absolutely exhausted us, over the last month. Now that the violence is over, half the hospital staff is taking time off to recover. I usually would spend tomorrow in Isurdhuna. I haven't made it for a month, but this time Aréjé decided to come along. That spa at Justha is partially finished and we've been invited to spend the night for free, so that's where we're going."

"How is my city?" asked Kekanu.

"It'll be months before things return to normal. There are a lot of burned buildings. Today the three brothers left and they were jeered by a crowd when they departed! So the city's still tense."

“How’s this place?” asked Aréjé. “When we drove in we saw a crowd at the village hall, and we had to avoid two trucks pulling huge logs.”

“The crowd was of new arrivals,” said Amos. “I stopped by about mid morning and about fifty people had arrived and were requesting land for a house and farm. It’s the largest single-day number yet. We’ll probably receive three or four hundred people in the next month; Albanu’s kicking them off their ancestral leaseholds. As for the logs, the grange is hauling the wood to the cement plant.”

“A lot of wood,” said Stauréstu. “Where’s it coming from? The sea?”

Amos nodded. “The grange has a partnership with Jathisérvika, the next village south of here, and with the Fish Eryan village of Owyapéla at the mouth of the Rudhisér. The Fish Eryan supply the boats, Jathisérvika and Pértatranisérv supply the lumbermen, and the grange here supplies the trucks to haul the wood.”

“How do they obtain it? Cut the trees down from the boats?”

“Exactly. Float up to the tree, strap themselves to it, and saw away.”

“Hum. You know, two weeks ago a cousin of mine visited from Snékhépéla, and he said they now have permission from the army to blast the glacier. The army sends men down once a week with a week’s worth of explosives, they sign for it, and use it to blow the ice free. The next week the army officer examines the books to see how much ice has been sold and sells them another week’s worth of explosives. It has cut the cost of selling ice pretty sharply.”

“That’s very interesting!” said Amos. “One of our regrets is that we have to cut the trees at the sea surface. Some of the forest is now under thirty meters of water, and if

we could get explosives down to the base of the tree, we could get all the wood that's underwater."

"The explosion will kill a lot of fish," noted Chris.

Amos shrugged. "The Fish Eryan are fishing anyway, and we won't wipe all the fish out that way."

"The bottom parts of the logs are waterlogged," added Chris.

"But the tops aren't; the trees will still float. Thanks, Stauréstu, we can use that idea!"

"Especially if we work with Lord Lukesu," said Chris. "As a retired army officer, the army will trust him fully with explosives."

"I'll have to develop a way to get the explosives down to the bottom," said Amos. "But once that problem is solved, I bet we can produce twice as much wood with the same people."

"Of course, with all these additional people, maybe what you need is more work, not less," observed Aréjé.

Chris shook his head. "No, we'll always want to increase efficiency; otherwise, salaries will drop. But we are absorbing the arrivals by employing them in public works. The grange is digging the irrigation ditches, the village is building a large storage dam upstream, and the electric company is building a smaller reservoir downstream to catch and even out the huge water releases during the eclipse."

"Who's funding all that?" asked Stauréstu. "You?"

Chris smiled. "Only partly. The grange has surplus and is borrowing from the bank. The village doesn't have a surplus, but Amos is buying five thousand agris of hill

country near the dam for a tree plantation that will produce fruit, nuts, and latex and is paying the village ten percent of the harvest per year for ten years. We gave an advance against the harvest to pay for the upper dam. The electric company's borrowing to build the lower dam, which is high enough to feed the irrigation canals as well."

Stauréstu nodded. Aréjé turned to Kekanu. "You know, your radio program has become immensely popular in all the hospitals. Any patients who are mobile ask their nurses to wheel them to the cafeteria to listen to *The World Table*. Everyone wants to gather round the radio during the eclipse! We've bought a radio for our house in Mëddwoglubas which is usually in the town's store, and during the eclipse the store is packed with people shopping and buying a bit of late morning lunch, just so they can listen."

Kekanu smiled. "Thank you. Chris, Amos, May, Dárásé, and I just met for two hours and came up with a plan to set up a commercial radio station, starting with *The World Table* and gradually adding music, news, and educational programs hosted by other people."

"A business partnership owned by both families," added Chris.

"And Dárásé and I will build a house here in Pértatranisé, where the radio station will be headquartered," added Kekanu. "We're very excited."

"Marvelous. Congratulations!" said Stauréstu. "I'm sure it will be a great success."

"If the radios can be built fast enough," said Amos. "The army's manufactory was never set up for this much demand, so I am hoping we can open another factory here."

“And if the crown has no objection,” added Chris. “We have to work on that more. This is uncharted territory for everyone.”

Three large, interconnected tents of faded gray-white cloth served as the abode of Mitruiluku and Mitrubbaru. Thornton parked the rover next to a hitching post to which three horses were tied on long ropes so they could graze or even walk to the nearby rivulet for a drink. He got out and looked around. A hundred meters to the east, the flat prairie of tall grass, intermixed with dying desert shrubbery and baby seedlings of tropical trees, was interrupted by a low line of ancient sand dunes, still scantily clad with vegetation. Near the tents, a dozen men were laying the stone foundations of a villa; a truck full of stone was parked near the house site. They hadn’t gotten far; the brothers had been there barely a week. A hundred meters to the west was the current edge of the sea, with drowned grass, shrubs, and seedlings sticking up above gentle ripples all the way to the close horizon.

Thornton reached inside the rover to pull out a fat roll of maps and headed for the entrance. A servant greeted him and asked him to wait in a long, thin, and oppressively hot section of the front tent. The sound of women and children behind the cloth divider indicated that much of the front tent housed servants. Thornton could hear loud talking in western shore and Tutane accents coming from the next tent back, but he wasn’t sure of most of the words.

After a few minutes, a flap pushed aside and two Kwolone came out quickly, feathers in their hair bobbing from their swift motion. One, Ekwedamu, fixed his eyes on the new arrival. “Honored Thornton, what are you doing here?” he said accusatorially.

“Greetings, honored Ekwadamu. The Queen ordered the Survey to bring the lords some maps.”

He glanced at them. “I see. Well, don’t stay long; this is Kwolone territory. We’d hate to scalp you.” Then he turned and left. The servant next to Thornton nearly fainted with fear. Speechless, he waved for Thornton to go inside.

Thornton walked back and entered the central tent. Several side sections were rolled up to let in a slight breeze, so it wasn’t quite so hot. Mitruiluku and Mitrubbaru sat at a long table that had some papers piled at one end. They rose for him. “Honored Thornton! It’s good to see you,” said Mitruiluku. “You are practically our first guest in this Esto-forsaken, scorpion ridden land!”

“Other than the Kwolone, anyway,” said Thornton. He extended his hands and shook with both men.

“The savages! When Her Majesty gave this land to us, she neglected to mention that the Kwolone thought it was theirs!”

“I didn’t think their claim extended to this area. The land they actively use has always been along the Swadakwés; that’s why Swadlendha was bought from them for ten thousand dhanay.”

“Ten thousand?” asked Mitrubbaru. “They were demanding fifty thousand from us!”

“They realize Lord Tritu is making a lot of money. So are the Médhelone by leasing land to Melwika farmers. You’d better go to Endraidha and talk to the army. Ekwadamu threatened to scalp everyone here. He’s a prominent warrior; not someone to cross.”

“*Skita!*” replied Mitruiluku, uttering one of Eryan’s rare profanities. “You know, we can go to Swadlendha, but not to Endraidha? Damn her!” Thornton raised an eyebrow, since it was directed at the Queen.

“We were trying to save Ora from Mitrulubu,” echoed Mitrubbaru. “And what do we get?”

“And *he* even got a township with a road, an electric line, and a telephone line! All we get is dirt!” shouted Mitruiluku.

“Route 3 passes through Mitrubbaru’s township as well. If you move there, you’ll be on a road with power and a telephone.”

“No, we want to be on the coast!” replied Mitruiluku.

Thornton shrugged. Mitrubbaru pointed to the maps. “Show us what you’ve got.”

“These are for you.” Thornton put the scroll down and began to unroll it across the tent’s canvas floor. The brothers grabbed cups and glasses to anchor the curling corners and poured over the detailed map. After he unrolled the scroll he pulled a second map out from under the first and slid it next to the first. The brothers moved the piles of papers off the table and used them as corner anchors as well. The two maps, two meters long and 1.5 meters wide each, took a lot of floor space.

“By Esto, how did you ever do this so fast!” said Mitruiluku, his eye roaming over the details. He shook his head in disbelief.

“We’ve been developing detailed maps for six months now, starting in Endraidha and the lower Arjakwés. We had already mapped this area. We’re now working our way up the Arjakwés. It was just a matter of copying the maps we already had into this

format. The scale is ten kilometers per meter. The left hand map is Mitruiluku's township, the right-hand is Mitrubbaru's."

"And where are we?" asked Mitruiluku.

Thornton put his finger on the map, showing a thin black line representing the coastal dirt track. Mitruiluku nodded and followed it with his eye northwestward and southeastward.

"What's this blue line?"

"We're using it as our zero elevation interval. In other words, the brown lines on this map are ten meters higher than it, twenty meters higher, etc. It's our best guess as to the old sea level, and of the probable edge of the sea when it stops rising in a year or two."

"What? You mean this tent is on the future sea bottom? And the foundation of my villa?"

Thornton nodded. "The line of sand dunes east of here—"

"Skita! *Skita! Shita!*" Mitruiluku stomped around the room, skatologically shouting out his anger in both the eastern and western shore accents. Finally he picked up a wooden chair and flung it against the side of the tent, which it bounced off of. "Damn her!"

"What about the dunes?" asked Mitrubbaru, unfazed.

"They're the old seashore. Behind them the land is flat and grassy, but it is very close to sea level and could be flooded also if the sea rises a bit higher than it was hundreds of years ago."

"Why would it do that?"

“Because when the sea was higher, the climate was wetter, so there was more rainfall and more groundwater; also more snowfall and probably more accumulated ice at the poles. It may be a century or two before the groundwater and polar ice build back up. Meanwhile, that water will end up in the sea.”

“We might as well build here and get drowned!” shouted Mitruiluku.

“I’d move inland to Route 3. This dirt track is above sea level in a lot of spots, but not all. You camped at the only spot it is crossed by running water, but if you dig a well you’ll hit water very easily.” He put his finger on the map about a kilometer farther north. “Right here the track runs along the old beach ridge, for example, which gives you a bit of elevation and a view of the surroundings.”

“Fine, we’ll move there,” said Mitruiluku, waving a hand at the map.

“How do farmers ever break the sod here?” asked Mitrubbaru.

“With good Ora-build steam engines. Swadlëndha has two of them. Mēlwika-built machines are fine once the sod is broken and turned over, but they don’t have the horsepower to break through the grass roots.”

“I’m amazed the area is so lush. We’ve been here ten days and there hasn’t been a drop of rain.”

“Usually when the western shore has its summer rainy season this area has a dry season, and vice versa. It seems to be controlled by the strength of the equatorial jet stream; if it blows rapidly westward, the western shore gets the rain. That happens in the summer. In the winter, polar air dominates; it heads equatorward down the western shore, then turns east at the equator, picks up moisture from the sea, and brings rain to this area and the rest of the eastern shore. Gwiwēru just figured that out a few months ago. But

even during the summer dry season, this area tends to get a thunder storm two or three times a month. In the last three years there's been enough rainfall for crops year round, and this area never gets frost. Wheat and corn grow well here."

"But Véspe is a rice area!" said Mitruiluku.

"Well, if you can get enough water, you can try rice," suggested Thornton.

"What do you suggest we do?" asked Mitrubbaru.

Thornton pointed to the map. "I suppose that depends on whether you plan to set up two separate townships or not. If you build north of here on the old beach ridge, the land to the east of it is slightly rolling prairie; rich, well-watered land with soil that drains well. I'd clear a dirt road due east from that spot all the way to Route 3, a distance of seventeen kilometers." He ran his finger across the map and onto the next one. "With earth-moving equipment, a dozen men can make a decent dirt road in a month or so. Mitrubbaru's town site would be at the intersection. It wouldn't be too difficult. That would open a lot of land to farming. Alternately, you can open land to farming along the coastal dirt road and along Route 3, because they're already usable. To go from one township to the other, drive to Mitruiluku's where the roads come together."

Mitruiluku shook his head. "We're not going to have anything to do with him."

"Suit yourself," replied Thornton. "These townships have a few gullies and a few low hills where rock is exposed, but basically they're flat to slightly rolling grassland with excellent, fertile soils and a year-round growing season. Potentially, each can feed at least three thousand families. You need townsites with roads, sewers, and water, but those are easy enough to lay out. Then you need a main gravel road with power and telephone lines. With a power line you'd be able to pump all the well water you'll ever need."

“How do granges divide up the land?” asked Mitrubbaru.

“In Swadlendha they divide the land with dirt roads every kilometer. Each farmer gets a strip 500 meters long. The width varies; if he wants sixteen agris, he gets a strip 120 meters wide. In Pértatraisér they give out blocks instead and farmers reach gravel roads via narrow dirt lanes.”

“But the real question is, how do we get people here?” asked Mitruiluku. “Hiring the house builders was incredibly difficult and I have to pay them five dhanay per day. *Five!* That’s almost double the salary in Ora. I had to raise the salaries of my servants when they found out. The Swadlendha Grange doesn’t always send the same men, either!” He started to stomp around the room again. “Meanwhile, my wives refuse to live here. Mitrubbaru’s wife, too. When they come they don’t bring the kids, so I never see them. And now we might get scalped, and if that doesn’t happen we’ll get flooded. *Skita!*” He threw another chair. It bounced off the wall, hit the first chair, and a leg broke off.

“Control yourself,” said Mitrubbaru to his older brother, though not loudly. “Pretty soon we won’t have any servants or any chairs.” He walked over and picked up the chairs, tried to put the leg back on, then gave up.

“Maybe Swadlendha Grange can help you set up a grange here,” said Thornton.

“A grange!” Mitruiluku spat the word.

“When he asked the workers about one, they laughed at him,” said Mitrubbaru.

“Well, you won’t get people here without one, unless you want to invest in industry and hire workers.”

“I want to buy some tractors and hire farm workers,” replied Mitruiluku. “That’s Albanu’s approach.”

“And according to the harvest forecast, he’s getting six bushels per agri, whereas the farmers around him are getting eight and Pértatranisér’s getting ten. If it weren’t for Pértatranisér, Rudhisér province would have a food shortage.”

“So what?” sneered Mitruiluku. “Albanu is *making a lot of money*. This world has plenty of farm land.”

“Well, anyway, here are your maps. As I said, you can farm practically anywhere; except the sand ridges that mark the old coastline, that is. I don’t think I can be of further assistance to you.” Thornton bowed slightly.

“No, don’t leave yet!” said Mitrubbaru. “We have no idea what to do with these maps.”

“You can’t use them without a plan; maps aren’t a plan. I’d start by convincing the army to move this dirt track out of the future seabed, gravel it, install bridges over creeks and over the Arjakwés north of here—that would make this road a direct connection from Endraidha to Belledha—and install utility poles. Then call the electric and telephone companies or send someone to negotiate with them to get them to install their lines. Send someone to Melwika to buy steam tractors, or rent time from Swadlendha Grange. A typical grange keeps a ten percent surplus of equipment over needs at harvest time. Because the need for tractors fluctuates a lot, granges rent or lease equipment during slack times. Swadlendha’s equipment is mostly down on the South Shore right now, helping with the planting, but in another week that will end and they’ll be back. Hire men to dig some wells. Send someone to the South Shore to talk to several

villages; their men could come here to plant and harvest if you time it right. Most of the lower Arjakwés is planted and harvested by farmers from the North Shore.” He shrugged.

“Does that help? A cup of coffee with Lord Tritu and he’d tell you all of that.”

“We tried that,” said Mitruiluku.

“Thanks, Thornton,” said Mitrubbaru.

Chris parked the rover in its garage in the basement of the tomi building and walked across to his Məlwika house. He wanted to head right upstairs and take off the red-edged robe that was the standard garb of members of the House of Lords—it was uncomfortable—but he heard laughter in the dining room, so he went there first.

Thornton was regaling Liz, Lua, Lébé, and Behruz.

“Oh, you’ve got to tell Chris,” said Liz, chuckling.

“At least they haven’t been bitten by scorpions yet,” said Lua.

“Yeah, but I bet when it rains, they’ll find that the old tents that the army gave them leak!”

“They’ll get flooded anyway,” said Behruz.

“It’s Mitruiluku and Mitrubbaru,” explained Thornton. “They’re in uncharted territory, in spite of the maps I gave them. They’re roasting in the heat, they’ve started building a villa on a site that’s below the future sea level, and they haven’t got a clue what to do next. I gave them ideas, but I don’t feel inclined to give them any more advice.”

“They need to learn the hard way. How about Mitrulubu?”

“He’s doing better. He’s camped where Route 3 crosses the little creek, half way between Swadlendha and Ornakwés. I put the name ‘Gramakwés’ on the map and he was pleased to see the creek had a name. He has a telephone and electric lights in his tent and has personally mapped out house sites for his town center. We had a long talk about the lay of the land. He has accepted it’s his land and has started planning accordingly. Mitruiluku and Mitrubbaru are still in denial and are cursing the Queen.”

“I’m not surprised, though Mitrubbaru strikes me as reasonably practical.”

“He needs to move to his own township and let Mitruiluku flounder, then pull himself together.”

“So, tell us about the first day of meetings,” Liz asked.

“Well, there’s not much to say; it was routine, mostly speeches, though Werétrakester gave a marvelous talk. The Houses of Lords and Commons met together all morning and separately in the afternoon. Weranolubu is speaker of the House of Commons, Kandékwes of Lords. Weranu announced that the budgetary amount we can allocate has been raised to 300,000 dhanay, partly because it has been a very good year in terms of tax revenue.

“The bodies have a very different tone than last year. Governors, not Dukes, got to appoint the members of the Commons, and they appointed people who want development and progress; in fact, a lot were appointed based on the development conferences. Duke Yusdu of Kërda is pro-development; Duke Albanu was not allowed to serve, so he appointed his son and Auskandu is pro-development; Duke Aryu of Vésipa and Lord Mitruidatu of Ora are pro-development; Duke Déolu is pro-development; Duke Gugéndu is more or less pro-development . . . so I think we will see laws passed this year that were

not even attempted in the past, such as tax reform to prevent double taxation, and a new incorporation law.”

“That is good news,” said Behruz.

Chris shrugged. “But I have one piece of bad news. The reason I’m late is because Kandékwes wanted to talk to me, and it turned out that Estoiyaju was there as well. Her Majesty wants the Development Corps to have its own incorporation and not be under the génadema any more.”

“Oh?” said Liz. “Maybe that’s a sign of our success.”

“Yes, I think so. They want it to be a neutral, independent thing. They have not asked for any changes on the Board of Trustees. Maybe it’s time the Central Spiritual Assembly starts its own small development program to supplement the Development Corps, and it can teach the Faith a bit more.”

Reread and edited 5/30/13, 8/9/17, 11/12/24

Wëranopéla

Mid Blorménu, yr 9/627

Lord Ekwiséru's mansion—well, it was a large house—was in a rebuilt part of Tripola near the palace. Thornton drove up to a mansion—one of four in a row on the street—and looked at his instructions again. “This should be it.”

“This area burned. I guess he built a brand new place,” said Lébé.

“At what cost to the good people of Wëranopéla,” replied Thornton. He put the steam car in neutral, set the hand brake, and closed off the oxygen supply to the firebox. They got out and walked up to the fine building of local brownstone, with large glass windows—an innovation of the last eight years—and knocked on the door. The butler admitted them to a pleasant sitting room nearby. “Not too different from Stauréstu's house,” he commented. She nodded and he began to calculate. Wëranopéla was a village of five hundred people; that was about 90 households. At one hundred dhanay of tax per household, that was nine thousand dhanay. If the Lord kept half of that for himself, that was 4,500 dhanay. Not a huge amount if one had a fancy house and servants.

There was a rustling of robes and Lord Ekwiséru entered the room. He was in his late forties, with graying orange hair. He had half his teeth, which was pretty good for a man of his age. Thornton and Lébé had seated themselves on pillows but rose.

“Welcome to my home.” He extended both hands to Thornton and one to Lébé.

“Thank you for writing and asking to speak to me before visiting Wëranopéla. Please, sit.” He gestured; they sat and he sat next to them. “I have mixed feelings about your

offer to visit. I welcome anything that makes my people more prosperous, including myself. But I am not pleased by the spread of the Bahá'í *Ségi*. These new Bahá'ís are speaking against me, I understand. They are making the entire village grumble.”

“Lord, I apologize deeply, then,” said Thornton. “Bahá'ís must obey the government, and you are the government of Wëranopéla. They are forbidden by their religion from stirring up mischief and making trouble.”

“Well, they are making trouble!”

“We will speak to them,” assured Lébé.

“We definitely will. What sort of mischief?”

“Everyone is polite to me when I visit weekly, but the head man says Aryéstu urges that the village elect a council or accept your Bahá'í council as its lord instead, and that all taxes go to it, not to me. If true, this is sedition. I could have him expelled.”

“If it is true, you indeed could,” agreed Thornton.

Ekwiséru wagged his finger. “It’s the influence of Kameru. But then Kameru was influenced by Bahá'í as well—”

“No, Lord, he was influenced by Marx,” interrupted Thornton.

“Marx, Bahá'u'lláh; we don't know the difference. Gëdhému's too complicated to understand. Brébëstu has assured me the Bahá'ís do not teach such things, so I suppose they don't. But you do teach about elected councils. I will ban your ‘spiritual assembly’ if this continues.”

“We understand,” agreed Thornton. “You would be within your rights to do so, Lord. If Aryéstu is doing this, we will warn him, and if he continues, I think our Central

Spiritual Assembly will sanction him. I am not on the Central Spiritual Assembly, but that is the usual procedure.”

“Then we understand each other. Am I not a reasonable man? I am not out to rob my people. I pay for five boys to go to high school here in town. When someone is ill, I pay their hospital bill. I pay for the mobile clinic to visit once a month. When a widow needs food, I make sure she gets it. We have a schoolhouse and I pay for the teacher. I helped my headman set up a store so people have better access to goods. There’s even a telephone to report troubles. Have I not been generous?”

“You have been, Lord,” agreed Thornton. “I, for one, am grateful. I have seen villages with much less. Our visit to Wëranopéla has two purposes. First, to meet with the Bahá’ís, deepen their understanding of their new religion, and clear up misunderstandings. And I think we now have identified an important misunderstanding. Second, to help them and their neighbors think of ways to make the village more prosperous. If we did that first, people might be attracted to the Bahá’í Faith because of material advantages, and that would be the wrong motive, so we meet with the Bahá’ís first.”

“That is a wise decision.” Ekwiséru nodded and seemed impressed. “Look, I have no objection to the ways my people pray to Esto. Wëranopéla has no priests. I perform sacrifices to the temple here twice a year to guarantee the success of our harvest; that is part of my obligation to my people. And obviously, I have no objection to my village becoming prosperous. I need more prosperity as well. My objection is to stirring up trouble in the village. I won’t tolerate that. It disturbs the peace. Go help the Bahá’ís pray, help my people become more prosperous, and make the place peaceful. You have my

blessings for that. But if the trouble continues, I will act, even if it makes me less prosperous.” He shrugged.

“I understand and I agree to your conditions, if you want to call them that,” said Thornton. “The Development Corps is willing to invest money into Wèranopéla, but usually we do so in a fund-matching arrangement, dhanay for dhanay.”

“What sort of investments?”

“I’ll give some examples. Four greenhouses were built in Khermdhuna; these are a wooden frame covered with a substance like canvas, but transparent like glass, so you can grow plants underneath when it is cold outside. The people built the frames and paid half the cost of the covering. We’ve helped granges give loans to families to buy their own sewing machines, oxen, wagons, plows, and other essentials. We’ve provided a one third subsidy to villages to buy tractors and helped train local people to use them properly. We’ve helped two villages with dairy and cheese making operations; we provided a one quarter loan and a one quarter subsidy, the lord and a few villagers put up one half, and other villagers provided labor. We’ve helped a village on the north shore and one in Kërda purchase and learn how to use a sawmill.”

“I see. I get the idea. Those are excellent and worthy efforts. I might be able to help, but I doubt I could provide more than five hundred dhanay. The village isn’t very large, the tax revenue is not great, and the surplus is quite small.”

“I understand,” said Thornton, disappointed. “Five hundred dhanay is a good start.”

“This year’s harvest looks to be average. That’s good, but most crops are selling for one half to two thirds the usual price. Wheat’s only five and a half dhanay per bushel.

That's not much of a problem for my people; they eat the food they grow. But here it means I have less cash for buying the things I need. But even so, I'll promise this: if tax revenue goes up in Weranopéla, half the increase will go to the school, health, development, and such things. That's generous, isn't it?"

"Yes, and I'm grateful for it." Thornton rose. "We will convey your greetings and best wishes to your village."

"Thank you. Are you on your way right now?"

"We have some business first. We much appreciate your permission to visit Weranopéla, Lord."

"Then may Esto protect you." Ekwiséru extended his hands and they shook, then they headed for the door.

Thornton and Lébé got into the steam car. He opened the air vent wide, glanced at the steam pressure gauge and pumped air into the firebox with his foot to raise it, released the brake, put the car into gear and began to send steam to the cylinders. They slowly moved forward. He rolled up the street and turned left, south.

"The best route to Weranopéla is to the right," Lébé said.

"I know. I don't completely trust him. I suppose there's no danger, but you never know."

"I was wondering why you were vague about when we were arriving in Weranopéla." She sighed. "He was nice, concerned—up to a certain limit—about his people, and content to live here off the fruits of their labor."

"Old houses," growled Thornton. "I hope he plans to send his sons to génadema so they can become doctors or lawyers, rather than living off of Weranopéla."

He circled around the outer edge of Tripola, then back south to Route 2, and then east along it to Weranopéla, just thirty kilometers away. In the old days it would have been a one-day ride on a horse or wagon; now it was a bit more than half an hour. On the way, Lébé called Melwika and asked Liz to come down; she agreed to visit that evening.

The gravel road paralleled the Dhébakwés and rolled through fields, the village of Kentudha, more fields, a stretch of forest, more fields, the village of Wrétradentes and the “Dragon’s Teeth” rock formations that inspired its name, fields, a stretch of forest, the village of Péskmara, “Fish Marsh,” with its fields, a forested interval being cleared for timber, the village of Mitrudoma and its extensive pasture for dairy cows, some scattered woods, Pitemarja, “Pine Edge,” with its fields and thick stands of fir, then finally Weranopéla. It was the last village on the Dhébakwés, small and perhaps a century old. Farther east, the river tumbled through narrow valleys and gorges around fir-covered hills. Just east of the village, Route 2 veered northward and left the fertile river valley, heading for Endraidha one hundred kilometers and two climate zones away.

“Weranopéla,” “Werano’s hill” itself was a defensible, low, rocky rise surrounded by the Dhébakwés on the east, south, and west; whether there had once been a temple to the old god Werano or whether the hill had once been owned by someone named Weranu was forgotten. The village itself was a circle of houses of wattle and thatch on the hill and a semicircle of more houses on the northern skirt of the hill, connected by narrow, crooked, and muddy lanes. Route 2 ran just north of the village and separated it from its fields of rye, barley, beets, cabbages, and other vegetables. Next to Route 2 was the headman’s house, the store, and the one-room schoolhouse. The Bahá’is had started on a

Bahá'í Center on the short stretch of lane connecting Route 2 to the hill, and as they approached it Thornton realized the Bahá'í Center was nine-sided.

They parked, got out, and walked in. The interior was a nine-sided room about twenty-five meters across with a heavy timber at the very center supporting a thatched roof. The floor was still dirt; each side had a doorway and a window, but they were not yet closed by anything. The walls of wattle and daub were fresh and smooth, and as they entered a half dozen men and women were coating them with a slip of cream-colored clay. Aryéstu was leading them, and Rudhékwa, the Bahá'í community's secretary, was helping as well.

"You made it, welcome!" said Aryéstu. "We weren't sure when you'd get here. We thought maybe earlier today."

"We wanted to, but it didn't work out," replied Thornton. There was no reason to shake hands; everyone's were covered with clay. "We're very happy to be here. You have a very impressive Bahá'í Center!"

"It's a temple, actually," replied Aryéstu. "We've built the easy part by using the usual materials. But we'd like to have real glass in the windows, we want the floor to be concrete with beautiful rugs, we want really nice doors, and we figure a space this size needs at least two iron stoves for the winter. We need three or four hundred dhanay for all of that, which will take all of us several years to accumulate."

"But you will eventually," said Lébé. "By the way, the Central Spiritual Assembly doesn't want people building houses of worship locally, yet. But this is a fine Bahá'í Center. I think you could hold all the adults in the village!"

"Yes, that's about right. But why can't it be a temple?"

“Temples are very special; you can only use them for worship. But a Bahá’í center can be used in many different ways.”

Aryéstu shrugged; the distinction didn’t impress him. “We’ll send people out across the village to round up the Bahá’ís. First we discuss Bahá’í matters, right?”

“Yes, we’ll talk about development later.”

Aryéstu nodded and turned to the others, most of whom picked up the clay and tools and headed out, leaving just Rudhékwa, Aryéstu, Thornton, and Lébé. “What sort of development can we do here?” he asked.

“Whatever fits the village’s needs and resources,” replied Thornton. “We have a hand-out to give everyone a list of ideas. I know for most people it’ll just be useful for lighting their next cooking fire, but that’s alright. We can read the ideas aloud, and there are little pictures to help people remember them.”

“I wish we knew how much we can spend.”

“We have some ideas. We stopped in Tripola first to visit with Lord Ekwiséru and had a very pleasant and productive conversation. He committed up to five hundred dhanay. The Development Corps can match that and anything else the village—”

“Five hundred! He’s so cheap. We’ve got to get rid of him!”

“Aryéstu, you can’t speak that way or consider action of that sort if you want to remain a Bahá’í,” replied Thornton, sternly. “The Bahá’í Faith forbids opposition to one’s government and requires loyalty to it. If you want to bring about change here, there are other ways.”

“You can’t tell me what to do here! You don’t know and you’re from a lordly family anyway! I thought this new revelation stood for consultation, equality, elections, and progress!”

“It does stand for those things, but not the way you think, because we stand for *unity*. That means that we don’t oppose people, fight them, or try to overthrow them—”

“Then don’t fight or oppose my ideas! I know what will work here!”

“Aryéstu, as Bahá’ís we have to stand for Bahá’u’lláh’s principles, and those principles mean you can’t say you are a Bahá’í and act in a way Bahá’ís can’t act. There are plenty of ways to change this place that don’t involve opposing Lord Ekwiséru. Work with him and he may offer more money and work with us.”

Aryéstu shook his head. “I’m afraid I can’t be a Bahá’í, then.” He turned and walked out of the Center.

Lébé watched, shocked. She turned to Thornton, mad that he had pushed so hard.

“He’s angry,” counseled Rudhékwa. “He is right; Lord Ekwiséru comes here weekly, basically to collect whatever tax is due him and offer a bit of advice, then leaves us to fend for ourselves. It is not a fair arrangement.” He lowered his voice. “But what hurts Aryéstu the most is the fact that Ekwiséru is probably his father. He is the lord’s illegitimate son—his eldest son—and the entire village knows it. He wants recognition and responsibility.”

“May Esto assist him,” replied Thornton, shaking his head. “His mother says the lord is his father?”

“She did say it, but she died in a severe pélui outbreak in a very cold winter ten years ago. She got ill because of hunger; no one would marry her, so she was poor. He is

an orphan, like so many of us here. But in spite of his poverty, he recently managed to marry.”

“And he went to Tripola High School,” added Lébé.

“He is a smart man,” confirmed Rudhékwa.

Thornton looked out the door at Aryéstu’s shrinking figure. “Will he come back?”

“I don’t know.”

Thornton and Lébé helped clean up the Bahá’í Center, then began to greet people as they arrived, for every Bahá’í wanted to meet them, especially members of the Spiritual Assembly. The Center kept filling up and there were some non-Bahá’ís present as well; it was impossible, in a small village, to keep them out. After about an hour there were seventy-five adults present, which Rudhékwa said was all the adult Bahá’ís in the village, minus Aryéstu, plus a dozen seekers. As Brébéstu had suggested to Thornton a month earlier, Aryéstu had exaggerated the size of the community. Even so, those present represented a quarter of the village’s adults; that meant that everyone in Wéranopéla was related to a Bahá’í and had had conversations about it.

They started with a round of prayers and for the next hour and a half, as the sky darkened into the daily eclipse, they did a Bahá’í equivalent of the “World Table,” which everyone had heard (indeed, half the village was fifty meters away, clustered around the store and listening to Kékanu on its radio). Thornton and Rudhékwa served as master of ceremonies. Four Bahá’ís chanted hymns or prayers. Thornton did a mock interview of Lébé about the subjects they planned to cover that afternoon. Making the program more exciting was Thornton’s laptop; he had created several Powerpoint presentations over the years. One presentation had slides alternating between questions and answers about the

growth of the Faith around the world, with Rudhékwa asking the questions and Thornton or Lébé giving the answers. At the end of the “Bahá’í World Table,” Thornton passed out large photos of the new Bahá’í temple that he had printed on his ink-jet printer. Questions took another hour.

They took a break for everyone to stretch, then Lébé started on the main deepening of the day: the Bahá’í Faith and the world. Handouts, written large on newsprint and projected on the laptop’s screen, gave quotations about the purpose of life, carrying forward an ever-advancing civilization, material and spiritual progress, and avoiding politics. The program surprised many Bahá’ís, who had moved toward a more active, even militant position. It was not clear the deepening had helped.

They took a break about sunset and everyone went home for supper. Liz arrived in the other rover and had a long, private talk with Rudhékwa over supper at his house about neutrality in politics, giving as many examples as she could think of. But Aryéstu wouldn’t talk to them.

After supper, the sky still bright with twilight and from a half-full Skanda, the entire village came to the Bahá’í Center to talk about development for two hours. Tumékwu, the headman—Ekwiséru’s first cousin—sat cross-armed in the front, looking skeptical. “Shall we start?” Rudhékwa asked Thornton. “The place is packed and people are looking in the windows.”

“Yes; one hymn and one prayer?”

“Perfect. Tumékwu has an excellent voice, I’ll ask him.”

A moment later the headman stood in front of everyone and chanted a hymn of Widumaj, followed by a Bahá'í woman chanting the Remover of Difficulties prayer. Then Rudhékwa introduced Thornton.

“Lébé, my mother, and I are very happy to be here,” he began. “Your hospitality has been absolutely incredible; we will regret leaving very much! What I want to do tonight is tell you some stories of what other villages, around the world, have been doing to progress. After that we will have some time for informal discussion. Tomorrow morning Lébé and I will meet with the Bahá'ís here in the Bahá'í Center to talk about our relationship with Esto; how and why Bahá'ís pray. Everyone is welcome to come to that meeting, but it has nothing to do with development, just as the development meeting tonight has nothing to do with the Bahá'í Faith. Then in the afternoon after the eclipse we will meet with everyone to discuss development again, and maybe at that meeting you can choose some steps the village can take.”

He reached up to his laptop's keyboard, which was higher than his head—they had raised it high so everyone could see it—and advanced the Powerpoint to the next slide. “This is a map of most of the world. We have the *Medmora*, Middle Sea, at the center, with Sumilara in the center of it. Tonight I want to talk about efforts in eight different places, so you know what others have been doing.”

He then shifted to a picture of Frachvála from the top of the escarpment. In the next fifty minutes he summarized efforts there and in Khermdhuna, the Dwobrébakwés, Mitrudoma, the lower Arjakwés, Gordha, Akelséra, and Pértatranisér. The audience was mesmerized by the idea of being able to actually see pictures of butcher shops, sewing machines, metal pressing machines, large cheese making houses, granges, and

greenhouses. The ideas fascinated them as well, especially when they saw pictures of people wearing tattered homespun doing most of the work.

“So, you said we are a little closer to Endraidha’s winter farmland than Belledha is to the lower Arjakwés’s?” asked Tumékwu during the discussion. “How long is it on a bus?”

“Less than two hours,” replied Thornton. “If there are enough farmers interested, a bus would leave Tripola at midnight, pass this area about 2:30 a.m., and get to Endraidha at 6 a.m. Another bus would pick farmers up at 8 p.m. Endraidha time and bring them back here about 7:30 p.m. Wëranopéla time; in time for supper and the family. You’d be on the bus four hours and could sleep some of that time, and you’d have fourteen hours on your farm. The bus would run every day, so farmers could go whenever their land needed it.”

“And Endraidha will lease us land?”

“Yes, they are willing to lease ten thousand agris to farmers from the South Shore. Mitru Transportation is willing to start the bus run. The Development Corps will help set up a grange. It could lease tractors to the villages down here for their planting and harvesting, because the planting and harvesting at Endraidha will occur at a different time.”

“So the machines will be used continuously.” Tumékwu nodded. “Are you planning to tell the other villages in this area?”

“We have no plans. If you go talk to them, we’ll come back.”

“I’ll talk to them. This is a simple idea. Our lord will have no objection; our farmers are idle a lot of the year.”

“And our crops will not earn much this year,” added Bēlstēlu, a young and inquisitive farmer. “They say prices will be half of last year’s. We need to earn more money, especially with radios and all these other things one can buy now.”

There were a lot of murmurs of agreement. “You need a coordinator; someone in charge of this village’s participation,” noted Thornton.

Bēlstēlu’s eyes lit up and Tumékwu immediately noticed. “You do it. You’re trusted by everyone,” the headman said to the young farmer.

“I’d like to find out about sewing machines,” exclaimed Rudhékwa, changing the subject. “My wife has already asked about them a few times.”

“Think what we could do with them,” echoed another woman.

“You said the Development Corps has made loan arrangements through local stores,” exclaimed Tumékwu. “I’d be willing to do that.”

Thornton nodded. “Sewing machines cost eighty dhanay. They aren’t cheap. The Development Corps loans the money to a local store to buy them so the store can sell them to local people. Everyone pays over five years. The store doesn’t want its credit with merchants to suffer, so it pays back the loan; and the villagers and the storekeeper know each other, so the villagers pay the storekeeper.”

“But a farmer, farming twenty agris of winter land through a grange with a tractor, can earn enough to pay for a sewing machine in one season,” pointed out Bēlstēlu.

“You also said that Frachvála was establishing a sawmill and encouraging hunting because it has one of the two routes in and out of the rift valley,” exclaimed Rudhékwa.

“Well, we’re the easternmost village on the Dhébakwés; east of here is forest. We could do the same thing.”

“And you could float the wood down the river to your sawmill. You even have a waterfall and rapids; plenty of waterpower, if you don’t want to use electricity,” said Thornton.

“How much investment?” asked Tumékwu.

“A thousand or two for the sawmill, especially if the villagers contribute labor. But if you want a steam vehicle to move lumbermen, hunters, and logs, that adds five thousand.”

“We better wait for that,” said Tumékwu.

“And we can sell milk to Mitrudoma, for their cheese making?” asked someone.

“Probably. There’s a morning bus every day that could carry the milk,” said Thornton.

“If an agricultural agent came here, how much could he help us?” asked another farmer.

“Only way to find out is to give it a try. The Development Corps will pay for the first visit; after that it splits the cost with the village. A two day visit costs eight dhanay.”

“There are really a lot of things we can do!” exclaimed a woman, pleased with the conversation.

“The examples help a lot,” agreed Thornton.

Others spoke up with ideas about an ice house to help preserve milk, a sewing coop, beaver trapping—the Dhébakwés had more beavers than any other part of the

world—wood carving, and several other ideas. The brainstorming and exchange of ideas continued for two hours before the crowd began to break up.

There was a long line of people wanting to talk to Lébé and Thornton; it was an exhausting wait. As the line finally ended, Thornton turned to Lébé. “I think this place is going to make some plans.”

“Yes, it looks like it. I predict the entire village will show up for the class about prayer, too.” She was excited too, but exhausted.

“Thornton!” The voice came from behind him, from outside the center’s open window. Thornton looked and saw Aryéstu standing there, looking in.

“Aryéstu. Good evening. It was a success, I think.”

“It was. You gave an excellent presentation.”

“You saw it?”

“Mostly; there were a lot of people standing between me and your computer. Say, do you have time to go for a walk with me?”

Thornton looked at Lébé, who nodded. “Sure. Just a second.” He finished packing up his computer and the power cord, which ran out the same window to the rover parked outside. Then he stepped out the door.

“This way.”

Thornton nodded and followed Aryéstu into the gloom outside the village, westward along the river. He didn’t altogether feel safe around Aryéstu, but the man didn’t seem nervous or angry.

They walked a few minutes to a spot where the land rose a bit along the river. An area was marked off with an old split-rail fence and after they passed inside Thornton

noted wooden markers in the ground and realized they were in a cemetery. Aryéstu repeated a brief prayer for the dead as they walked to a particular marker. “This is my mother’s.”

“I heard she died of pélu ten years ago. I felt very, very saddened when I heard about it.”

“Thank you. He never acknowledged her or me. No one would marry a woman with a . . . child but no husband. She did have her father’s six agris, though, and we worked it *hard* every year to feed ourselves.”

“How do you manage?”

“We lease six more agris, so we have twelve. Maybe now you understand why I want to get rid of him.”

“You know, if you had been in the meeting tonight, you might have been one of the people to organize the village’s use of winter farmland.”

“I wonder. Tumékwu has never acknowledged me as a cousin.”

“You know, Aryéstu, you are very smart. That’s very clear. Have you studied accounting? Writing?”

“Both. And I got an A in almost all my high school courses.”

“I’m sure. Do you have a diploma?”

“I will in another month and a half.”

“I think you should go to Mɛlwika Génadema for at least two years.”

“Huh? How could I do that? I don’t have the money.”

“Most of our students don’t. What they do have is the desire to learn and become experts. This world needs smart people with advanced training. All those projects I talked

about are dependent on experts, one way or another; accounting, for example, to track the money. The first year you'd take lots of courses and get an idea of what you could pursue; the second year you'd focus on a subject. If you really liked it, you'd do two more years of the same sort; another general year and another year of specialized courses, and get a kwétèryèri. You might even pursue a Master's and help teach courses at the various génademas."

He looked at Thornton in the dim light, trying to determine whether he was serious. "I don't know what my wife would say."

"She could take some courses, too. We have to educate women, too, and I bet she's smart as well."

"She is. Why are you saying all this to me?"

"Because I think you should direct your anger into something positive, and because I think you can. You can stay here and remain angry at Lord Ekwiséru, and maybe make trouble for him, but that will make trouble for yourself and a lot of other people. Or come to Melwika and make something of yourself. You won't need him any more. He might even be impressed."

"I doubt that." He looked at his mother's grave. "She wanted me to make something of myself."

"How did you end up at the high school?"

"Well, he paid for it."

"Then take the next step. And it isn't hard to get back here. It seems like the other side of the world, but on a bus it's only four hours!"

Aryéstu nodded. "Alright, I'll talk to Spèrjé."

[Nov. 10, 2006; reread and edited 5/30/13, 8/9/17, 11/12/24]

An Education

Late Kaiménu, yr 9/627

Thornton's map of the world looked like a giant bull's eye, with Sumilara in the center in brown—for volcanic rocks—surrounded by blue for water, then a series of other colors for other layers. Like bathtub rings, formed as the water level in the tub dropped, the other colors concentrically followed the seashore.

“The layers are oldest on the outside and youngest inside,” he explained to the hundred people squeezed into the classroom. “The biggest problems with relative dating are the many climatic zones the strata are found in, at least today; when the sea was higher in the past, it tended to even out the climate worldwide. It's very hard to use fossils to recognize units formed at the same time if the units formed in different climates with different species around.

“As a result, ironically enough, the oldest strata are the easiest to recognize. This outermost, green, belt of rocks formed during what I am calling the ‘Nénaslúan’ Subdivision, which I am guessing happened about two million years ago. Melwika's coal deposits formed at this time, when the sea was at its maximum height, 200 meters higher than it is today. The sea flooded the entire north polar basin; it was an arm of the sea. The organically rich shale layers that dominate the rocks of that basin are probably Nénaslúan as well. Coal and laterite deposits along the Swadakwés and Ornakwés are part of that subdivision as well, based on fossils they share with the Nénaslúa coal deposits.

“Once sea level dropped about twenty meters, the ridge north of Belledha became largely exposed, cutting the north polar basin off from the sea. I think that may have been a factor for the climatic change from tropical to mixed that can be seen in the rocks; at that point the north polar basin began to experience cold winters and send cold air equatorward. I call this next subdivision the ‘Megdhunan’ because the rocks are well exposed there, with a tiny strip of Nénaslun coals stratigraphically below them. In Megdhuna we see possible evidence of glaciation; the climate was definitely colder. As you can see from the yellow patches on the map, we haven’t managed to identify Megdhunan outcrops all the way around; I think there’s an outcrop uphill from Pértatraisér, but that’s tentative. This summer we’ll do a lot more exploration.

“Éra’s sea level appears to drop quite a lot—about fifty meters—in a short time, then stabilizes for a long time, because there’s a belt of sandstone all the way around the sea called the Mëddwoglubas Formation, so named because it is best exposed in cliffs above that town. It’s the best example of a formation that one can identify all the way around the sea; as you can see, there are orange outcrops all over the map. In some places, the Mëddwoglubas sandstone is of high quality and suitable for glass making. We can only speculate how the sea dropped and stabilized. One possibility is that the north polar basin filled with ice; that would store about the right amount of water. We still can’t explore the Long Valley, so we don’t know what role it played. The Mëddwoglubas Formation is our only stratigraphic representative of the ‘Mëddwoglubas Subdivision’ which is a time period. I’d guess from the sea level it represents, that it would have occurred about 1.5 million years ago.

“Then there are a series of red and purple stripes, representing a rise and fall of sea level about thirty meters. Together we’re calling these the ‘Lædhalisér Sequence’ because they are well exposed in cliffs cut by that river northeast of Néfa. We haven’t yet sorted out how many rises and falls the stripes represent; about six.

“Then there’s the Tripola Sequence. It appears to represent a gradual drop in sea level after the Lædhalisér Subdivision of time. It’s exposed all the way around the sea as a series of beach sandstones and marine shales. The last of the units of this sequence is the Lilalara, ten meters of dune sandstone; its thickness suggests that sea level stabilized for quite a period of time more or less where it will be in another few years.

“Turning to the Gordha area, there are extensive deposits of continental sedimentary rocks—conglomerates, sandstones, shales—to the west of that town, and lacustrine—lake-formed—deposits east of the ridge. As you can see, we have numbered various units and have not yet given them names. We have no way, so far, to relate these units to the time subdivisions of the sedimentary rocks around the sea because they don’t overlap. We can’t even relate the east-Gordhan to the west-Gordhan, because at the time the Gordha Gluba didn’t exist. The lake east of the ridge probably drained southward into the Swadakwés, which has a very large and wide valley all the way to the sea.

“That gives you a good idea of the work we still need to do. Sumilara, in particular, requires a lot of work, because it has units of sedimentary rock trapped between volcanic deposits. Until we can date rocks using radioactive isotopes—at least a decade from now, we think—the dates remain guesstimates. We know the sea level has dropped two hundred meters—an average of twenty meters per hundred thousand years—but we also know the drop of level has not been constant, so sea level represents

only the crudest of geological clocks. I hope we will have filled in more details next year. Thank you.”

The crowd responded with thunderous applause. He had spent most of his half hour showing very large photographs of rock outcrops, describing the different kinds of rocks, and explaining how one recognized when a period of time had passed between the beds. They understood how difficult the work was.

Then came the questions, about the utility of the information, the problem of dating outcrops, the possible value of drilling to fill in details where rocks were not exposed, the difficulty of linking deposits separated by space but not by time, and many others. When the session ended, Thornton was pleased with the response.

Lébé came up and kissed him. “I even understood what you were talking about! Now I understand the work better. Well done.”

“Thanks. I’m drained of energy; let’s go outside.”

“You’re not going to stay and hear Estonpréku?”

“I can’t; I won’t pay attention. Besides, I know the results: he has revised his information about Skanda. Éra orbits 35,000 kilometers from Skanda, and Skanda is 13,593 kilometers in diameter, which is just a bit bigger than Earth.” He pointed to the door and she nodded. He collected his very large photographs, stuffed them in a satchel, and they headed out.

As they reached the door, someone reached out to him. “Honored Dhoru.”

He looked at the young man and at first didn’t recognize him; then he smiled. “Aryéstu! I apologize for not recognizing you, I haven’t seen you for over a month. You made it to Melwika!”

“I did. And this is Spərjé, my wife.”

“Honored to meet you.”

“Welcome to Məlwika,” added Lébé.

“Thank you!” she replied to Lébé, and her facial expressions added “please be a friend, I feel lost.”

“I really enjoyed your talk,” said Aryéstu. “I had no idea the geology of this world has been so thoroughly reconstructed.”

“Gradually. It takes a long time to figure these things out. I’ve been doing geology here for nine years.”

“How much geology did you do on Gədhéma?”

Thornton shook his head. “None. I had some geology in high school, just like you.”

That surprised Aryéstu. “I’m glad we found the génadema,” exclaimed Spərjé.

“We wandered around for an hour before we got here. People gave directions by pointing and listing streets; go this way, turn left onto this street, etc. But we assumed it was close and didn’t occur to us that at every street corner, the streets had names! This is a *big* place.”

“One of the world’s largest. Probably the largest,” replied Lébé. “It’s really pretty simple; four or five major streets will get you to every neighborhood. And if someone says their address is ‘101 Temple Street,’ that tells you two things. First, 101 is an odd number, so it’s either on the east side of the street or the north side, depending on which way the street runs; second, it’s about 101 meters from where the street started. In a day or two and a few tricks like that, you can get around pretty well.”

“You need to know the names of some squares, too,” added Thornton. “Are you here permanently? Are your crops harvested?”

“No, they aren’t,” replied Aryéstu. “We decided to come to the all-génadema conference and get an idea of what this place is like. We had a little savings. Besides, if I’m going to apply, I want to see the place and apply face-to-face.”

“Where are you staying?” asked Thornton.

“We just got here,” responded Sperjé. “This room was our first stop.”

“Luggage?” asked Lébé.

“Just this.” Aryéstu pointed to a blanket roll on the floor, which had a change of clothes inside.

“Well, let’s see whether there are any dormitory rooms left,” said Lébé.

“Just show us where to go,” said Aryéstu.

“Only if we get lost, ask for directions,” replied Sperjé.

“We’ll both show you,” said Thornton. “I need to get out of here anyway; after I give a talk I can’t sit and listen for at least half an hour. This way.” The four of them headed out the door and down the hallway of the science building, then outside. They paused and Thornton pointed to every building around the quadrangle and explained them, then they headed across the space to the next building, which held the cafeteria, bookstore, and conference registration. Aryéstu stopped in front of the bookstore door, shocked. “I had no idea this world had so many books!”

“And you can buy them all; or go to the library and borrow them.” Thornton turned to the bookstore owner, who was seated behind a table. “Lojéstu, this couple has just arrived from Weranopéla. Do you have any rooms left?”

He shook his head. “I’m sorry, Lord, but I don’t. I ran out half an hour ago. But I’ve sent only one person to the hospital; they’d have rooms. I do have meal plans left, though.”

“We’ll start at the hospital. Thanks.” Thornton pointed to the door and the four of them headed outside. He pointed toward an exit from the campus. “We’ll go this way.”

“The hospital?” asked Spèrjé, uncomfortable.

“Yes. You won’t have to worry if you get sick. They usually have about fifteen empty rooms and at times like this they rent them out for the same rate as the dormitory, except they’ll evict you on one hour’s notice and pay for a hotel room for you if they need the room for an emergency. It’s a good deal; if they have to kick you out, you’ll get an incredibly nice room in the hotel for half a dhanay per day.”

“But I don’t know that I want to be in a hospital!”

“There will be other guests; especially medical students. An interesting group to talk to.”

“One of the few places there are women around, too,” added Lébé.

They turned onto Majakwés Street and headed north toward Temple Square. Several new three-story buildings were going up and the new arrivals gawked at them. “This is the main commercial district,” said Thornton. “You can buy anything here. The first buildings here were one-story houses with stores on the street. Then some were torn down and two-story buildings were built; the entire first story was the store, the second story a house or apartments. And now the next generation of buildings is going up and it has three stories. A four-story building’s going there in a few months.” Thornton pointed to a one-story house.

“You should go in there some time,” Lébé said to Sperjé, pointing. “It’s new and has three stories of shops. Lots of clothing stores; you can see the tailors working in the back. And it’s air conditioned! In other words, when it’s really hot here, they use melting ice to keep it comfortable.”

“Twenty tonnes of ice a day,” added Thornton.

“Twenty tonnes!” said Aryéstu, shocked. “What a waste!”

“Well, in a sense, yes,” agreed Thornton. “But the stores here are competing against each other and increasingly they’re competing against stores all over the world. Rich people in Tripola shop here; they don’t shop in Tripola or even in Meddoakwés. They’ll shop in a place that’s air conditioned. For that matter, on a hot day, everyone wants to come in here, so sales go up and the ice is a good investment.”

“Investment,” muttered Aryéstu, digesting that word. “What do all the people here *do*, anyway?”

“A lot of different things,” replied Thornton, as they crossed Temple Square and started north on Temple Street. “The city’s economy is anchored by the Foundry, the génadema, and the grange. The Foundry employs five hundred people. Their average salary is two thousand; that a million dhanay. But the Foundry spends a million more to buy limestone, coal, timber, iron ore and some parts, and a half million dhanay on construction and other services. That employs five hundred more people in town and maybe five hundred elsewhere around the world. The grange now has 700 farmers and 16,000 agris here and in Médhela, south of the Majakwés. They earn about two million dhanay. The génadema has almost 300 students and is expanding to 400 next year and has a budget of 300,000 dhanay. Then there are 300 city workers, whose salaries are paid for

by taxes, and over a thousand people who make and sell things or provide services, like the hospital. The city's population spends two million dhanay a year buying things they need, and that employs a lot of people."

"Amazing," said Aryéstu.

"Does anyone wear homespun?" asked Spærjé, feeling out of place.

"Not many," said Lébé. "Women keep themselves busy here in other ways, and everyone has the money to buy machine-woven cloth or mass-produced clothes."

They continued up Temple Street, which was also lined with two and three-story buildings, though restaurants and offices of various sorts were more common than stores. They entered the hospital entrance where the street ended at the Mennea house and stopped at the receptionist's. "Do you have a room for this couple?" asked Thornton.

"Yes, we still have a few rooms we can rent for the conference." She pulled out a room key and explained all the conditions and they paid a dhanay and a half for three nights, then went to the room on the top floor.

"Wow; this is nice!" said Aryéstu.

"Strange to be in a hospital, though," commented Spærjé, shaking her head.

"We just doubled the size of the hospital, so there will be empty rooms for a few years," explained Thornton. "Demand for hospital services keeps growing as people come to understand what a hospital is."

"I think four people went to hospital from Wëranopéla last year, but two the year before and only one the year before that," agreed Aryéstu. "All four of the people came back healthy, too, and we were sure two of them were finished." He nodded. "Can we stay here any time we come to Melwika?"

“No, these rooms are reserved for emergency medical situations,” said Lébé. “But the rest of this wing of the hospital is a dormitory for the génadema, until it has to be converted into rooms for patients.”

“Thank you so much,” said Aryéstu. “You have been very, very kind.”

“Wëranopéla was so hospitable to us, we have to return the favor,” replied Thornton. “Actually, it’s just about noontime. You must be hungry, too; did you have any breakfast?”

“Not since we left Wëranopéla,” replied Sperjé.

“Then please come to our house for lunch.”

“Oh, we wouldn’t want to be any trouble!” she replied.

“No trouble,” replied Lébé, shaking her head. “The house always has a lot of guests during the conference; we’re prepared for it. Please come.”

“Then we will accept,” agreed Aryéstu.

They left their blanket roll in the locked room, exited the hospital, and crossed the street to the Mennea house. There was a small crowd, mostly génadema administrators; Ékwégéngu from Bellédha, Skandu from Anartu, Stërsejiu from Isurdhuna, Wëranunu of Ora, Wërdéu of Tripola, and Chalu of Néfa. They filled plates with pasta, meat, and vegetables, and sat in the courtyard with the others, who were chatting.

“Great talk, Thornton,” said Skandu. “Fascinating. The geologists on Sumilara will be fascinated by my summary; do you have it written up, yet?”

“I have a draft. As you probably heard, Roktanu will be the editor of the *Royal Journal*, the génadema’s new scientific and literary journal, and he wants to publish the paper there.”

“Good.” Skandu turned to May, who was sitting nearby. “I’m sorry I missed your talk, but I couldn’t get here from Mæddoakwés fast enough. I gather you have figured out the origin of the Eryan language?”

May smiled, embarrassed. “I wouldn’t put it that way! On Gædhéma, about five to eight thousand years ago there was a people whom scholars call the ‘Indo-Europeans.’ Eryan is an Indo-European language; I knew that the first day we were put here. Its relationship with English is obvious; just consider *mater* and mother, *brater* and brother, *sunu* and son. But as I learned more vocabulary and the various dialects, I was puzzled by many details. For example, there are a few words that are considered ‘western Indo-European,’ like *knéu*, “nut,” and *abel*, “apple” that are found only on the eastern shore and among the Tutane. The western shore has some distinctive words as well, like ‘gésel,’ the old Indo-European root for thousand, whereas the eastern shore has ‘dekent,’ which literally means ‘ten hundred.’ Another example is ‘nénase,’ elephant, and ‘donti,’ ivory, instead of ‘yebe’ and ‘læbi’ on the western shore. Hence my theory that two Indo-European groups arrived here. The *aliénés* must have brought them here, maybe at different times. Based on historical information, the western shore Eryan fled the Long Valley when it flooded, so I think the *alienés* put that group there; they were from the eastern or southern Indo-European population. The other group was put somewhere on the other side of the Spine; possibly Gordha, since it has legends of being very old and being a center of Eryan culture. They were from a western Indo-European population, and one lacking some words.”

“And the Sumis were put on Sumilara or along the seacoast?” asked Skandu.

“Sumi legends speak of Anartu as the ‘mother of the world’ and of ships going from there to Lilalara at the mouth of the Arjakwés and to Idka or Ora.”

“Really? Perhaps they preserve some history.”

“I think so. Based on the chronicles we’ve been able to review in the Great Library, I’d date the settlement of Anartu to about 4,500 or 5,500 years ago. The king lists are incomplete that far back, confusing, and they overlap, so it is difficult to create a final chronology.”

May nodded. “The date sounds about right. Sumerian culture flourished on Earth then. By 4,000 years ago the language had disappeared on Gædhéma. The Eryan would have been put here about the same time.”

“Where does Eryan’s seven noun classes come from?” asked Thornton. “That’s not Indo-European.”

“No, it isn’t,” agreed May. “But it’s derived from Indo-European; the earliest form of the language had only two noun classes, animate and inanimate, and later the animate split into masculine and feminine. So what happened here in a sense was a continuation of that splitting. It’s clear from the stories about Widumaj that He had something to do with it. He probably utilized, clarified, partially developed distinctions between the masculine and abstract classes, the feminine and passive classes, and the neuter and derivative classes in his hymns. And of course He retained an old Indo-European neuter ending in -er, like *mater* and *pater*. The Tutane still don’t have those distinctions; their nouns fall in four classes, and many feminine Tutane nouns became derivative nouns in standard Eryan. In Tutane, old names for gods don’t all end in -o, either. My guess is that

when the east and west Eryan encountered each other, especially on the eastern shore, their dialects were sufficiently different to make comprehension difficult, and that caused a leveling of grammatical differences and possibly the development of a neutral and grammatically regular patois that Widumaj developed through His hymns. I suspect masculine, feminine, and neuter in the eastern shore ended in –o, -a, and –ε, and on the western shore they were –u, -é, and –i, and after the dialects mixed you had six noun classes with six distinct endings.”

“And after that, the consonant and vowel differences between the eastern and western dialects developed?” asked Størsejiu, skeptically.

“Unless they were already there in prototypical form,” replied May. “Or possibly the pre-existing dialects were modified differently under the influence of Widumaj’s common dialect.”

It’s possible,” said Størsejiu. “Of course, your story of our origins hasn’t accounted for the Hymn of the Sacrifice, where Manu and Tritu sacrificed their middle brother, Yimu, and from Yimu’s body, Wεrano the Wise created Éra. I know you claim there are similarities to gεdhéma stories and that it predates our arrival on this world, but I don’t believe it. I think we were here from the beginning.” May opened her mouth to respond, but Størsejiu didn’t want to argue, so he changed the subject instead. “I think we need a good course on Gεdhéma. Honored May, you’ve taught various classes about Gεdhéma at different times and in different courses. But the information is piecemeal. Perhaps a big, fat history textbook could be translated and used for a course?”

May smiled and nodded. She looked at her father. “You see? Maybe the time has come.”

“Especially with your ideas about a new way to design a génadema education,” said Chris, tentatively. “Everything is rethought.”

“Yes, what are these new ideas?” asked Wérdéu. “And what about these expansion plans, also? We have several new génadema heads here. All our génademas together are barely the size of Mèlwika génadema, and you plan to expand! I’m sure all of us are wondering how we will ever keep up.”

“I worry about that, too, but naturally I’m inclined to invest my personal wealth in my own génadema, and I haven’t started one in Pértatranisér,” said Chris. “The educational needs of Pértatranisér will be met by Néfa and Ora, so those génademas will benefit. It’s clear that a lot of people want to get a higher education who can’t afford it, and the world needs more educated professionals. I’m putting thirty-five thousand dhanay into the expansion here; you’d think the expansion would require about seventy, but we figure with larger course sizes, more teaching by graduate students, and other economies of scale, we’ll manage. We’ll also encourage more students to come here *after* completing *dwoyeris* and *kwéteryeris* at the other génademas, so we hope demand everywhere will rise. And via Pértatranisér we’re in a better position than ever to support your génademas; even Isurdhuna and Tripola are close enough to reach by car.”

“But you’re also planning to teach a business course in Pértatranisér,” said Chalu.

“Let’s talk about that, Chalu. Pértatranisér needs business education; its marketplace is expanding fast. The tomi can’t hire locals with enough experience, even from Néfa, because Pèrku hired so many of my business students to run the province. I think I’ll have as many as thirty locals who want business training. I don’t want them to take a bus back and forth two mornings a week. Shall we consider it a Néfa Génadema

course? A Məlwika Génadema course? And would you like me to give the same course in Néfa? I could do that.”

“Please do offer it in Néfa as well, and let’s make it a Néfa Génadema course. That helps us.”

“And bring the course to other schools. Tripola needs your help,” added Wérdéu.

“Back to the new graduation requirements,” exclaimed Stersejiu.

“Let me summarize the idea,” said May. “It is based on a study of *The Secret of Divine Civilization* where ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says that ‘the learned’ should have ‘knowledge of the sacred Scriptures and the entire field of divine and natural science, of religious jurisprudence and the arts of government and the varied learning of the time and the great events of history.’ He elaborates in various places and stresses knowledge of science in particular. That’s not so different from our current requirements, but we want to make them clearer. We’re assuming our current arrangement where a typical course involving thirty classroom hours is three credits and each *yəri* is thirty-six credits—twelve courses—whether they are accumulated in one year or not. An *uniyəri* will require a writing course, an Eryan literature course—including the hymns—two math courses, two science courses, and a history course, seven total, but if one took any of those courses at a high school they might count. We might even give the student credit towards the *uniyəri*.”

“I had those at Tripola High School,” injected Aryéstu. “So, I might already have seven courses—twenty-one credits—toward an *uniyəri*?”

May nodded. “You probably would, because Tripola High School is now pretty good. The other five courses can be anything the student wants; the math or science or history course could also count as a course toward a concentration. The *dwoyəri* basically

doubles this, by adding requirements for a specialized science course, an advanced writing course, another math course, and another humanities course, either literature, philosophy, religion, or history.

“What’s new and important for the other génademas is that we are proposing a *triyeri* degree, which would be a *dwoyeri* plus the courses for a concentration. The *kwéteryeri* would add another year of general education courses, including a requirement for a course about Gèdhéma. The *pàti* or five-year Master’s degree would add another year of specialized courses and a thesis; a *doktori* would add studying for exams and a dissertation.”

“So,” said Sèrsejiu. “We’re talking about a general term, a specialized term, another general term, another specialized one, a specialized year, then one or two years of highly specialized study.”

May nodded. “Essentially. Many students would mix the courses more than that.”

“It makes it easier for the small génademas, because we’re finding the current *kwéteryeri* difficult,” exclaimed Wérdéu. “I gather you’re making the *kwéteryeri* even more difficult.”

May nodded.

“But the *triyeri* will be a great help to our small génademas,” said Skandu. “It’ll be a kind of ‘poor man’s masters.’ That may cut down on the number of students coming to Mèlwika.”

“We’ll take that chance,” replied Chris. “The Mèlwika Génadéma is not in business to make money; it’s an institution to serve the people of this world. This world needs *triyeris* and other short degrees now, and longer degrees later. We should make sure

all teachers have at least a *triyeri*, for example. Businessmen, nurses, lawyers, many professionals should start with a *triyeri*. If they take four courses a year, they could complete the requirements of a *kwéteryeri* in three more years and would be earning money all that time. Then they could move up to a Masters.”

“The professions have to decide on the standards they want to set,” added May. “And the professions need to insist that their employers pay for professional training.”

“South Shore province now puts aside three thousand dhanay per year to educate teachers,” agreed Wérdéu. “It has to be spent at the Tripola Génadéma and the student has to match it.”

“We’re doing that on Sumilara, too,” said Skandu. “But I’m worried about how we will do the history requirement. Its treatment of the Eryan-Sumi relationship will be controversial.”

“We need to form a committee to draw up a curriculum and write a textbook,” said May. “First at the génadéma level, then maybe a high school version, then the génadéma version will be revised and upgraded.”

“The course on Gædhéma will be controversial, too,” said Stêrsejiu. “One course can’t cover everything, so selecting what to say will be the challenge. We don’t want to create another Kameru or Rébu.”

“How do we do it?” asked Chris. “A committee and a textbook?”

“I think so,” agreed Stêrsejiu.

“Some of us could meet tomorrow evening, after the All-Génadéma Council ends,” said May.

“Bad for me,” said Thornton. “The geologists are meeting for dinner and will talk about standards of professional training.”

“And I’m going to the play,” added Chris.

They debated various times to meet and arrived at one that worked fairly well. Aryéstu turned to Thornton and said quietly “I’m tempted to volunteer, but I know nothing about the subject!”

“I’m impressed you were tempted. It is a specialized discussion. So, you like Melwika?”

Aryéstu nodded. “I think I’ll like it a lot.”

The theater was dark except for the brightly lit stage. Chárdú bowed to enthusiastic applause, then called out the rest of the cast and the chorus, who came on stage and bowed as well. He pointed to the orchestra—most using traditional instruments, though a piano was included—and they rose to the applause as well. Then the company bowed again.

“That was *really* good,” said Liz. “Chárdú’s third play, and it is the best by far.”

“It was very good,” agreed May. “Very skillful use of the chorus. A creative retelling of the story of Widumaj and Mégékwes. Uplifting and inspiring.”

“And contemporary,” noted Chris. “Some of the lines clearly were allusions to the new knowledge.”

“I’m pleased Chárdú portrayed the king as opposing Widumaj; that was daring,” said Lébé. “Of course, in the end Mégékwes came around.”

“And was rewarded the monarchy forever,” said Chris. “Let’s not forget that! Whose authority does that reinforce?”

“The Queen!” exclaimed someone. They looked out of the box they occupied on the second level and saw the entire audience below rise, then the Queen walked down the aisle and to the stage.

“Where is our playwright and actor?” she said, clearly amused. “Chárdu, come out with your cast!”

The curtain opened again and Chárdu came out to kneel humbly before the queen, followed by the others. In her hand she held a small head dress of eagle feathers. “Let us honor the man who so inspired us tonight.” She placed the head dress on his head and everyone applauded again.

“And let us honor the cast and this new art that has come to our world. I hope Chárdu and his cast will agree to present *The King and the Prophet* at the Isurdhuna Festival next month, and to take it on the road with the royal party as we circle the sea.”

She turned to him and beckoned him to rise. He rose and bowed before her again. “Your Majesty, we are thrilled by the offer to present this play in every city around the Middle Sea and thank you profusely for this opportunity.”

“Excellent, I am very pleased. When your cast returns to Mèddoakwés, I will patronize a proper, permanent theater building and support a permanent theater company in the capital, with a permanent orchestra. The Royal Theater Company will also travel to other cities, to bring plays and music to the entire world.”

The audience erupted in applause. Chárdu bowed to her again and waited for the audience to quiet. “Your Majesty, your theater troupe, obviously, is not the only group of

people here who are profoundly grateful to you tonight. But we feel a special joy because of our love of the theater and our certainty that this art form has much to offer our civilization. The story of Widumaj is filled with so many dramatic and tragic elements; indeed, our entire history is a moving and powerful epic. We thank you for this opportunity to take it to the people.”

Everyone applauded again. The queen walked back up the aisle, then everyone began to leave.

“I’ve got to congratulate Chárdú,” said May, and both Liz and Lébé nodded vigorously. They all headed down stairs and backstage. When they entered the area the cast was using for preparation, they were surprised to see the queen there as well, thanking everyone personally. So they waited for her to come out before they went in.

When Her Majesty came out, she saw Chris and said, “Lord, come with me.” Chris was surprised and followed her to the back door of the génadema, while the rest of his family went inside. “Wasn’t that an incredible performance?” she said to him.

“We were amazed,” agreed Chris.

“How is Pértatranisér?”

“Still growing; about half the farmers Duke Albanu displaced from his land have come to our town, where they are farming or working in the stores. And the big development is the radio; Kεkanu has agreed to stay in Pértatranisér, build himself a house, and be a partner with us in establishing a radio station.”

“He’s building a house? You mean he has money?” She was amused by that.

“Indeed, I’m paying him a salary. Do you enjoy *The World Table*?”

“Everyone loves *The World Table*. I listen to it every day. He plans to interview Prime Minister Weranolubu next week.”

“You may wish to appear on the show as well; the people know your face and they should know your voice as well. They will love you even more if you are on the radio, speaking to them, on special occasions. But that is why I am paying him handsomely; he is an excellent host, he will develop Eryan music immensely through the radio, and frankly, Kekanu’s voice and personality will soon be known to everyone in the world.”

“I see.” She didn’t seem to like that. “He has good judgment. Lord, I wanted to ask you to assist Mitruiluku’s, Mitrubbaru’s, and Mitrulubu’s townships. They have now been there for almost two months and are suffering. They need your business touch to get their towns started. Make money off of them, but help them.”

That surprised him. He wished he had the courage to say they got what they deserved; the Queen worried too much for her cousins. “I see. Has the Kwolone threat been resolved?”

“There is no threat! We do not recognize their claim, which is based on the fact they pastured horses and cattle there once every ten or fifteen years! They have plenty of land.”

“I understand. I am not altogether sure I trust them. I would feel more secure in my position if you granted me the land along Route 3, between Mitrubbaru’s township and Ornakwés township. I would establish a grange building there and sell land for farmers.”

“Another township.” She considered. “I don’t know how we will fill all the townships we already have, Lord.”

“It will take a decade or two, I admit. But land is wealth, and I want to protect my family’s position.”

“You have Pértatranisér, let us not forget.”

“If Your Majesty is willing, I would like the title of Lord of Pértatranisér to pass to my son in law, Amos Keino. He has done an excellent job and the people there love him.”

She looked at him, surprised, then nodded. “Very well. Done. You have the land between Mitrubbaru and Roktøkæster as well, but only on the grounds that you concentrate on the townships of the three brothers first.”

“I agree to your conditions, Your Majesty.”

“Very well, Lord. Good night.”

[Nov. 12, 2006; reread and edited, 5/30/13, 8/10/17, 11/12/24]

243.

Lords

Early Dhonménu, Yr 9/627

Aryéstu opened the door of the small apartment and flipped on the light switch, illuminating a bare bulb in the ceiling. He and Spærjé stepped into a room that was three meters wide and four long, with a window at the end, and dropped their blanket rolls. The room had a table with four chairs, a sink, and a gas stove. The floor was bare wood, a bit rough.

Spærjé opened the cabinets over the sink; empty. She opened the oven under the stove top and nodded. “Not sure how one uses this, but I can ask.” She opened the large door of a metal box. “What’s this for?”

“I think it’s an ice box.” Aryéstu walked over and opened the top compartment, then nodded. “Yes. A block of ice goes here. It melts, the water trickles down and accumulates in the pan underneath.”

“For preserving food,” said Spærjé, nodding. She had heard of the contraption and wondered how much the ice cost. “Where do we sleep?”

Aryéstu opened a door in the right-hand wall that led to another room, three meters square. He flipped on the light switch. Double bed, table, armoire for clothing, chest of drawers.

“Very nice.”

“Except we don’t have sheets, pillows, any of the things people seem to have here. At least we brought our blankets.”

He nodded. There was another door to open, into the one by three meter space separating the room from the hallway. He opened it, turned on the light, and saw a bathroom. “Hey, flush toilet! Shower!”

“Shower!” she said. She had used one at Mɛlwika Hospital on their last trip to Mɛlwika, a month ago, and had loved it. She hurried in and noted the sink with a large mirror as well. “Oh, this is *such* luxury!” she said. “I hope we can afford it!”

“Well, tuition and room is covered by the scholarship, and we have enough money to eat for a while.” He smiled at her. “Let’s take a shower!”

She giggled and they took off their clothes and washed together, then made excited, eager love in their new married student housing apartment. It was the perfect way to express their thrill at being at Mɛlwika Génadema.

They unpacked, dressed, and headed to the future site of the Bahá’í temple nearby to say prayers. They stopped at the Bahá’í Center, but it was locked. They wandered around campus, over to Temple Square to explore the stores along Majakwés Street, then walked to the hospital to say hello to the receptionist, who remembered them and welcomed them to town. They were stepping out of the hospital and walking past the Mennea house, hoping someone would notice them, when God smiled on them and Lord Kristobéru walked out.

“Good morning, Lord,” said Aryéstu.

“Good morning,” replied Chris, not recognizing them, but he felt their hopeful eyes on him and looked at them again. “I met you about a month ago at the all-génadema conference, didn’t I?”

“You have a good memory, Lord. I am Aryéstu of Wëranopéla, and this is Sperjé, my wife.”

“Pleased to see both of you again. What brings you to Mëlwika? The summer term?”

“Indeed, Lord. I’ve been accepted to the génadema. I want to pursue a *dwoyeri* at least.”

“Excellent.” Chris was beginning to remember the details, since Aryéstu’s attitude toward Lord Ekwiséru had been a subject of discussion at a Central Spiritual Assembly meeting. “Come into the house and have tea. We need to welcome the two of you properly to town.”

“Oh, thank you, Lord!”

Chris turned around and went back inside, leading them across the courtyard to the dining room where there was always tea. It was a hot midsummer day, though the humidity was fairly low. Luktréstu came out of his room where he was working and poured tea immediately for the three of them. “So, what are you planning to study?” Chris asked.

Aryéstu shook his head. “I don’t know, yet. I’m good at math, but I don’t particularly like accounting. I enjoy science, and Thornton’s talk about this world’s geology was fascinating, but I’m not particularly interested in a profession that requires a lot of walking around outside and camping in tents. Agricultural science would be helpful to our village, perhaps. Engineering might be, also. Maybe I could go back and open a bank branch.”

“How much education do you have?”

“I just got my high school diploma last month. I had two years of high school.”

“A diploma after two years. That’s good.”

“I took courses at Tripola Génadema both summers, which helped.”

“So, business, but not accounting. That limits your options. Nowadays, you can’t avoid accounting. Of course, there’s always economics.”

“Economics? What’s that?”

“The study of the economy. The economy is the flow of goods, services, labor, and money round and round in our society. Hey Luktréstu! Bring out the economics text!”

“Just a moment.” Luktréstu appeared a moment later with a fat pile of ink-jet printed pages. Chris handed it to Aryéstu, who began to flip through it.

“It’s a standard economics textbook on Gèdhéma. For the last two spring terms, I’ve been teaching a course on “Economics in English,” with five business and literature students in it. We translated the entire textbook, including the diagrams; that was the purpose of the two courses. I’ll be teaching Economics in Eryan in the fall.”

“Fascinating.” Aryéstu handed the book back.

“It’s in the library. In fact, it’s already in the bookstore. We printed twenty copies, I think.” He looked at Spèrjé. “Are you considering a subject?”

“Lord, I’m here as a wife, not as a student!”

“So? When you get the chance, go to the Women’s College and talk to the women there. They always have at least one free course available to local women. Give it a try.”

He looked back to Aryéstu. “I suppose you had a harvest to get in?”

“Indeed, twelve agris of rye and barley. It takes a long time to scythe it down, beat the grains free, and winnow them! Most of the last month. We sold the whole thing, rented our house for a pittance to a cousin who just got married, and came here with everything we could get on the bus.”

“Good. Congratulations for making it. What are you taking over the summer?”

“Basic things: Eryan literature and geology this term, writing and agricultural science next.”

“Good.” Chris finished his cup of tea. “I hate to be a poor host, but I have an appointment that I can’t miss. Welcome to town again, and to the university.” He rose from the table and escorted them to the door, then went across the street to his office in the tomi building quickly to get some papers. When he went down stairs to the rover, he found Luktréstu loading three heavy batteries into the back for their trip.

They headed west, down the Arjakwés. The first harvest had come in several weeks ago and the second crop—usually corn or wheat—had been planted and was emerging from the ground. The harvest had been bountiful, as expected, and crop prices had been six dhanay per bushel, half the old standard price, but this year the economy had adjusted well in most places. Grange members, farming an average of twenty agris and getting an average of fifteen bushels per agri, were earning 3,600 dhanay on two annual harvests, which translated into 1,800 dhanay after taxes and fees were paid; not as good as last year, but almost triple the income of a traditional farmer in times past, and five times the income of village farmers who had no access to equipment. Chris was earning an average of 7.5 dhanay per agri per harvest from the lands he was selling to farmers, 11,000 agris of twice-annual crops and 5,000 agris of triple-cropped fields, so he was

earning 277,000 dhanay from the agricultural side of his operation this year. Hence he loved to look at growing fields; they were gold.

Chris drove while Luktréstu read the new economics textbook aloud to him and they discussed the translation of a term or the clarity of a sentence. It helped Chris familiarize himself with a subject that he had understood little, and Luktréstu's questions helped him clarify his arguments. Luktréstu was becoming quite familiar with the subject as well, and possibly could become a teacher of it sometime.

At Ornakwés it began to rain as they started down Route 3, a narrow, three-meter strip of dusty gravel with an electrical and telephone line along the northern side. They watched for stone piles along the side of the highway marking the end of that township. "Here's the beginning of my township!" exclaimed Chris, gleefully.

A few kilometers down, a hill rose on the northern side of the road. The rain was abating, so Chris stopped. "This is the spot!" he said. "We've driven the road dozens of times; this is the nicest spot along it. This is where the village will be. Actually, the eastern corner of the township is on the Ornakwés, so I think we'll put a village there, too. The township's 225 square kilometers, making it the biggest one around."

"Because no one wants land that's not on a river."

"That's right! It looks like useless land to the Eryan. A sea of grass. But it could feed seventy-five thousand people."

"But it won't have that many any time soon."

"No. We won't start to sell any land here for a year or so." He opened the rover's door and got out, even though it was still raining slightly. Luktréstu stepped out as well. Chris walked the hundred meters to the crest of the round hill and he followed. They

surveyed the land as the raindrops fell. Surprisingly, the sun peeked through a hole in the clouds at the same time, so they had sun and rain simultaneously. “An auspicious sign,” said Luktréstu.

“I agree.”

“So, why do you want another town?”

Chris considered the question. “Well, Melwika isn’t completely mine; it’s also John Miller’s. And Pértatranisér formed itself, then I was put in charge, so it isn’t completely mine, either. But this place is mine. We’re learning all the time how to set up townships; this is a new start. I plan to stay in Melwika, but eventually I’ll build a house here as well.”

“What will you call the place?”

“I don’t know yet.” He looked around again, nodding. “We need to excavate a well, set up a windmill and a water tank, and plant some fruit trees. Set up a little oasis of shade next to the road. Widen Route 3 through here so vehicles can park and pass each other easily. Make this place attractive and hospitable. That’s phase 1, I think.”

Luktréstu nodded, surprised his boss’s plan started with hospitality, not farming. Then Chris turned and walked back to the car. “You drive,” he said.

They continued down Route 3 and in another 4 kilometers they passed large rock piles that marked the border with Mitrubbaru’s township. It was also unbroken prairie, brush, and saplings. Soon the Gramakwés or “Emeraldwater,” a small creek, flowed in from the east and paralleled the road. Passing another pair of rock piles, they entered Mitrulubu’s township, which he was calling Gramakwés. His villa had two completed rooms. But they didn’t stop; they turned right onto the dirt road leading to Mitruiluku’s

villa, in a township he was calling *Kérékwes*, “Host of Horses,” which was the family name.

In twenty minutes they came to his new location on the sandy ridge: three tents, as Thornton had described from a month earlier, but they now had a well and a windmill to pump water for them, and two rooms of a villa on high ground were partially complete. Chris parked next to Mitruiluku’s steam car and Luktréstu stayed there, with the phone and the manuscript to proofread, while Chris walked to the tent.

Mitruiluku’s butler warmly welcomed him and ushered him immediately into the inner tent. Mitruiluku and Mitrubbaru were both waiting. Mitruiluku smiled broadly and offered both hands. “Lord Kristoféru, it is so kind of you to write and to visit. No one visits me here! Even my wife has refused to come for the last three weeks!”

“I’m sorry about that. How are you managing?”

“Right now, we’re soaked! These tents leak terribly! Damn the army for cheating us this way! I’m surprised you’re wet, also.”

“A little. I see you will soon have some rooms enclosed, at least.”

“Yes, another week or so. The men do adequate work, and we’re no longer building on future seabed.” He shook his head. “I’ve never suffered so much in my life, Lord. Never.”

“Well, I have a few things for you. They’re gifts. Thornton said you have a steam car; it has headlights, right?”

“Yes, though I never use them. I don’t drive during the eclipse.”

“That’s fine. The car has an alternator to power the lights. I’ve brought you three large batteries to put in the car’s trunk. I can wire them to your alternator before I leave.

Every time you drive the car, the batteries will charge up. You can run one house light all night off each battery, and a radio as well.”

Mitruiluku’s eyes grew large. “May Esto bless you! That will make our lives a little more pleasant. Did you bring a radio?”

“No, but you can buy one in Swadlendha. Leave it on channel one and listen to the weather reports. If anyone has anything to tell you, you’ll hear a ‘call’ over channel one. Then you switch to channel ten to exchange the message. Or you can switch to channel ten and see who else is there; usually there’s a telephone operator monitoring the channel who can telephone a message for you.”

“Oh, that will help immensely! Thank you so much. And that means we can also listen to music on channel two, which will bring some joy to our lives. But Lord, Kekanu angers me terribly. If he hadn’t interfered, Mitruiluku would have caved in. I don’t think he would have lasted more than another week or two. I was close to victory and Kekanu snatched it from me!”

“Lord Mitruiluku, Kekanu does not command army units.” Chris shrugged. “You know who does.”

“Let’s not dwell on the misfortunes of the past,” interrupted Mitrubbaru. “The three of us have had very pleasant times together.”

“Yes,” said Chris. “Remember, Mitruiluku, when we drove the two rovers along the old Royal Road, through Anartu, to Ora, and you showed us around? That was an exciting moment for you and for me.”

“That was exciting,” he agreed. “I was so proud to show you around our city. A city that is now mostly washed away.”

“Many changes,” agreed Chris.

Mitruiluku rang a little bell and the butler came in. “Can you bring us tea? And roll up the tent sides so we can get air in here, it’s getting quite humid.”

The butler nodded and headed out. His wife, the cook, appeared immediately with tea. They all took cups and added sugar. “At least we have tea,” said Mitruiluku. “But we have no ice here, and no delicacies of any sort; you can’t buy them in Swadlendha or even in Endraidha, which our butler drives to once or twice a week.”

“With a radio you can order things from Mæddoakwés or even Mælwika and they’ll arrive in Swadlendha on the morning bus.”

“We’ll have to do that; with a few luxury items and delicacies here, our wives will visit us again,” said Mitrubbaru. “Tell us, Lord, what is the news? We don’t even get the newspapers here.”

“The big news is that Her Majesty is traveling, as she always does this time of year. She was in Belledha for four days, where she met with the provincial Assembly; it consisted of all the lords plus a dozen commoners selected by Déolu. They approved a provincial budget for the year, based on the harvest and on some money Her Majesty added. Then after a day in Sumiuperakwa, she spent five days in Néfa, and there was a provincial Assembly there as well that also approved a provincial budget. She’s now in Ora for almost two weeks and she will meet with a hastily assembled provincial Assembly for Vésa, to help heal the wounds and finalize a provincial budget. After that, of course, she goes to Isurdhuna for two weeks, where there will be a provincial Assembly for Kæda after the Festival. Then a week in Mæddwoglubas, a week in Tripola, three days each in Gordha and Mædhpéla, and then home.”

Mitruiluku shook his head. “All these provincial Assemblies; the old days are over when someone could make a decision and that would be it. But I suppose you approve of them.”

“I do, Lord, because it is better to develop a consensus. Widumaj said so.”

“Widumaj also said there were to be lords and monarchs.”

“And there still are, last I looked. In fact, I am now Lord over three places.”

“Three?” asked Mitruiluku, furrowing his brows intensely.

“Indeed. I have made an arrangement with Her Majesty. She has granted me the triangular piece of land between Mitrubbaru’s township and General Roktekester’s. So I am now a neighbor of yours. That’s one reason I wanted to visit. The other part of the agreement with the Réjé is that I work with the three sons of Mitru in their efforts to develop their townships.”

“Oh? So, you are to help us? Was that your idea, or Her Majesty’s?”

“I think she does not mean for you to suffer in loneliness and poverty, but to make something of this area. It has Sumi ruins scattered across it; it is well watered, warm all year round, and has rich soil. Each of your towns could feed fifty thousand people, and with industrial development they could be as large or larger than Ora currently is.”

Mitruiluku scowled again. “So, how do you propose we make our four towns that large?”

“It’s a question of where we start. Thornton and I have talked to General Roktekester and he told me to tell you he would have a crew down here to gravel the road from Gramakwés to Kérékwes next month. They will also install utility poles. To get the power and phone line, you’ll have to contact the companies. I don’t think they’ll charge

you, because this is a future village site and the road is supposed to get an official route number.”

“Are they graveling the road all the way to the Arjakwés?”

“No, just to here. That’s too much to do this summer. I think Her Majesty had to add money to their budget to complete the road to here.”

“We’ll be thankful for anything we get,” said Mitrubbaru, before Mitruiluku could complain. “What else?”

“I’m starting a grange for my township, or I’ll ask the Ornakwés Grange to expand southward. That will get people to move to the township and start a real village, which is an essential start to make a place grow.”

Mitruiluku shook his head vigorously. “No, no grange for Kérékwes. I plan to farm this land with tractors and hired workers, like Albanu.”

“Albanu has thousands of farmers living on or near his farms who know the land and the climate well. Are you planning to pay workers huge salaries to get them to move here? And how will they become familiar with the farming conditions?”

“Brother, how big are our towns? If we have one or two hundred farmers here, they will use a tiny fraction of our farmland,” noted Mitrubbaru.

“Each of your townships has about 42,000 agris; that’s sufficient for almost 2,000 farmers at twenty agris per farmer. Mitruiluku, you need a few hundred farmers here. They will turn Kérékwes from a villa into a village. You can hire them to work on your lands. They will bring to you a marketplace, businesses, and eventually factories. Very large farms may very well prove to be the way of the future, but you can’t plunge into that immediately.”

“Do we want a villa or a city?” asked Mitrubbaru.

Mitruiluku nodded skeptically. “You have a point, Lord Kristoféru. We do need to decide what we want. I want a villa and a large farm, but that doesn’t mean that I don’t want a city as well. Perhaps I want both.”

“We can have both, brother.”

He looked at the over-anxious Mitrubbaru. “Alright, alright. I agree, we should try it. Lord Chris, are you planning to make the same offer to Mitrulubu?”

“I am indeed. Mitrulubu has already written to express interest in a grange. I think he wants neighbors. My goal will be separate granges for each township, but that will not be practical until the number of farmers is sufficient, so we’ll start with one grange for all four townships. The logical place for the grange would be on Route 3 on Mitrubbaru’s land; it would be equidistant from the other towns. I suggest you both start by allocating a thousand agris for sale to farmers. You may wish to sell it in forty or fifty agri chunks. Your own farms can be part of the grange, also, which means you have access to the grange’s tractors, plows, threshers, and planters.”

“Yes, that’s the way to go,” said Mitrubbaru.

“How do we know you’ll send farmers our way, rather than keep them all for your township?” asked Mitruiluku.

“Simple. I won’t allocate any land to farmers at all until next spring. That’ll give your townships time to get established. I want a township because Ménwika’s farmland will all be paid for, starting in two years, so I need to sell more land.”

“How much?” asked Mitrubbaru.

“Each farmer pays two tenths to the Réjé, one tenth to the local lord, a thirtieth to the Duke—I don’t know that there is one for this area—a twelfth grange fee, and a twelfth mortgage payment. That totals half the crop. One can’t charge more; people will buy land elsewhere.”

“So, that totals eighteen percent; if I get the Duke’s allocation, twenty-one percent,” said Mitruiluku, nodding. “How many farmers can we get?”

“That’s hard to say, because in the last nine years, almost two thousand farmers have settled on forty-five thousand agris of new farmland. I don’t know how many more will do so. North Shore villages have arrangements with the lower Arjakwés granges; farmers farm there in the winter and some of the grange’s equipment goes north to help out over the summer. But we may be too far from both the northern and southern shores for that arrangement. We’ll try it this fall and see.”

Alright, we’ll try it,” concluded Mitruiluku. “I guess it’s the first step in populating this wilderness.”

Chris, Liz, Kekanu, and Dárasé left Isurdhuna at 3 a.m., three hours before sunrise. It was the only time that was practical; the annual festival dedicated to Widumaj’s hymns had ended late the previous afternoon and the road had been totally choked with buses and steam cars. As predicted, it had again been a record-setting festival.

They reached Pértatranisér at 7 a.m., less than an hour before Kekanu had to start *The World Table*. He and Dárasé hurried to the studio to get ready. Lébé and Thornton were at the breakfast table with their kids.

“How was the festival?” asked Lébé.

“Fantastic and terrible at the same time,” said Chris. “The biggest crowd ever; 40,000 people, half of whom came from outside the valley. Maybe half of them left last night, and the other half are about to hit the road today.”

“And most will stop here,” said Lébé. “Even buses to Bellédha stopped here! I gather Isurdhuna ran out of food, so people stopped here to stock up for the trip. Now the marketplace is bare.”

“Really?” said Chris.

She nodded. “You should go see. They kept the marketplace open last night until midnight and the stores were picked bare. The phone lines were burning all night and trucks have been pouring in with more stuff for two hours.”

“Amos and May are down there helping right now,” added Thornton. “We’re baby sitting.”

“How was the new hotel?” asked Lébé.

“It was great!” said Liz. “Awsé was going crazy to make sure it was set up the way she wanted. The old palace doesn’t make a very good hotel; the stucco work on the walls is beautiful, but there are no places to install hallways or bathrooms. Yet they had it ready, we stayed there one night, then moved out for the paying customers.”

“The spa in Justha was much more comfortable and had a regular bus to the festival, so it was more pleasant,” added Chris.

“It even had food!” agreed Liz. “No one expected such a big crowd.”

“How’s Frachvála?” asked Thornton.

“Everyone there is fine and sends their greetings. They got power and telephone six months ago, a thrice-daily bus run to the top of the escarpment started in the spring

and makes hunting much easier, their sawmill started up last month, and their high school opens in the fall. So the development conference triggered quite a lot of growth. How was your field trip?"

Thornton smiled. "It was great! Route 55 has been graveled all the way along the southern side of the Glugluba to the edge of the Long Valley. Lord Mitru was far-sighted; he didn't want Kerda to have the only access to the east. When I came back through Ora, Duke Aryu asked me whether I thought a road from 55 northward to Kerda would be possible."

"That's a great idea!" said Chris. "Another way in and out of the valley would relieve congestion."

"And Route 55 rarely gets any snow, so it would be open all winter," said Thornton. "I'm sure there are hiking and goat trails up and down the escarpment at the valley's south end, but whether the army could convert one into a real road's another matter. The other interesting thing, dad, is Long Lake: It's mostly empty."

"Really?" Chris was surprised.

"The flat bottom isn't visible yet, but I don't think there's more than a year of water to drain out. It's really amazing to see. In another month I'll take a geological team along the old Royal Road from Kerda to the edge, then northward."

"And I'll be stuck here with the kids," said Lébé.

"Let's go down to the marketplace in a few minutes," Chris said to Liz. "I want to see what's happening there."

She nodded. They waited for the cook to finish heating up some breakfast for them, then as the plates were cleaned and the eclipse was beginning to deepen into gloom

outside, they walked down to the marketplace. There were already three buses from Isurdhuna parked in the loop, and as they entered a fourth arrived. “Mitru has made this place the hub of operations, or at least an obligatory stop,” said Chris.

“Go to the Festival and go shopping,” concluded Liz, wryly.

They entered the marketplace. Another building had been finished a month earlier, so that the bus parking loop now had buildings on two of three sides. The new building had a bookstore, a wine shop, a fancy clothing store, a barber shop, a toy store, and a store that sold nick-nacks of glass, wood, and ceramic. Home Improvement was stuffed with customers. Chris caught a bit of Bëbru’s time while he was madly restocking shelves.

“Best day yet?”

“If I can keep the store stocked! The Melwika store’s truck hasn’t arrived yet. They stripped the store there all night and are sending almost everything here.”

“How are the radios selling?”

“They sold out late yesterday afternoon and I’m getting only fifteen more.” He stopped filling a shelf with sheets and turned to Chris. “This is unbelievable. I swear, there are peasant farmers buying radios! And beds; you should see them loading the frames and mattresses on the buses. And tables with chairs. Not to mention the clothes; I have a truckload coming up from Mëddwoglubas in an hour. They told me demand has been so strong this summer, they’re running out!”

“Really? I guess it was inevitable.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, there are about eighty thousand more agris under cultivation than ten years ago. A lot of that is a change of practices; rather than leave a quarter of their land fallow for a year to recover, farmers are buying fertilizer and farming it, either because they have access to a tractor or because a neighbor now has a team of oxen. Crop prices have halved, but rural income has often held up. And there are five thousand workers in factories or doing other things involving the new knowledge. So maybe ten thousand families have more money than ten years ago, and they’re spending it.”

“So, this is a trend?”

“Yes, I believe so.”

“It’s certainly good for Pértatranisé, if we can convince people to come here to spend their money!”

“I think Awsé needs to consider a hotel here,” said Chris. “People can come to shop and have fun. Good luck, Bèbru.”

Bèbru went back to his work and Chris headed out of the store. He was looking for Amos. He crossed the marketplace and the new building a second time, all the time while Kèkanu’s radio show was blaring in the background; they had installed loudspeakers in the buildings so everyone could hear it. Finally he spotted Amos talking to the owner of the bookstore. Even it seemed to be doing a brisk business.

Chris held up a scroll. “I finally got the royal proclamation yesterday.”

“Oh? About what?” asked Amos.

“I’ll read it aloud, but not here; on the stage in the other building. Come on.”

Chris headed slowly toward the other building, Liz following knowingly and Amos with a puzzled expression. The stage was usually reserved for the noon concert, which Kèkanu

had an assistant organize every day. Chris turned on the microphone, turned off Kēkanu's program, and stepped forward. Liz came to help hold the scroll. Since *The World Table* had suddenly stopped, he had everyone's attention.

“Ladies and gentlemen, I have a very important and exciting announcement. Last month I approached Her Majesty about the future of this fascinating and growing city. Yesterday she issued a proclamation, which I will now read to everyone.” He paused as Liz unrolled the text and he donned his reading glasses. “To the people of the city of Pértatranisér, greetings: I Dukteréstó, Queen of this world from the Spine to Sumilara Island, have considered the petition of Lord Kristoféru about the future of Pértatranisér and determine as follows: first, that Pértatranisér is a royal city, a twin to Néfa in the province of Rudhisér, to whose governor it must now pay the three percent provincial tax; second, that like Melwika, it is a city with two lords, whose aristocratic rank passes down to the heir of each; third, that Amosu Kéyno is now Lord of Pértatranisér along with Kristoféru Ménnéa. I congratulate the people of Pértatranisér for their growth and progress and look forward to making an annual visit to the city so that I may appraise myself of its conditions.”

Chris lowered the scroll and looked at a very shocked Amos. The audience, thrilled, began to applaud. “It is clear that Her Majesty shares my very high opinion of the capacities of Amos,” Chris continued. “In the last year he has earned the love and respect of the inhabitants of this city, and its steady growth, now to almost two thousand people, is a reflection of his leadership. I am thrilled to give him the regular, day-to-day responsibility for overseeing Pértatranisér and working with the City Council to ensure its bright future.” [November 15, 2006; reread and edited 5/30/13, 8/10/17, 11/12/24]

Luktréstu held up the master calendar. “I’ve updated this with your course schedule, Central Spiritual Assembly meetings, Mēlwika City Council meetings, and meetings connected with the city election,” he said. “The rest of Brenménu and Génménu look pretty busy, but then it gets quieter.”

Chris took the large piece of paper, which had been printed with an array of boxes, twelve long ones vertically by thirty-three horizontally. Each vertical column represented two weeks; there was room to detail each day, hour by hour, for an entire year. Luktréstu’s penciled notes were neat. “This is nice; is it from Estowékhu Tērskuai’s office supply store?”

“Who else? He took that idea from your business class and ran with it. His metal filing cabinets are very well made.”

“He’s doing a good job. Tērskua needed the manufacturing jobs; I’m making money as a start-up partner; and Mēlwika has a new store. This is nicely designed. I bet Modolubu helped with the layout.” He scanned the boxes. “Let’s put this on the wall outside our offices and keep it updated, so everyone can see where I’ll be at any time of the day.”

“Alright, I’ll put it up.” Luktréstu pointed to the second and third weeks of Génménu. “Next month, right after the election, I want to be away for two weeks. With your permission, I’m going home to get married.”

“Married? Marvelous! Congratulations! What’s her name?”

Luktréstu smiled. “Blorudhé. She’s twenty, very smart and pleasant. My father suggested the match to her mother; her father’s dead. They accepted. We’ve met a couple of times and I think she’ll be an excellent wife.”

“Oh, I am so happy for you, Luktréstu! Is she a Bahá’í?”

“No, but she’s interested and has taken a few classes in Domamitrui. Just yesterday I found a house to rent for us, up on the northern hill. This will cut into my hours working for you, I’m afraid.”

“Understandably; you’ve been working twelve hours a day most days. And it’s time to give you a raise; you’ve worked for me a year and a half and haven’t had one for a year. How’s fifteen hundred?”

Luktréstu smiled. “Thank you very much, Lord, you are very generous! Blorudhé wants to get a job, too, and I said yes. This will help us out a lot.”

“She’ll settle into town, get a job, and find that she’s pregnant.” Chris lowered his voice. “Luktréstu, it’s better not to have children in the first year; get to know each other and enjoy a life together first. Tell her to go see Dr. Lua once she’s in town. She’ll tell her how to avoid pregnancy with some reliability, so the two of you can plan your family.”

“I see.” Luktréstu was surprised and a bit embarrassed by Chris’s information. “We are concerned about having too many children; they’re very expensive! After we get married, I’ll mention that to her.”

“We’ll need to find someone to substitute for you while you’re away.”

“How about Aryéstu? He did very well in his summer term courses, and he’ll be in your economics class. You may remember meeting him at the beginning of the summer. The young man from Weranopéla.”

“Yes, I remember. Arrange for a time when I can meet him, then the three of us can discuss the job together. I could probably use two of you for a few weeks.”

“Alright. We have to leave for Mèddoakwés in fifteen minutes.”

“Thanks.”

Luktréstu stepped out of the office, leaving Chris to look out of the windows over Citadel Square and wonder whether he was going to lose Luktréstu soon. He was happy the young man was getting married, but the sort of assistant he needed was not easily compatible with domestic life. Perhaps with two assistants, though, it would work out.

There was a knock on his door, bringing him back to the present. He looked; it was Géndukordu, a young Ghéslone student at the génadema. “Greetings, Géndukordu, come in.”

“Thank you, Lord. How are you today?”

“I am very well. So, the summer term is over and you’re ready to go home? How did you do?”

“Fairly well. I’m trying to read two more books before I have to return them to the library. I just got a letter in the mail from Lord Ornkordu’s secretary. He said you are welcome to come to Moruagras next week and that he would very much look forward to meeting you.”

“Excellent. Tell him that I will accompany Thornton and you. It will be a privilege to see the land of your people.”

“I’m excited to be going home. I’ll be happy to give you a tour!”

“Thank you, I look forward to it. Also, since we are going with you: please go to the bookstore and select one hundred books for the village’s school. I’ll call the bookstore and authorize the payment.”

“You had already said I could assemble a small science lab, and that was expensive, Lord!”

“I know, I didn’t forget. But now I am going as well, so I want to make a bigger gift.”

“You are too generous, Lord!”

“Not at all. Not at all. It is an honor to serve your people.”

“Then my people will honor you as well.”

“No, no honor is necessary.”

“Thank you again, Lord Kristobéru.” Géndukordu waved goodbye and stepped away. Chris turned back to his correspondence for a few minutes, then Luktréstu arrived. Time for the quick drive to the capital.

They drove the old, battered rover out of its garage, across Citadel Square, through the Citadel Gate, and downhill to West Street, the wide ribbon of concrete that circled part of Mēlwika outside its walls. Where it reached the base of North Hill they turned left onto Route 2. It was hard to tell they were outside the town; Route 2 was lined with houses all the way to Nénaslua, three kilometers away, especially near the little wooden bus stop huts. The exception was a two-hundred meter gap on the north side of the road where a wall enclosed the city’s hazardous waste cesspool. Nénaslua had grown by a hundred houses as well.

They stopped at Nénaslua's one stop sign, where Route 4 came in from Yimuaidha, then continued toward Béranagrés. They passed a highway crew pouring concrete; the six-meter pavement was being widened to ten meters to provide separate lanes for wagons and steam vehicles. They passed a utility crew installing an additional telephone line. Beyond the construction, the highway passed through fields that were fallow after their second harvest. Chris smiled as he looked at them. "I love agriculture."

"It was a good year."

"Unbelievably good. And look at all the vineyards and orchards that are being planted! And the fields that had vegetables. So much greater crop diversity and cash cropping."

"That's why they're widening the road and laying more phone lines!"

Chris nodded. "They gave the road contract to Déru and he's doing the work for about a third less than the army's costs for the highway on the western shore! The other day Perku told me they decided to widen the phase one roadway by half but had to double the budget. The Néfa to Tripola Highway's going to cost 1.6 million." Chris shook his head. "But of course, the army won't take any advice from us about efficiency!"

"No, no way."

They continued three kilometers more to Béranagrés. The new road around the village was already lined with new houses, plus an elementary school and a grange building; it had grown as well. After five kilometers they slowed to pass through part of Morituora with its two factories. Another five kilometers brought them to Mèddoakwés, which they circled. They parked in the palace's new parking lot, right outside the city's

eastern wall next to a postern gate. Luktréstu stayed with the car while Chris walked into the palace.

He was escorted to the meeting room where Estoiyaju was already seated with Lukaru, chief editor of the *Royal Standard*, the palace's weekly newspaper. Before they were able to get beyond greetings, Kekanu came in, followed by Wëranolubu. That made Chris nervous; it suggested they were trying to convince him of something.

"Kekanu, we are all thrilled by what you are doing with the radio programs," began Estoiyaju. "Her Majesty was very pleased by the interview you did with her last month; it was so kind, yet gave her challenging questions to answer decisively. She listened to the entire interview when you repeated it later that day."

"And I want to echo Estoiyaju," added Wëranolubu. "I've enjoyed both my interviews."

"I hope you'll come on the program monthly, honored Prime Minister," replied Kekanu. "And Her Majesty was gracious, as always. It helps to know her; I knew what to ask. But I am sure you didn't invite us here to praise World Radio."

"In a way, we did," replied Estoiyaju. "World Radio has been an incredible success. How many radios have been purchased now?"

"Three hundred," replied Chris. "And demand exceeds the production rate of fifty per month."

"I heard two thirds of the villages now have one," said Wëranolubu.

"It may be a bit more by now," replied Chris. "The bigger problem is paying for the operation. But we now have several sponsors."

“Our proposal may help, where that is concerned,” replied Estoiyaju. “Her Majesty wants the palace to produce a regular radio program. She has asked Lukaru to handle it.”

“Excellent,” replied Kekanu. “There is a huge amount of unused channel space. Educational programs will start in a few weeks on channel 3 but there are six completely unused channels.”

“We’d like to have the program on channel 2, though,” replied Estoiyaju. “Right after the *World Table*. It’s the second best time. In fact, it is better than the eclipse in one way; Isurdhuna is awake by then.”

“But I’ve been extending the *World Table* an hour after the eclipse, and I’ve hired someone to run a music show after me, leading up to and including the concert. It’ll be called the *Concert Show*. You can have a time slot after that.”

“But when the *Concert Show* ends, everyone here is asleep,” objected Estoiyaju. “You can’t relegate the palace to sleep time. There are about five hours when everyone is awake, and only two or three of those hours are actually good because most people listen to the radio in a public place. We need the time slot after *The World Table*, Estoiyaju.”

“Why not use channel three? It’s completely empty right now. You could run during and after the eclipse, if you want.”

“And who will be listening?”

“Well, there will be some people, I’m sure.”

Estoiyaju laughed. Chris said, “Look, Estoiyaju, I understand your concern. We want to help the palace to communicate with the public as well. But we’ve already

invested money in the time slot you want. We've hired someone to host a show then. You know that; it's been announced for several weeks."

"We have heard the announcement, yes," agreed Estoiyaju. "But Her Majesty is requesting this."

"Her Majesty, or you?" asked Kekanu.

"Would you like to ask her? According to Estodatu's research, radio channels are considered public property on Gædhéma and are both regulated by the government and sold to users by it. Would you like us to charge you to use channel 2?"

"No," replied Kekanu, startled.

"Look, maybe we can come up with another arrangement," said Chris. "We can always put the new guy on before *The World Table*. Eventually, we'll need to fill channel 2 and channel 4, assuming channel 3 remains an educational channel. Right now, there's nothing for the eastern shore during the morning. What if the palace broadcast on channel 4 starting at 6 a.m. here, then repeated the show twelve hours later at 6 p.m., after the *World Table* ends?"

"On what channel?" asked Estoiyaju.

"Channel 2."

"Then we're making progress." Estoiyaju smiled. "Why don't you repeat *The World Table* on channel 4 first, then our show would follow. You are recording it, right?"

"No, but we could, and could hire someone to re-run it." Kekanu looked at Chris.

"Six in the morning here is nine in the evening on the western shore and seven in the evening in Isurdhuna. I suggest the *World Table* start two hours earlier than that, with the

Palace Show starting at 6 a.m. here. That way, the Palace Show will get the eastern and western shores.”

“What about channel 3?” asked Lukaru. “How can you fill it with educational programs?”

“Eventually,” said Chris. “The plan is to offer six hours of programs and repeat it four times. For example, first and second grade programs would start at 8 a.m., third and fourth grades at 9 a.m., etc., through twelfth. When the twelfth grade program ends at 2 p.m., it’s 8 a.m. in Bellédha and the first grade will be ready for its lessons. On the western shore, the grades will start with 7-8 and the fifth and sixth graders will hear their broadcast at the end of the school day. This way, little village schools will always have something for their kids. We’ll start with one day a week, repeat it other days, and gradually add more days.”

“Widéstu has been working with the Melwika School system all summer,” Weranolubu added. “We’re providing ten thousand dhanay in funding. This has absolutely incredible potential. Imagine families clustered around the radio at night, listening to basic science or geography or history.”

“And we’ll broadcast génadema courses on channel 5, starting some time in the spring,” added Chris. “Amos is working on a longer recording system, because the cylinders hold four minutes and they’re bulky to store.”

“We’ve already played a few cylinders in the wrong order,” added Kékanu.

“Well, this is all very good, because it means the palace can get its message out to everyone more easily than ever before,” said Estoiyaju. “Our English translators have been very busy reading about *public relations*.” He said the English term. “We know this

medium is even harder to control than the press, but we understand that on Gædhéma governments manage their message carefully and that way they can usually dominate the airspace.”

“Usually, but not always,” said Chris. “I am impressed by the approach the palace is taking. We have tried to be very responsible in our use of the radio.”

“Like the BBC,” added Kekanu.

Estoiyaju nodded; he knew about the BBC. “We are very grateful for that. Did I not hear some Bahá’í quotations about the press on channel 1 the other day? The ethical principles are very good.”

“I assume you’re going to build a studio here?” asked Kekanu.

“Yes,” replied Lukaru. “Of course, we have no idea how to.”

“Come to Pértatranisér and see,” said Chris. “We’ll help, of course.”

“And I would like to propose to use your studio sometime,” added Kekanu.

“Usually I am in Mælwika in the fall, and I still want to be here sometime, but I have no studio here.”

“Of course you can use it,” replied Lukaru. “And I assume we can use yours?”

“Indeed,” said Kekanu, nodding. “Lukaru, come to Pértatranisér next week and I’ll interview you on *The World Table*. Maybe for two days, so we can talk about your plans for the *Palace Show*. This week’s interviews are already scheduled; I have three with teachers in Mælwika to talk about the educational programs, plus one with Pærku and one with Duke Albanu.”

“How will you do your show this afternoon?” asked Estoiyaju.

Kekanu smiled. “Well, it’s six hours from now, and I have Amos’s steam car waiting to drive me back! I hope to get a decent sleep on the way!”

“We’d better not keep you any longer, then,” said Estoiyaju, rising. They all shook hands and exchanged pleasantries, then Chris walked Kekanu back to the parking lot.

“Those bastards!” mumbled Kekanu, after they had exited the gate. “They were going to get their way on this one, and they plan to control the radio medium for their own purposes!”

“Never mind. I could see that we were going to lose. We’re better off being cooperative. Eventually someone will get channel 2 and someone else will get channel 4. It really doesn’t matter who gets which one. And if we lease space to them on ours and they lease space to us on theirs, I guess that’s alright, too.”

“I suppose. It screws up the entire plan—the vision—I had for the programming! But Chris, they plan to use the radio to get their point of view across, too! That’s not right either.”

“I know, but what can we do? That’s the way the world is. We’re better off working with them and helping them than resisting them.”

Kekanu sighed. “I know cooperation is wiser. You don’t have to be a Bahá’í to know that. But I’m not going to help them dish out *propaganda*.” He used the English word.

When Thornton, Chris, Jordan, and Géndukordu drove out of Melwika heading east, Skanda was nearly full and shedding so much light they didn’t need to use the rover’s

headlights. Forty-five minutes later, Skanda had set in the west, but the eastern sky was glowing fiercely with the twilight of an impending dawn. When they reached Gordha after another thirty minutes, the sun was up and shining in their faces.

They had no time to stop; they admired the old center of Tutane culture as it flew by. There had always been clusters of stone huts near Route 1 on the approach to Gordha, but now the clusters were more common, the number of huts had increased, and they were surrounded by vegetable and wheat fields, even some rice paddies carved from the marshes along the river, and were accompanied by barns and animal pens. The Meghendres tribe was settling down to benefit from electricity, telephones, schools, a génadema, a hospital, and Gordha's dam and slaughterhouse. A few new clusters of huts even represented arrivals from other tribes.

The rover slowly chugged up over the ridge behind town, past the astronomical observatory on top, then downhill, past Gordha reservoir, and steadily up hillslopes toward Kostakhéma. They passed the shrunken outpost at the crest of the Spine Mountains an hour and three quarters later, but since they were now five time zones east of Melwika, it was late morning. A dusting of fresh snow reminded them that it was now past the beginning of autumn and the steadily dropping amount of sunlight was ushering in a colder season. The thunder of dynamite blasting ice free from the glacier south of the village reminded them that ice exports had partially replaced the army garrison as a source of income.

What formerly had been considered the end of civilization soon slipped behind them as the freshly graveled route descended another 85 kilometers toward the

escarpment edge above Long Lake. An hour and a half later they approached Moruagras, where it was late afternoon.

“Slow down,” said Géndukordu, pointing to the Kostësruma or “Spine River” next to them. Chris slowed the rover, then Géndukordu said “stop here,” and he did. They all climbed out. “From this point, the Kostësruma begins to descend into a canyon that takes it to Long Lake,” the Tutane added. “But right here there’s this old cut-off meander that can be supplied with a steady supply of river water. So this is the best spot for a trout hatchery.”

Chris nodded. “Based on the little I know about the subject, it looks good to me.”

“It has all the features we need,” agreed Thornton. “It’s even on a power and phone line.”

“How far from the village?” asked Jordan.

“Ten kilometers, and about six kilometers from the fort at Moruastéa,” replied Géndukordu. “The bus to Altagras and Kostëkhéma runs by every day.”

“Why does this world need a fish hatchery?” asked Jordan.

“Because I’m willing to pay for one,” replied Chris. “Every river that flows westward off the Spine Mountains and every river on the western shore has no large fish; just little minnows and a few warm-water perch in Véspe. Some rivers even lack those species. At one point in the past, the rivers must have virtually dried up and the fish perished. So we’ll restock them from here.”

They got back into the rover as a heavy truck hauling a heaping load of iron ore to Melwika rumbled past. They drove down the road and almost immediately, the river next to it dropped over a waterfall and entered a canyon. “Dad, we need to talk more about

establishing national parks,” said Thornton, looking at the falls. “Some areas are incredibly beautiful; in others the animal species need protection; in others, the forests or grasslands need management.”

“I know. Maybe this winter we can talk to Weranolobu or the Queen herself.”

“Meanwhile, could we talk about setting aside part of your township in the lower Arjakwés as a park?”

Chris thought about that. “Perhaps.”

They passed Moruastéa, the rock pinnacle near the entrance to Moruagras or “Island fields,” a flat agricultural area some four kilometers long and two wide with drop offs on three sides that constituted the Ghéslong’s main settlement. They stopped the rover at the isthmus connecting Moruagras to the rest of the highlands and looked eastward over the Long Valley. Chris whistled. “Wow, Thornton, Long Lake *has* dropped a lot!”

“I told you. The valley floor is beginning to appear.” Thornton pointed to the other side, then handed his father a pair of binoculars. Chris pointed and focused, then nodded. “The slope is leveling off. There can’t be much water left.”

“Maybe a hundred meters in the middle of the valley, but the water level has dropped sixteen hundred meters in eight years, and as the width of the lake narrows it’ll drop faster.”

“And you said the dam was washing away too, right?” asked Jordan.

Thornton nodded. “When the geology team visited the dam two months ago, it was half as high as it used to be; a lot of it has washed away. I think the lake will be empty by this time next year.”

“So, my people need to be in the position to claim the lake bottom,” said Géndukordu. He pointed. “You see those forested ramps? That’s the old royal road.”

“Clear it,” said Chris. “In my opinion, the floor should be split between the people on each side. Opposite you are Kërda and Vésþa; opposite the Géndonε are Vésþa, Læwésþa, and perhaps Deksawsakεla. But you may not be able to do much even next year; the floor will be covered by tens of meters of soupy mud for many months.”

“And the people on the other side may fight us for it.”

“And Her Majesty will make the final determination,” said Thornton.

Chris nodded. They got in the rover and headed on down the road to Moruagras village. The road was graveled and still had power and telephone lines along it. Chris pointed. “Are they using them?”

“Not much,” replied Géndukordu. “Sometimes I get messages from Moruagras, via the telephone, but I call at least once a week to receive orders for things the village needs and convey any news. Other than a call to Gordha hospital every few months, they don’t use the phone. Only the school, the temple, and Lord Ornkordu’s house have light bulbs.”

“The iron mine doesn’t use power?” asked Jordan.

Géndukordu shook his head. “The army garrison blasts the ore apart twice a week, then a team shovels and throws the pieces into a trailer. The truck comes three times a week to bulldoze big pieces into a pile so the army can blow them up again, and to haul away a trailer-load of smaller chunks. Every month or so the truck brings a power shovel to put in the trailer the big pieces the men can’t lift, smash, or blow apart.”

They began to approach the village, which was built on a promontory of the “island” which itself was surrounded by cliffs on three sides. Notable was the new school building, which had four classrooms; the ground was broken next to it for an addition, and a former wheat field behind it had a pair of soccer goal posts. Once they passed the school, someone started ringing its bell, causing the entire village to turn out. Chris slowed the rover to walking speed and soon it was surrounded by a crowd.

They stopped in front of Lord Ornkordu’s large wooden house and stepped out. Everyone began to cheer Géndukordu—son of the lord’s sister—and he introduced the three generations of Menneas while they slowly walked toward the door. Thornton was surprised to see a familiar face in the crowd. “Rébu!”

“Thornton!” Rébu stepped forward a bit and they shook hands. “But you might as well call me Kwéteru here. This is my wife, Snékhésé.” Thornton smiled, pleased to meet “Snowflower” or “Eidelweiss,” the wife he had heard Kwéteru had married, who was clearly pregnant.

“I’m honored to meet you.”

“Thank you,” she replied, with a shy smile. They shook hands.

“She was my assistant with the six to ten year olds. I’ve now taught her four génadema courses, as well as I can remember them.”

“Excellent, that’s very important.” Thornton nodded and hurried to catch up with his father and Jordan.

Once inside the house there were other introductions to make, for the village elders began to enter. Ornkordu was at the door and gave Géndukordu and the Menneas a big, bone crushing embrace, much to Chris’s surprise. Géndukordu took them into the

main room of the house and introduced everyone, an excited act of hospitality that seemed to surprise the host. The whirlwind of conversation was overwhelming for its volume and its strangeness, for the Ghéslone dialect was even harder to understand than the Gordhan, with strange “bh” sounds and a completely different set of noun endings.

“We are all very honored that you have come all this way to see us,” began Ornkordu. “Lord Kristobhéru, a particularly warm greeting to you. Please accept our thanks for taking such good care of Géndukordu for these two years.”

“It was our honor and pleasure, Lord,” replied Chris. “And he was an excellent student, who completed a *dwoyeri* or two-year degree in two years even though he arrived unable to read and write. That usually adds an entire year. And he did all that while serving as your tribe’s agent in Melwika, helping other students settle in, arranging purchases and sales . . . he is an extraordinary young man and a treasure for your people.”

Ornkordu was beaming with pride at his nephew. “Thank you. He was a loyal and reliable servant and has trained two to take over his role. He wrote to me many times that your *tomi* offices were extremely helpful to him, explaining how things are done, who to talk to, what approach to take. . . we all owe you an immense debt, Lord. The Ghéslone have been isolated for many centuries, and the isolation has saved us, because the lowland people have generally wished to exploit us. But now we have some idea how to protect our interests, and we have people able to do it.”

“And friends who will help,” added Géndukordu. “And we may need all the help we can get, uncle, for the floor of the Long Valley has started to dry out, and then there will be a land rush.”

“Yes, I have thought about that. Lord Kristobhéru, what is your view?”

“Lord, as I was saying in the car on the way here, the valley floor needs to be divided up between the tribes on one side and the provinces on the other. Ultimately, Her Majesty will decide. Your people are here; you have a right.”

“Exactly. But let us not worry about that matter now.” Ornkordu reached down and picked up an impressive headdress of leather and eagle feathers of the sort he and a few elders were wearing. “This headdress of honor is worn only by a few elders among us. We have never bestowed it on an outsider. But today that will change, because we can think of no other suitable way to express our gratitude to our friends in Melwika.” He walked to Chris, who bowed slightly to allow Ornkordu to place it on his head. The expressions of shock among some of the elders were followed by applause and ululations.

Chris extended his hands to Ornkordu. His eyes glistened. “Lord, I am very, very moved by this honor. No words can express the feelings in my heart. This headdress will be treated with the great respect that I feel for you and for the Ghéslonε. Your people will multiply, become prosperous, and will play an important role in this world’s future. I am sure of this and hope I live long enough to see many, many contributions from the Ghéslonε.”

“Thank you, Lord.” Ornkordu was pleased by the visitor’s words. We have *hot tea* for our guests.” He emphasized the words because of the rarity of the item. “Let us bring that out, and some bread and soup. You have had a very long journey.” He waved his hand and someone went out to summon the refreshments. As they came in, he continued, “So, Géndukordu, you are now here as our *high school* teacher. What will you bring us?”

“Uncle, I bring new knowledge to complement that taught us by the Sumi exiles. We have brought a simple science laboratory and a library of one hundred books for the

school, a gift of the Menneas. The génadema has authorized me to teach four génadema-level courses, so I can prepare our students to go to Gordha or Məlwika for additional education. And I bring knowledge of ways we can develop Ghéslona. This summer, working for the Development Corps, I have seen what the lowland and Tutane villages are doing. We are blessed with a road and a telephone line, but also with intelligent and hard-working people. We are already mining iron, copper, and silver. We already have a better school than most tribes. We are a fortunate people.”

“We have always known that we are fortunate, and now we have someone with a *dwoyeri* to tell us so!” That caused laughter among the elders. “But, honored nephew, of course you are right. You will be my *development minister*, Géndukordu. Together with the elders, we will chart the future of our people.”

[November 19, 2006; reread and edited 5/30/13, 8/10/17, 11/12/24]

More on school of government.

Dwobergone are producing milk; pasteurization an issue. At some point Melwika has a health crisis

Chris meets with Estoiyaju and Kekanu re radio station; Lébé wants Thornton to use condoms; Chris talks to the fish hatchery man, then he and Thornton go to Moruagras

Réjé appoints a governor for south shore, displacing Brébéstu, and moves tax collection to a royal appointee in Belledha

More on Development Corps

Chris and Thornton go to Moruagras to start fish hatchery; see that the Long Valley is beginning to dry out.

Internal auditor for Mennea Tomi; refer to day-long meeting with Weranu to hash out taxables; refer to problem with embezzlement

Continue Pértatranisér development, especially when Albanu kicks 250 more farmers off his land per year for two years; several lords kick 500 more off land in the next few years, displacing a total of 6,000 more people.

Pértatranisér deals with another 100-150 arriving families when their leases on farmland end.

Establish commercial radio station, educational radio, audio recording system, folk music broadcasting

Late Brénménu/early Génménu, year 9: Melwika City Council election, same as last time (public elects 4; Lords choose 2; the eight of them choose the Mayor)

Lébé's writing. Melwika theatre.

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