THE PIONEERS

Vol. 21

Year of the Consumer

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370.

The Rest of the Story

1 Kaiménu/21 June 16/634

Jordan and Tiamaté parked their steam car on the street outside the Mennea Tomi building and walked through the building to the Mennea house. They opened the front door and entered the cool courtyard, a welcome relief from Mɛlwika's early summer heat. Jalalu Mennea was sitting in the great room, which was wide open to the courtyard, reading a book. Jordan waved. "Hey Jalalu! So, you're a big game hunter, now!"

"Not a hunter, exactly."

"I bet the kids in school loved the story, though!"

Jalalu blushed a bit. "Yeah, I got to tell it again and again. It was quite an adventure. Have you seen the three mastodon calves?"

"Yesterday," replied Tiamaté, putting down her satchel and sitting on the couch next to the table. "We went to the zoo to watch the third one arrive. It was quite interesting. As soon as the gate was opened, it saw the other two and ran into the pen really fast!"

"I heard. Today, Mɛgdontɛr, who planned the capture, was driving a pickup to the enclosure. As he approached it a big bull mastodon charged the pickup and turned it over! He escaped and ran to the safety area, but he has a broken arm!"

"Really? When did you hear?"

"Just a little while ago; he called from Bɛllɛdha Hospital, where he went to get his arm set. They've let half the herd go because the gluba was really too small for all those

animals; it's bad on their feet to be standing in running ice water all the time, and the gravel bars are too few. They thought the twenty-five they released would run away, but instead they have been hanging out trying to get the rest of the herd free. It's very dangerous. The hunters have had to kill two of them."

"That's too bad, considering how small the herds are. Do they plan to take any more to Mɛlita?"

"I think so; there are four other babies in the enclosure. If they can separate them from their moms and get them into a truck, they will."

"That'd give the zoo a herd of seven; that would be incredible," said Jordan. "There's already an increase in visitors, and next week the City Council meets to decide whether to give the zoo ten thousand dhanay for developing eating areas next to the shopping mall."

"That's good. I hear grandpa has asked the palace for some funding as well."

Just then, Liz Mennea came downstairs. "I thought I heard voices," she said, walking straight toward the great room. She gave her grandson and his wife a hug. "How are both of you? You're early."

"We took our things to ɛndraidha and drove straight here when we finished," replied Tiamaté. "Today I finished the Book One class with ten women, and two more declared!"

"Congratulations! So, that's six?"

"Yes, raising the number of Bahá'ís in ɛndraidha to ten! I'm sorry it's too late to elect a Spiritual Assembly."

“They can elect one next year, when the community’s older, bigger, and more experienced. We can always appoint an administrative committee if they need one, or they can elect officers.”

“I’ll be starting a Book Two next week,” added Tiamaté. “We’ll be supporting the gabruli that mom has started. I think mom’s getting interested in the Faith, too.”

“Good, I’ll pray for her,” said Liz. “I’ll be going down in three weeks to visit with the gabruli and give them more ideas. Jordan, your class on the oneness of humanity just ended too, right? Will you be doing any more?”

“Yes, it just finished, and they’ve asked me to repeat it twice more, so I’ll be starting again in two weeks. The génadɛma takes a break for the Grand Court.”

“Really, even down there? I suppose they want to come to the all-génadɛma conference, too. So . . . both of you must have gotten appointment letters by now.”

“Did you *have* to?” asked Jordan.

“You can always say no.”

“No, that’s alright, I’ll serve on the Area Committee for the Swadnoma and Lower Arjakwés Cluster. I sent in the reply today.”

“Good.”

“And I can be Institute Coordinator for the ɛndraidha-Swadlɛndha Zone of the cluster,” added Tiamaté. “I’m already going to both places weekly anyway.”

“This is actually to your advantage, because instead of doing the classes yourself, you can get others to do them instead. There are some places the Ruhi Institute doesn’t work so well, like villages that are one hundred percent Bahá'í; they have no one to reach

out to. But Swadlɛndha and ɛndraidha have some of the smallest Bahá'í populations, relatively speaking, in the world, and the latter is fairly literate."

"The army wives have embraced the classes very enthusiastically," agreed Tiamaté. "They like visiting others, holding devotional meetings in their houses, and they want their children to get a spiritual education. They will become tutors pretty quickly, too. They are some of the least busy women around because their men earn enough money to support their families, they don't want their wives to work, and there are very few employment opportunities open to them. In consequence, they can become quite active in a Bahá'í community."

"Good. I suspect we will elect a local Spiritual Assembly of women next year."

Tiamaté chuckled. "Definitely."

"I'm going to take our bags upstairs," said Jordan. "Where's everyone else?"

"May and Amos aren't here yet," replied Liz. "They called an hour ago from Bɛllɛdha, so they should be here in two more hours. Your mom and dad got back from Sumiupɛrakwa last night and both of them are at work right now. Thornton and Lébé are in their offices and Chris is at the new stock market."

"Oh, today was the first day! How did it go?"

"There was a report on the radio an hour ago that said the stocks went up."

"I'll have to go over and see." Jordan grabbed Tiamaté's bag and took it upstairs with his. He put them in a bedroom next to the empty master bedroom above the great room, leaving the master bedroom for Amos and May. The third bedroom would be for their two girls, Bahiyé and Marié. Then he came downstairs. Jalalu saw him and ran over to accompany him to the stock market building.

“Any way you can use me this summer?” he asked.

“I don’t know. Probably. We’ll be staying at the house in Mɛlita all summer. The new development consulting company requires our presence every day.”

“I could give children’s classes and could help out with the company, maybe.”

“Maybe.” Jordan was skeptical that a thirteen year old could do much. “We’ll see.”

They walked along Temple Street to Temple Square, then turned right and headed west on Péskakwés Street. They immediately passed the bank, now closing for the day. The Mɛlwika Stock Market was next door; the stock market company had acquired a shoe store, torn it down, and replaced it with a new and very impressive four-story building, much of which was rented out to the bank, which badly needed more space.

They knocked on the front door, which was locked. The security guard opened it and, recognizing them, let them in. The stock trading floor was about twelve meters square and was littered with paper. On the far side, a dozen men labored at desks to record sales. A few were on the floor negotiating. A chalk board listed twenty-two stocks by three-letter abbreviations and their prices. He scanned them; they were higher.

Chris Mennea was sitting in the observing area with Aryéstu, the economist, and Yimanu, the bank president. Jordan headed to them, Jalalu trailing behind. “Is the excitement over?” he asked.

“Temporarily,” replied Chris. “We’ve suspended trade during the eclipse. The system can’t keep up with the transactions.”

“And things are up?”

Aryéstu laughed; Yimanu smiled; Chris nodded. “Yes, right now by ten percent. At the opening, calls for stock flooded in and the price went up twenty-two percent, but then others decided to make profits and phoned in orders to sell, so supply actually exceeded demand and prices dipped below the start. But everything calmed down in the end.”

“We’ve got three hours to go, after the eclipse ends,” added Yimanu. “Noon to nine everyday. I think we should always close during the eclipse, so the traders can get something to eat!”

“I’d vote for that,” agreed Aryéstu.

“Noon to nine?” Jalalu asked Jordan, quietly.

“That’s 4 p.m. to 1 a.m. in Gordha, 3 a.m. to noon on the western shore, and 1 a.m. to 10 a.m. in Isurdhuna. The stock market will be open during business hours for everyone.”

“These boys remind me that we have a family gathering, starting tonight,” said Chris. “So I think I’d better go.”

“I’ve got everything under control,” said Yimanu. The bank had the largest share of the stock market’s stock, so he was running it as well.

“I’ll walk out with you,” said Aryéstu. He and Chris rose and headed for the door.

“So; twelve percent this year?” asked Chris.

“I think so. All the grants and loans have stimulated growth. Even the microcredit effort is having an impact; the survey we completed suggests 25,000 dhanay of income to the crown has resulted from microcredit loans through Wiki Bank. That means 125,000 dhanay of more income to the people, and that’s after only one year.”

“Not bad; 100,000 in loans has generated 125,000 in income. What about the medium loan program of Prosperity Bank?”

“The survey concentrated on villages with microcredit; a lot fewer had the Prosperity Bank program. But the data suggests the same for that program. The four million the crown has injected into the economy in the last five months is having an impact as well.”

“All the construction companies are busy. Lɛpawsona and Morana are building factories and docks.”

“Everyone is building something. The survey suggests we’re creating two thousand new jobs directly and two thousand more indirectly, when those workers start to spend their paychecks. That’s a five percent increase in the economy right there.”

“I was in Kérékwɛs and Gramakwés the other day and I was struck by the development there. The lords there are constantly building more factories; they’ve invested half a million in the last year. As a result, in the last year the amount of land under cultivation has actually dropped; farmers are switching to factory work. Houses are being built in both places or people are buying modulars. Some retail businesses are opening too, but maybe half the business is going to Mɛlita. I suspect Kérékwɛs and Gramakwés have both gained two hundred or two hundred fifty houses; at least five hundred people. And Mɛlita has maybe two hundred more commercial jobs, too.”

“Isn’t it amazing, all this growth.” They were standing on the steps outside the stock market by then, but were still talking. “And the harvest prices are holding up pretty well, right? You follow that better than I do.”

Chris nodded. “The Mɛlwika Grange seems to be the expert. They’re reporting wheat prices of 5.60 dhanay per bɛrwoni and a bit less for corn. Wheat’s actually up slightly over last year. Demand is increasing a bit faster than supply, and supply is up as well. Demand for alfalfa and oats are way up and prices are rising fast, which indicates demand for beef, mutton, chicken, and turkey is up. A lot of people will plant alfalfa this fall.”

“You’re always a source of fascinating information, Chris.”

“So are you! When we get together, we spend most of the time interrogating each other.” Chris pointed to the stock market. “This place will have to go into futures trading pretty soon. It’ll help stabilize prices and demand.”

“Next year. I have to get home, and now it’s getting dark fast. Bye.” Aryéstu turned and headed for his car. Chris watched his young friend go.

“One of the brightest minds we’ve found,” he said to Jordan, as they turned toward Temple Square.

“It’s too bad he’s not more active in the Faith.”

“True, but his heart is in the right place. He can do a lot of good for the Faith as a quiet Bahá'í; he works in the palace almost daily and as president of Gésɛlékwɛs Maj Génadɛma he deals with prominent non-Bahá'ís every day. How was your last class?”

“It went well and the students applauded me at the end.”

Chris smiled. “Fantastic! Congratulations.”

“And Tiamaté had two more ladies declare at the end of her Book One class today, so ɛndraidha now has ten Bahá'ís.”

“And how many of the ten are women?”

“Eight.” Jordan laughed.

“So, on an army base we’ll have a Spiritual Assembly of women. Ironic.”

“I think I may be able to invite some soldiers to a book one, though. I think there are two or three who might be willing, and one or two from my previous class. So maybe I’ll be able to even out the numbers.”

The last of the sun slipped behind Skanda; all at once the stars came out and the streetlights came on. Temple Street was bustling with people walking home to make supper; fortunately at that hour it was closed to vehicle traffic, so there was plenty of room for the crowds. They fell silent to pay closer attention to where they were walking in the semidarkness.

The house was a haven of light and coziness as they opened the front door. Lua and Behruz were home and talking to Tiamaté. Liz was sitting with them as well; the radio was on quietly in the background and was broadcasting Kɛkanu’s *The World Table*. The smell of coffee emanated from the table where they sat and the aroma of a cooking dinner from the kitchen, where Agné was working her magic. Jordan came over to his parents and kissed them, then sat next to Tiamaté.

“How was Sumiupɛrakwa?” he asked.

Behruz smiled. “Pretty good. Small and quiet. The pipeline crew came and dug all the gas pipes for the entire town in a month. The water gas units installed fine, too. I don’t think we’ve ever installed gas so fast.”

“He had some time left for chemistry lectures in the high school, too, and a few lectures about the Faith at the Bahá'í Center,” added Lua.

“They have a Bahá'í Center?” Jordan was surprised.

“It’s brand new and bare; except for the gas stove, that is,” replied Behruz. “We donated the stove, which has a built-in heater. The Khɛrmdhuna Bahá'ís are sending teams all summer, so they’re expecting some growth.”

“The town has a nice clinic, too,” added Lua. “I drove to Bɛllɛdha, Néfa, and Pértatranisér five days a week, but I was in Sumiupɛrakwa one day a week, so I saw some patients and gave a few talks on health and hygiene.”

“That was a bit hectic,” added Behruz. He turned to Rostamu, his younger son, who was almost fifteen. “And you did alright here for the last month, right?”

“Yes, between grandma, Thor, and Jordan.”

“I wasn’t here much, but he seemed to be fine whenever I stopped,” said Jordan.

“Chris, you should stop and see the sawmill and woodworking facility,” said Behruz. “And the latter, of course, will now be heated by gas. They’re doubling its size because of demand.”

“The modular factory is ordering a lot more door and window frames. Construction is booming right now.”

“Chris, Lua was just telling us about the new health study,” said Liz. “A talk about it will be delivered at the conference in three days.”

“Blorakwé’s been scouring medical records in Mɛlwika for the last three months,” said Lua. “We put together a special public health course just for her; I’ve been supervising with the help of Datodéu of the Math and Statistics Department in Mɛddoakwés. She’s been creating a huge table of every person with a serious medical condition who was cured and everyone who has died, with their age and sex, and she’s been comparing it to the general population of the area. Datodéu has done much of the

analysis, but she has caught on pretty well also; Budhéstu's thrilled to see her develop her abilities. The conclusions have to do with life expectancy."

"Oh?" Chris was all ears.

"Life expectancy in Mɛlwika appears to be 65 years," continued Lua. "For men, it's 62; for women, 68. Work-place and vehicle related accidents are the main preventable causes of death, and affect men more than women. The death statistics in city hall show that a certain number of people who get sick don't go to the hospital at all and die at home, so we have some education to do. She also examined the death records in Yimuaidha, where most people are farmers, and Roktatroba, where most raise cattle, but both places are close enough so that sick people can get to Mɛlwika easily. Life expectancy was about 60, but the gap between men and women was less. There were more deaths from disease and fewer from accidents."

"Lots of implications for policy," said Chris.

"I'm amazed life expectancy is now over 60 years," said Lua. "I suspect that's more or less true everywhere, except very remote places. When we arrived fifteen years ago, it was probably about thirty years, and that requires one to ignore infant mortality. If one includes infant mortality one gets a meaningless statistic that life expectancy was about seventeen years. The health care system has really had a huge impact."

"How many doctors and nurses are there now?" asked Liz.

"If you include the people graduating tomorrow, about 100 physicians and 400 nurses," replied Lua. "Of course, almost all of them are still undergoing training; only a handful have been practicing for more than five years. A lot of the nurses have just a dwoyɛri; that's pretty limited training. But we have a young population, and one that has

a better diet than ever before. By the time this population ages we'll have a lot more doctors around to care for them."

Behruz looked at Chris. "What did the gas company stock do today?"

"It went up to 10.45. Electric and telephone both went up to about 10.65 or 10.70, if I remember right. The environment is good for the release of more stock in another month or so."

"Good, we'll have to take the matter to the board, then. The expansion into the Kɛrda Valley will take a lot of capital."

Just then, the front door opened. They all looked up and saw Thornton and Lébé come in. "Please welcome the new author!" Thornton said.

"What did you publish?" asked Liz.

"Not me; her." Thornton pointed to Lébé.

"The génadɛma bookstore got its shipment of my new book of folk tales today, so they put it on the shelf, even if it is two days early," said Lébé. "The bookstore was crowded with people who had arrived for the graduation, so the books sold fast and they called me to come over and sign copies. I signed thirty-three!"

"Pretty good. Congratulations," said Liz.

"A lot of people asked her questions, too," added Thornton. "I predict she'll get a big turnout at her talk about the book at the conference."

"Dad, did you get a hold of Mɛgdontɛr?" asked Jalalu.

Thornton nodded. "I called Bɛllɛdha Hospital while he was still there. His arm has been set and he was heading back to Dɛntastéa." Thornton turned to his father. "This morning Mɛgdontɛr was driving a pickup truck to the mastodon corral in the mountains.

When he got close, a big bull mastodon charged the truck. It weighed about six tonnes and turned the truck over! Mɛgdonter had to hide in the cab until the animal left, then ran to the safety of the corral. He was taken out in the other truck and had to go to the hospital for a broken arm."

"Wow; nasty beasts. What happened to the pickup?"

"It's badly smashed."

Chris considered. "Tell them we'll replace it. Someone should come here and pick one up."

"Thanks, dad. I think I should have a long talk with Mɛgdontɛr about the corral. I don't think it's a good idea."

"He may not think so any more, either. If we can get a few more of the baby mastodons for the zoo, fine. But I think we need to get the babies, let the adults out, and leave. It's taking twenty men to feed them and they've already almost broken out of the palisade twice."

"And the ones hanging around outside are extra dangerous. Someone will get killed."

"Let's settle this generously and end it. We have three babies in the zoo; if we can get the other four, great. If not, we tried, and that's enough. The effort has already stretched over two weeks. Let's give them ten thousand dhanay for their effort, including the new pickup. We promised a thousand dhanay per animal in the zoo; that's generous."

"I agree," said Thornton. "I'll call Dɛntastéa tomorrow. They should make another effort to get the calves away from their mothers and herded into a separate enclosure. If they manage it, the zoo can send a truck."

"I agree," said Chris. He rose from the table and walked into the little office off the great room that he and Liz used for phone calls and reading mail. A pile of mail awaited him and he began to open it and read while the others continued to chat. After a few minutes, Thornton rose as well and walked into the little office.

"Dad, I've been wanting to ask you about something."

"Sure, Thor, what is it?"

"Jalalu and I were talking a few weeks ago in Sullɛndha about the duties of the lords of Mɛlwika and he asked me how one ever prepared to be a lord. It made me realize that I really haven't been helping you out much at all with the city, and if I need to be prepared to assume that role some day, I should start. So, I was wondering what you might suggest that I do."

Chris smiled. "Thor, you've made my day. I haven't wanted to press the matter on you, but I have wished that you would speak up about it. You're the future lord of Ménwika; for that matter, you're also the future lord of South Ménwika, because it is a separate town, even though we run it as part of Mɛlwika. There are two things you can do. One is attend the City Council meetings with me, and eventually in my place, just as Jordan attends Mɛlita City Council meetings when I can't. There's a meeting in a few weeks. The other is to serve on a city board: education, development, zoning, streets and parks, water and sanitation, health, inspection, taxation, welfare, police, and fire. Some of those boards are bigger and more active than others; they're all advisory because the mayor calls the shots, but he has used them for advice and ideas."

"Interesting. I can attend the City Council meetings, and I might be interested in serving on a board. They meet only a few times a year, right?"

“Usually once per quarter.”

“Alright. Let me think about it and I’ll get back to you about it.”

“Excellent.”

Chris went back to reading mail and Thornton returned to the great room to listen to the rest of the *World Table.* The sun reappeared and the kids went outside to play in the park by the river until it began to get dark. When they returned, supper was ready and Amos and May had arrived with their kids. The entire Mennea clan sat to a noisy and joyous dinner together.

After dinner, as the dishes were being cleared away, Amos said, “before we turn to the annual budget, I have to show everyone something. I think you’ll be impressed.”

“Oh?” said Liz, curious.

Amos walked over to his steam car, parked in the courtyard, opened the trunk, and pulled out a cylinder about sixty centimeters around and long with a hose attached. He brought it over to the great room, pulled out its electrical cord, and plugged it in. He flipped a switch; a very loud electric motor started up. He began to run the hose along the floor.

“A vacuum cleaner!” exclaimed Liz, amazed, though she could be barely heard above the motor.

Amos turned it off. “It’s pretty loud, but the motor is strong and reliable, so it’s pretty effective. We’ve designed some attachments, too.”

“Your engineering lab made it?” asked Liz.

“It was the product of a class last term. Another team developed a clothes washing machine. It still needs work.”

“So, have you sold it yet?” asked Chris.

Amos nodded. “Lord Mitrulubu wants to open a vacuum cleaner factory in Kérékwɛs. He’s interested in the washing machine as well.”

“Good. He’s rolling in dough and constantly looking for new products.”

“The gabrulis will need to buy some of each,” said Liz. “Washing machines in particular; it’ll save women a lot of time. The gabrulis could open laundromats in their buildings. They could rent out vacuum cleaners to their members.”

“I was thrilled by these two developments,” agreed May. “These are things we need to invest in.”

“I’m not so sure,” replied Chris. “How much will these things cost?”

“The washing machine, about 100 dhanay. Vacuum cleaners will be about 50.”

“Too much,” said Liz, shaking her head. “That doesn’t include electricity coupons either, I bet.”

“No, those prices don’t, and they both need about one dhanay of power per year, so we’ll ask for the sales price to include ten annual coupons,” replied Amos. “Based on other products, the vacuum cleaner market is one to two thousand units. Businesses, palaces, schools, and hospitals will want them, and somewhere around a thousand of the more wealthier households. If laundries, hospitals, some larger businesses, and palaces buy washing machines, and self-service laundries are established, the market is 500 to a thousand units.”

“So, the ‘factories’ are pretty small,” said Chris. “In both cases we’re talking about total sales of fifty to one hundred thousand dhanay. Divide that over two years and the sales are twenty-five to fifty thousand a year. That’s four to eight jobs and only a few

thousand in profits per year. They'll have to store a lot of units for another five years of sales when demand will be too low to keep a factory open. Mitrulubu won't be very generous."

"He wants to create a consumer products business, though, so this is part of a larger strategy," replied Amos.

"If we ask him to donate one washing machine and one vacuum cleaner to each of the big gabrulis—so people can see them in action—would he do it?" asked Liz.

Chris considered. "There's a good chance. Maybe Home Improvement will help, too, since they will be the sellers and they won't sell any unless people can see the units in action. Do we have gabrulis in all the cities where there are Home Improvement stores?"

Liz nodded. "Yes. All the big cities have gabrulis. We'll need to arrange a grant to them so they can set up a special room for washing machines."

"So, that gets us to the budget exercise," said Chris. "Let's review the finances and figure out our expenditures for the year." He pulled out his table of projected income and expenditures.

Item (all figures in thousands)	Gross Income or Profit	Tax	Net Income	Expense
Mɛlwika mortgages; farms	30	9	21	
S. Ménwika mortgages, farms	80	27	53	
Mɛlwika tax income	70	---	70	
S. Ménwika tax income	50	---	50	

Mɛlwika business leases & profits	80	19	61	
Grants to génadɛma				100
To hospital/medical school				40
To Women's Géndhas				40
To local Temples				12
To local Bahá'í Fund				20
Profit, Miller Motors	30	9	21	
Plastics/Chemicals Company	50	13	37	
Gas, Electricity, Telephone	260	75	185	
Biogas: Profit	6	2	4	
Investment: Fischer-Tropsch				60
Mɛlwika, totals	656	154	502	272
Mɛlita mortgages	425	---	425	
Mɛlita tax income	80	---	80	
Swadlɛndha mortgages	60	20	40	
Lower Arjakwés mortgages	80	---	80	
Business partnerships, Mɛlita	40	13	27	
Business partnerships, ɛjnopéla	6	2	4	
Business partnerships, Tripola	15	5	10	
Business partnerships, Isurdhuna	10	3	7	
Mɛlita Zoo				100

Lɛpawsona Investments				40
Pértatranisér: tropical plantation	75	15	60	
Pértatranisér: commercial center	30	11	19	
Radio Station and record comp.	15	5	10	
School of Agriculture				25
Engineering Lab				20
Women's Géndha				20
Néfa Génadɛma (Pért. Campus)				15
School of Deaf and Blind				30
Alcohol Production				50
New Investments, businesses				200
Investment repayments	150			
Tomi profits	50	16	34	
Theatres: Profits	8	3	5	
Soccer teams: Profits	5	1.5	3.5	
Investment, Wiki Bank				200
Profits from other investments	30	10	20	
Women's gabrulis				20
Central Bahá'í Fund				150
Personal Incomes	40	13	27	
Household costs				30
Totals	1775	271.5	1353.5	1172

Chris pulled out a chart that he and Amos had assembled the day before by telephone and modified slightly in between. “It keeps going up!” said May, amazed. “I see business profits are increasing quite a lot, too.”

“The tomis we had to invest in a few years ago are beginning to reap profits for us,” agreed Chris. “We own half of Mɛlwika Theater and a quarter each of Pértatranisér’s and Bɛllɛdha’s, and they’re beginning to make profits; they’re also driving up revenue for the radio station and the record company. We also own half of the Mɛlwika and Pértatranisér soccer teams and they’re making a profit. The phone, electricity, and gas companies are doing even better and because biogas is expanding at an incredible rate, it’s making a profit as well. Businesses have been paying us back, too.”

“Did Wiki Bank make 100,000 in loans?” asked May.

“Barely; they just reached that number last week. But they have so many solidarity groups now that loans are expanding faster. About fifty thousand dhanay will be repaid this year and I want to give them 200,000 more. They’re confident they can loan that much out.”

“When will the investment in Fischer-Tropsch produce something?” asked May.

“This year we’ll make a pilot plant for producing gasoline and other heavier hydrocarbons,” replied Behruz. “It’d be mixed with alcohol.”

“Sales of alcohol have been growing quite nicely,” added Chris. “I’m investing fifty thousand to expand production. Profits are already running fifteen percent, though they’re being invested in expansion right now. It appears that even ten percent gasoline or diesel will be good for the steam engines. It’s doubtful we can make the hydrocarbons at a competitive price, but they guarantee the alcohol isn’t fit for human consumption.”

“You’re adding a bad odor to the alcohol, right?” asked Lua.

Chris nodded. “I understand that hasn’t stopped a few cases of alcohol poisoning, though.”

“There have been three, I think, including one death,” said Lua. “I would like to propose that we spend some of the surplus on an anti-drinking campaign. The consumption of alcohol is rising very fast and it’s causing massive social problems.”

“The average family spends 1 dhanay a week on beer or wine,” agreed Amos. “That’s almost five million dhanay per year. Néfa can’t build breweries fast enough and Swadnoma has been planting huge areas of grapes.”

“Mɛlwika, too,” said Chris. “What do you have in mind?”

“Say, an office with a full time staff of three or four dedicated to spreading the bad news of alcohol consumption with a budget for newspaper and radio advertising. Maybe thirty thousand, total. They could also talk about tobacco use, since it’s spreading fast as well. It could have an advisory board including doctors and prominent people.”

“Great idea,” said Liz.

“I’d keep them at a distance from us, so no one accuses them of being a tool of ours to manipulate the masses,” said Chris.

“I’d like to see us fund a similar office to deal with safety,” added Thornton. “Driving is incredibly dangerous, most houses still have bad electrical wiring, and the medical data Lua told us about before supper showed that industrial accidents are a leading cause of death.”

“That’s a good idea,” agreed Lua. “I bet Mitru would contribute something toward it, too, since it’d improve the safety of his buses and trucks.”

“Then let’s pencil it in as well,” said Chris, adding a line to the budget.

“I’d increase the amount for gabrulis,” added Liz. “The Central Office costs ten thousand a year and I suspect the gabrulis together can spend 25,000 in grants.”

“Okay, I’ll increase it to 35,” said Chris. “As you can see, I have 200,000 down for business investment for the upcoming year. I want to try a different approach than in previous years; I want to give first priority to businesses in Bahá'í villages. We’ve been worried that investments will encourage conversion to the Faith for monetary gain. But if the Bahá'í villages don’t progress, we’ll lose them. I wouldn’t invest in a Bahá'í village during the first year or two after it has converted, or mostly converted. The first year or two, we need to concentrate on educating youth and young adults so that the school can improve and literacy can develop. But once those things happen, literate people need better jobs and the villages will have people with accountancy skills, management skills, and other basic skills needed for creating factories and other institutions. At that point, we need to be sure they obtain the funding for development. Not all of that will come from the Development Corps or the palace’s special programs.”

“I think that’s an excellent plan,” agreed May. “After a few years, you know people in the villages and have a better idea who you can work with, too.”

“Exactly,” said Chris.

“I agree, we need to help the friends get ahead,” said Liz. “Your approach will strengthen local community life, local and central funds, and teaching; it has a lot of implications.”

“We will be criticized, though, if anyone realizes what we’re doing,” said Thornton.

“We already are,” replied Chris. “We’re already investing more in Bahá'í businesses than their three percent of the population would suggest because they’re more educated and more trustworthy than average.”

“We haven’t spent the last hundred thousand dhanay in the surplus, yet,” said Lua. “What do you recommend, dad?”

“We can add it to the medium-sized loan program Prosperity Bank has started. That program has worked out quite well and all that money remains ours. Our main obligation has been to cover higher operating costs, and last year they were about one percent of the total. Basically, we get a lower interest rate on the money. If we put more in that account, the bank will make more loans to small businesses.”

“Let’s do that, then,” said Liz. “Now, let’s go around the room. In the next year, who’s doing what? I’ll start: I’ll be making two round-the-world trips, and while I will visit as many gabrulis as I can, I’ll be focusing a huge amount of energy on the cluster teaching committees and strengthening their networks of coordinators.”

“That’s badly needed; it’s all so new,” said Chris. “I’ll be with her to meet with tomi boards and businessmen with whom I might invest. I’m also going to visit the Krésonɛ tribe, Khɛrmdhuna, Dhudrakaita, and maybe a few villages with a lot of Bahá'ís like Bilara, Frachvála, and Wɛranopéla.”

“Lébé and I will be visiting the Krésonɛ for a month this summer and will visit some nearby tribes as well,” said Thornton. “We’ll be offering a variety of specialized classes based on our expertise, and about the Faith. Jalalu will be offering classes for junior youth, for which he is quite excited. It appears we’ll be spending a month in Isurdhuna during the winter, especially if the kids can stay here and go to school.”

“It’s so disruptive of their schooling to take them along,” added Lébé. “And Jonkrisu will soon be eight.”

“We can take up the slack for a month,” agreed Liz, looking at Chris, Lua, and Behruz.

“In addition, I’ll be teaching in Pɛnkakwés for at least two terms,” continued Thornton. “And while I’m here, I’ll be helping dad with city business. And I’m not going to research and write any books or articles this year, so maybe I’ll have more time to help with consolidation of new Bahá'ís in the area.”

Jordan was next. “Tiamaté and I will be tied up for most of the next year with the development consultancy, so we’re not planning to travel much. But we will focus our energy on the Swadnoma-lower Arjakwés cluster, especially developing a community in ɛndraidha and expanding the community in Swadlɛndha.”

“That’s extremely important,” agreed Liz. “Those are two small communities; ɛndraidha is the largest city without an assembly. As we heard earlier today, too, Kérékwɛs and Gramakwés are two of the fastest growing villages in the world. They need attention as well.”

“We’ll see what we can do,” agreed Tiamaté. “Our other priority is completing our *kwéteryɛris,* and to do that we plan to take some courses early morning or in the evening and write up a book-length case study about our business.”

“Which I will remind you about weekly,” pledged May. She looked at Amos, then said, “We’ll be in Pértatranisér most of the next year, except for the next month and a half when we’re here. Last year we were able to visit a dozen Bahá'í communities near

Pértatranisér, and that helped them. But now there are committees and coordinators, so maybe our visits are less urgent. Instead, I'd like to spend more time developing a serious program of Bahá'í Studies. It should be located at the temple in Mɛddwoglubas, but I can get there in an hour. There are a lot of materials available over the web that we can translate from English, especially pertaining to the writings of Bahá'u'lláh. If the Central Spiritual Assembly would approve a Bahá'í Studies Géndha, I'd like to start some courses for it, mainly for youth and young adults."

Chris nodded. "Write a proposal and they'd take it very seriously. We're at the point where we need something like that."

May nodded. Amos said, "I'm not much of a public speaker and I don't have much to offer that others can't offer better, but my engineering work, I think, is very important. This summer I'm starting on a project with Miller Motors to refine their small steam engines further and to improve their assembly line in order to increase efficiency. I'm also finishing up a big project with Ora Motors, developing a new steam shovel and bulldozer. Then some time in the fall or winter the engineering lab in Pértatranisér will take another look at developing an automated telephone switching system. Our prototype is big, slow, and makes mistakes, but several of the members of that team have had some new ideas. Maybe we can fix it to work better. If so, it'll save the telephone company a lot of money and will make the entire communications system more effective. In the spring we'll be looking at building some new transformers that allow the intercity electrical lines to carry more power. We're also working on remote switching systems, so, for example, someone sitting in Mɛlwika can control the water flowing through the

turbines of the dam in Gordha. This will make the electrical company more responsive to changes in demand and reduce the staffing needed to keep the power flowing."

"Those are all very important," agreed Chris.

Lua and Behruz were next. "We'll be in Kɛrda the last month of the summer to get the water gas units installed, even though the escarpment chimney won't be installed yet," said Behruz. "The location has much better ventilation than Isurdhuna because it is located next to the gluba carrying the Rudhisér out of the valley. Even fifty meters of chimney up the side of the valley will be a great help. We'll be giving our usual rounds of lectures there about Bahá'í subjects, health, and the virtues of gas. Otherwise, I'll be here. Lua's scheduled to be at Mɛddwoglubas Hospital for a month in late fall. If the Bahá'í Géndha is ready to get started by then, I'll go along and give a few talks about Islam and Sufism."

"That would be great," said May. "You need to write them down so they can be used as texts."

"My big focus over the next year is improving our health care system," said Lua. "We'll be organizing a Medical Association and holding regional meetings at hospitals around the world to discuss several matters: improving our emergency rooms, a wider range of surgery, selecting regional specialties—every hospital can't offer everything—and preparing to meet the demands of universal health care, which is probably just a few years away. But I will make myself available to talk about the Faith and visit villages. Rostamu's pretty big and doesn't need me so much."

Rostamu smiled at that, uncertain what to make of it. “I want to contribute to this discussion, too,” the fifteen year old said. “Summer’s here and I want to get out of Mɛlwika and do something for the Faith.”

“Then come with Lébé and me,” suggested Thornton.

“Can I?” Rostamu said, looking at his father.

Behruz nodded. “Sure, you’re old enough. Jordan went to the Krésonɛ when he was thirteen or fourteen.”

“And I loved it,” added Jordan.

“Then we all have our plans,” said Liz. “Our marching orders. This is going to be an interesting year.”

“The year of the consumer,” said Chris. Liz frowned, so he continued. “Well, it’s the year of washing machines, vacuum cleaners, and a growth rate—according to Aryéstu—of twelve percent. That’s a lot more money for consumer goods, gas, telephones, etc. And this year we’ll see a lot more individual initiative in the Bahá'í community, thanks to the coordinators and cluster committees.”

“The year of the consumer,” said Liz, nodding. “I see what you mean.”

Reread and edited, 6/14/13, 8/27/17, 11/28/24

371.

Krésonɛland

Mid Kaiménu 16/634

Udworu Dɛdrai was a short man in his late twenties with a trimmed reddish beard, and as soon as Thornton saw him, he recognized him.

"Honored Udworu! It's good to see you again!"

"Honored Dhoru, I am delighted to see an old teacher. Please come in."

Thornton entered the man's compact office. It was a short walk east from Mɛlwika Génadɛma in the city's latest eastern addition. The city's streets and parks department had been relocated there about a year ago. The facility included a garage with three large trucks; they plowed the snow in the winter, moved garbage the rest of the year, and were used for moving plants and city property. "Thank you. This is a nice, new building."

"And I finally have an office. I used to run the parks crew from the park. I was surprised to get your telephone call a little while ago. I had been thinking of you lately because I saw you a few days ago, right after the all-génadɛma conference. There was a wedding party crossing the city."

Thornton smiled. "Yes, that was Tomasu Miller's! We processed from the Bahá'í Center to the Mɛlwika Palace Hotel for the reception."

Udworu nodded. "That would have been it."

"It was a beautiful wedding. The bride, Sulokwé, is a lovely young woman from the South Shore."

“An aristocrat?”

“No, a commoner. They’re both Bahá’ís; good, active ones, too.”

“Yes, you Bahá’ís have different wedding customs. Well, honored, please sit down.” He pointed to a chair and paused to remove a pile of papers from it, then sat on another chair. “What can I do for you? How can I help?”

“I’ve offered to help my father with the City Council and he suggested I find a city department to learn about so I could get involved in its advisory committee. A few days ago I saw a list of city employees and saw you were in charge of the parks subdivision of the Streets and Parks Department, so I thought I’d come hear about it, if you don’t mind.”

“I don’t mind at all. The parks division is in a difficult position right now. I’m pretty sure we’ll get cut in half next year; maybe to a third of its previous size.”

“Why?”

“Because of that thing.” Udworu pointed out the door at a lawn mowing machine leaning against a wall nearby. “They just came on the market; maybe you’ve seen them? You push the thing forward and the rotation of the wheels makes the spiral cutting bars go round and round. If they are adjusted right, they cut grass incredibly well and produce a much more uniform looking lawn than if men cut it once a month with scythes. So we’re buying four lawn mowers. The problem is that right now we have eight men scything grass and we’ll only need four once we have the machines.”

“Can’t you give the other four other work?”

“I will this season, planting extra flowers and doing some landscaping we wanted to do, especially outside the walls along the edges. But I suspect the department will be cut in size next year.”

“How many men do you have?”

“Eight in grass cutting, six in landscaping, and four in street washing. The streets department has a four-man street repair crew that also maintains signs and painted lines, and two engineers. Rather than see the parks subdivision shrink, I’d like to see it grow! We also have to maintain playgrounds, two soccer fields, and the trail along the Péskakwés. The grass mowers will make it easier to do that.”

“On Gɛdhéma, many cities have public swimming pools,” said Thornton. “Maybe Mɛlwika should build a pool.”

“Really? Great idea! When I was working on my dwoyɛri I took your urban planning course, and I remember there was a long list of things cities can do. I’ve referred to my notes many times since; I even called you once.”

“I remember.”

“But I don’t remember a public pool on the list.”

“No, I probably cut it out that time because there was no possibility of implementing it. But that was eight or nine years ago. Mɛlwika is bigger, richer, and more capable now. We need a recreation division. The city has a lot of people and needs more parks, walking trails, playgrounds. . . I can make a list in five minutes if I review my notes.”

“I’d love to see that. And I’ve asked repeatedly for more men to plant flowers along the streets; I remember a picture you showed of trees growing in gaps in the

sidewalks with flowers around them. Mɛlwika can be much prettier. All the roundabouts need flowers, rather than roughly cut grass."

"There are landscaping arrangements that require little maintenance, too. I have some new articles translated into Eryan, since I last ran that course. I'll send them to you. I don't think anyone has ever followed up on that part of the course!"

"Do you still offer it?"

"Usually every three years, but maybe I should offer it again this coming year. If I want to get involved in the city administration, it may be useful."

"If you can, send some of those articles to me. I'd love to write up a proposal. But I'm not very confident in my writing abilities. I have a pretty strong south shore accent, so I spell funny; I often leave out 'r's!"

"I'll figure it out. Tell you what. I'm about to go to the Krésonɛ lands for a month, but I'll be back one day every week. Next week I'll put together a collection of readings and send it to you. Then we can get together a week or two after that and talk about them; brainstorm. I'll be glad to help work on the proposal, if you'd like."

"Sure, if you're willing! Sounds like you're going to get involved in the Streets and Parks Department's advisory board."

"Yes, it sounds like it!"

At noon later that day, a pickup and a rover set out for Sértroba, the Krésonɛ's largest village, two hours and three time zones east of Mɛlwika. Chris drove the rover, accompanied by Rostamu and Jalalu; Thornton sat in the pickup's driver's seat, accompanied by Lébé, eleven year old Kalé, and Jonkrisu, who would soon be eight.

They headed south past Médhɛla, then turned eastward onto Route 77, a graveled road that ran 85 kilometers along the Ornakwés. Thornton kept up a running narrative about the Krésonɛ hamlets they passed.

They reached Sértroba an hour before sunset and parked between the Bahá'í Center and the hostel, a prefabricated building next to the Center used to house guests to the village, especially Bahá'í teams. They quickly transferred their luggage to the hostel, which had two bedrooms; Kalé got the tiny bedroom, Thornton and Lébé the big one, and the three boys would sleep in the parlor. The water was running, the toilet was flushing, and the lights were working; there was charcoal in the kitchen for the stove. Lébé got the stove going so she could boil some water for drinking, the kids went outside to play with the kids accumulating to see the arrivals, and Chris headed for Lord Patékwus's house with Thornton. The village had a dozen new houses in the last half year; its population now exceeded four hundred.

"I am so happy to see my old friends," said Patékwu as they entered his reception hall. He rose and hugged both of them warmly, a gesture that surprised Thornton.

"We are delighted to see you again, lord," said Chris.

"And my family is very happy to be here for a month," added Thornton.

"You are very, very welcome. I saw the list of classes you and Lébé propose to offer; most impressive. We have many people here who are eager to learn, even if we are not sure we can use any of it."

"We'll try to focus on practical applications," said Thornton.

"Here's a practical application for you, then," said Patékwu. "This village spends 500 dhanay per year on candles and oil for lamps. That's ten dhanay per household. If we

spent the money on wires and bulbs instead, the first year we would spend much more, but subsequently we'd spend much less."

"Unless you want more light," replied Chris. "I'm sure people are using the candles and lamps only about an hour a night."

"With an hour of dim light, all you can do is wash dishes and go to bed," said Patékwu." If families want some time together or to read, they need more light. This was a decision we made together at Feast, two weeks ago."

"Really?" said Chris. "Very impressive. Where will the money come from for the wire and bulbs?"

"We're not sure. We understand the electric company will come and install the main wires and places for the houses to plug into them. The Krésonɛ Company will contribute 150 dhanay. Many houses can contribute 2 or 3 dhanay; that's about 125 dhanay more. But we will need another 200 or 250. I will contribute some of that from the taxes."

"Allow me, Lord, to make a contribution as well," said Chris. "It would be an honor. What about the other hamlets?"

"They will make their own decisions; this was a decision of Sértroba. The business portion of the Feast took all afternoon, but it was decided and we will all do it."

"I don't know much about wiring, Lord, but I will help in any way I can," said Thornton. "We have several Bahá'í youth volunteers who are electrical experts and I'm sure they can come here to help."

"Definitely; I'll arrange it when I get home," said Chris. "How is the Krésonɛ Company doing?"

Patékwu smiled. “Finally, after a year of struggle, we have found an arrangement that works well. Every adult is an owner in the company; we debated and decided ownership would not be per household, but per adult, because `Abdu’l-Bahá said that ‘the honor of one is the honor of all.’ This suggested to us that there was nothing wrong with recognizing each person. If anyone wants a larger share, they contribute work to the company, and most do that in one way or another. Labor has been our main capital. During the fall we completed a diversion dam on the Ornakwés where it comes out of the mountains and dug a canal 2,000 meters long to a ravine that leads back to the Ornakwés west of here. With it, we irrigated 425 hectares of arid land, which more than doubled our farm and pasture land. Just about everyone in Sértroba wanted some, either for pasture or crops, as did fifty households from as far as thirty kilometers down the river. And with your investment, Lord, we were able to buy one tractor and rent another one when we needed it.”

“And the result?” asked Chris, with a twinkle in his eye.

“Sixty thousand dhanay! We had to work five days a week, twelve hours a day, very intensely, for six months, but it was worth it. We even closed the upper grades so the older kids could work full time. The company got five thousand of profits and plans to pay off the tractor. We’ll also buy pumps so we can irrigate land for hamlets downstream. The tribe got an extra six thousand in taxes, which has allowed us to build a clinic, pay our teachers better, and pay off our hospital debts. Each household ended up with three hundred dhanay, almost half a year’s extra income. As you walk around, you’ll see glass windows, new doors, nickel-steel roofs, and gravel on a few more lanes. Everyone has

store-bought clothes. The reason we don't have more money for electricity is because everyone is saving to install piped water this fall."

"We can send some youth volunteers to help plan the system," said Chris.

"We're counting on it; I wrote the Central Spiritual Assembly three weeks ago. We haven't the faintest idea how to do it, but we do have most of the money. We may need to borrow more from you, Lord."

Chris nodded. "That's one reason I'm here, Lord Patékwu. I wish to be of service to Krésonɛland in a way that helps uplift the entire population. As we have already discussed, independence is important and dependence must be avoided. Sometimes I can help arrange for grants; the palace is giving out more money than ever before, and if you collected ten thousand in local taxes they must have gotten twenty thousand. My grandson, Jordan, is operating a development advising office. You and Thornton can talk to him by telephone, he'll complete the paperwork to help you get a palace grant—for the water and sewer system, for example—and he'll help answer questions about it and let you know whether it is approved."

"How much?" asked Patékwu.

Chris shook his head. "Nothing. It's a free service available to every village, gabruli, grange, and company in the world. We'll help with development plans, too, though we will charge for them."

"That's marvelous. If we can get a grant for some of this work, it'll help a lot. There's so much we need! We want to organize a volunteer fire department, train our teachers in public health, train six people in nursing, install running water and sewage in

every hamlet, double the number of agris everyone can farm, open two factories, install electricity, and maybe biogas; what is this biogas thing?"

"It sounds like you don't need a development plan, because you already have a good one," said Chris. "Biogas might be helpful; it converts manure and straw into a gas you can burn for cooking. You won't need as much firewood, which saves time and protects forests from damage. Tomasu Miller will be available to install it next spring."

"We don't have many trees around here, so I think we could use it," said Patékwu.

"Lord, are you irrigating the 425 hectares during the summer?" asked Thornton. "I wonder whether the Ornakwés has enough water to irrigate so much land."

"We are not irrigating most of the 425 hectares right now; only the 150 hectares that are being used for pasture. There is enough water; the river flows quite vigorously all year, in fact it is a bit larger in the summer. But farming the additional land is too much work when it's hot! When we worked on the dam and the irrigation ditches, some people did not plant their regular fields at all. Planting our regular fields and these extra fields in the winter required constant planting, then constant harvesting; there was no time to rest. The summer is too hot, so most people are just working their old fields right now. But once it cools off—which is also when the irrigation water goes farther—we'll start to work both sets of fields again. This year we'll get two harvests from the new fields. With five irrigation pumps, the downstream hamlets will have access to an additional three hundred hectares, also."

"This is excellent, Lord," said Chris. "With the additional hectares, you'll need at least one more tractor, maybe two. I will be honored to extend a loan to the Krésonɛ Company to purchase them."

“Thank you, Lord, and I am sure we will take you up on it. Thank you for asking Mɛlwika Grange for their help with the irrigation ditches and plowing; we learned a lot from them.”

“The Krésonɛ Company qualifies as a ‘grange,’ so you can send representatives to the grange assembly, next time it meets.”

“How else can my family be of service to you in the next month?” asked Thornton.

“It sounds like you will be able to help with the electrical system and maybe with planning the pipes and sewers, but those will be toward the end of the month, I suspect. We should apply for grants right away. In between, we need to go to visit our cousins, the Wuronɛ, sixty-five kilometers south of here. Many want to become Bahá’ís.”

“So, you’ve been teaching them?” asked Chris.

“All fall, winter, and spring; we’ve been sending teams down there almost constantly. The Bahá’í youth volunteers came along sometimes, but even when we didn’t have any volunteers with us, we sent down our own teams. The village has a small school and had only three literate people until we arrived. Now fifty have gone through book one and thirty-six have completed the literacy course.”

Chris was shocked. “Really? Congratulations!”

“We’ll be glad to go there,” said Thornton. “I visited the Wuronɛ once about twelve years ago. We heard that you were teaching them, though we never heard the results, and figured we’d go to them and to Awstroba, the Kwolonɛ village south of here. The road, Route 78, is passable, right?”

Patékwu nodded. “The army graveled it two years ago. We drive a pickup truck down every Primdiu and bring as many Wuronɛ as possible to Gordha for shopping, then take them home. It has strengthened relations between the tribes. But there is still no electrical connection or telephone line to Wurontroba. The army installed the poles, but no one has installed the wires.”

“I’ll ask about that,” said Chris. “The palace often promises a subsidy for connections to remote places and the companies then wait for the money to arrive. If someone forgets, it doesn’t happen.”

“They have no idea what value electricity and telephones can bring. For that matter, we’re still not sure what value they’ll bring to us! We didn’t even notice the fact that they had no power or phones until a few months ago when I asked my cousin, Lord ɛndranu, what his telephone number was; not that I would ever call him on a telephone! He told me they didn’t have any.”

“When should we go down?” asked Thornton.

“Perhaps tomorrow? They’re anxious to meet you.”

The phone at the Mennea Development Consultancy constantly rang. Jordan would spend an hour with someone and as soon as he hung up, it would ring again. Tiamaté would take that call while Jordan wrote up his conversation, which usually meant completing an application for a development grant; he used carbon paper to keep multiple copies. Then he would complete notes of the conversation, including his impressions of the caller’s honesty. Their assistant was busy looking up facts, checking maps, and copying

information into forms that needed completing. By then Tiamaté would be done with the next call and it would ring again for Jordan.

Four hours before eclipse to five hours after; eight hours a day, 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Mɛlita time, the phone rang. At eight o'clock the cook, Golbésté, would have supper ready for the three of them. From the dining room they could hear the phone ringing; the operator was told to allow calls until 7:30. Then it stopped, but Jordan knew there would be six messages and the next morning, if he had the energy, he'd call them back before the office officially opened. Sometimes he even called back later that night. Other nights they went to bed early, exhausted.

That night, Jordan went back to his office at 9 p.m. to review the stack of applications they had prepared; nine that day alone. They were getting quicker and more efficient. He sat and read through the ones Tiamaté had prepared, knowing that he might have to explain something when he took them to the development ministry next week.

At 9:30, his head dropping with sleep over the pile, he quit. But then the phone downstairs rang and a moment later Tiamaté called him, "Hey Jor, it's Thor!"

"I'm coming." He hurried out of the wing where they had set up the offices and entered the living room, where Tiamaté was chatting with Thornton. She said goodbye and handed the phone to him.

"Abhá, Thor."

"Abhá, Jordan. How's your consulting business going? I tried to call about six times in the last three hours and never got through. I finally left a message with the operator, then decided to call the house phone."

"Thor, you wouldn't believe what it's been like here! The first day we opened, it was pretty quiet; we had maybe three calls. But the next day I was on Kɛkanu's *World Table,* and then two newspapers did articles about the Mennea Development Consultancy. After that the phone hasn't stopped ringing! We're dealing with about twenty-five calls a day, some informational, but most want help with development grant requests. We typically complete eight to ten of them per day!"

"Really? Wow, what's the palace going to do with them all?"

"I took my first stack to the development ministry yesterday and sat all morning with three men. I had a week's worth; forty-seven requests for a total of 165,000 dhanay. They were blown away. At this rate, they'd have to expend 10.7 million dhanay per year for them all! I don't think this pace will continue, though; they came from 47 villages and we only have 250. If you add in companies, gabrulis, and granges, maybe there are a thousand entities that could apply. Their big concern was reliability and verifiability, because as you know, about a third of the development money in the past has lined the local lord's pockets or beautified his house, and another third was wasted one way or another. They finally said to me 'okay, which ones are you sure of?' I said 'well, I'm sure of the ones from people I'm sure of, or places I know well.' They said 'how do you know them?' I said 'well, usually because they are Bahá'ís.' They said, 'oh, alright, we'll trust those as well. Make a pile.' So I gave them eight—not all the Bahá'í ones, because I'm not sure all the details were right—and they asked me to rate the reliability of the rest for this coming week. I'm not sure how to do that. I suppose I can make some calls."

"Usually to Bahá'ís, though, which might be awkward. You have a big problem on your hands."

“I’ll call grandpa. If we go through about twenty-five of them together—which will take a long time, I hope he’ll do it—I suspect we can drop a dozen or fifteen of them. They’re mostly from members of Old Houses. They may have called me because the palace routinely turns them down anyway! I also need to talk to grandpa about hiring more help. A lot of these grant requests are complex and really can’t be fairly represented on a single sheet of paper. I need some experts to make sure they’re done right. We’ve seen villages with a broken water system for only half their houses because the grant money ran out.”

“What are they applying for? Factories?”

“Sometimes. I suspect grandpa will look at them and laugh them out of contention. Some of them know how much the building would cost but have no idea how much the machinery will cost. I refused to complete six grant requests for that reason. Others are for water systems, but not sewers; they really should do both at once to save on digging. And if I ask the caller ‘how many meters of pipes do you need?’ He’d say ‘two hundred meters; no, three hundred; no, maybe four hundred.’ They really don’t know what they’re asking for!”

“That’s why I’m calling, Sértroba is planning to install a water and sewer system this fall and dad told them they should call you and apply for a grant.”

“Another grant!”

“That’s really why I’m calling.”

“Tell you what. The palace’s form is really very short; it’s just a summary, and it doesn’t ask for a longer description of the project, probably because five years ago it wasn’t feasible. That’s why so many villages have partial systems; they didn’t create a

good plan. But now everyone can do better. Can you help me develop a model application? Sértroba will be the example. We need a map of the village, an exact measure of the length of pipes, a description of problems—hills, rivers, bedrock outcrops to deal with—a plan for the water intake and sand filtration, water towers, sewage settling tanks, and sewage discharge into an artificial marsh."

"The plan also needs to account for the water to fight a fire."

"Exactly. Tomasu designed a lot of the basic equipment five years ago and they have been available at standard prices, but they're selling slowly. Can you give me a model? Because there are maybe one hundred fifty villages with nothing, twenty-five more with partial or broken systems, and only seventy-five places with real water systems. That's all Widubéru and the Development Corps has managed after eight years; it's a bit of a failure, if you ask me. Half those were inspired by the youth teams, too. Meanwhile, people are dying from bad water or they're being rushed to the hospital and treated at great expense. The palace now has the money to fix the problem."

"You don't need to convince me, I just need to find the time. Alright, I'll see what I can do. We should call Tomasu. He must have a standardized form to apply for biogas grants."

"Come to think of it, the reason biogas is spreading is because there's a professional team installing it. Maybe that's what we need; a 'Water Company' to plan the systems with the locals, then mobilize their labor and install them."

"Take that to my dad and I bet he'll find someone to do it, too! Say, Jordan, I have to get to bed; it's 1 a.m. here in Sértroba and we're leaving for the Wuronɛ village early tomorrow morning. I'll try to get something to you over the next month, okay?"

“That’ll work, especially if they plan to do the work in the fall. Get a good rest, Uncle Thornton.”

“You too, don’t work too hard. Bye.”

Reread and edited, 6/14/13, 8/28/17

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One Amazing Day

Mid Kaiménu, 16/634

The next morning Thornton rose early to drive to Wurontroba. Jalalu and Rostamu came along; Lord Patékwu sat in the front; in the back were Dhrébékwɛs, the chief teacher of the Sértroba school, who was also secretary of the Sértroba Spiritual Assembly, and Estodɛdonu, “God is Generous,” who was institute coordinator for the Krésonɛ “Zone,” which included the Wuronɛ.

The sixty-five kilometer trip—formerly a two-day horse ride—took an hour and a quarter in the steam-powered pickup. The first half of the trip—which passed through Awstroba, the farthest easternmost Kwolonɛ settlement—took them through rolling desert foothills, ever paralleling the Gordha Ridge, the first range of the central highlands. After Awstroba the land became more rolling, higher, and the ridge less of a distinct presence. As they got farther from the equator the air became cooler and the land greener, transitioning into grassland just south of Awstroba and into pine forest just north of Wurontroba. It was rich land, with ample game.

The village of Wurontroba was just as Thornton remembered from his visit. Its 400 souls lived in seventy-five wooden houses, usually with an associated barn, and farmed six hundred agris of bottomland on the floor of a dhuba several kilometers across. The Dhébakwés flowed through the dhuba on its way through one hundred kilometers of forested hills to Wɛranopéla and the south shore. A dirt track paralleling the river was barely improved since Thornton got a rover down it twelve years earlier. The surrounding woods had clearings for cattle pasture and lots of free-ranging pigs which were owned by various villagers. Their accent was distinctively archaic, more like the tribes on the eastern side of the Spine than the western, but with a few features common to the Krésonɛ and Kwolonɛ dialects.

As they drove across the dhuba, Thornton did notice one improvement: corn, a crop his family had introduced to Éra. He spotted potatoes as well. The village's houses looked perhaps a bit better than twelve years earlier, and a few people wore manufactured clothes. The modern world was impinging.

They drove straight to Lord ɛndranu's house in the center of the village and parked. Everyone immediately turned out; the village was not on a bus route and had no steam vehicle of its own. Patékwu waved, nodded, and even offered an "Alláh-u-Abhá" to a few people as they walked to the lord's door, where he greeted them.

"Welcome. Thank you for coming. You are just in time for a feast, we have a stuffed pig roasting behind the house," said the forty-year old, red-bearded lord.

"Allow me to introduce you," said Patékwu, and he pointed at the other guests one by one. Lord ɛndranu nodded and pumped hands with all of them. "Honored Dhoru,

we are especially pleased you could make it. We badly need the spiritual guidance and material assistance you can provide. We are very isolated here. It takes forever to get from here to Tripola; it is impossible to take anything there for sale or bring anything back here from there. North of us, the Kwolonɛ have never taken any interest in us. Neither have the Kwétékwonɛ, northwest of us. The Kaitɛrɛ have helped, but they are a long way away and have asked for favors in return. The Krésonɛ, however, have been like brothers for generations, even though they have to cross Kwolonɛ territory to get to us. The Prince visited us ten years ago and made promises. He did give us a gravel road, but that also meant he expected us to pay taxes regularly, so in some ways we are poorer now than we were then. The electricity and telephone lines haven't been installed. The clinic comes once a month, so that has helped, but lately we have had to pay for it, so that is a further expense for us."

"I am sorry your tribe has had so many difficulties," said Thornton. "I rejoice that there have been at least a few positive changes. Bahá'u'lláh's revelation provides us with prayers and other ways to establish our own personal relationship with Esto. It also calls on us to build a divine civilization based on unity and justice. Bahá'u'lláh has come to offer us the way to establish unity in the world. Unity means that everyone must be treated fairly and equally, for without justice there can be no unity. Unity means that problems must be solved through consultation rather than force; force has always been the way in this world and now we seek to replace it with a better way. Unity also means that we must build strong communities, and He tells us how to do that. He says that communities must have central authority, and that is best provided through hereditary leadership combined with elections to create a consultative body. Strong communities,

working toward unity through consultation, provide a foundation for material as well as spiritual progress. The Krésonɛ have seen this over the last few years, as they have absorbed Bahá'u'lláh's teachings, built community, then used the community's unity as a way to progress materially as well."

"I am afraid I can't imagine what you mean by these words."

"But he speaks the truth, cousin," said Patékwu. "Because of consultation, we have been able to talk as a village of Sértroba and as a Krésonɛ tribe about how we want to improve our lives together. Bahá'u'lláh's principles give us the guidance on how to talk together—that's the consultation he mentioned—and the principles that shape what improvements to seek. It is true: unity is the fruit of spiritual principles, and material progress is one of the fruits of unity. So is further spiritual progress, for both spiritual and material progress are potentially infinite."

"Then how can the Wuronɛ have unity?"

"By accepting Bahá'u'lláh," Patékwu replied. "And starting the process of striving to live according to His revelation."

"We have been studying the Ruhi books, and they have given us prayers to say, but they say little about His teachings on unity or building a prosperous society."

"Perhaps they say more than you think," replied Thornton. "Especially Book Twelve on creating prosperous families, which we have only recently translated into Eryan. Perhaps we should get that book here soon. My father has also promised to talk to the electrical and telephone companies about installing their wires all the way here, so you will have them. That's a bit of material progress."

"I wish you could offer something more quickly; something tangible."

“As I have mentioned to you, Lord, the Bahá'í Faith does not provide financial incentives for accepting Bahá'u'lláh,” said Patékwu, gently. “Being a Bahá'í is a question of faith, and no other reason will do. But there are things we Krésonɛ can do to help our Wuronɛ cousins, which have nothing to do with becoming or not becoming Bahá'ís. We have established relations with merchants in Mɛlwika to buy wild animal meat and skins, cattle hides and meat, vegetables, fruits, grains, and other products of our labor. We have already said we will be glad to help you sell your items through the same merchants. The Wuronɛ have perhaps the best hunting grounds of any tribe in this world. We’ll send our pickup down to help bring your items to the market through our contacts and you will get the full price. That will be true of your corn, wheat, vegetables, milk, cheese, and other products.”

“You said there was a problem with quality, Lord!”

“Not with furs, and the quality of cheese can be improved. Selling cheese requires some changes in the way you make it. Your grain and vegetables are fine, I’m sure.”

“There will also be plenty of time to talk about ways the Wuronɛ can sell things and become more prosperous,” added Thornton. “But perhaps today we should concentrate on Bahá'í matters.”

“Yes, of course. Tell me, honored: what sort of life did He live, this Bahá'u'lláh?”

“A saintly life of helping the poor and needy, before He began His mission officially. Once He began it, all His wealth was taken from him. His rich clothes were replaced by worn garments, his mansion by a prison cell, and His family suffered terribly from hunger, disease, and cold. Yet He remained saintly, writing tablets—they are rather

like hymns, sometimes—about how to love all humanity and love Esto. He emanated a spiritual power that was felt by all who visited Him."

"And this saintly man, what did He say about punishing people who broke His laws?"

"He said that society is guarded by twin pillars of reward and punishment. Perhaps some day it will be enough to love everyone, but love alone will not protect the weak from the strong and will not guarantee justice."

"That is how it always must be. And what about murder? What does one do if unity is grievously breached by murder?"

"He said that if someone murders another intentionally, that execution is the proper punishment. The details have been left to the House of Justice to work out, however."

"I see." Lord ɛndranu nodded. "I feared a weak prophet, but I see Bahá'u'lláh understands the ways of the world. I, too, wish that murders would cease, and who knows, perhaps it is possible that some day they will. But meanwhile, we must deal with them."

"This is a practical religion, Lord," urged Patékwu. "And a logical one."

"So it would seem. Honored Thornton, let us gather the entire village so you can talk to them about Bahá'u'lláh. Many, of course, already know about Him; they have studied book one. But now let everyone hear and decide together."

"Right now, Lord?"

"Yes, right now!"

Shortly after dawn in Mɛlita, five time zones to the west of Wurontroba, Jordan got in his steam car and drove to Mɛlwika. Grandfather had two hours that morning to talk to him, and he planned to use it as effectively as possible.

He and Chris sat in the latter's big office in the Tomi building. Chris flipped through grant applications and whistled. "There's so little good information in these four generic requests for money for factories. That's ridiculous; the provincial tomis were created to prevent amateur efforts like this."

"So, what should I do?"

"It's the palace's job to reject applications, not yours. So go to them and say you recommend a rejection on the grounds that the plan is inadequate. Assuming the palace agrees—I hope they do—call this lord back and say we'll help him fix the application."

"But that could take forever! It could be a huge commitment of time."

"I know. Next time you visit the palace, ask them this: could they approve an extra five percent for every grant as a fee for Mennea Development Consulting. That's fifty dhanay per thousand and would be enough to pay for much of a week's work to fix up an application. I bet they'd agree if the result was an application that was well thought out."

"Our advice wouldn't be free, then."

"It isn't always free now. We've already said we'd charge for development plans. But the work is still free *to the customer*. I suspect we'll have to offer the palace one more service: follow-up afterward, to make sure the money has been spent well."

"We'd need staff to do that."

"And we'd have the money to hire staff if we got five percent of every grant. Factory applications really should be thought out carefully. There's fire protection to consider, disposal of hazardous wastes, and employee services; that's why we've been siting factories in industrial parks."

"But villages want their own factories."

"But they can't handle hazardous waste that way and if there's a fire and they're 45 minutes from the nearest fire engine, they'd lose everything. The tomis are beginning to create more industrial parks. The south shore will have three, the big one at Tripola, but two others east and south of the city on the main routes to the villages in those areas. Individual factories will also need access to professional accounting to handle salaries, taxes, and general cash flow. So village factories really need access to a tomi; the provincial one or Mennea Tomi."

"Should factory proposals be reviewed by tomi boards?"

Chris shook his head. "Not necessarily. But every province now has a development plan. If the plan calls for two shoe factories and someone is proposing a third one, they probably need to be appraised that their plan will encounter stiff competition. Someone in search of a factory should look at the list of 'unassigned goals' in a provincial plan to find something that fits the locale. I can get you the existing plans, and a quick call to the secretary of the tomi board will help you give a village good advice that is consistent with the circumstances. There are still a few tomi boards that are secretive, but most are pretty open. I can give you names of tomi board members to call if the secretary is uncooperative. There's almost always someone to talk to, and I have a pretty good idea what's going on as well."

“It’s a shame the provincial tomis won’t work with villages. They aren’t without resources, after all; they have some tax money to contribute and they can mobilize labor.”

“That’s a good point. I should take that to the tomis next time I visit them. If villages can arrange a contribution, they should get a tomi-run factory, and they should get a share of the tomi’s profits proportional to their investment.”

“Okay, I’ll write up a good, clear proposal for a grant reviewing and auditing fee to take to the Development Ministry. Now, look at this.” He pulled out a grant application for a water system for Akɛldɛdra. “They aren’t sure how much pipe they need, they don’t know how to design a water intake with sand filtration, they didn’t know about the need for a water storage tank, and they had no thought of sewers or an artificial marsh. I explained all that to Lord Bɛlékwu and he said ‘alright, add it to the application.’”

“That’s pretty common, isn’t it?”

“That’s my point. There is a way to do water and sewer systems. What is needed is a company, rather like the biogas company. It arrives with all the things needed and the local village provides the workers to dig the ditches and holes. The system is installed in perhaps a month and a half, then the company moves to another village to supervise work there as well.”

Chris nodded. “You’re right, that would help quite a lot. That’s something the Development Corps was supposed to do. But the ‘corps’ side has never materialized.”

“Really? I didn’t know that.”

“You were young. Widubéru was very keen to establish a group of young development workers. He emphasized the need for clean water in villages, though I don’t think he really understood the importance of sewers. But never mind; he’s not going to do

it now. Your proposal will add to the cost, but the quality of the work would be worth it, and there would be fewer problems. I wonder who could do it."

"I wonder. . ." began Jordan.

"Who?"

"Primanu Boléripurai. He got a dwoyɛri in agriculture three years ago and has been enjoying the work. He's out doing youth team work again this summer, for the fourth summer in a row. When he went out with me four summers ago, he and Tomasu worked closely to install water systems in four villages, so he has a basic grasp of it. He has experience from the other summers as well. He's great with his hands and pretty good at managing people."

"So, we could set him up in the business?"

Jordan nodded. "It's not a huge financial investment because the needed items are bought with grants. Villagers have to supply their own shovels. We can standardize the process. Someone has to go to the village to survey it and draft the grant application. Someone goes to the village right before the work starts to get it organized. Then two supervisors arrive with the equipment and supervise the installation. Afterward, the result needs to be audited. Right now, villages put together their own plans willy-nilly. The more I think about it, the more I realize why the results are so disappointing after all these years of trying."

"This is brilliant," said Chris. "The company needs some young, energetic, honest, and reliable employees, and we know where we can get them. I can call Primanu and offer the job to him. Do we know where he is?"

“Call Mɛddwoglubas and ask Modolubu; he’d know. Primanu is out with a four-person team somewhere.”

“We can borrow aerial photographs from the Geological Survey, too,” said Chris. “That would ensure that the villagers would know exactly where to put pipes, and how much pipe is needed. I like this idea more and more all the time.”

“And I’m feeling better about what to do,” said Jordan. “This is becoming a much bigger job than I thought.”

“Plan to hire at least two more full time staff,” said Chris. “I’ll let you know what Primanu says.”

It took an hour to gather the Wuronɛ village—most of the village—in the muddy central square in front of Lord ɛndranu’s house. ɛndranu was really the elected headman of the village and tribe; his title of lord, conveyed by the Réjé after his election, meant little to his four hundred cousins.

ɛndranu gave Thornton the bare minimum introduction: “Honored Dhoru Ménnéa of Mɛlwika, son of the rich and honorable Lord Kristobhéru [as he pronounced it], has come to tell us of Bakhá'u'lláh. Please, honored, speak to us.”

Thornton said a quick prayer to `Abdu'l-Bahá for guidance, rose, and began to speak. He spoke of Bahá'u'lláh’s early life, His acceptance of the Báb, His protection of the Bábís as they were persecuted, His imprisonment, exile, and loss of all earthly possessions, His terrible suffering, and through it all, His love for all humanity and the flood of tablets He wrote; for while Widumaj had left His lovers with only 110 hymns,

Bahá'u'lláh left 15,000 tablets. That caused the audience to gasp, and he realized his talk might, indeed, be partly inspired.

So he turned to the contents of the tablets and began to talk about prayer, the afterlife, God's progressive revelation through messengers, Widumaj's specific acceptance of Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, and Buddha, the importance of love and unity, the role of sacrifice in all religions, the importance of education so that priests are unnecessary and people can create their own lives of service and advancement, and Bahá'u'lláh's vision of a united, prosperous, peaceful, and just world. He told of Bahá'u'lláh's passing and His appointment of `Abdu'l-Bahá as perfect exemplar, infallible interpreter, and perfect head of the Faith. He held up a picture of Bahá'u'lláh's tomb and a portrait of `Abdu'l-Bahá to the huge crowd, which was still alert and fascinated after almost two hours; they were used to long speeches. Then he spoke of the advancement of the Faith on Éra, the two Houses of Worship, the three all-Bahá'í villages, the slow material progress that the Bahá'ís were making by themselves, and the ways Bahá'í principles were helping the entire world to progress.

The sun passed the zenith and was beginning to wester and his voice was getting hoarse when he stopped. Lord ɛndranu appeared to have been listening with rapt attention the entire two hours, and perhaps he was; all the details were not as important as the tone, the feeling, the energy in the village. It had been a powerful and persuasive presentation, even if Thornton's standard eastern shore dialect had made it hard to follow. ɛndranu rose when Thornton finished. "He wants questions."

Everyone stood and they had no questions at first, so Thornton said, “I have two for you to ponder, while you consider your questions: do you believe Bahá'u'lláh is a messenger from Esto? Are you willing to live by His teachings? If the answer to both is yes, you are Bahá'ís.”

“I think I am,” said ɛndranu, immediately. “But I need to know more, to be sure.”

A man raised his hand. “I have a question. Does Bahá'u'lláh allow us to sacrifice animals to Esto?”

“Sacrificing goats and sheep were customs of Bahá'u'lláh’s own people, the Muslimɛs. The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh both sacrificed animals on occasion. But they did not require it of Bahá'ís, so animal sacrifice is not a part of the Bahá'í Faith; it may be a traditional custom that Bahá'ís do with their cousins, but it is not a Bahá'í custom. Bahá'u'lláh called on us to sacrifice ourselves for others instead.”

That caused some discussion. “And honored, we want to sacrifice for you,” said another man. “For you have spoken eloquently and persuasively today. How are you sacrificing for us?”

“It is difficult to sacrifice for people you don’t know well. I am devoting my life to the people of this world, and I hope it is acceptable to Esto. I am a scientist and a Bahá'í and try to teach both. I try to bring development to people in a fair way so they are not exploited by the rich and powerful. My family devotes its treasure to helping people to improve themselves, which means finding out what people need and figuring out how to help them attain that goal. We also devote our treasure to making more treasure, so we can continue and expand our service. We help others whether they want to accept

Bahá'u'lláh or not; that is a different matter entirely. Today, though, Lord ɛndranu has invited us to talk about Bahá'u'lláh. Another time we can talk about material matters."

At that point, Lord ɛndranu rose. "Could we recite some prayers now, and break for some food and drink? We can come back together afterward."

Jordan drove back to Mɛlita in a state close to ecstasy. His confusion had been clarified; a solution to long-standing problems suddenly had presented itself; and a plan had emerged from the fog. He still couldn't believe the changes that had been wrought by a 90-minute conversation.

When he pulled into the driveway, he saw a pickup truck where he usually parked the car. Puzzled, he went inside and was shocked to see Primanu Boléripurai. "How did you get here?!"

"I was just south of here, in Brébatroba! Your grandfather was talking to Luktréstu, who knew I was there for the month, so he called the Brébatroba Bahá'í Center and I had just finished a class on electrical wiring. We talked for half an hour and he went over the entire idea. I was so excited, I drove here to talk to you immediately."

"Great! I don't have much time; the office opens in a few minutes. But I suppose Tiamaté and our assistant can handle the calls for a while."

"That's what she said; she was surprised to see me. So: I'd go around the world, province by province, installing water and sewer systems?"

"I suppose. Nowadays you could hop around, one day on the eastern shore and one on the western shore, or going from the northern shore to the southern shore. I guess

this office would finalize the plan and budget and steer the application through the palace; you'd decide on the schedule."

"Lord Chris said his tomi would handle the paychecks, payment for materials, taxes, etc."

"The tomi has offices in Mɛlita, Bɛllɛdha, Pértatranisér, Tripola, Anartu, and now Isurdhuna. Wherever you go, they can handle the paperwork. They handle it for Tomasu Miller."

"Good; I can manage people and schedules, but I'm not an accountant! I'm good with my hands! I haven't helped with a water system for two years. We didn't install one last year. Brébatroba has one; Brébéstu paid for it."

"It should be pretty good, so ask him for a tour of it, make a list of everything it has, and ask people what problems it has. You might want to call Tomasu, since he worked on water and sewer systems a few years ago."

"I remember. Because of him, Mɛlwika made standard sized sand filter beds, water towers, and sewage settling tanks, though I bet they aren't selling them now. Brébatroba has electric motors to bubble air into the settling tanks to aerate the sewage. I remember the basics, but I suspect Tomasu has a lot of tips!"

"I suspect the artificial marshes are better now than when we installed one in Wɛranopéla, too. Go ask the guys who run Mɛlwika's. So, are you going to do it?"

"Definitely! I enjoy agronomy, but farmers don't always take my advice and I don't have my own farm. I feel helpless, sometimes. I'd love to have my own business, and I'd love to see villages get proper water and sewage. How are you going to make money off this project, though? Do you think the palace will agree to a commission?"

“We’ll see! But if they don’t, my grandfather will support it, at least this year. Don’t worry about me. We’ll arrange the grants. I know the palace likes water and sewage grants, and if they’re done professionally they’ll be even more likely to be accepted. When can you start?”

“Right away! The youth team in Brébatroba is a strong one. They can manage without me.”

“Then I suggest you go find Tomasu and get his advice—maybe you can get it by phone, but I bet a day with his team would be better—then we’ll see whether we can get a grant for the first project.”

“Lord Chris said Sértroba wants a system.”

“Correct. Thornton is there and said he’d help plan it.”

“Then I guess Sértroba’s my second stop.”

They prayed at the end of the morning meeting and at the beginning of the afternoon session. The Wuronɛ who had memorized Bahá'í passages through their study of Ruhi Books One and Two stepped forward to recite them; the Krésonɛ present were surprised that so many of their cousins already knew Bahá'í texts. Fifty of the village’s 280 adults had studied Ruhi with Krésonɛ tutors and many already considered themselves Bahá'ís, though had not said so. Now they were excited and emboldened.

Thornton’s voice was still hoarse as he resumed the question and answer session. Many had asked him questions privately over lunch and he had encouraged them to pose the question in public, so that got the discussion going; soon everyone had questions. It continued until the sun set and Thornton’s voice was fading. “Before we have closing

prayers, allow me to repeat my two questions," he said. "Do you accept Bahá'u'lláh as a messenger of God? Are you willing to try to follow His teachings?"

"Indeed," said several of the Ruhi students, who raised their hands.

"I do," added ɛndranu. "We must try His way." He raised his hand. He looked at the 200 or so adults and youth who were still gathered. They looked at each other and began to raise their hands as well. After twenty seconds, only six or eight still had their hands down. Lord Pakékwu and Dhrébékwɛs, who had been answering questions all day, beamed with pleasure.

Thornton smiled. "Marvelous. Welcome, my friends, to the community of Bahá'u'lláh's followers and lovers. Let us pray together."

He sat and let others recite prayers; his voice needed a rest. Everyone headed home and ɛndranu invited Thornton and the Krésonɛ guests to his home for dinner and to stay the night. They let Thornton rest his voice; Patékwu, Estodɛdonu, and Dhrébékwɛs answered questions. It was quite late when Thornton retreated to his pickup and turned on his cell phone to call home. "Dad, the entire Wuronɛ tribe has declared."

A pause. "All of them? What happened to your voice, are you sick?"

"No, I've been speaking or answering questions for about ten hours. Lord ɛndranu convened a village meeting in the late morning and it continued, except for a break for lunch, until sunset. At that point I asked who would declare their faith in Bahá'u'lláh. About 200 adults were present and all but about eight raised their hands."

"Wow. Congratulations to them and to you. I'll go to the House of Worship right away to pray."

“Please, we all need it. Can you send some gifts? Prayer books, Ruhi books, pictures of the temples?”

“Sure. I’ll call Modolubu and arrange it right away. Tell them I spoke to the electric company today and they’ll install the line in a month or two. They never got the grant from the palace that Prince Mɛméjékwu promised, but the poles are already there, so the line will cost about eight thousand. I’ll talk to the telephone company tomorrow and if they don’t have it in the budget, I’ll make a donation.”

“Thanks, dad. You and mom need to come. Mom can form a gabruli. Poverty is a common issue. They need a sense of progress. The Krésonɛ know a lot of them, so they know who is reliable.”

“We’ll get a youth team there with a pickup truck right away. I’ll talk to Modolubu about that, too. If they teach a few people how to drive, if we can arrange for the village to get a truck, they’ll have someone who knows how to use it. I’ll talk to Jordan about drafting a grant request for a pickup.”

“That’s a great idea! Then there won’t be any Bahá'í connection.”

“Exactly. By the way, Thor, you’re going to have a visitor in Sértroba in maybe a week: Primanu Boléripurai. Jordan and I talked this morning and Jordan proposed that Primanu be asked to organize a company that will install village water and sewer systems. We talked about it this morning; I called Primanu, who was in Brébatroba; he immediately accepted and drove to Mɛlita; he and Jordan talked; then Primanu drove back to Brébatroba, packed, and drove to Isurdhuna to talk to Tomasu for a few days! So he’s already started. He plans to go to Sértroba after that.”

“Extraordinary.”

"That's exactly the right word for it. I don't think I've ever seen anything like it! Today has been an amazing day."

"You can say that again, dad!"

Reread and edited, 6/15/13, 8/28/17

373.

Business Opportunities

Mid Kaiménu/mid July, 16/634

Chris left the office of Mɛlwika Génadɛma's Vice President—who was really the acting President, since Chris spent little time on the college—pleased by the progress on expansion. The school was on track to lodge five hundred new students on campus in the fall and almost as many elsewhere, especially in ɛjnopéla, Mɛlita, and Sullɛndha, though with the use of the telephone, Mɛlwika would provide classes that were experienced all across the western shore as well. Conversely, some nursing classes in Mɛlwika would have the instructor on the phone in Mɛddwoglubas.

He started toward the Stock Market to see how it was going that day, but on a whim he veered westward, crossed Majakwés Rodha, and headed for Mitru Transportation's headquarters. It was a surprisingly small building because the bus parking and repair facility was located in Béranagrés ten kilometers away. Chris walked in and was pleased to see Mitru was in. "Ah, Chris!" he said, seeing Mennea outside his door. "Come in."

"How's everything today?"

Mitru nodded. "Pretty good, considering the Isurdhuna pilgrimage is coming up. We're preparing to move forty thousand people into the valley next month. We've had to tell several schools that have summer sessions that they won't have as many buses for that week. I had ordered three more buses, but one may not be ready in time!"

"I'm sorry. Any news on the bus route to Wurontroba?"

“We’ll do it every Primdiu; ten dontay one way to Gordha, fifteen round trip. My driver for the Kwolonɛ route talked to the elder who runs Awstroba—Mɛnɛgékwɛs—yesterday. In spite of the fact that he’s first cousin of Lord Patékwu of the Krésonɛ, it didn’t go well. ‘We’re Kwolonɛ and we don’t want or need a bus to Gordha.’ ‘No, it would be disloyal to the tribe and we won’t support it or use it.’ The arguments that Gordha has an excellent hospital and better shopping than Mɛdhpéla and is closer fell on deaf ears. The driver finally said, ‘Well, the bus won’t stop, then, unless someone flags it down.’”

“How could anyone do that?”

“Route 78—north-south, Gordha to Wurontroba—goes right past the existing bus stop for the bus to Mɛdhpéla.”

“I see. I’ll be going to Wurontroba in three or four days. I’ll let them know.”

“We’ll start this Primdiu. That’s four days away.”

“Then I’ll let Thornton know; he’s still in Wurontroba. He’s been teaching straight for four days, now.”

“Thanks. I’m so excited that a fourth village has converted to the Faith! It’s really amazing.”

“It is, and very stressful. The Central Spiritual Assembly meets in two weeks and we’ll set up a schedule whereby just about every member visits over the next year. Liz goes with me. Gɛlé Entɛrdékui, the Auxiliary for the South Shore, has promised to go in the fall.”

“It’s a big transition. They’re in my prayers. If there’s anything I can do, let me know.”

“Thank you, I will.” Then an idea occurred to Chris. “Actually, there might be. Yesterday I asked Widubéru whether the Development Corps can give them a grant to buy a pickup. He was quite clear. First, he reminded me that they have a standard procedure and if it isn’t followed, it would be meaningless and the Corps would no longer be a dispenser of aid. The Corps needs an application, they need to visit to review the application, and then they need to put it in their queue, because sometimes they have to wait for money. He’s right, of course. So I asked him if we made a special gift to the Development Corps whether that could be expedited and he said yes, sometimes he’ll do that, as long as the grant is for legitimate development and is not going to a relative of the donor. He can drop the visit and just call Thornton to verify the need. If you can donate money for the pickup to supplement his budget, he’ll pass it on to them right away.”

Mitru nodded. “I can do that. If you can draft a cover letter for me to send to the Development Corps with the check, I’ll send it. That gives me another incentive for raising the round trip ticket to Isurdhuna for the pilgrimage by a dontay! I probably have to raise it anyway, but that will guarantee it.”

“Don’t tell anyone their bus ride to pilgrimage is buying a remote village a pickup! Thanks, Mitru. We don’t want the gift to come through the Central Spiritual Assembly or through my family; it might foster dependency.”

“I understand.”

“Have a good day.” Chris waved, so Mitru waved back. Then Chris headed out of the building.

He stopped at the Stock Market. Everything was going well that day; the market was up a few percent after dropping a few percent the day before. Generally, the value of

stock was creeping upward at five percent a month and if that continued he would have to worry about a bubble, but there was no danger yet. Hence he headed to the Mennea Tomi building. Luktréstu was waiting.

"You finally got a call from Rudhkrisu," he began, referring to the Chief Executive Officer of the World Electric Company. "The palace has finally gotten back to him about the prince's pledge that the Wuronɛ would get electric and telephone lines. They will honor the pledge, even if it is very old. Rudhkrisu says he'll schedule the work on the line for next month. He called the telephone company and volunteered to have his crew install the telephone wires as well, since that's cheaper for everyone."

"Great! Excellent. I bet Wurontroba's the last village in the world to be connected."

"No, some of the Ghéslonɛ and Géndonɛ hamlets are still isolated. I'm not sure they even have roads."

"I guess we'll have to send Bahá'í teachers there, then," quipped Chris, and Luktréstu laughed. Remote places responded to the Bahá'í message more vigorously and that forced Chris to lobby for their development.

"Too bad we don't know more about them, so we can help them anyway," suggested Luktréstu.

"Maybe we can get some Bahá'í youth teams to visit them this summer. The teams are getting a lot of development experience and can bring back lots of information about their needs."

"You also got a call from Moléstu Dénujénésɛ's office reporting that the heavy crane is working perfectly to build the new dock at Arjdhura and they are running ahead

of schedule, so they anticipate being able to start work on the Nuarjora fish processing plant in Abɛlménu; a month early. I passed the word on to the accounting department, since we have the financial management contract for that project. Prime Minister Wɛranolubu called asking when the grain elevator and grinding mill for Wɛranowika were scheduled, so I looked it up and called him back. Lord Wénu of Médhɛla called asking about whether we'd invest in another textile factory there, so I asked him for a formal letter making a request."

"Good. They're growing a lot of cotton."

"And that's it." The telephone rang. "Except for that call, of course." Luktréstu picked up the phone. "Mennea Tomi, Luktréstu speaking . . . Oh, greetings, Jordan. Just a minute, I'll hand the phone to him." He handed the phone to Chris.

"Good afternoon, Jor. Are you back from the palace?"

"Yes, I just got back, and I'm ignoring the telephone for a few minutes to catch my breath. I was able to give them one completed and verified grant application, for which they were grateful, and handed them a dozen and recommended that they reject them, which they immediately promised to do. They were pleased by that. Then I suggested a five percent fee for verifying all data, making a professional recommendation, pledging to work with the applicant to improve rejected applications if they felt it was merited, and inspecting the final work to report whether it was done properly or not. They were absolutely thrilled with the idea; it made their work much easier. But then they began to consider the regulations and decided that they couldn't do it without asking permission. They suggested that I work for free for the next month

while they run the proposal past officials in the palace. If it's approved, they'll pay me retrospectively."

Chris shook his head. "That's too bad. It may just encourage them to refuse."

"Then what do we do?"

"I guess we'll move forward anyway."

"But you just said it was bad!"

"I know. I'll cover the costs. This is such a good idea, they *have* to say yes! A small commission that guarantees that the money is spent right is worth it to them. I'll talk to the palace about it. It isn't just us; others could open consulting services and compete with us. The result would be less wasted development funds."

"Alright, I'll move forward. Primanu's back from Kɛrda, full of ideas, and he's working with the local Mennea Tomi office to draw up forms for the company. He's really excited. He'll be ready to go to Sértroba in a few days."

"Tell him to come with Liz and me; we should be able to go on Suksdiu, and I want to talk to him anyway."

"Okay, I'll let him know."

When Mɛlitané's telephone rang, she glanced at the clock on her desk. Nine a.m.: it was almost certainly Migyusu, the chief buyer for the Home Improvement chain of stores. He always called the Gabruli Central Office on Kwétɛrdiu mornings, first thing. She already had the order form ready.

"Khélo?" she said, picking up the phone.

"Greetings, good woman Mɛlitané, this is Migyusu."

“Hail, honored Migyusu. How are you today?”

“Quite well, and you? Is it hot in Tɛrskua, like it is in Mɛlwika?”

“It promises to be. Last night was pretty warm. But it’s midsummer, so the heat is to be expected, right? At least it isn’t humid. Down here, the farmers are irrigating very heavily.”

“Here too; no rain for three weeks, now. I have a big order for you for next week. I might call Tridiu next week, also, to supplement. We’re beginning to prepare for the surge of sales associated with the Isurdhuna pilgrimage. They say this year’s will be the biggest yet, and that means sales should be strong. Are you ready?”

“The pencil and order form are waiting.”

“Alright. Jams and preserves: they’re popular this time of year and cheapest, so we want 2,000 jars next week. We particularly want peach, apricot, blueberry, quince, and medlar. All of them have been selling very well. The tropical fruits remain more popular in the winter.”

“I’m told there is a good peach harvest in Mɛlwika and villages nearby, and Brébatroba apricots are good. We can do that. What about the peanut butter?”

“The Pértatranisér store wants some, but that’s the only place it sold. They’ll get it straight from the local gabruli. No one else wants some until we can figure out how to sell it.”

“The Pértatranisér Gabruli has been making and selling it for a year and it has caught on there. Alright. Next?”

“Candles are selling well now because people have spare cash; can you get us a thousand?”

“I’ll call around and set it up. Next.”

“That line of woven baskets made in the lower Arjakwés is selling well, for some reason. Can you provide three hundred?”

“We’ll try, but the Naskɛrpɛda Gabruli can’t make more than one hundred a week, and we’re busy with perfume making here. I’ll see whether they can make them faster or get help.”

“Please do. Perfume making: your rose water and lavender water is flying off the shelves. We’re going to raise the selling price. We want as much as you can make.”

“Really? We’re making 100 bottles a week.”

“If you could make a thousand it’d sell. I don’t know where you’ll get the flowers, but if you have to pay to import them from the other side of the world and charge us more for the bottles, believe me, it’ll be fine. We’ve never had a product like this before. Women *love* it, and they think men love it when they wear it. Make as much as you can.”

“Wow! Alright, we’ll see what we can do. I’m sure we can make 200 bottles, but we’ll shoot for 400.”

“Shoot for five hundred if you can.”

“Alright! What else?”

“The embroidered shirts, dresses, vests, and slippers that you shipped last week; the order is the same this week. They’re selling well. Same for mats, wicker chairs, painted clay toys, and leatherwork. Tell everyone that next week we will increase all those orders twenty percent, and that will continue for three weeks up to and including the Isurdhuna pilgrimage, then we’ll probably cut them in half for the rest of the summer.

That's my guess. After Isurdhuna, everyone should start thinking about autumn clothes. We'll want a list of possibilities."

"Alright, I'm making a note. We'll be calling everyone today and tomorrow."

"Great. That's everything, Mɛlitané. The Central Gabruli has proved very reliable so far and we're really pleased with the results."

"Thank you, we're really happy to work with you. The check for 523 dhanay came yesterday and I got the payments to the individual gabrulis in the mail. We're very happy to work with Home Improvement; women keep telling me how thrilled they are to see their products on your shelves."

"It looks like this process is making more satisfied customers for us, then. Any more news about the rouge and lipstick from Tripola? That other batch really wasn't good enough. It sold because it was the only stuff available."

"I'll ask again, but last week they said they were still awaiting some professional advice from chemists. I think it'll be a few months. But they know that if they improve their product, you'll want a lot of it."

"We will want a lot; remind them, please. I've got to go. Bye."

"Bye." Mɛlitané hung up the phone and made a few more notes. Then she stepped out of her office and crossed two rooms to the house's former kitchen, where the Tɛrskua Gabruli made rosewater and lavender water. One of the two stills was sitting on the stove, cooking; a load of petals was put in water and heated to a boil. The pot's lid was dome-shaped and upside down, so that condensation on it would drip to the center and fall into a cup; the top of the lid was filled with ice to make sure the steam condensed.

The first half hour had the rose essence; after that, the condensate was just pure water. With gas, they could control the heat precisely and time each batch carefully.

The aroma of roses in the room was so powerful, it was almost overwhelming. A huge heap covered a table on one side, where two women were busy plucking petals and putting them in a big bowl. A big ice chest held several hundred kilograms of ice and had just been refilled that morning.

"Do you have enough petals to run both stills?" she asked.

"No," replied Sarékrisɛlé. "Why?"

"Because Home Improvement would like as much as we can make; 400 or even 500 bottles, rather than 100."

"That's impossible! If we ran both stills day and night, we might manage 300."

"Then we should try for 300, and I'll buy us another still."

"But the rose petals are almost gone. This is the last batch."

"Can we go out and pick more?"

"We can try, but the number of flowers that are opening is decreasing. There should be more north of here, though."

"I'll ask gabrulis when I call them whether they can send us rose and lavender petals."

"Good. We should offer jasmine and chamomile." She pointed to small quantities of both flowers.

Mɛlitané nodded. "Yes, because they will sell and we won't get enough of the other two. Can you manage this order, Sarékrisɛlé? I'll let you know whether I can get

more rose, lavender, jasmine, and chamomile. We'll need to run these stills sixteen or more hours a day."

"How much money will we get?"

"We charged three dontay per bottle for one hundred and we'll have to charge more for the longer work hours and to pay to have flowers shipped to us. I'd say, five."

"Five? Wow!"

"But only if we can get the flowers and run the stills for longer hours." Mɛlitané looked around the former kitchen. "The demand for essential oils can only expand. We'll have to use orange blossoms this winter and find a farmer to plant some very large fields of roses and lavender for next year. This kitchen will be too small."

Chris and Liz left Mɛlwika for Sértroba not long after dawn on Suksdiu. They led a small caravan: Primanu Boléripurai came along in a rented pickup and Déodatu Ekwɛsmani, accompanied by two Bahá'í youth, came in another pickup. As soon as they arrived in Sértroba, Lord Patékwu came out to walk Primanu around the village so they could plan the shortest route of pipes to deliver clean water to everyone. Chris and Liz met with Lébé and their grandchildren, who had been running all sorts of classes while Thornton worked in Wurontroba. Liz met with the gabruli and, after dinner with Patékwu, she spoke to the entire village.

The next morning they drove to Wurontroba with Lord Patékwu. "The more I hear about your efforts with the Wuronɛ, the more impressed I am," said Liz, as the rover headed south on Route 78.

“I didn’t do it,” replied Patékwu. “The area teaching committee coordinated the efforts, starting last fall, and appointed an institute coordinator in the village in the winter once there were six determined to learn all the Ruhi books and teach them to others. Every time Sértroba’s pickup went to Wurontroba, every Primdiu, someone visited, even if it was for an hour. Usually the person stayed all day. Three youth who were tutors spent over a month there in the winter. When Thornton and I went down, the ground was well prepared.”

“That’s what I mean; the whole effort is impressive. Have you tried helping with Awstroba?”

“We’ve talked to relatives there and the area teaching committee wrote the area teaching committee for the Kwolona cluster to coordinate visits. But we’ve been so busy helping Wurontroba, it wasn’t possible. Soon, we can devote resources to Awstroba.” He sighed. “I have a new explanation why the Krésonɛ were slow at consolidating their understanding of the Faith and of development: I was trying to manage everything, and the people expected me to manage everything. But it really wasn’t possible. Now, we have three local Spiritual Assemblies, an area teaching committee, and a dozen coordinators of various activities, and the Bahá'í system of organization has its non-Bahá'í parallel: we have the Krésonɛ Company, five regional subcommittees of the company, and coordinators for various tasks, like water and sewage, irrigation, production of goods for sale, and electrification. I have appointed a public education committee and a health committee for the tribe. There are almost fifty people working for the tribe in various ways and they all have their own spheres, so they are getting a lot done. Furthermore, with Feasts and reflection meetings, everyone is getting used to

getting together to talk about problems and ways to solve them. We have a long way to go, but we have started down the road to creating a Bahá'í way of life."

"Your analysis is fascinating," said Chris. "And I congratulate you for making so many personal changes in your leadership. Changes of that sort are very difficult."

Patékwu shrugged. "Please pray for me, because I really don't know what sort of leader I should be! You can't just consult; someone has to manage and make many decisions. It is not clear which decisions should be made by consultation and which by someone appointed to carry out the decisions."

"It never is clear," agreed Chris. "But if your heart is in the right place, it works out in the end."

Patékwu pointed. "Look, the first bus from Wurontroba!"

Chris slowed the rover so the bus could pass them on the narrow road. Seven men and women occupied the seats in back; they waved enthusiastically. Then Chris resumed their full speed of 70 kilometers per hour.

"This young man you brought to Sértroba, Primanu: he seems reliable and honest," said Patékwu, changing subjects.

"I believe so. I have known him since he showed up in Mɛlwika as an abandoned child at age ten. His mother was starving, so she put him on a bus to Mɛlwika and said his aunt would meet him there. But his aunt had never lived in Mɛlwika and had actually died of malnutrition in Néfa. Fortunately, Primanu was found almost immediately by the head of our schools, who took him in, then called someone who was married and childless and reliable: a Bahá'í named Snékwu. He and his wife became Primanu's adoptive parents. Primanu became a Bahá'í through them and has since gone back to his

home village to meet his mother, and they have reconciled. Some children would have been devastated by his mother's intentional decision to abandon him, but it made him stronger."

"It was a question of survival."

"Exactly; they were faced with starvation. Lord, I was impressed by how you worked with Primanu and with your coordinator for water and sewage, listening, making a few suggestions. You spoke a few minutes ago of uncertainty about how to balance managing with consulting, but I think you do the two well."

"Thank you, Lord Chris, you are kind. Are you sure we can get a grant to install the system? Because Primanu says it will cost about four thousand, which is more than we thought."

"There is a very good chance. You understood that he plans to stay an extra week to help with wiring the village? He's good at that, too."

"We understood and are very appreciative. Lord, what else can we offer the Wuronɛ, other than a pickup? My heart aches for them."

"We need to talk to them. We don't even know they'll want a pickup. We can certainly send them a constant stream of Bahá'í youth to teach at the village school for free; that will bring them quite an education over time. Déodatu was at Dhudrakaita for three months and helped with their school quite a bit, plus he gave agricultural and animal breeding advice, improved their driving skills, helped wire the village for electricity, advised them about microcredit, and arranged for biogas!"

"He sounds like a one-man development team. I'm sure he can help, as can the two youth with him. The education they provide won't be systematic, as we are now

realizing. Still, the Bahá'í youth were able to move our education forward quite a bit. How's the market for pork? Because the Wuronɛ have a lot of pigs. Just north of the village is a belt of oak forest, and many of the oaks there are sweet; the acorns are just about edible for people, and certainly for pigs. I'd encourage the sale of their pork and ham. They produce a smoked ham that is quite good."

"Then that's something to sell. The market for pork products is pretty good. Let's brainstorm on our way down and see what else we can come up with. I suspect Thornton has ideas as well."

Patékwu began to tell Chris and Liz about the Wuronɛ, their land, its resources, their handicrafts, and some of their characteristics. He knew his neighbors quite well and obviously had affection for them. They asked him questions; Liz, in particular, inquired about the women. But that triggered a discourse on the work the women did. "As you can see, for the last two years, I've been thinking a lot about my people," Patékwu confessed at one point. "I'm just applying my own questions to the Wuronɛ!"

When they rolled into Wurontroba, everyone dropped their work and turned out to meet the strangers. Lord ɛndranu came out of his home with Thornton to greet the older Menneas. Chris and Liz both gave little speeches about how pleased they were to visit and ɛndranu responded in kind. Then they retreated into the lord's house with Déodatu.

"Perhaps my wife should join us as well," suggested Lord ɛndranu. "Wéré!" He turned to Liz and Chris. "After all, we're trying to understand this equality idea. At least we understand it means consultation."

"It indeed does," agreed Chris.

A moment Wéré came in. She carried herself with great dignity, even though her dress was old and stained and its hem torn in a few places. About thirty, she was ten years younger than the lord. They could hear an older woman's voice quieting the children in the kitchen, the house's only other large room, from which she had emerged.

"Please join us, my dear. This is Lady Liz Ménnéa."

"Welcome to our village, Lady Liz, and Lord Kristobhéru." She nodded to Déodatu as well.

"This is Déodatu, and listen to him speak; he's Kwétékwonɛ!"

Déodatu smiled. "Greetings, Lady Wéré. Indeed, I am from the tribe to the northwest, though I haven't been home for almost a year, except for a week at the beginning of summer."

"Déodatu just spent three months at Dhudrakaita," said Chris. "It's a remote village of three hundred on the western shore."

"All Bahá'í, too," added Déodatu. "They joined the Faith four years ago. Their climate is much warmer and they grow rice rather than barley, wheat, and corn. They have oxen rather than cattle and pigs. But they are about the same size as Wurontroba and started with a school like yours."

"How big is their school now?" asked ɛndranu.

"Two rooms, and they're adding a third room for the older youth. They can't get to a high school, but they can listen to some high school classes on the radio, and we're providing them with a Bahá'í youth volunteer to help with the school."

"Which is what you will do here?" asked Wéré.

“There are three of us and we will be pleased to stay at Wurontroba as long as the Wuronɛ desire, though we will have to leave by the end of the summer. We can provide classes for adults and youth on a wide variety of subjects: basic science, math, accounting, health, hygiene, ecology, geology, surveying, basic and advanced literacy, and electrical wiring. We will have a pickup to assist the village and we can give people instruction how to drive it, should your village ever acquire one.”

“We need one,” agreed ɛndranu.

“Lord, the Development Corps gives grants to remote villages to acquire pickup trucks,” said Chris. “We can arrange that, if you desire. We can get the application form.”

“Yes, please.”

“I’ve helped to fill out a few such forms also,” added Déodatu. “In the last year, the palace has started giving out many grants. Basically, they are giving back to people the tax money extracted from them.”

“It’s about time. I understand in the next month they will install the wires from Awstroba and we will have electricity and telephones. But I hesitate to contemplate how much we have paid in taxes since the road was built, and for what?” ɛndranu shook his head.

“More is coming back, now,” replied Patékwu. “In Sértroba, we are applying for several thousand dhanay to install running water and sewers for everyone. We talked about the idea two years ago and no one took it seriously, but a month ago we were meeting and agreed it was needed to guarantee clean water to every house. We also established a company, owned by every adult in the tribe, to plan projects. We irrigated

425 hectares—about 1,200 agris—for farming and pastureland. It used to be desert and our families will now have half more money than they used to have. We have many other projects to pursue together. Sértroba itself is about the same size as Wurontroba."

"We will have to hear about the steps you have taken," said Ɛndranu. "And perhaps we can hear about Dhudrakaita as well. And Lord Kristobhéru, can you tell us about Mɛlwika?"

"Of course, and many other places. And Liz can speak about the women's gabrulis that are being established all over the world."

"They allow women to come together, plan how they will help their families, and work together to earn some money," explained Liz. "All the Bahá'í youth who have come here are men, unfortunately. I think we need to send some young women as well. They can teach sewing, new things to cook, knitting, and many other skills that are spreading around the world."

"We would welcome that," said Wéré. "I am the only woman here who can read, and I can read only a little."

"Gabrulis can give literacy classes. If women can read and write, they can serve their families and themselves much better. The woman who coordinates all the gabrulis around the world learned to read and write to help her husband's construction business. Her daughter is now studying at Mɛlwika Génadɛma."

"Our goal for the Krésonɛ is universal literacy," said Patékwu.

"We need to send more youth to génadɛma," said Wéré. "Our teacher has had only three génadɛma courses."

“The génadɛmas have scholarships,” said Chris. “The crown even has special scholarships for tribesmen and people from very remote villages.”

“We didn’t know,” said ɛndranu.

“Kɛkanu often mentions these things on *The World Table,”* said Déodatu. “But you have no electricity, so you have no radio.”

“That’s something else we need,” said ɛndranu. “We don’t even have a post office; I suppose the crown can support that, too? We get copies of *Mɛlwika Nuɛs* from Sértroba. They’re used in the school and sometimes I read them. Otherwise, we’re cut off.”

“That will now change,” replied Patékwu.

Reread and edited, 6/15/13, 8/29/17, 11/28/24

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Opportunity Knocks

Early-mid Dhonménu/late July-early Aug., 16/634

In the last year, Suksdius had taken on a new character in Mɛlwika. Most factories had shifted to a four-day, eight- or nine-hour work week, so the city now had a weekend; in the fall even the city's schools planned to shift to a four-day week, though the days would be long. With the surplus income that Mɛlwikans had—more on average than anyone else—weekends had become times for outings, travel to nearby places, picnics, leisurely shopping, or just staying at home.

A dozen Bahá'ís gathered in Mɛlwika's Bahá'í Center at 9 bells to discuss a new teaching effort: going door to door in the world's largest and most impersonal city. Sudguné Domo-Mɛgdhunai and Skandastáru Dádikár, Auxiliary Board members from Mɛlwika and Ora respectively, led the opening prayers, then led a review of Anna's conversation, a presentation of the Bahá'í Faith in Ruhi Book Six that had been modified to fit Éra's unique culture. Some ground rules were discussed. Then after sandwiches, they prayed again and went out onto the streets at 1 bell.

Sudguné was accompanied by her twelve year old daughter, ɛlɛmé, and by Swadé Dwobrébakwési. They walked up the hill behind the foundry where Crest Boulevard ran eastward for five hundred meters along the top of the ridge. Streets dropped steeply to the reservoir to the north or to the Péskakwés River to the south, lined with stone and brick houses, usually two or three stories high. They turned left and headed north on Maple

Street; it was distinctive because the city had started planting maple trees along it. They stopped and knocked on the first door, numbered 110.

A moment later a dark-skinned woman opened the door and looked at them, confused. “Good afternoon,” said Sudguné. “My name is Sudguné Domo-Mɛgdhunai and this is Swadé Dwobrébakwési. We’re Bahá'ís, members of the Bahá'í Faith, and we’re visiting your neighborhood today to answer people’s questions about the Faith. Many people have heard of it, but few have learned much. If you’d like, we’d appreciate a moment to tell you about Bahá'u'lláh, whom we believe is the promised messenger of all ages and the one foreshadowed by Widumaj. May we tell you about his teachings?” She smiled with the last sentence, hoping to show the love she felt for this fellow human being. Next to her, Swadé was smiling while she silently prayed for confirmations.

“I . . . sorry, no speak Eryan much,” replied the woman, with a Sumi accent. She smiled, nodded slightly, then closed the door.

“Thank you!” replied Sudguné, summoning up one of the four Sumi words she knew. Then headed downhill to the next door, 102, and knocked. A moment later a man opened it.

“Good afternoon, my name is Sudguné Domo-Mɛgdhunai and this is Swadé Dwobrébakwési. We’re Bahá'ís, members of the Bahá'í Faith, and we’re visiting your neighborhood today to answer people’s questions about the Faith. Many people have heard of it, but few have learned much. If you’d like, we’d appreciate a moment to tell you about Bahá'u'lláh, whom we believe is the promised messenger of all ages and the one foreshadowed by Widumaj. May we tell you about his teachings?” She smiled lovingly.

The man looked at her, startled by this unexpected visit. “Ah . . . no thank you,” he replied, then he nodded and closed the door.

The next door was numbered 96. They knocked and waited, and when a woman answered, Sudguné repeated her standard greeting.

“Thank you,” the woman replied. “But this is not a good time. We’re eating dinner right now with cousins.”

“I see. Is there another time we could stop by?”

“Perhaps, but not this weekend for sure. I’m sorry, we have a busy few days.”

“That’s fine. If you’re interested, tomorrow afternoon in Arjakwés Park, the Mɛlwika Bahá'í community is sponsoring a free musical concert. It should be a lot of fun; it’ll start at 2 bells. I have a flier.” Sudguné pulled out a sheet of paper that had been mimeographed. Her purpose was to talk to people, not invite them, but the latter was better than nothing.

The woman smiled. “Thank you. We have a cousin in Mɛddoakwés who is a Bahá'í and we are a bit curious. Maybe we can make it to the concert. Goodbye.”

“Goodbye,” said Sudguné with a smile.

The lady closed the door and Sudguné made a note that the lady at number 96 was friendly and open. Then they headed to 88 Maple Street. No one answered there, or at 80.

A man opened the door at 72 and listened to her speech. “Who?”

“Bahá'u'lláh.”

“Bakha’u’llah? Oh, the Bahá'í prophet. Well, I’m really not interested in prophets and priests and such.”

“We don’t have any priests, Bahá'u'lláh taught that all of us should learn to read and write ourselves so that we could investigate truth on our own.”

“I see. Interesting. Well, this is not the time, I think. Thank you, though.”

“Could we perhaps come back some time?”

“Well . . . we are not interested. Widumaj was a great man and I like his hymns. Thank you, though.” The man closed the door, a bit irritated that Sudguné had continued the conversation.

They moved down hill to 66 and 64, which were side by side. They knocked on 66, and when no one answered they tried 64. They heard someone coming down stairs, then a child of about ten opened the door.

“Is your mother or father home right now?”

“Father’s at work and mom’s asleep right now.”

“I see. We’ll come back another time, then. Thank you.” The three of them walked away and Sudguné made a note to return. Then they knocked on number 60. Eventually a young woman carrying a baby opened the door.

“Good afternoon. My name is Sudguné Domo-Mɛgdhunai and this is Swadé Dwobrébakwési. We’re Bahá'ís, members of the Bahá'í Faith, and we’re visiting your neighborhood today to answer people’s questions about the Faith. Many people have heard of it, but few have learned much. If you’d like, we’d appreciate a moment to tell you about Bahá'u'lláh, whom we believe is the promised messenger of all ages and the one foreshadowed by Widumaj. May we tell you about his teachings?” She forgot to smile.

“Yes, you may. I’ve heard of him.”

“Thank you. The first of Bahá'u'lláh’s teachings I will describe for you is about Esto and our relationship with Him. Bahá'u'lláh teaches us that Esto is unknowable in His Essence. This means that we should not make images of Esto in our mind, thinking of Him, for example, as a man. In general, that which has been created cannot understand its creator. For instance, a table cannot understand the nature of the carpenter who made it. The carpenter's existence is totally incomprehensible to the objects he makes. Esto is the Creator of all things. He has made the heavens and earth, with its mountains and valleys, its deserts and seas, its rivers, its meadows and trees. Esto has created the animals and human beings. The reason behind our creation, we are told by Bahá'u'lláh, is love. He says: "0 Son of Man! I loved thy creation, hence I created thee. Wherefore, do thou love Me, that I may name thy name and fill thy soul with the spirit of life.”

She paused; the woman was listening and seemed interested, though Sudguné realized that she had delivered the presentation word for word, when the instructions clearly said that one should pay attention to the inquirer and tailor the presentation to her interests. She had reminded many Bahá'ís to vary the presentation as well. The difficulty was that the script was so detailed and complicated, one had to memorize it to depart from it.

The woman saw her pause and said, “Why don’t you come in and sit down? It’s much cooler in the garden.”

“Thank you, you are very kind,” replied Sudguné. They entered a living room with four very pretty chairs and a rug and walked across it to a kitchen. It had a table and chairs, a double sink full of wet clothes, an icebox, and a gas stove that had a house heater attached. The heater was on the side of the stove closest to the steep stairs that

went up to the bedrooms. They paused while the woman took old jelly jars and poured water for everyone. Then they went out to the verdant garden. Its high stone walls were covered by climbing peas and beans; the ground was covered by strawberries and herbs; ripening peaches hung on a tree. They sat around a little table and sipped water.

"What's your name?" asked Sudguné.

"Brébɛdɛnté. And you are Sudguné?"

"Yes, and this is Swadé. My daughter is named ɛlɛmé."

"Could I hold your baby for you?" asked ɛlɛmé. That was the main reason she had come along.

"Yes, thank you, dear." Brébɛdɛnté handed her the year-old and ɛlɛmé cradled her gently in her arms.

Sudguné resumed the presentation, trying to alternate the wording a bit and paying attention to the woman's interests. At one point she paused and said, "How do you feel about this? Do you think Bahá'u'lláh might be a great widu, as He says he is?"

"Yes, I think he might be. I listen to Mitrubbéru's radio show on channel 1 and sometimes I listen to the Bahá'í show on channel 2. Bahá'u'lláh's teachings are one of the reasons this world has progressed so far in the last fifteen years. But I really don't pay much attention; I'm busy raising my daughter, maintaining our house, and taking a literacy class at night."

"That's a lot to do," agreed Sudguné. "I have two children and many tasks to do every day as well. My husband's immensely busy at the *Mɛlwika Nuɛs,* too." She didn't add that he was the managing editor.

“Life is too full.” The woman sighed. “I need to finish the wash. My husband’s at the market and will be back with the food for dinner, and at that point I need to start cooking.”

“Of course.” Sudguné rose. “Can we come back some time? Perhaps Dwodiu or Tridiu?”

“I’m at home all day and mornings tend to be more flexible. I’d like to know more.”

Sudguné smiled. “Excellent. I’ll see whether I can stop by on Dwodiu, then.”

They all shook hands and Sudguné’s party headed for the door. “It’s a shame everyone is so busy,” said Sudguné. “I think Brébɛdɛnté could become interested.”

“I think so, too,” agreed Swadé. “I’m not sure I can stop by on Dwodiu, though. I have a class all morning.”

“I’ll do it,” replied Sudguné. She walked down the street, passing two city street cleaners, who were busy sweeping debris into the gutters on each side with straw brooms. She nodded to them, but they were busy, so the three of them went to number 52 and knocked. After a second knock, a middle-aged woman came to the door. “Good afternoon,” she said.

“Good afternoon. My name is Sudguné Domo-Mɛgdhunai and this is Swadé Dwobrébakwési. We’re Bahá'ís, members of the Bahá'í Faith, and we’re visiting your neighborhood today to answer people’s questions about the Faith. Many people have heard of it, but few have learned much. If you’d like, we’d appreciate a moment to tell you about Bahá'u'lláh, whom we believe is the promised messenger of all ages and the one foreshadowed by Widumaj. May we tell you about his teachings?”

The woman was startled by that and didn't reply immediately. Then she turned inside and shouted "Hey Widulubu, come to the door!"

A moment later a bearded, middle-aged man wearing distinguished, traditional robes came to the door behind her. "What is it?"

"They want to tell us about the Bahá'í Faith and Bahá'u'lláh."

He smiled. "Oh, really? Interesting. Please, go ahead."

Sudguné looked at him nervously. He spoke with an educated Isurdhuna accent; perhaps he was a priest, though she couldn't imagine why an Isurdhuna priest would be visiting a house in Mɛlwika. "Alright," she replied. "The first of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings I will describe for you is about Esto and our relationship with Him. Bahá'u'lláh teaches us that Esto is unknowable in His Essence. This means that we should not make images of Esto in our mind, thinking of Him, for example, as a man. In general, that which has been created cannot understand its creator. For instance, a table cannot understand the nature of the carpenter who made it. The carpenter's existence is totally incomprehensible to the objects he makes. Esto is the Creator of all things. He has made the heavens and earth, with its mountains and valleys, its deserts and seas, its rivers, its meadows and trees. Esto created the animals and Esto created human beings. The reason behind our creation, we are told by Bahá'u'lláh, is love. He says: "0 Son of Man! I loved thy creation, hence I created thee. Wherefore, do thou love Me, that I may name thy name and fill thy soul with the spirit of life."

"A very nice hymn," said the man. "Interesting. Go on."

Sudguné nodded and moved on to explain the Bahá'í concept of Manifestation of God and how Bahá'u'lláh and Widumaj were both examples of Manifestations. Then she

spoke about the Bahá'í concept of unity and the oneness of humanity, which caused the man to nod and the woman to look on indifferently. She asked whether they had questions and he replied simply, “What else do you have?” so she described the life of Bahá'u'lláh, then that of His forerunner, the Báb, and His successor, `Abdu'l-Bahá. She mentioned the Covenant and the system of elected governing bodies, then turned to some of Bahá'u'lláh’s laws. The more she talked and the more he nodded, the more she summarized. There was something creepy about the man; also something familiar, though she could not figure it out.

After thirty-five minutes of standing on the doorstep, she finished. “Have you any questions?”

“And you are doing this to everyone in the neighborhood?” he asked.

“We want to offer this knowledge to everyone; it’s very precious and momentous.”

“Yes, I can see that it is. Well, thank you very much. I’m impressed by your stamina.” And then without another word the man turned away, without even offering a goodbye. The woman nodded to them and closed the door.

“That was . . . strange,” said Sudguné.

“I couldn’t figure out whether he was interested or hostile,” said Swadé.

“More likely, hostile,” replied Sudguné. Just then, the clock tower struck 2:30. “I can’t believe we’ve been out an hour and a half. We barely got half way down one side of this street, too! I suggest we head back to the Bahá'í Center. The teams are supposed to be back at 3 bells for the debriefing.”

“That’s fine with me,” agreed Swadé. “This last visit was rather strange anyway.”

“We never said this would be easy,” said Sudguné. “But my impression is that it is useful and worthwhile. We have a contact, after all, who seems interested. I bet we can find a hundred or two Bahá'ís in this city if we persist.”

“And it doesn’t seem to be doing any harm to the Faith, either, as long as we are polite.”

Mɛlitané didn’t like tackling big efforts without talking to Lady Liz, but she had been unavailable for two weeks and hard to reach in Wurontroba. So finally, very early one morning when Moléstu had to go to Mɛlwika for an hour to purchase supplies, she accompanied him and sought out Behruz.

I’m very sorry to bother you,” she said, when she finally found her way to his office. “Normally I would prefer to talk to Lady Liz first about a matter like this. Our gabruli in Tɛrskua distills essential oils from flowers. We started with rosewater, then made lavender, and now we’ve added jasmine and chamomile. The problem is that demand has gone through the roof; every week, Home Improvement doubles their order. We have two distillation systems and we are running them eighteen hours a day and can’t make enough. I’m spending several hours on the telephone trying to obtain flower petals; we literally need tonnes of them. But I think we’re at the point where we need more distillation systems, and probably better systems.”

“I think I developed the system you have now, right? It was based on traditional systems for extracting rosewater in my home country.”

“Yes, that’s correct.”

Behruz considered. “I’m sure we can come up with something better. I bet the systems you have waste a third of the essential oils. We can capture more of them. Do you have gas to control the heat?”

“Yes, Tɛrskua is on the ɛjnopéla to Arjdhura pipeline.”

“Good, that helps. Do you have piped water?”

“Yes.”

“So, water and gas are reliable. That’s important. What size are you talking about?”

“Right now we can process twenty liters of water and petals an hour in each distiller, forty total. We need to be able to do one hundred liters of water an hour, and the amount will probably keep increasing.”

“Then I should aim to produce a system that can handle one hundred an hour, and you can keep adding them.”

“We’ll need to find a new space for them because our current building has no room left. So I’ll need to know how big each unit will be.”

“Five times the size of the current units. Actually, think of it as twice as long, wide, and high; that’s plenty of space. How many will you want?”

“Three initially and five eventually.”

“Then leave space for eight. You’ll need a lot of space to store petals where they can be kept chilled until you can process them.”

Mɛlitané nodded. “I’ve been thinking about the space. Our existing facility is the former house of a relative. It’s now too small. But that’s not your problem. We appreciate any assistance you can give us.”

“This is a good time for my chemistry lab; we have finished our work on the Fischer-Tropsch process and we plan to start another big project in the fall. I think we can get you a larger, redesigned distillery in four to seven weeks; in other words, by about the end of summer.”

“That would be very helpful. We can import flowers from the tropics, even in the winter.” She rose. “When does Lady Liz get home?”

Behruz rose to accompany her to the door. “A few more days. I’ll tell her you were inquiring about her.”

“Thank you. I hope your various projects are going well.”

“Yes, fairly well. I was just in Kɛrda for a week, where we’ve broken ground for a water gas production unit and pipelines that will eventually take it to the entire province. They’ve started building a smokestack to carry the smoke all the way to the top of the escarpment! There’s nothing like it even on Gɛdhéma, as far as we know.”

“We may go to pilgrimage this year to hear the cycle of hymns, so I’ll look for it. Thank you again. Please greet Dr. Lua for me. Goodbye.”

“Goodbye.” Behruz waved and Mɛlitané stepped out of the office. She headed for the south gate—their agreed on rendezvous—her head working furiously on the problems the new opportunity created.

She didn’t have long to wait; Moléstu came along ten minutes after she reached the meeting point, the back of his pickup piled high with sheet metal. “You look happy; Behruz must have said yes.”

“He did, and he didn’t even mention a price.”

“Better write him a thank you note and ask about that, to be sure you won’t be surprised.” Moléstu put the truck in gear and headed for West Street, to drive around the built up areas quickly and head home. “Where will you put the equipment?”

“I don’t know. Behruz suggested saving space for eight units, each four times the size of the two we have now. Honey, we need a new, bigger gabruli building. It needs to have room for the offices of the central gabruli as well as room for several different kinds of work and a large social gathering place.”

“Very nice. Sounds like a ten thousand dhanay contract to me.”

“That’s the problem. But look! How much profit are you earning this year? Can’t we afford to do it? Huh?”

Moléstu hesitated. He looked at Mɛlitané. “Let’s not eat up a chunk of our profit this way. We’re saving for old age, investing in the business—that crane I bought is one of only three in existence—and giving to the Bahá'í funds.”

“Ten percent of half a million is fifty thousand, and that doesn’t include your ten thousand dhanay salary.”

“I haven’t even built us a new house.”

“I don’t want a new house, I want a new gabruli.”

He shrugged. “Look, maybe we can split the cost over two years, so it doesn’t cut into our income so much. Because I have my eye on some heavy equipment that can excavate foundations, but can also be leased out for road construction when we don’t need it. If I can get it, we can get even more jobs and pay for the equipment.”

“So, are you saying you’ll build the gabruli this winter when it’s slow and spread out the costs into the next fiscal year?”

"Ah; I guess so."

She leaned over and kissed her husband. "Thank you, dear."

Chris felt some relief when Mɛlwika hove into view in front of the rover. "It'll be good to be home," he said to Liz.

She nodded. "Trips like this aren't so easy for us any more, even if we were pretty comfortable in Sértroba and Wurontroba."

"Yes, pretty comfortable. I'm glad we stayed, even if it is almost mid Dhonménu and the summer is flying away. I think the Wuronɛ are pleased with their decision to join the Faith, and the Krésonɛ are that much stronger in it."

"It was a very successful trip. And just think: the stock market survived just fine for three weeks without you!"

Chris smiled weakly at that. "Yes, it's doing fine, so far; no slide downward and no irrational bubble of rising stock values. I'm relieved."

"We won't have any problem driving around the sea for a month, then," concluded Liz.

They passed the Grange building and slowed as they approached the more built up ring of houses outside the city walls. They drove three quarters of the way around a roundabout and onto West Street, the major boulevard that ran along the 150-meter wide green space outside the west wall. Thanks to the new grass mowers, the space looked neater than ever. They entered the city through the Citadel Gate and drove straight into the house's central courtyard.

They unpacked, then headed downstairs. Luktréstu had opened Chris's mail daily and sent important items to him, so there was no big backlog, though there were several weeks of newspapers. Chris sat at the main table in the great room reading the papers with Liz, who reviewed some recent correspondence.

"This letter from Sudguné is exciting," she said to Chris at one point. "She has started door to door teaching here in Mɛlwika in a neighborhood on the north side of East Hill, where they expected to find added receptivity because it's diverse. They've gone out twice; six teams the first time, four the second time. Skandastáru's taking teams out in Ora, also, but Sudguné hasn't heard the results. In Mɛlwika, ten efforts, a total of seventeen hours on foot, these are the results: 112 doors knocked on; 50, no adults home; 35, not interested; 21, interest of some sort requiring follow up; 1 declaration; and 1 was already a Bahá'í household. The teams are now busy following up with the twenty-one, three of whom are Sumi, and one of whom is a cousin of a Bahá'í and very interested. They are also returning to the houses where no one was home."

"That's impressive. I wonder how many have heard of the Faith."

"She says most people have heard of it and most of the ones who say they are interested have listened to Mitrubbéru's radio show. She's written to him asking him to reinforce the campaign."

"Good idea. If two percent of the city became Bahá'í, that'd be 400 more Bahá'ís; it'd double the community."

"Think of the impact on Ora, with sixty Bahá'ís. All the big cities have fewer Bahá'ís for their population, compared to Mɛlwika. I suspect there are ways to do this in smaller places, too, where there are already a lot of Bahá'ís." Liz paused. "I'm relieved

they did this experiment while I was away on business! It's rather awkward for me to go door to door. It might look pushy if I do it."

"I agree. I'm glad this is being done, but I'm also glad others are spearheading the effort. The cities are our important challenge. We need to choose a neighborhood and provide social action as well, though." Chris turned the newspaper back to page one and tapped it. "Last week's *Mɛlwika Nuɛs* had an important interview with Bidhu about the royal statistics department's research about urbanization. This world now has 370,000 people and 171,000 live in cities, or 46%. Fifteen years ago the population was only 15% urban! Swadnoma is 68% urban; Arjakwés and Sumilara are both 52%."

"How are they defining a 'city'?"

"Five thousand or more. I'm surprised; they used to use three thousand. I bet the change in the definition was made to exclude a lot of smaller cities in Sumilara. If you included them, Sumilara's probably 75% urban."

Liz laughed. "And they wouldn't want Sumilara to be ahead! But that explains the island's higher literacy and income, and its rapidly improving health and education."

"I'll have to ask Bidhu about that; or maybe suggest Kɛkanu to ask him, because I'm sure he'll want to follow up this story with an interview. The story says even the Tutanɛ are considered to be 50% urban, because Gordha and Mɛdhpéla are both over 5,000! I think that's a stretch. Kɛkanu should ask him about that, too. At any rate, teaching in the cities is *very* important. The Bahá'í population isn't 46% urban; I'd say, closer to 25%. Our strength is in the villages."

"If we bring two percent of the urban population into the Faith, that would help even things out. I am amazed the cities are growing so fast."

“The population’s growing fast. Isurdhuna has 7,500, Bɛllɛdha 8,000, Néfa 8,500, Tripola 9,000, Anartu 16,000, Ora and Mɛddoakwés 19,000, and Mɛlwika 20,000. Mɛlwika’s growing six to nine percent a year, which means about 1,500 more people this year and 400 more houses.

“I’ll have to ask Lua about the need to start talking about birth control. The speed of our population growth worries me. This world now has eleven people per square kilometer, and it can’t support the density of Earth! The climate is less predictable and the rainfall, overall, is less. It doesn’t have petroleum and its soft coal is poor quality, which means the forests will bear the brunt of our energy demands. We’ll cut them all down, and then what?”

“We still don’t even know what resources this world has.”

“True, but we know most of them are in tutanɛ hands, and if the population pressure grows high enough their land will be taken from them. A lot already has been taken to create Swadnoma and to expand Arjakwés southward and the south shore northward. There’s no guarantee the borders will hold.”

“The physicians are worried about population growth, and they’re meeting next month. Yes, urge them to discuss the matter.”

Just then, the telephone rang. The maid walked over and answered it, then turned to both of them. “Her Majesty, Queen Estoibidhé, wishes to speak to both of you on an urgent matter.”

“Oh? Urgent?” Chris and Liz both rose from their seats and hurried to the telephone. Chris gave the phone to Liz and leaned his good ear close; her hearing was worse than his, so she needed to have the phone closer to her ears.

“Hail, Your Majesty,” said Liz. “Chris is here with me listening in. How can we assist you?”

“Alláh-u-Abhá to both of you. This morning the palace received a telephone call from Wɛranodatu, chief priest here in Mɛddoakwés. He asked us to investigate something that will be discussed tomorrow in Widulubu Domo-Sirudhérula’s radio show about the customs of Widumaj. He says that he was in Mɛlwika a week and a half ago and when he was there, a team of Bahá'ís knocked on the door of the house where he was staying. They didn’t know who he was and he didn’t tell them. He says they tried to push the Faith on him, spoke insultingly about Widumaj, and even offered a bribe to him to become a Bahá'í!”

“What? Of course not, that’s ridiculous. He’s inventing that!” replied Liz.

“Can you ascertain that the entire incident never happened?”

“Bahá'ís are going door to door here in town to introduce the Faith to their neighbors. That part is true. So he may have seen a Bahá'í team on a doorstep. But they have a script. It introduces the Faith very calmly and beautifully and it says nothing about Widumaj at all. Certainly, we would never insult Widumaj. That’s absurd. And we would never bribe people to become Bahá'ís. Declaration must be heart-felt or we won’t accept someone as a Bahá'í.”

“That’s certainly what I have seen, also. My mother is furious, and I am not sure whether she is furious at the Bahá'ís or at the priests. We have to do something; or perhaps I should say the Central Spiritual Assembly has to do something. Could Mitrubbéru interview some of the teachers so they can explain what they are doing? That

would help. It is impossible to refute this because some people won't believe anything we say."

"The fair-minded will, however," replied Chris. "We'll talk to Sudguné Domo-Mɛgdhunai; she led the teams. Maybe all of them can listen to the interview. Maybe someone will remember his voice or remember something he said to them, if they really did encounter him."

"You'll alert the Central Spiritual Assembly?" asked Estoibidhé. "It's still too soon to call Modolubu; it's 6 a.m. in Mɛddwoglubas. After talking to mother, I had to talk to someone, and since it happened in Mɛlwika I thought I'd call you."

"We'll talk to Modolubu," agreed Chris. "We'll make sure something is done to refute any inaccuracies. Mitrubbéru would be the obvious one to do it, since both shows are on channel 2 at the same time on alternating days."

"I'm sure the facts are quite different," added Liz. "And that can be explained. If it's done well, the priest will be discredited."

"To some; there will always be people who trust him over us," replied Estoibidhé worriedly. "Thank you, my friends. I feel a bit better. Let me know if I can do anything to help."

"We'll do that," agreed Liz.

Reread and edited, 6/15/13, 8/29/17, 11/28/24

375.

Fallout

Late Dhonménu/mid Aug. 16/634

Tomasu Miller had never been to the northern end of the Kɛrda Valley before. He drove the pickup slowly, partly because it was towing a house trailer and partly because he was enjoying the view. The rift valley gradually narrowed, and thirty kilometers north of Isurdhuna the two escarpments, only five kilometers apart but still almost a kilometer high, were magnificent piles of cliffs separated by horizontal bands of trees. At that point the two roads running north-south along the eastern and western sides of the valley, Routes 44 and 46, came together, and a large village dominated their union on the banks of the North Branch of the Rudhisér: Lɛpawsnédha, "North Valley." With a thousand inhabitants, it was the largest settlement at the northern end.

"Lots of chickens are running around," observed Sulokwé, as soon as they entered the southern edge of the village.

"It looks pretty traditional," agreed Tomasu. "Stone and mud brick houses, tile roofs, irrigation ditches, and oxen for plowing the wheat fields." Tomasu pointed to the faint remnants of a ditch running along the right side of the road. "Looks like they installed water pipes."

"Maybe. I don't see any connections to the houses."

"And no hydrants." Tomasu shook his head. "Another failed development project, I bet. Primanu will finish it." He caught a glimpse of the fallow fields beyond the houses;

cattle were wandering them and grazing on the stubble. “And it looks like they only get one crop a year up here. There’s a pretty steady breeze from the north.”

“And there was a second crop of ripening wheat just two kilometers south of here,” added Sulokwé. “So we’re right at the boundary.”

In another minute of slow progress past pedestrians, wagons, herded cows, and men on horses, they came to the village’s central square. The house of Lord Sugwétu dominated the east side of the square and the river, the west; the village store was attached to the house, indicating it was a family business, as it often was in small villages. Route 46 came into the square from the west, crossed the river on an old bridge, and ended at a big circular patch of gravel and dried mud. “Route 44” continued north from the square, but the gravel stopped. The two villages farther north were served by a muddy, rutted wagon track.

“This is our destination,” said Tomasu. “I’ll park at the northern end of the square next to that utility pole.”

“Don’t climb it to connect to the power and telephone lines yet. Remember the ruckus that caused in Dɛntastéa.”

“I remember! We’ll talk to Lord Sugwétu first.” Tomasu pulled the vehicle alongside the pole and shut off the air to the firebox. “You come, too; I prefer having you along.”

“I might even speak,” said Sulokwé. She had gradually gotten used to attending Tomasu’s business meetings and took careful mental notes; once or twice she had even spoken to change the subject or help break the tension. It was another way they were learning to function as partners.

They got out of the pickup and locked it up, then walked to Lord Sugwétu's house and knocked on the open doorway. They could look straight into the Lord's great room where he met with visitors during the day and the family spent their evenings. They could see through the room to the house's central garden. A bearded man of about 45 was working at a table in the corner and looked up. "How can I help you?"

"I am Tomasu Miller of the Biogas Company, looking for Lord Sugwétu."

"You have found him. Please come in."

Tomasu stepped in. "This is my wife, Sulokwé, who accompanies me to take notes and assist."

Sugwétu looked at her. "She can write? You married a smart one, honored!" He turned toward the garden. "Hey Mitré! Can you make a pot of mint tea, I have guests!" There was a faint reply in the affirmative. "My daughter; she's about your age," continued Sugwétu. "My wife passed away last year and I haven't remarried. Please, sit." He pointed to the pillows on the floor, then he got down on an especially grand and fancy one. "Biogas; you're scheduled to be here in Brénménu, right? That's six weeks away."

"Correct, Lord. I'll bring my crew here on the second of Brénménu; I have fourteen men and four pickup trucks. They'll be working here and at seven nearby villages for two weeks, then we'll head south to the next eight villages. The entire valley will take two months, then we'll head to Rudhisér for the rest of the fall and early winter."

"Where have you been working?"

“We started at Jérnstisér in late spring and followed the warm weather northward. Currently, we’re finishing work in several villages in the north polar basin, including Khɛrmdhuna due north of here; we left there this morning.”

Sugwétu chuckled. “You could have gotten here by horse almost as fast.”

“True. Since the beginning of the year we’ve installed eighty-seven biogas units in twenty-one localities and we’ll be installing ten more in Bɛllɛdha in the next few weeks. We also provide a new service: gas storage tanks. They cost five thousand and are able to store surplus biogas production in the summer to supplement the winter supply, when people use it to heat their houses.”

“Wait, back up.” Sugwétu rummaged around on his desk until he found the prospectus Tomasu had sent him. “Let’s review this. I have read it. Lɛpawsnédha has 160 households, so you say we need two biogas digesters to supply cooking gas to everyone and eight more to supply heating gas. But you also say here that a house needs 1/8 cubic meters a day for cooking but up to 12 cubic meters a day for heating; one hundred times as much. How can six additional units supply that much? It doesn’t make sense.”

“Twelve cubic meters of gas represents demand on a very cold day; colder than what you usually get here. A house here needs about 50 cubic meters of gas for cooking per year. But according to the weather bureau, which has developed a chart for each village for me, a house here needs about five hundred cubic meters of gas for winter heating. We figure all the houses will want cooking gas but only a third will want heating gas, so that’s 160 houses times 50 and 54 times 500, which totals 35,000 cubic meters of gas per year. When you remember that twenty-five to thirty percent of the gas is wasted or used to heat the digesters, that raises the total that the village needs to 45,000 cubic

meters per year. Each digester produces 12 cubic meters of gas per day, or 4,650 per year. Ten digesters will produce 46,500."

"I see how you figured it. And the storage tank will store that much?"

"Each 5,000 dhanay tank can store 8,000 cubic meters compressed, so you'd need four of them to store a year of gas production. But Isurdhuna will be getting four huge—100,000 cubic meter—gas storage tanks subsidized by the crown, and they can store gas much cheaper per cubic meter. The plan is to have two of the 8,000 cubic meter tanks here. When one is full in the summer, a truck will drive it to Isurdhuna to empty it. In the winter trucks would carry full ones here instead."

"Clever. And if more houses want biogas?"

"After the first winter, more will. We'll come install more digesters next year if you want them. The real difficulty will come when you try to obtain the manure and straw to fill the digesters. Each digester needs 500 kilograms of manure—the output of about thirty cows, pigs, or horses, or seventy-five sheep or goats—per day. A typical village produces enough manure for four or five digesters. You can supply ten digesters by adding an equal amount of straw and vegetable matter. But much more than that won't work because the microorganisms that make biogas need nitrogen to do their job, and that comes from manure. The system will require two people full time to obtain and store the materials and feed them into the digesters daily. Everyone who owns animals will have to change the way they house the animals to capture the waste."

"This is getting more and more expensive all the time . . . . 8,000 for ten digesters plus pipes, plus 10,000 for storage, plus our labor!"

“Your people spend that much already to haul, cut, and store wood, especially considering the wood has to come down from above the escarpment, or to buy soft coal, and the smoke in the houses is bad for health. Furthermore, the province and the crown will supply two thirds of the money as a grant and the rest as a loan because this valley needs clean air. Biogas pollutes the air much less.”

“So we understand. I’m not against this project; we’re going to do it. But this is taking some getting used to. What about a pipeline?”

“The Kɛrda gas company plans to extend a line all the way up here next summer, at which point they will buy your two storage tanks. They probably will move one tank to the southern end of the valley where the weather is warmer year round and heating is unnecessary and leave the other here as backup storage. When people need more gas for heating in the winter it will be supplied by the plant south of Isurdhuna, which will convert coal into gas.”

“So we’ll get that money back. How much labor do you need?”

“Three men for a week to dig the holes for the ten biogas digesters, three men for a week to help with concreting and other aspects of emplacement of them, and ten men for two weeks to dig 800 meters of ditches for the gas pipes, lay the pipes, then fill in the ditches. We’ll train them. We expect hard work, but if you want to have them paid, that’s an extra five hundred dhanay. We recommend you pay them with vouchers good for free gas. Will we have to avoid water pipes?”

“Only on the road to the northern end of the village and a hundred meters to the south; that’s all we were able to build, three years ago. How many of your men will actually be working here? Two or three?”

“Two or three will do training and initial supervision, one will be here most of the time to watch the work, and six will be here to install the digesters. That’s more specialized work. We’ll probably be based here for two to four weeks, depending on how the work goes, which means we’ll be purchasing laundry services and food.”

Sugwétu looked at Sulokwé. “You don’t cook and wash?”

“I do, sometimes, but I’m pretty busy with office work and telephone calls. Those are my responsibilities. There’s a lot of paperwork to get the grants. Besides, it’s good for local business if we patronize them, and we can usually get cooking and washing at a reasonable price.”

The lord nodded. “I’m sure we will appreciate that. You’re all Bahá'ís, right?”

“No; I have two non-Bahá'í workers.”

“I see.” He seemed relieved. He wagged a finger at Tomasu. “There is to be no door to door teaching in Lɛpawsnédha. This is a nice, quiet place. We don’t need aggressive efforts to spread one faith at the expense of another.”

“Lord, I assure you that there are no plans to go door-to-door in Lɛpawsnédha,” said Tomasu. “That isn’t our thing; we’re busy doing our work. The description of what the Bahá'ís did in Mɛlwika isn’t true. They were very friendly, they knocked quietly, invited people to hear very politely, and never pressured anyone.”

“I’ve heard both sides of the story. I missed Widulubu’s show where he described what allegedly happened, but the *Isurdhuna Herald* reprinted the whole thing and I read it. I did hear a little bit of Sudguné’s reply on Mitrubbéru’s radio show the next day, and others have told me all about it. I am willing to believe her side of the story. She and Widulubu both strike me as fanatics, but I know those personalities and can deal with

them. Mɛlwika is a very big, impersonal place. Lɛpawsnédha is not. We all know each other and each other's grandmothers. We are all third or fourth cousins. I have assured everyone that there will be no door to door here."

"Of course. You put your finger on the reason why it is appropriate in Mɛlwika; everyone there is *not* a cousin of everyone else. No doubt the Spiritual Assembly of Lɛpawsnédha will want us to speak or sing; some of my men are very talented musicians."

"We'll see. Maybe the controversy will have calmed down by then. Right now, the Spiritual Assembly won't want you to do anything; I know because I have told them not to do anything. There are fanatics in this village on both sides. I want them both quiet for a while."

"I see, my Lord, and we will cooperate fully with your wishes," said Tomasu.

"Thank you. I have no problem with your private faith, Honored. But keep it private. Under those rules, you are welcome here."

"Very well, Lord. We will respect your rules." Tomasu glanced at the mint tea, which had arrived during their conversation, but Sugwétu had forgotten to offer them any. "We still have several hours before sunset, so I think we need to head farther north to the villages there, to talk to their lords. Is the road passable?"

"If you are careful, yes. The bus gets through several times a day." He rose. "I'm grateful you came and we had a chance to go over the rules. We're all looking forward to obtaining gas; or we think we're looking forward to it, because we're really not sure!"

"You'll find it very convenient and clean. We're constantly getting letters from villages telling us how happy they are with it," replied Sulokwé.

“Excellent.” Sugwétu led them to the doorway and shook hands. Then Tomasu and Sulokwé walked to the pickup.

“We’ll have to talk to the Spiritual Assembly,” said Tomasu as he fed air and alcohol to the firebox to get it going again. He checked the steam pressure; there was still plenty to get started, so he put the vehicle into gear and it very slowly began to move forward. Steam pickups were like trains; they accelerated slowly when pulling a heavy load.

“Even if we can’t proclaim the Faith, a lot of people will ask us and our staff about it,” said Sulokwé. “We’ll be able to do some good.”

“And give a few talks to the Bahá'ís. But we wanted to do a lot more. Maybe we can find another village that’s more open and concentrate our teaching efforts there. We don’t have to be based in Lɛpawsnédha.”

“That’s true.” She looked at the last few houses as they rolled out of the village; the square, as it turned out, was close to the northern end of the houses. “How many more villages up here?”

“Two small ones; 400 and 300 people, but the climate gets colder according to the weather bureau, so they’ll need a lot more gas in the winter, so the systems will be expensive. There will be some negotiating to do.” He sighed. “It’s so beautiful up here.”

“I love that waterfall.” She pointed to one descending the eastern escarpment nearby.

“It is beautiful. If we have time, we’ll have to ask for a beautiful spot where we can park for the night. I’d like a cozy, quiet, beautiful spot, maybe by running water.”

Sulokwé smiled and squeezed his arm. “That would be very nice.”

Even though it was only eight in the morning, Swadlɛndha, just south of the equator, was extremely hot. It didn't matter that humidity was low; it was close to forty Celsius and quite oppressive. Tiamaté hurried into the village's laundry center, where women washed their clothes. It was cooler inside because of all the water being sloshed around.

She started the class—Ruhi Book Three—right away for the dozen women who had gathered to participate in the open space between the sinks. She handed out copies of the book in Eryan and Sumi and women sat on the reed mats in groups, usually with someone literate to help read. Other women brought their laundry, proceeded to wash it, and listened; some even offered occasional comments. Most were quite interested in the idea of offering spiritual education to their children.

Half an hour into the class, Tiamaté saw Kalané Wɛsénakwénu enter the washing center, no doubt to discuss microcredit with various solidarity groups. She nodded to Tiamaté, listened for a moment, then sat down and joined the course. She got interested and began to participate in the discussion. When the class ended at eleven, she walked over to Tiamaté and smiled. "What an interesting class! I knew you were doing classes, but I didn't realize they were Tridiu mornings."

"Yes, and every Pɛnkudiu morning at my mother's house in ɛndraidha. There's a book one here on Suksdiu afternoons, too, run by a woman from the village."

"Really? How do you have time?"

"I make it a priority. The development consulting business is doing extremely well; we now have a staff of five. I can get away two mornings a week."

"How are you paying the staff?"

“The palace has tentatively agreed to pay us five percent of every development grant we clean up, oversee, and audit afterward. Unti; now, thirty percent of the grants were wasted. We should be able to reduce that.”

“That’s excellent! I’ve visited sixty villages and seen a lot of wasted projects.”

“How’s your work?”

Kalané nodded. “It’s going very well. We’re making a hundred fifty loans per month now, thanks to a network of four hundred seventy solidarity groups. A lot of them are members of gabrulis or granges or Spiritual Assemblies. Of course, the loans weren’t made for the reasons we expected.”

“What do you mean?”

“Gas stoves; everyone’s getting gas. Often they’re getting stoves with a built in gas light and a heater, which are a bit more expensive. People are buying radios, motorbikes, ice boxes, sinks, two-wheeled shopping carts, baby carriages, and toilets.”

Tiamaté laughed. “What about development?”

“People are using the loans to get ahead. Women are getting telephones and renting them out, buying sewing machines, taking knitting lessons, or cooking things for gabrulis. Some farmers are getting farm equipment, animals, or wagons. But a lot are getting consumer goods.”

“I suppose I better not tell Lord Chris.”

“He’ll find out soon enough. We have to publish a report quarterly, and I told Wéroimigu we should put it in. There’s good news, too. Everyone who takes a loan has to open a bank account, and many are using the accounts to save. We now have 3,500 accounts worth sixty thousand dhanay!”

“But, how do you get the money? How many branches do you have?”

“Just three; Mɛlita, Pértatranisér, and Tripola. We may open small branches in Bɛllɛdha, Anartu, and Gordha in another year. In contrast, Prosperity Bank has twenty branches. But we have six agents who visit villages to make loans, collect repayments, receive deposits, or handle withdrawals from accounts. They visit ninety villages weekly. They don’t carry much cash with them because they can go to the local store and either write a check to obtain cash or and receive a check from the storekeeper in return for cash. They carry bank books and checks, so they don’t have to worry about being robbed.”

“That’s clever! In effect you have ninety branches.”

“Exactly, and in another year that number will double. We suspect we’ll end up with more depositors than any other bank because we’re accessible.”

“But your interest rates are really high.”

“Yes; often twenty percent, sometimes as high as fifty percent. But the loans are usually for a short period, so they are manageable.” She looked at Tiamaté and changed the subject. “I’m very impressed by the Bahá'í Faith. Every village I’ve visited, the Bahá'ís are among the most progressive people. Often they want the loans and often they are the ones the solidarity groups trust to be their leaders. If Wéroimigu and I visit a new village, I tell him to look for the Bahá'í Center. If we start there, we’ll find people who want to hear from us, and they invite their friends.”

“Why do you think that is?”

Kalané considered. “I suppose it’s pretty simple: Bahá'u'lláh had progressive ideas and Bahá'ís believe in them. Especially about women . . . the gabrulis and Bahá'í

women's committees are really making changes in village after village. When I look at my life and how different it was from my mother's, it takes my breath away."

"When I look at my mother's life, I am impressed by how far she has come" Tiamaté lowered her voice. "I think she may even start to take birth control pills."

Kalané chuckled a bit. "I started a few months ago, and I still haven't told Wéroimigu. I suppose I had better, though. We have two kids and that's plenty."

"Yes, tell him some time, it isn't fair otherwise."

"I suppose you're right. I loved that quotation you read earlier: 'So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole world.' This world is crying out for unity and justice; because of my travels, I've seen that. Raising up women is immensely important to the achievement of both."

"Exactly."

"And Wiki Bank is central to that effort because two thirds of our loans are made to women."

"I agree, but ultimately women will be raised up by spiritual changes in this world, not just by access to money. Unity and justice require building a whole new society, and to me, that means teaching people about Bahá'u'lláh. So that's why I make classes like these a priority; they are at least as important as development consulting. My goal here in Swadlɛndha is to raise up eight to fifteen women able to teach classes to children about virtues; that's what Book Three is about. Ideally, that will result in better moral and spiritual education in this town. And maybe some of those women will be able to organize a daycare facility together so that all women have a place to take their

children where they will be loved and nurtured while mom and dad work or study. If they get that far along, we'll help them get a grant or loan to build a daycare facility!"

Kalané smiled. "That's brilliant."

"And by next year I hope to get to the book on 'Family Prosperity.' We're now teaching that book in about thirty villages and hope to train teachers for that book in every village in a few years. That book talks about joining the material and spiritual together. It's perfect for the work we both do."

"Really. I'd love to learn it myself; can you teach me?"

"Sure. We'll be starting a class in Mɛlita in the fall; would you like to participate?"

"Absolutely. Do I need to be a Bahá'í?"

"No, anyone can participate."

"Good. Well, not that it matters; I'll probably become a Bahá'í anyway."

"Then let me teach you a prayer to say every day. It's the Bahá'í short obligatory prayer and we are supposed to say it every day, some time between noon and sunset. It goes like this: 'I bear witness, O my God, that Thou hast created me to know Thee and to worship Thee. I testify at this moment to my powerlessness and to Thy might, to my poverty and to Thy wealth. There is none other God but Thee, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting.'"

Kalané listened, then repeated the whole thing twice. "That's beautiful, really beautiful."

"Saying it will attract blessings to you."

"Thank you so much. Can we get together again to talk about the Bahá'í Faith?"

Tiamaté nodded. “Sure, just name the time. I can arrange it.”

“This week, tomorrow evening or the next. Why don’t you come to me. I’m not afraid to have Bahá'ís knock on my door!”

Tiamaté laughed. “Alright, I’m glad to hear that!”

The next morning, bright and early, Tomasu and Sulokwé drove south on Route 44 from the Stairstep Falls at the very northern end of the valley to Isurdhuna. They stopped at three villages south of Lɛpawsnédha to talk to lords or headmen and review the biogas plans. They were sufficiently alarmed to drive to the Widi Génadɛma in the early afternoon to find Estobaisu Estolubu, the Auxiliary for the area, who taught philosophy there. Widi Génadɛma had a new campus, built several years ago, with two dormitories and two classroom buildings forming a rectangle about three hundred meters northwest of the Stɛja, Widumaj’s Tomb. Getting there involved driving across the expanded fairgrounds, which were being set up for the great pilgrimage to hear the recitation of the complete cycle of hymns of Widumaj, starting in four days. But as soon as they entered the main building, they were directed to the cafeteria in the basement, and there they found Estobaisu conversing with two old friends: Budhéstu and Blorakwé.

“What a surprise!” said Budhéstu, when they approached the faculty dining room where the three of them were drinking tea. “What brings you here?”

“Biogas; we’re visiting villages to finalize the contracts,” replied Tomasu. “What brings both of you here?”

“I’m teaching three courses in psychology and a development course starting the week after pilgrimage and continuing for eight weeks.”

“Four courses in eight weeks!”

“We’re taking advantage of his presence,” said Estobaisu.

“I’ll be back in late fall for Fall Term number 2, also. Lord Yusbéru has arranged for three hundred thousand dhanay to be spent on housing for elderly and ill people this year. With equal private investment, that’ll add two hundred housing units. Next year, the goal is four hundred new units. The queens have agreed that much of the limited pension funds they have approved for the elderly will be spent here. A priority is psychological counseling for elderly patients, and that’s where I come in.”

“You’ll be training workers?”

“Many will be nurses; the génadɛma is starting a nursing program. Dr. Lua and I are also starting a psychology program, which will require a Master’s, and it can be combined with medical school training to make psychiatry. Starting in the fall, Blorakwé and I will be the first ones to go through the program.”

“Are you getting a Masters in psychology as well?” asked Sulokwé.

Blorakwé nodded. “If we’re going to travel together, we might as well do the same thing. One reason he can teach three psychology courses at once is because I’ll be helping.”

“They’re team-teaching the courses; they’re both faculty this term and both are getting paid,” added Estobaisu.

“It sounds rather like our partnership,” said Tomasu. “Sulokwé’s been an incredible addition to the company.”

“And I’ve enjoyed the work,” she added. “We’ve been traveling all over the North Shore in a pickup pulling a small house trailer, which is both our home and our office.”

“That’s been fun, too,” said Tomasu. “Estobaisu, have you ever been to Stairstep Falls? We parked there last night. What an incredibly beautiful spot!”

“Yes, I was there once a few years ago,” he replied. “Amazing to see. The North Branch of the Rudhisér enters the valley down a hundred little waterfalls and there’s a trail that allows one to go up. The trail actually takes one to the North Polar Basin.”

“Near Khɛrmdhuna; we heard about it when we were there,” said Tomasu. He pointed to the samovar. “Can we get some tea? We want to ask you about something, Estobaisu.”

“Yes, help yourselves.” Tomasu and Sulokwé stepped over to the samovar while Estobaisu resumed his discussion with Budhéstu and Blorakwé, who apparently were looking into accommodations during the pilgrimage. They were back a minute later with fresh, hot tea with sugar and milk. “You don’t have a place to stay here?” asked Sulokwé.

“We do when we’re teaching at Widi Génadɛma,” replied Blorakwé. “But we arrived a week early and the dormitory is completely full for the pilgrimage; in fact, every single room will be accommodating two during next week. The Bahá'ís in town and even in Frachvála are accommodating all the guests they can. And the palace and hotels are full with the two queens and their entourage.”

“We have a tent,” offered Sulokwé.

“You do?” said Blorakwé.

“We do,” added Tomasu. “It’s a spare; it belongs to the company and we keep it stored in the trailer. If the two of you would like, we plan to find a spot not too close but not too far away that’s pretty and quiet. We’ll leave the trailer there during the day and drive into the pilgrimage events every day, then ‘home’ at night.”

“And we could join you?” said Budhéstu. “That’d be fun!”

“Then let’s do it,” said Tomasu.

“That solves one problem,” said Estobaisu. “And I know a beautiful, romantic spot where you can camp, about a kilometer south of Frachvála, where a little brook trickles down a series of waterfalls into the valley.”

“Two problems solved!” said Tomasu. “Just one to go!”

“How can I help you with the third?” asked Estobaisu.

“We want to know what to do. Yesterday afternoon we drove into Lɛpawsnédha and met with Lord Sugwétu about the biogas installation scheduled for six weeks from now. That part of the meeting went well, but then he asked whether we were Bahá'ís and emphasized that there would be no door to door teaching in the village. Then he added that there would be no meetings or concerts, either; nothing to stir up fanatics.

“We headed north to the next two villages and the lords at both asked the same question and said basically the same thing. This morning we stopped at the three villages south of Lɛpawsnédha and two of the lords there also raised the issue of teaching the Faith in their villages. The third one didn’t, but I suspect it’s the same. One reason we visit villages is to teach the Faith!”

“And now you can’t. I understand. Above all, we must obey the local lord. I think we need to take a long-term view of this incident. We have done nothing wrong. We had no intention of going door to door in the villages. Mɛlwika and the other big cities have a different culture and there’s nothing wrong with going door to door in the cities if one is polite and courteous. Sudguné herself met Widulubu and I trust her version of the story; it is true to the personalities of both of them.

“I know Widulubu. He teaches courses here occasionally, though I am not particularly impressed by their quality. He met with May Keino once and offered to teach the customs of Widumaj at Néfa Génadɛma. She asked him to provide a written application and he never did. He was quite enthusiastic about hymn halls, but once it was clear that he and the other priests wouldn’t be able to control them his enthusiasm waned. The hymn halls want to organize themselves and elect a committee like a spiritual assembly. Then he discovered he was pretty good on the radio and that’s where he’s putting his attention for now.

“We are assured in the writings that opposition to the Faith is not like pouring water on a flame, but feeding it oil instead. Widulubu’s accusations constitute opposition. It isn’t very high quality opposition either, because it’s all lies. If Widulubu had more truth on his side, we’d have more to worry about. We would have done something wrong and would have to admit it. This lie will come back to haunt Widulubu; wait and see.”

“But now he’s attacking the Faith directly on the radio on almost every show.”

“I know; I have to listen to every show because I know him, so I am one of the ‘experts’ the Central Spiritual Assembly has called on to advise them about ways to respond. Three of us listen to every show and have a long conference call with Mitrubbéru so that he always has a response the very next day on his show. It takes a lot of time! And everyone who has a radio knows there is excitement on channel 2; they’re switching their radios away from channel 1 in large numbers to listen to the debate. Tens of thousands of people are learning about the Faith.”

“But some are being inoculated against it. Prejudices are hard to overcome.”

“True. Widulubu is creating prejudices and biases against us. But he’s also forcing the rank and file Bahá'ís to think about their Faith in greater depth and discover more sophisticated answers. If you can’t give public talks about the Faith, offer deepenings that answer the objections. It’s much less uplifting, but it’s needed. There will be plenty of written material; we’ll be publishing summaries.”

“My cousin, Sugérsé, is putting them together,” added Budhéstu.

“You make a good point, Estobaisu,” said Sulokwé. She looked at Tomasu. “I’m sure we can keep ourselves busy one way or another.”

“And I think we’ll be calling Estobaisu often for advice!” he added.

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The Connection between Earth and Heaven

Chris and Liz waited until Mitrubbéru's radio show was over before they turned on the rover's engine and descended from the wooded hills of the polar basin rim toward the flatlands of the basin itself. At one point they could see Khɛrmdhuna spread out as a ribbon of Kelly-green marshes, the milky white thread of the Yujisrumakwés meandering along it, scattered whitish patches of sinter or blackish splotches of tar marking eruptions of hot water or petroleum from below. To the north the polar lands were still white, even if it was early Abɛlménu or late August. They blended with the cumulus clouds in a perfect meeting of land and sky.

They drove down the graveled road, with its continuous line of utility poles, to the edge of the basin floor. Two kilometers across the floor, a circumferential ridge rose, its south-facing slopes terraced with walls of black basalt stone into strips of vegetables and pasture. The road took them to a gap in the ridge and immediately on the other side were the thermal swamps that gave Khɛrmdhuna, "Warm fields," its name. They drove straight to San Juan—San Khuanu—Parish, where Lord Pédru resided in a large house next to the old church, which was now the parish's Bahá'í Center. He was very happy to see them and hugged them both.

"Lord Kristobéru, Lady Liz, you are a sight for sore eyes!" he exclaimed at the door. "Please, come in, come in. How was your trip? You came from Bɛllɛdha, right, not all the way from Mɛlwika?"

“Correct,” replied Chris. “It’s so good to see you, Lord. It’s been quite a long time; six months.”

“Indeed. I’m so glad you can stay a few days. Please, come in, sit, and have tea with us. Marié has been keeping it ready since breakfast. Marié! Come see our guests!”

A moment later, Marié Domo-Khɛrmdhunai appeared. She smiled, nodded, and exclaimed “Alláh-u-Abhá Chris and Liz!”

“Alláh-u-Abhá!” replied Liz and Chris almost simultaneously. The women hugged; Chris and Marié shook hands. “Are you well? How is the family?” she added.

“Everyone is very well, thanks be to Esto,” replied Liz. “How are your children?”

“Anné is now married, and she was the last one, so we are free of children,” replied Marié. “Of course, we have four grandchildren!”

“Congratulations!” replied Liz. “Our children and grandchildren are all well, and we still don’t have great grand children.”

“But we will soon enough; I am 70 years old now,” added Chris. “Of course, most of those are Gɛdhéma years. In Eryan years, I am 67.”

“That’s still very impressive; may I be so blessed,” replied Pédru, who was almost fifty.

Marié walked back to the kitchen to bring the tray of tea, bread, and cheese, which she had ready, and they all helped themselves. Then Pédru said, “How long can you stay? Four days?”

“Three,” replied Chris. “I wish it were four, but we have two days of business in Sumiupɛrakwa, three or four in Isurdhuna, three in Néfa, two in Pértatranisér, three in

Ora, Mɛddwoglubas, and Tripola, two in Dhudrakaita, one in Wɛranopéla. . . we'll be away from home more than a month."

"This is your annual trip around the sea?"

"Exactly. We've already spent two days in Arjdhura, two in Sullɛndha, and three in Bɛllɛdha. Morana organized a provincial tomi, so I helped the board hold its first planning meeting. Lɛpawsona held a planning conference of their lords and representatives to revise their development plan and Dhoru and I helped them break into small groups for brainstorming. In Bɛllɛdha, I met with the North Shore Tomi Board and made a few business deals."

"It sounds typical, Chris!"

"I suppose." He sipped tea. "How are things going here? I saw the vegetable gardens and pastures on the way in, and we passed the wool weaving factory at the edge of the village."

"The vegetable gardens are working out pretty well now because we're using the greenhouses to start the plants and get them fairly large before transplanting them. That, and the south-facing slopes with their sun-heated walls of black rock, have made agriculture possible here. The farmers have added quite a few terraces this year, so next year's crops will be even bigger. The grange has built five more greenhouses, thanks to loans from the Mɛlwika Grange. The wool processing and weaving plant is very successful; in fact, I'd like to talk to you about ways we could expand it."

"That's one reason I'm here. How many does it employ?"

"Twenty; we're washing, carding, and spinning wool into thread, dyeing it, and running six power looms to make cloth. We'd like to expand to twelve looms and add a

sewing area to make wool clothing. Demand is there; we can employ fifty, and eventually one hundred. If we don't expand, other villages will instead."

"That's a lot of money," said Chris, making a quick mental calculation. "Thirty jobs usually cost sixty to ninety thousand dhanay."

"We can do it for sixty. We can organize some volunteer labor for building the building, and we've saved five thousand dhanay from tax revenues to invest in the expansion."

"Pretty good." Khɛrmdhuna had four hundred households and fifty thousand dhanay of tax revenue per year, so that was substantial. "You can get development grants through the palace and the North Shore Tomi. I spoke to the tomi about the fact that in four years they've sunk six hundred thousand dhanay into factories in the Bɛllɛdha area and the eastern side of the polar basin, and not a kɛntay here! You're seven percent of the population, so you should have received at least forty thousand by now!"

"It's discrimination. Can you write to the palace about it? I did last year and nothing changed. We have toyed with the idea of petitioning the palace to add us to another province, such as Jérnstisér, mostly to make a point."

"I'll write. Call Jordan in Mɛlita; his development office can help write the grant request, for which the palace will pay him. He's doing a very good job. He'll ask you many questions and help you develop answers to them, so the application is in good order. Later, his team will visit to make sure the money was spent effectively, so everyone must be very careful with their procedures. How's dairy and wool raising?"

"The dairy we built last year has been successful and the sales of milk and butter to Pértatranisér have been strong. So far, Néfa has been uninterested. If we had a road to

Kɛrda we might be able to sell dairy there, but we don't. Bɛllɛdha, of course, is uninterested and is buying all its dairy products from the east end of the Basin." He shrugged.

"Have the sales helped the cattlemen?"

Pédru nodded. "Definitely. They're expanding their herds; there are a dozen new barns in the various parishes. The sheep raisers have expanded their wool production as well. About twenty men have taken out small loans from Wiki Bank to start or expand herds. Farmers have taken loans as well; Khɛrmdhuna has eight solidarity groups and about sixty loans right now! I know because my cousin's in charge of our Wiki Bank 'Center' and he told me. We'll need to expand the dairy next year, Chris, and the woolens factory again the year after."

"How's the gabruli?"

Pédru pointed to his wife. "Ask Marié, she's the expert."

"We now have four gabrulis, in four of our seven parishes," she replied. "Two have buildings and the other two want buildings, so we're working on that. We're mostly knitting sweaters and sewing, and we have a huge order from Home Improvement right now. I think we'll have a fifth gabruli next year. Right now, almost one hundred women are involved one way or another."

"Excellent!" said Liz. "I gather the deepening of the Bahá'í culture here has proceeded well lately, also."

"I think so," said Pédru. "The average household has perhaps five Bahá'í books. We've held many classes on them, so people understand them fairly well. Most adults have done at least one Ruhi book. The youth are our big source of pride; we have 155

sixteen, seventeen, and eighteen year olds, and this summer sixty-eight of them are doing summer service for the Faith. Considering many of the rest are married or are off herding sheep and goats, that's pretty good! The majority of sixteen year olds have gone out for at least a month."

"And they have returned here with incredible enthusiasm," added Marié. "One thirty year old mother wants to volunteer next summer, as does a forty-year old grandfather. I think next year a lot more families will make arrangements so that their kids can participate."

"I take it the recent controversy hasn't caused any trouble up here," asked Chris.

"Not really," replied Marié. "We have our negative personalities and the door to door controversy gave them something to complain about, but Mitrubbéru has handled it well. In Sumiupɛrakwa, some asked the Bahá'ís about it, then dropped the subject."

"I was very impressed by today's show about children's classes and what they're trying to accomplish," added Pédru. "I think he summarized half of book three!"

"I gather the Khɛrmdhuna youth have brought over a hundred into the Faith, so far," said Liz, returning to the subject of youth. "I've heard a lot of impressive reports. Chris, we need to get the Krésonɛ youth involved in summer and yearly service, too."

"Send them here!" said Pédru. "The fifteen summer youth service volunteers we have hosted have been marvelous. They've offered special summer classes for children and youth, they've helped farmers build terraces, raise barns, dig irrigation canals to spread thermal waters to new fields, they keep the square clean . . . really, they've been great and worth all the effort to keep them busy and fed. We sent out almost seventy and got back fifteen. Maybe next year we can send out a hundred and get back fifty!"

“Are your youth organizing to do service projects around here the rest of the year?” asked Chris.

“Only a little, but that’ll increase,” said Marié. “The youth committee is looking into ways to do more with the youth locally.”

“The best way to get them to do more is to send them elsewhere, where they’ll do more in that place,” said Pédru. “Then send the youth from those places here to help here. It builds ties, exposes the kids to new places and ways of doing things, and really develops a sense of service.”

“It makes them think about the future, too,” added Marié. “A lot of the youth who come back from service want to go to génadɛma. They see they can travel to another place and it’s alright, and they see the importance of education to serve.”

“That’s very true,” said Liz. “And in many ways, Khɛrmdhuna is leading the way.”

“Overall, Khɛrmdhuna’s doing pretty well, right now,” said Pédru. “It’s taken some time, both to clear up our spiritual confusion and create unity over the direction of our economic development. Consider that twelve years ago we collected no tax at all for the village or the crown, though the church tithe averaged forty dhanay per household. Once we started collecting crown and provincial tax, which was set at twenty-three percent, it averaged only one hundred thirty dhanay per household, so household incomes averaged about five hundred a year. We didn’t start charging the ten percent local tax until eight years ago. This year, twelve years after contact with the geological survey, household incomes are about twelve hundred dhanay, on average, and going up a hundred dhanay a year.”

“That is impressive,” said Liz.

“But we’re still only two thirds the world average, and half Mɛlwika’s,” noted Pédru. “We have a long way to go.”

“In ten years, I predict Khɛrmdhuna’s household income will be higher than Bɛllɛdha’s,” said Chris. “You have more literacy and you can get the investment you need to develop. Certainly, I plan to invest here. Bahá’í villages should be doing better than average; spiritual development has consequences for material development and vice versa. And that brings me to the other reason we’re visiting, Lord. Perhaps you heard that about two months ago, the Wuronɛ tribe became Bahá’ís, all 400 of them. We’d like to hold a meeting of all the lords of all-Bahá’í villages in Wurontroba to talk about the challenges and opportunities they face. Khɛrmdhuna is the oldest all-Bahá’í village, and the largest, so your presence is particularly important.”

“Me?” Pédru shook his head. “You know, lord, how I dislike traveling. Jonu Obisbu travels on our behalf. He’s on the Central Spiritual Assembly. He should go.”

“Perhaps he will attend; the Central Spiritual Assembly is uncertain who will represent it at the gathering. But Jonu, while a fine man and wise, is a man of spiritual matters, not practical ones. He has never run a village. He was a bishop before leading the people into the Faith and he remains a spiritual leader. We need lords at this gathering because we want them to share practical experiences and solutions.”

“I see. How far is it?”

“Three hours from Mɛlwika, six hours from here. The Central Spiritual Assembly will pay for your transportation and will arrange for a car to take you to Mɛlwika, where Liz and I will drive you the rest of the way.”

"How long? When?"

"A day to get there and three days in Wurontroba; four altogether. We want to meet on the last four days of this month."

"The twenty-seventh through the thirtieth of Abɛlménu . . ." He sighed. "Do you *really* need me?"

"We do, lord, we really do. I think you will enjoy and benefit from the gathering. I'll be there, as will Lords Estodhéru and Brébéstu. All seven Bahá'í lords will attend."

"Really? Intriguing." He sighed, then nodded again. "Very well, I'll attend. We have to walk the spiritual path with practical feet, and maybe my feet are more practical than most!"

Thornton kicked a pile of horse manure on Crest Boulevard. "This looks pretty old," he said to Jordan. "The sweepers were supposed to wash this street yesterday."

"I don't think they did," Jordan replied. "Are you worrying about street sweeping as well?"

"It's part of the cleanliness and appearance of Mɛlwika, and I'm concerned with that, generally."

"Mɛlita's streets are much worse. We have half as many street sweepers per kilometer of streets, probably twice as many animals, and the streets are a lot flatter, so they're harder to wash."

"The steep slopes do help."

Jordan sniffed the air. "But I am surprised how much worse the air is up here, compared to down by our house."

“Yeah, the Miller Foundry smokestack has to be raised another fifty meters to get the smoke above the upper city. I bet that’ll be quite a battle, too. When the wind comes out of the west, this area gets a lot of smoke.” Thornton stopped and looked down Maple Street. “This is where the ‘door to door incident’ occurred.”

“Really?” Jordan looked down the street as well. “Right here, huh? A month has passed and it still hasn’t blown over.”

“No, but Mitrubbéru’s gradually winning. Widulubu’s running out of silly accusations.” Thornton pointed to the trees. “Note the street has maples planted along it. The street name inspired the streets and parks department to experiment. Most streets have no trees and therefore don’t have any shade. Of course, in the past the trees would have been cut down for firewood; people were poor and wood was expensive. But now people are more prosperous and almost everyone has gas heat. These trees are in pretty good shape; no missing branches. We can get oaks from Sullɛndha’s nursery and pecans from local nurseries pretty cheaply. I’m looking into other choices because I think we want trees that don’t grow much above ten meters.”

“Pecans will be popular.”

“They will, though on the steep slopes where there isn’t much topsoil we’ll have to plant other species. I want a flower garden around each trunk, too, with shade-tolerant annuals and perennials in the summer and cold-tolerant ones in the winter, like prusimitranɛs.”

Jordan nodded; “frost-friends” were rather like pansies. “Good idea, but oh, the cost.”

“No, it won’t be that bad; about ten dhanay to set up each little garden and three dhanay per year to plant and maintain it. We’ll need twelve hundred of them; one on each side of the street every fifty meters, forty per kilometer, and we have thirty kilometers of streets. The city council won’t need to build a school next year; the school-age population will grow by three hundred fifty. If we spent a fraction of the hundred thousand dhanay cost of a new school on beautification, it’ll be done. We’d have to hire two more street workers to maintain them.”

“How much did the quay cost?”

“Seventy thousand, and it has been immensely popular. Restaurants and shops are opening up along it and the value of the houses went up twenty percent. It was a good investment. Beautification has economic benefits. Mom has been pushing it for years and has made fairly little headway because it was a purely aesthetic argument. But it needs to be an economic argument as well.”

“Good, we need both. The aesthetic is a connection between the material and the spiritual; hence its importance.”

Thornton stopped and pointed to a white oval chalked onto the sidewalk less than a meter wide and two long. “A tree could go here.”

“You’ve already marked the spots!”

“As an experiment; I did it at dawn two days ago when there were few people out so I could see what it would look like. It narrows the three-meter sidewalk rather significantly. I think we need to narrow the street as well. The street’s ten meters wide and people are beginning to park vehicles on it, so we need to paint parking spaces and

use the planters to define strips of parking. This is a main street. On Maple Street the trees partially block the sidewalks, which was not a good solution."

"So you'd narrow even the alleys?"

"I think so. They need to be made one way anyway because once people start parking on them, there won't be room for two-way traffic." Thornton stopped and pointed down a narrow street. "You see, there's a pickup parked there and another vehicle can barely pass."

They started walking eastward along Crest Boulevard again. "Mɛlita has wider streets, but many people still use wood, so I don't think we can plant trees and flowers on the streets yet," said Jordan. "It's a shame; the sun beats down and it's hot and bare."

"Maybe an educational campaign could be tried, an ordinance establishing fines could be passed, then experiment planting trees on a few streets."

"That might be worth a try, but as you know, it's hard to get something as complicated as that through the City Council."

"So I'm discovering. I attended the City Council meeting last week for the first time. It was the first meeting dad had missed in three years and I felt like an inadequate substitute! I think dad intentionally moved up his departure date at the last minute to miss the meeting. But Mitru helped me out; he's an old hand. Nine strong opinions; it's not easy to get agreement. It reminds me a bit of the Mɛlwika Spiritual Assembly."

"Were you on the LSA?"

"For two years, ten years ago."

"I forgot about that. Tiamaté and I moved officially to Mɛlita after the Ridván election, but there may be a vacancy on the assembly in a few months. We'd rather not

get elected. She's busy coordinating study circles and I'm busy on the Area Teaching Committee."

"That's the challenge; if you're active and capable, you get elected and appointed to things. The Development Consultancy is taking a huge amount of your time, too. But it has paid off. Primanu did a great job in Sértroba."

"Yes, that's worked out quite well. You made sure the work was well organized and we managed the paperwork."

"And Lord Patékwu is thrilled; Sértroba got a well designed water and sewer system. The palace must be pleased because they agreed to the five percent."

"They are pleased. Primanu's off to a good start, too. Now we have to figure out how to audit, though. I'll have to travel. I suppose the office is set up well enough to do without me for a week every month."

"Tiamaté can run it fine without you."

They reached the eastern end of Crest Boulevard; straight in front of them was a closed gate while to the right and left was Anar Street, the heart of Sumiwika. They crossed Anar and stopped near the gate while Thornton pulled a key from his pocket.

"What's that?"

"A key to the tower."

"Where did you get that?"

"Aisu. I asked him for a master key to the walls and he gave me one! Dad never had that."

"Aisu's rather rigid at times, but he'll come through."

“He’s no Pɛrku, but he’s a good guy.” Thornton unlocked the heavy metal door and beckoned Jordan inside. The central space of the tower was dimly lit through a few slits; they could see spears stacked against the far wall. Thornton locked the entrance behind them and pointed up the stairs, so they went up three stories to the top.

“The view up here is incredible!” said Jordan, as they stepped onto the roof.

“This is one of my favorite spots. Because it’s on the ridge crest, you can see the whole city.” They scanned four thousand red-tiled roofs stretching out to the north, south, and west of them.

Jordan pointed eastward. “The rest of this ridge is pretty ugly and bare. People have removed all the loose stones to build with and the trees have been cut for firewood. I suppose animals graze the grass, too.”

“Yes, it’s leased to a dairy; sheep and goats pull up the grass roots and all, but cows don’t. It’s pretty gullied as it is.” Thornton pointed eastward. “So, should we move the wall and enclose this area? Or expand the city southward and westward? It’s a big question.”

“Really? It must be more expensive to develop the ridge. The streets cost more, the house lots have to be leveled, and water has to be pumped up.”

“True, but an expansion here can include a new city wall. If we expand southward or westward, we’ll probably have to tear down houses to create a 150-meter clear zone in front of the walls. When we expanded to the southeast we had to tear down several farmhouses outside the walls and it was controversial.”

“So, the question is whether to keep the majority enclosed or expand outside the walls, like Mɛlwika already has to the south and west.”

“The westward and southward expansion is guaranteed to continue; should we expand eastward as well and expand the walled area? The clear zone south and west of the walls is a park and is popular for walking. I’d like to add trees and landscaping, but no one is ready to weaken the defenses by blocking the lines of sight.”

“So, what would you do with this area?”

“I don’t know. The wall has been moved eastward twice and could be moved again. But Mɛddoakwés is to the west and the future lies in the emergence of a Mɛlwika-Mɛddoakwés metropolitan area. It has already emerged, in fact; there are houses all the way to Nénaslua; Nénaslua has doubled in size in ten years; the villages in between Mɛlwika and Mɛddoakwés have all grown by at least fifty percent. Tripola has abandoned its walls. Pértatranisér doesn’t have them. Néfa and Isurdhuna never had.”

“Mɛlita doesn’t.”

“Exactly. The walls we have were sufficient to repel two armored steam wagons and twenty soldiers two years ago, and if they had gotten in they wouldn’t have been able to destroy the whole city. If the royal army attacked, we’d be wiped out with or without the walls. And the Kwolonɛ aren’t going to attack again; they make their money by trading with us.”

“That’s right. So you’d leave the wall here and expand westward?”

“Not necessarily; there’s a political issue to consider. If the city expands southward our family benefits because the growth is in Ménwika, so John quite legitimately may want it to grow eastward on his land. The city really can’t grow northward very easily because the land keeps rising into mountains, except around the reservoir, and I suspect we’ll see that area develop pretty soon.”

“If the city grows westward, both families benefit.”

“Yes, until we encroach on the sewage treatment facility on John’s side of the river and the airstrip on our side. I’m teaching a ‘City and Village Planning’ course this fall and I think we’ll make Mɛlwika a case study. My general feeling is that we should plan for growth in several directions: southward, westward, northwestward, eastward along the crest, eastward on both sides of the Péskakwés, and northeastward along the Arjakwés Valley. The only part of that within the walls would be eastward along the crest.”

“How big of a city will you plan for?”

“Fifty thousand. At five percent a year, we’ll be there in twenty years.”

“I wish I had time to take that course, but the consultancy is taking too much of my time. Mɛlita’s growing about ten percent annually because North Shore kids are settling there, rather than going back and forth. It’s becoming the center of Swadnoma’s commercial sector and the zoo’s making it a tourist destination. Its industrial sector’s expanding by three hundred jobs a year, which is ironic because our family is investing no more than a hundred thousand a year there, while Lord Mitrulubu and Lord Mitrubbaru are sinking about 700,000 dhanay a year into Kérékwɛs and generating about the same number of jobs!”

“That’s because no one else will invest in Kérékwɛs; they fear what terms they’ll get. But a lot of people are investing in Mɛlita because they know their investments are safe. That’s our big advantage; trustworthiness and transparency.”

“So, are you taking grandpa’s place on the City Council?”

Thornton thought for a moment. “Gradually, I guess. I’m still only a substitute for him when he’s out of town, but I’m now on the Streets and Parks Advisory Committee, which consists of Mayor Kérdu, me, and three citizens. That way I’ll get experience.”

“I wish I could have done that with Mɛlita. But it was smaller and didn’t have committees.”

Thornton looked around for one last time. “Let’s go home, sit, drink tea, and chat. You won’t be here much longer and I want to pick your brain about managing and planning cities.”

“Good, because I’d like to pick your brain about the same things!” replied Jordan with a laugh.

The Kɛrda Valley’s smokestack climbed 125 meters up the escarpment and stopped; smoke belched out of it, rose a bit higher, and spread out across the southern end of the valley. Fifty meters higher up the cliffs, a metallic glint revealed the next stretch of pipe, almost ready to receive smoke and carry it higher. A slash of gray interrupted the vegetation and showed the chimney’s future path to the very top of the escarpment not far from where the western road started down.

Chris walked with the seven members of the Kɛrda Tomi around the site of the World Gas Company’s new facility, past the one operating water gas plant, past the concrete foundations for four more units and the half-finished outlines of two others, past the gas purification structure, and finally past the skeleton of the first gas storage tank, twelve meters across and twelve high. They could hear the whistle of gas passing through the pipes as it was sent to Isurdhuna five kilometers to the north. The manager of the

Kɛrda operation pointed to the chimney and noted how the smoke was pumped up it with a powerful fan and was sprayed with water to wash soot from it; the water poured back down the pipe and accumulated in a special settling pond. Éra had its first functioning anti-pollution system.

After finishing the tour, the eight of them headed back to two taxis and drove to the Isurdhuna Industrial Park, on the eastern edge of the city. “I am impressed that the gas facility is going up so fast,” Wɛranokaru said to Chris, as the taxi started forward.

“Once the decision is made and the permissions have been given, there’s no reason to wait,” replied Chris. “Otherwise, money is sitting unused.”

“Indeed. We aren’t doing that any more, as I think you already have heard.”

“I have, and I am very pleased to know that the tomi here is finally moving forward with plans.”

“We are making progress.”

“A lot of the delays before had to do with acquiring land,” added Widumigu, a middle-aged priest who was on the tomi board. “Frankly, some of my priestly colleagues were greedy to sell land to the tomi and fought for the privilege of doing so.”

“As governor, I had tried to simplify the situation by expropriating land for the industrial park, but that was blocked by the courts,” added Wɛranokaru. “I now regret that move on my part, which just slowed down the process further and caused the land to be even more expensive. But Lord, I do want to thank you for your confidence in me. I never would have gotten this position as manager of the tomi without your intervention.”

“I recognize leadership talent when I see it,” replied Chris. “Everything I have heard so far suggests you are doing a good job, Wɛranokaru.” He didn’t add anything

about the man's salary, which was double that of his predecessor; but the predecessor had been ineffective.

"He works with people well, and has vision," agreed Widumigu. "And he helped engineer the compromise; land on the northern side of the city is being used for new houses for elderly people, while the industrial park is going on the southeast, downwind."

"Which makes sense," added Wɛranokaru. The taxi slowed as it reached the southern edge of Isurdhuna, then turned right at a new roundabout onto a new concrete road. "We've built this ring road around town partly to give the industrial park good access, but it will soon have a new road of its own that will go due south to the gas plant and from there to the western entrance into the valley."

The road ran about a hundred meters beyond the densely packed houses on the south side of town, which in turn circled the rock on which the old palace, temple, and priests' houses were built. After a half kilometer the taxi slowed and turned right into a fallow field filled with excavations. The concreting of the ring road ended at that point as well, though the industrial park's long access road had a fresh concrete surface. Only one building was finished at the far end. They stopped and got out. A moment later the other taxi stopped as well and the entire party was reunited.

"As you can see, we have a good road, electricity, and telephone service here," began Wɛranokaru. "It also has piped water and a special sewer system. Gas will reach here in two months. We have 100 hectares of land; eventually we could employ several thousand people, so we have reserved space for a child care facility, restaurants, a few small stores, and a bank." He pointed to the foundation being dug on the right side of the road. "This will be our fruit drying facility, which will use sunshine and gas heat to

produce raisins, dried apricots, and other fruits. Kɛrda has a reputation for dried fruits and traditionally pilgrims take some home as gifts. This year almost 40,000 people came into the valley on pilgrimage and most of the dried fruits they bought were imported! We anticipate a half million dhanay a year in business, a third from pilgrimage."

"Where are you going to get the fruit?" asked Chris.

"Many orchards are on estates owned by priestly families and they already produce much of the dried fruit, and they're investing in this facility, so we should be able to buy much of the fruit from them. But we will need to buy a lot from individual farmers."

He pointed to the left side of the street. "Over there we're building a new, modern, flour mill. In the last decade the valley has acquired several small electrically or water-powered mills and they will probably continue to operate, but most flour is still ground using animal power. We anticipate no difficulty selling a million dhanay of flour a year. Behind the large square excavation you can see two round holes in the ground; those will be modern grain storage elevators. The province still allows payment of taxes in grain and we will be buying and storing much of the provincial grain payments. This will reduce spoilage.

"Next to the flour mill will be a large, modern bakery, and next to it will be a pasta plant. Together they should sell a million dhanay a year as well. Farmers are already planning to plant more wheat for them next year."

"This is for export as well as local consumption?" asked Chris.

"Exactly. We hope to make half the valley's bread here. With the growing elder population supported by royal pensions, demand for food ready to eat will increase. Right now we import all our pasta."

He pointed to the right side of the street, across from the future bakery. "Next to the fruit drying plant will be a press for making fruit juices, especially grape, cherry, and apple. The northern end of the valley has some excellent apple orchards and the central valley's sour cherries have an excellent reputation. We may have to import fruit to run the plant; we want to expand it as fast as we can and the orchards may not be able to keep up. Beyond the juice plant will be a cannery to can fruits and vegetables. We figure in the winter the average family now spends ten dhanay on canned food, and we have 6,000 households in the valley. In a few years the cannery could be producing two hundred thousand dhanay per year."

"So, to summarize, phase one over two years aims to produce three million dhanay of agricultural products and employ seven hundred people," concluded Widumigu. "It requires 1.9 million dhanay, including all of the industrial park's infrastructure. We have seven hundred thousand in private investment from local families, many priestly families, plus about the same amount from the palace. The rest comes from the province and bank loans. And it will produce minimal air pollution because it will use gas and electricity."

"Brilliant," said Chris. "This valley's strength is agriculture and it is very underdeveloped. I'll tell you something else you can consider for phase 1: a vegetable washing facility. Home Improvement is expanding its grocery sales and needs high quality vegetables. A chain of stores named Royal Foods, supported by the Kérékwɛs

brothers, will open soon and it will have similar needs. Mɛlita and Mɛlwika are both building such facilities and there are none yet on the western shore."

"That's an excellent suggestion! Thank you," replied Wɛranokaru. "Will we be able to get a design?"

"I can get one sent to you. But obtaining a reliable supply of vegetables and fruits will be tricky. Kɛrda really needs farmers' organizations. I know the word 'grange' is disliked here, but one of their chief functions is to organize farmers to fulfill contracts."

"Granges will be very difficult to organize here; Duke Yusdu is opposed, as are the priests."

"Perhaps not so difficult," replied Widumigu. "If anyone can convince the Duke, it is you, Wɛranokaru. The priests are opposed because they don't want the people to have any organization at all. But it's too late; the people are voting. My colleagues have to change. And if anyone can push that, it is you, Wɛranokaru."

"Alright," replied Wɛranokaru. "Lord Chris, we need an advocate of granges who is not a Bahá'í and who can speak for them here."

"That is easy; I can arrange that. Let me ask another question, if you are ready for it: What comes after phase one?"

"The usual things the development plan recommends," replied Wɛranokaru. "A dairy, slaughterhouse, tannery, and shoe factory. We have plenty of animals; Kɛrda is one of the more prosperous provinces that way. We have no plans for sawmills and wood working because we have no significant wood in the valley and we're already hauling in finished wood products, drywall, and other construction products. There's no need to compete with them, but we can export agricultural goods because we have some

incredibly rich land. Phase three will involve a large ceramics plant; we have a strong pottery making tradition here, and pilgrims often take out their dried fruit in a pot made of red Kɛrda clay. We also have no plans for metal working industries because we have no history of them here."

"Even if they are prestigious," adding Widumigu.

"That's wise and practical," replied Chris. "They also pollute. What about that building on the end? It's already complete."

"We're rather embarrassed to talk about it; we hoped you wouldn't notice," confessed Wɛranokaru.

"You might not understand," added Widumigu.

Chris frowned. "I'm sorry, I have no desire to embarrass you. But I am sure your tomi has made practical decisions with its money."

"We hope so," replied Widumigu. "You see, pilgrims buy trinkets, typically of carved wood or baked clay. Lately, more and more have been made elsewhere and trucked in; some are even plastic. That's a trinket making factory. It opened in the spring and employs twenty men."

"Good idea," replied Chris. "If people want to buy them, make them."

The tomi board members looked relieved. Widumigu reached under his priestly robe and pulled out a small amulet that was on a lanyard around his neck. "Have you seen these?" He turned the amulet so Chris could see the symbol.

"Yes, just in the last few months. I understand the symbol comes from a hymn."

"Exactly. Widumaj said 'I am the connection between Earth and Heaven'; in other words, He brings us Esto's truth, and that truth makes our life here better and opens the

door to happiness in the next life. Some have interpreted it differently, to mean He brings together the material and spiritual; Wɛrétrakɛstɛr has talked about that interpretation a few times. This symbol captures the meaning of that hymn. The big horizontal line on top is heaven and the circle right above it is Esto, the smaller horizontal line on the bottom is this world or humanity, and the vertical line going from Esto on top to the horizontal line on the bottom, uniting them, is Widumaj. This has become the symbol of the 'old religion,' the customs of Widumaj."

"And it is made here?" asked Chris.

Widumigu nodded with satisfaction.

"Excellent," replied Chris. "It is a beautiful symbol and a beautiful teaching. What better way to capture the purpose of the Isurdhuna Industrial Park, for it exists to make life easier for everyone, does it not?"

Reread and edited, 6/15/13, 8.29/17, 11/29/24

377.

A New Project

Late Abɛlménu/mid Sept. 16/634

The palace complex in Mɛddoakwés had undergone yet another change. When Chris entered through the southwestern gate, he passed the old house of Wɛrétrakɛstɛr, which had served as the palace's private finishing school; it had later been extensively refurbished to become Prince Mɛméjékwu's residence, then Queen Estoibidhé's, but now it had been refurbished one more time to serve as the Prime Minister's residence.

His destination was the new palace, however, where both queens resided. As soon as he entered, the guard called on someone to escort him to the meeting room, which, he noted, was equipped with one of the new speaker telephones the phone company had started to custom manufacture in the spring. Estoiyaju, Wɛranolubu, and Aryéstu arrived immediately thereafter, the two queens a moment later. Chris was a bit surprised to see Queen Duktɛrésto, who was younger than him, had totally white hair and was thin and frail. The assassination attempt on her and the death of her son were blows from which she had not recovered.

They all exchanged greetings, then the queens bade them sit. Duktɛrésto held up a copy of the eighty-page report Chris had sent to the palace three days earlier. "This is an immensely impressive piece of work; one of the best I have seen. It is also encouraging. It appears our tomis are beginning to function effectively and efficiently."

"Indeed they are, Your Majesty," replied Chris. "It has taken several years to find the right combination of talent and experience and for them to get a grasp of what will

work best in their regions. Some tomis have had greedy board members who were out for themselves, or dreamers who sought prestigious industries for their provinces rather than industries suited to their province's strengths. But those problems are mostly past. In the last year they all have invested fairly well."

"I also appreciate your chapters about Swadnoma, Lɛwɛspa, Gordha, Krésona, and Sumiupɛrakwa," added Estoibidhé. "They are all doing well without tomis. The idea of a village owned company—a sort of local tomi—appears to be quite a good one for the tutanɛ."

"The Krésonɛ tribe's company is an excellent example," agreed Chris. "And it needs to be duplicated elsewhere. Gordha is doing well for the same basic reason; the slaughterhouse was a tribal investment and it is bringing wealth that is invested in expansion and new industries. Sumiupɛrakwa has a large private sawmill and woodworking operation that is spawning related industries; again, there's a profit source. For Lɛwéspa, every village has a vigorous textile industry. In Véspa, Ora's industrial base and large, talented population is generating wealth for expansion.

"In Swadnoma, the source of investment is different; every town has been settled less than ten years and all the farmers are paying mortgages to the local lord for their land, in addition to paying local taxes. The Kérékwes brothers and their sister, the Duchess, collectively have an income of close to two million dhanay a year, between mortgages and profits from their own extensive agricultural developments. The same is true in much of Arjakwés; Mɛlwika and the southern and western towns have sold new lands to farmers. Néfa benefits because General Pɛrku, as lord of Luktrudɛma, has had a pool of mortgage payments to invest in that province.

"That's why those areas haven't needed tomis. But the other provinces, lacking these sources of wealth, are now beginning to benefit from other investments. The South Shore has had a small but vigorous manufacturing sector; by next year the tomi will have equaled it in size. That's also true with Sumilara. Rudhisér's situation is similar as well; it has had a brewing industry and some manufacturing, but the tomi is rapidly developing more. The north shore had a much smaller industrial sector and now the tomi provides much of the province's industry. Kɛrda's situation is like the north shore's several years ago, but it is now growing faster.

"The one area that is seriously behind is Dɛlongisér. The valley only has 6,000 people, so basic agriculture is still being established. The tomi board is not very talented. I would recommend some replacement of Board members. In my opinion, the province needs better leadership; the governor seems ineffective. Settlement must be encouraged, mortgages must be collected consistently—they've fallen behind since the Prince's death—and the mortgage money must be applied to development. The valley has vast land resources and thus enormous potential mortgage income."

"I have noted your suggestions," said Duktɛrésto. "It is a delicate matter, but perhaps we can arrange something. Morana and Lɛpawsona are also behind, I see."

"Indeed, but Morana has a pretty good board, so they need money. I recommend giving them a generous quota. Lɛpawsona doesn't have a tomi, but it has a lot of businesses and factories and they all need money to expand, so they need a generous quota to aim for as well."

I also see that you recommended that more north shore money be devoted to Khɛrmdhuna."

“Indeed, the village has 2,000 people and hasn’t seen a kɛntay from the tomi. They’re basically in the same situation as a tutanɛ tribe in that they work together, but because of their harsh climate their options are limited. They pay almost 100,000 dhanay in taxes to the crown every year. If it were possible for them to obtain grants for legitimate development projects totaling at least 10,000, and preferably 20,000 or even 25,000, it would help them immensely.”

“I think we can do that,” said Estoibidhé to her mother, who scowled a bit, then nodded. “Your recommendation about granges is of a similar nature,” added the younger queen.

“Indeed; that’s the other conclusion of the study. Small farmers need granges for the following reasons: (1) they can provide equipment; (2) they can pool harvests and negotiate a better price; and (3) they can provide services, like medical benefits. The oldest granges cover Arjakwés and Swadnoma. From them they have spread to the north and south shores to serve the farmers who travel seasonally to Swadnoma and Arjakwés. The problem granges have is obtaining the seed money to buy the initial equipment; they need about 4,000 to buy one tractor plus attachments. In the past it was triple that. They can lease, but even that can be risky financially. The good news is that the cost of basic equipment has now fallen quite a bit. If a basic grant of, say, 3,000 dhanay were made to a potential grange, it could use the money to lease equipment and buy fertilizer and perhaps new seeds, then make enough profit to save toward its own tractor. At that point, distant granges would be willing to loan money and equipment; the grange will have a track record of success. A few years ago the basic package would have cost twice as much and granges would have had trouble finding accountants, record keepers, and

drivers. But equipment is now cheaper and human resources more plentiful. A commitment of 100,000 dhanay a year for two years would go a long way."

"Lord, if traditional villages have no additional land to till, how will they expand their agriculture enough to pay for the equipment?" asked Duktɛrésto skeptically.

"The lack of extra land has always been the barrier to establishing new granges. Extra land is much easier to open for farming when heavy equipment is available, so that is the incentive to get the equipment. But almost all villages do have spare land around them, it's just more than an hour's walk from the village center. With the spread of pickup trucks, that's less of a problem. Furthermore, the traditional farmer usually has thirteen to fifteen agris of land, and rotates which ten agris he will farm. But that is no longer necessary; because of radio programs and newspaper articles, farmers are learning new crop rotation practices, and they are purchasing more fertilizer. Farmers have been increasing the agris they farm even with traditional methods because crop prices have dropped by half. They need granges to stabilize the prices and get machinery. There's no reason to work two weeks to plant ten agris of land when one can do it in two days with a tractor."

"The other issue is freedom," said Duktɛrésto. "Lords have long resisted granges because they don't want the people organized."

"But mother, the people have now voted twice and this fall they will vote again," replied Estoibidhé. "If the lords wanted to help their people and prevent granges, they'd buy tractors for local use. Very few have done that, and some of the ones who did, leased the tractors to their villages at high prices. The Lords have lost a lot of power because of their resistance to the changes you have encouraged."

“That’s true,” replied Duktɛrésto reluctantly. “How’s this, Lord. The crown will provide to the granges fifty thousand a year for two years. That’s not as much as you want, but I think you can raise the rest. The important contribution the palace is making is that we are supporting the effort to establish granges through our contribution. This indicates we do not oppose them. That will go a long way to make it easier for you to establish the granges.”

“It will, Your Majesty, and I thank you for it. I agree that fifty thousand will get the effort started. I will see how much I can raise in other ways; I’m sure I can obtain some.”

“If any lords oppose them strongly, I will go on the radio about the matter,” added Estoibidhé, looking at her mother. “I agree, mother, not to make strong statements of support otherwise; there’s no reason to antagonize the old houses.”

“The old houses are mostly making their money from the mortgages paid by farmers in granges,” added Duktɛrésto. “We can remind them privately of that.” She extended her hand across the table to Chris. “Lord, I am always amazed by your service, and I am immensely grateful. I believe future generations will be grateful to you as well, for your attention and persuasion have made much of our development possible. I don’t think my daughter’s plans for universal health care and old-age pensions would be possible otherwise. Thank you.”

Chris smiled and nodded. “Thank you, Your Majesty,” he said with a tear in his eye, and they shook hands.

Chris was excited as he drove home. He rarely had been so well received by the palace. He had gotten almost everything he had asked for. More support for the granges

would have been ideal, but he now had the green light to organize them formally and properly without anyone accusing him of creating a revolution. That was an achievement he had not planned to seek. It would require a lot of time and energy to accomplish, too.

He drove to Mɛlwika, getting there a bit before the eclipse. He parked the rover in the garage under the tomi building and walked to John Miller's house first. As he expected, John was there drinking his afternoon tea.

"Chris, what brings you here? Bloody hot day, today."

"Pretty bad; I wish the heat would break. Say, John, how are your tractor sales?"

John shrugged. "Flat; about one hundred a year. Half are replacements for machines burned out from overwork. I wish granges would buy more and treat their machinery properly, but heh, it's business for me, right?"

"Right. I have permission from the palace to make an effort to organize more granges. They're supporting it with fifty thousand a year for two years. I can double that with grants from existing granges and wealthy investors. That'll mean the purchase of twenty more tractors a year for two years, and after that the granges will have revenue streams of their own, so they'll buy more equipment from their profits."

John scowled. "I see. And you want me to contribute as well."

"I didn't say that, but it crossed my mind."

John shook his head. "I'm not a charity. Sometimes I do contribute, but remember that all my 'profit' goes into new efficiency projects to cut manufacturing costs, research on a new lathe or a rearrangement of an assembly line, or an extra expansion of capacity. Miller Foundry and Motors has made a huge contribution to this world."

“I completely agree. I’m not asking for a discount, John, but a twenty percent increase in annual production will give you a few efficiencies of scale, and a bulk order is worth something. We’re talking about a hundred thousand dhanay of business per year for two years, and who knows how much more business will result afterward. Isn’t that worth ten thousand a year?”

John looked at him, then growled, “You’re either persuasive or persistent, Chris. Or maybe both. And I suppose that’s not unreasonable; I have to make some charitable contributions.” He rose and walked to his desk, where he wrote a check for ten thousand. “I’ll make it out to you because I know you won’t spend it on your family.”

“No, I won’t. Thanks, John. I think this will bring you blessings, as well as more business.”

“Those are both good, my friend.”

Chris and John exchanged a few pleasantries, then Chris headed out the door, bound for the tomi building, where he’d hand the check to Luktréstu with instructions to open a special account. As he was crossing the corner of Foundry Square, he crossed paths with Mitru Miller.

“Alláh-u-Abhá!” said Mitru. “I thought you’d be in Wurontroba already!”

“The summit starts tomorrow evening. Hey, I have a question. Can you make a donation to an effort to start more granges? We have approval from the palace and a fifty thousand dhanay per year commitment for two years, and your father’s committing ten.”

“Hum, what can I offer.” Mitru thought for a moment. “Five thousand this year. My profit’s not huge and I give as much as I can to Bahá'í Funds, so that’s a lot.”

"I know. Thanks, I appreciate it very much." Chris smiled and headed to the tomi building, where he had Luktréstu type a letter to the bank to open a special account. He also asked his assistant to call Mitruiluku Kérékwɛs to set up an appointment for early the next morning.

Chris was on his way at 8 a.m. the next morning to visit Kérékwɛs. He was surprised to see Duchess Sugé, Lord Mitrubbaru of North Gramakwés, and Governor Brébkordu of Swadnoma in the room as well when he entered. That complicated his pitch. Mitrulubu of Gramakwés was not present; Chris already had an appointment to see him later that morning.

"Welcome, Lord Chris," said Mitruiluku, rising, as did the others. "Come join us. We had a meeting scheduled for 9 and when I told them you were coming at 8, they decided to arrive early. Breakfast?"

"No thank you, I ate two hours ago in Mɛlwika, but I'll have a cup of coffee."

"Of course." Mitruiluku nodded to a servant. "Please sit. How's the zoo going?"

"The mastodons and sabertooths are drawing huge crowds. We now have a lion, a black bear, two giraffes, two wildebeests, two zebras, six monkeys of three different kinds, three coyotes, and five deer. The aviary has seven species of birds and the aquarium has a dozen kinds of fish in three different tanks."

"Wow, and I bet it's increasing sales in the stores," said Mitruiluku.

"Indeed; families are coming to Mɛlita on the bus, visiting the zoo, eating in a restaurant—one of their first times in a restaurant—shopping, then going home. A third inn is opening and a Palace Hotel will open next year. Next year we're going to add a

‘water park’; a place where people can swim and splash in fountains of water. We may add some rides as well, just like Luktrudɛma.”

“Tourism,” said Brébkordu. “Yet another Swadnoma industry.”

“We have sunny weather in the summer, with low humidity; it’s a good time to visit,” said Chris. “How goes your factory construction?”

“We’re expanding the light bulb factory again,” replied Mitruiluku. “Demand for gas stoves has gone way up in the last two years. You know about the plans for vacuum cleaners and washing machines. We’ve got a dozen other products, too.”

“We have quite a circular flow of cash going,” added Mitrubbaru. “Two hundred new workers per year need two hundred houses, so we’re selling them modulars, which boosts demand for the products we make for modulars! And by the time they’ve paid off the mortgage—usually ten years—the modular will be getting rather old and will need a lot of work, but it’ll be their problem.”

“They aren’t lasting as long as a solid, traditional house,” agreed Chris. “But many owners rebuild and expand them after a few years. It looks like North Gramakwés is mostly modular homes, but Kérékwɛs is maybe a third.”

“That’s about right,” agreed Mitruiluku. “Mɛlita has a lot, too.”

“And the village around my estate, also,” added Sugé.

“How’s your estate doing?” added Chris.

She nodded. “Well. We’ve added another thousand agris of cropland this year. Our workers earn good money and have become very proficient with the equipment, so I felt confident I could expand.”

“Excellent,” said Chris, seeing his opening. “Mechanization has helped everyone so much. How many farmers would you have had to hire before, to farm six thousand agris?”

She laughed. “Four hundred! Instead, I need one hundred. Of course, I have to pay them three times as much, but I still make more money.”

“A *lot* more,” agreed Mitrubbaru. “It helps to stick to a few basic crops, and to plant and harvest constantly nine months of the year.”

“I gather we’re getting more biogas this winter, right?” asked Brébkordu. “Because demand for gas is growing fast.”

“Yes, Tomasu will be here for two months in the winter,” replied Chris. “He’ll be installing as many as fifty digesters in Mɛlita and Gramakwés. Industrial farming of poultry is producing enough chicken and turkey manure to run one hundred digesters, and in the future that may double.”

“One hundred! That’s a lot of gas!” said Mitruiluku.

“My son in law’s not very happy, but I don’t think he’ll need to install more blue water gas units for a while. We can use manure and save the coal and wood for other things.”

“I’m glad to hear Swadnoma will export gas,” said Brébkordu.

“Now, Lord, you came here to talk about helping farmers; what did you have in mind?” asked Mitruiluku.

“When I finished talking to people at the palace yesterday, I thought of your continued affection for Véspa and thought I should visit. Queen Duktɛrésto has agreed that it is important to support the formation of additional granges. More and more tax

money has to be devoted to paying health bills; granges provide the service to their members already. Furthermore, granges help farmers mechanize, freeing many of them to work in factories, and with the continued spread of factories there will soon be a labor shortage. The palace has agreed to provide fifty thousand a year for two years as seed money for granges. Swadnoma's prosperity is based on granges and we don't need more of them here; every town is served. But Véspa has only two: Dhudrakaita, a little village in the south, and two villages on the northern border are served by Pértatranisér. Véspa needs about twenty granges, with start-up costs of four thousand dhanay each."

"Now, why should we shell out any money at all for Véspa?" said Mitruiluku, skeptically.

"You need to keep your cash here, to grow Kérékwɛs," added Brébkordu. "Kérékwɛs, North Gramakwés, and Gramakwés are all gaining about 200 jobs a year, which means 200 households, and a household grows to five people within six years. So each town is gaining a thousand a year. In ten years they'll all gain ten thousand and in twenty years, twenty thousand."

"That's right," agreed Mitrubbaru, and Sugé nodded her head.

"I hesitate to speculate about the reasons why people might support various projects," replied Chris. "You might want to do it because you want to show your continued affection and support for Véspa. Or, you might want do it because you want to repair your reputation among the province's population, who had great love and affection for your father and quite a lot for you as well. Or, you might want to do it knowing that you could get a larger flow of Véspa migrants to your towns; they have to go somewhere, and the more they hear of these places, the more they will consider moving here. Or, you

might want to do it knowing that it will upset some of the lords who were angry at you. Or, you might want to do it because it will slow Ora's growth a bit while speeding the growth of Swadnoma." Chris shrugged.

"At least you started with the altruistic reasons," commented Sugé.

"I would hope they are sufficient, but they aren't always."

"Lord, you are more Machiavellian than I thought," said Mitrubbaru.

Chris shook his head. "Not at all. I have listed both altruistic and personal reasons to help support granges in Véspa. A Machiavelli will go with the personal reasons when they go against the altruistic ones. But I will support the altruistic goals even when they hurt my personal interests, unless they wipe out much of my fortune, of course."

"So, do you personally stand to gain from the spread of granges?" asked Mitruiluku.

"I submit that I do and all of us do. It would seem that every two jobs that Kérekwɛs gains causes Mɛlita to gain one, because Mɛlita has become the center of the area's commerce. Granges will make farmers more efficient, will raise their incomes, increase their consumer purchases, and increase the work force for factories. Does that not benefit everyone, farmers included?"

"It's the typical long-term argument you like to make," sighed Mitruiluku.

"Perhaps not that long term. Farmers could be earning 100 dhanay more per year within a year or two. Most of that will go to the purchase of consumer goods. If, every year, two thousand of them decide to take the bus to the Mɛlita Zoo with their family for the day and spend ten dhanay, my town gains twenty thousand dhanay *every year*. That's a lot of money in the long run. If your investment ultimately causes 100 more Véspans to

move here and they earn 2,500 per year and pay 250 dhanay of local taxes per year, that's a lot of money, too."

Mitruiluku smiled and looked at Mitrubbaru and Sugé. "It's an interesting definition of 'investment,' but it is a definition," he conceded. "How would we link our contribution with increased migration?"

"You say you're giving the money to foster immigration. You give it in a series of checks every quarter and get a mention in the newspapers each time. You are already visiting Véspa once or twice a year; when you do so, you talk about the grant and how much you value immigration. It's easier to ask for something when you give something in return."

"That's true. You've thought this through, Lord Chris." Mitruiluku looked at the others, whose skepticism had softened. "How much do you want?"

"Can all three of you commit ten thousand each for two years?"

They looked relieved. "Yes, that's possible," said Mitruiluku, and the others nodded. Brébkordu remained poker-faced and said he hoped Swadnoma would gain as much, long term, as it had lost that day. Chris nodded thanks to the three Kérékwɛs siblings and took a sip of his coffee. He had an argument that would probably extract ten thousand more from Mitrulubu, who wouldn't want to be outdone by his brothers. He suspected Pɛrku and Brébéstu could be convinced to contribute, and he would try Roktɛkɛstɛr, Gurwɛkɛstɛr, and Aryékwɛs as well. Starting granges had become his new passion.

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378.

Summit

Late Abɛlménu/mid Sept., 16/634

Chris had no further time that day to pursue fundraising for the grange project; he had only a little time left to get ready for the meeting of Bahá'í lords at Wurontroba. He jotted some notes and looked up several passages from the Bahá'í writings about development. Then he headed home to pack.

Lord Pédru arrived from Khɛrmdhuna after the eclipse and they offered him supper, even though it was breakfast time for him, then they headed for Wurontroba. They arrived about 10 p.m. Brébéstu had arrived with Lord Estodhéru of Mɛddwoglubas and Lord Chordu of Dhudrakaita an hour earlier; Dr. Stauréstu was with them as well, as a representative of the Central Spiritual Assembly. Liz had come along to represent the institution of the Auxiliaries. Lord Patékwu of the Krésonɛ had arrived in the afternoon to help with preparations. They were joined by Wéré, ɛndranu's wife. They had a huge pot of coffee ready for everyone.

"Let's start with a round of prayers," suggested Brébéstu, so they went around the table and prayed together, everyone reciting something from memory or from a prayer book. By the time they finished, Patékwu was looking sleepy.

"Let me stand up and get a cup of coffee," he said apologetically. "Lords Pédru, Chondu, and Estodhéru won't be ready to sleep for many hours."

"If we can get some discussions in tonight, it would be good," agreed Stauréstu. "The Central Spiritual Assembly asked me to attend and serve as chair because I am *not* a

Lord, though my brother Brébéstu is. The Assembly has asked me to greet everyone on its behalf and assure you of its prayers. It is very pleased that six Bahá'í lords could meet together; about 2 ½ percent of all lords, a similar percentage to our membership, compared to the total population. It's too bad that Amos Keino was unavailable to attend at the last minute. The Faith's growth continues; furthermore, there are many signs of internal strength and devotion. The Bahá'í Faith has sunk its roots deeply into the culture; it is an indigenous movement. Inevitably, we must talk about how to spread the Faith further, as well as how to develop our communities in a material sense. Those are our two goals."

"I am delighted you could come," said Lord ɛndranu. "The village is extremely excited; I hope all of you will be able to speak to everyone in the next three days. We are also a bit embarrassed to serve as your hosts because we have so little. Electricity just arrived two weeks ago, so we do have modern lights for you." He pointed to the three bare light bulbs shining in the room. "We also have a telephone, and we just got a radio three days ago."

"A radio three days ago," repeated Chondu with a smile. "I remember when we got a radio in Dhudrakaita; what a shock, for the first few months! All these words we had never heard before, all these ideas, all these strange developments we didn't understand."

"Exactly!"

"I agree," said Pédru. "But in our case there was such a difference in climate, compared to everyone else; we didn't understand most of the agricultural advice. And the accents were so strange."

“I have trouble understanding you,” agreed ɛndranu.

“We all may need to speak slowly,” agreed Stauréstu. “We have the eastern, western, and Tutanɛ dialects represented here, and Khɛrmdhuna has a dialect of its own.”

“But we’ll understand each other,” said Chris. “I can’t tell you how happy I am that we are able to hold this meeting. It has a lot of potential.”

“I agree,” said Brébéstu.

“I hope it will result in some help and relief for my people, and a sense of direction,” said ɛndranu. “Because we really don’t know where to start and what to do. We have a school where a few things are taught, but we have no idea how this electricity can help us, or the telephone, or the radio. We hear about water running in pipes under the streets, of sewers to remove wastes, of biogas so we don’t have to burn wood in fireplaces, of factories, and wonder what we need, why, and what order to get these things. It’s confusing and frightening. I am sure some remote villages are glad to be isolated because there are fewer choices to make.”

“We are still confused,” agreed Chondu. “And frustrated because so many people are still poor, after four years of effort.”

“Exactly,” agreed Patékwu.

“We feel that way, too,” added Pédru. “We have twenty-three hundred people, but we have so few resources that we are still fairly poor.”

“What order did you get things in?” asked ɛndranu.

“The road arrived at the same time as a modern school. Electricity and telephone followed a year later. Then once we had some accountants to track money and a few

engineers to set up and maintain machines, we acquired a textile mill for making woolen clothing. The range of things we manufacture is slowly increasing."

"That's about what we are doing as well," added Patékwu. "We got the road, schools, power, and telephone, and of course a post office so people could write to us and we could write to them. Once we had some people with skills, like driving tractors and trucks or accountants who could track money, we were able to create the Krésonɛ Company, which is both a grange and tomi. It has greatly increased our farmland and our income. With that, we were able to wire the entire village for electricity and start installing water and sewers."

"Order is important," agreed Chris. "You need people with skills before you take each step."

"But we will benefit from your experiences," replied ɛndranu. "We now have eight men able to drive pickups, thanks to the Bahá'í youth team who have been here all summer. Three of us have been learning accounting; we don't know it very well, of course, but we have started down that road. We don't have a post office or a store, yet."

"You need both of those things, even if they are very small," said Brébéstu. "The crown will pay a very basic salary for a post office; 100 dhanay per year. Post Offices buy stamps for one third of their sales price and they keep the profit. That's their main source of income. Most village post offices are in either a store or a school and are a supplementary source of income for the storekeeper or a teacher."

"It sounds like the three of you have very similar stories, in terms of the order of development," noted ɛndranu. "What have electricity and telephones done for you?"

"You know their basic functions; electricity provides light and powers things, telephones provide communication," said Patékwu. "In Sértroba we decided to help everyone wire their houses for light. Every householder had to save twenty dhanay, half for the wires and half for the bulbs; we helped a few very poor households somewhat. Now, no one has to buy candles or oil and they have light whenever they need it, and not dim light; they have enough to read or sew. The village made the decision so that people could read to each other at night and learn, and to do useful work for their families. Factories need light so that workers can see their machines well; if they don't have enough light they can get injured."

"As for telephones, you may not use them much," said Brébéstu. "They're most useful in emergencies. You can call an ambulance to take someone to the hospital or call for help if there's a big fire. You can order goods from stores by mail or by telephone. But once you have factories, telephones are important to order supplies because you are constantly ordering something new or selling a new batch of products. Customers need to call you. Then, once people are more prosperous, they find it convenient to have a telephone at home, so people can call them instead of dropping by."

"I see; that would help me, sometimes," agreed ɛndranu. "So, keep telling us these things; teach us; and we will be able to develop quicker than ever before."

"We can't just give things to villages, Lord," said Chris. "This is not to say that your suggestion is a bad one; on the contrary, I think it is good. But we can't hurry and accomplish in one day what other places have taken years to accomplish. Some things can't be rushed."

“I understand that you can’t give things away, and we are not asking for charity. But we are already becoming prepared for a next step, whatever it is. We have people who can drive a truck; we have people learning accounting, including myself.”

“In Dhudrakaita, we didn’t have anyone trained in accounting for over a year,” said Chondu. “I confess, I have no interest in it at all, but I have a cousin who comes in and he keeps the village’s books. The storekeeper’s son keeps the store’s books and those of the bamboo factory. The gabruli still struggles because neither of them has the time to help.”

“We can provide some accounting help,” offered Patékwu. “I think we can send someone here every week or two.”

“I wonder whether we can find a Bahá'í youth to come here this fall for three or four months of service,” said Chris. “I can think of one who might be persuaded. He knows accounting, which he could teach. He could also teach the high school students a variety of subjects.”

“That would be good,” said ɛndranu. “Could he provide classes for adults as well?”

Chris nodded. “I’m sure.”

“The Central Spiritual Assembly needs to make a commitment, I think,” said Stauréstu. “All four of our all-Bahá'í villages need at least one resident college student all the time. That would give all of you the ability to maintain or improve your classes to high school age students and adults.”

“We want to expand our school,” said ɛndranu. “We can crowd fifty kids into our classroom, but it’s really tight. Wurontroba has 404 people; 52 from age 6 to 9, 46 from age 10 to 13, and 41 from age 14 to 17. We need two more classrooms and three teachers altogether. In two months when all the harvests are in, we plan to build two more classrooms.”

“I will personally donate two wood-burning stoves for the classrooms,” said Stauréstu immediately.

“We have one teacher who’s pretty good; he reads things and teaches them to the kids. If you can provide us a Bahá'í college student for the high school students, our teacher can concentrate on the middle school. We have two older youth who enjoy teaching little ones and a grandmother who can tell stories. Between them, we can handle the little ones.”

“What’s the situation with text books for all four of your villages?” asked Chris.

“We have a few old ones from Sértroba,” said ɛndranu.

“And we have a few less old texts,” added Patékwu.

“We have hand-me-downs from Mɛddwoglubas that are adequate, but need new ones pretty soon,” said Chondu.

“Khɛrmdhuna has over 750 children aged six through seventeen,” said Pédru. “We have to replace textbooks every year and we have it in our budget. This year there’s an entirely new seventh grade text, so we are replacing them all. We were planning to sell them cheaply.”

“We’ll buy some of them,” said Patékwu. “We don’t have enough.”

“I should make a call to the superintendent of schools and find out what we still have.”

“Between the Krésonɛ and the Wuronɛ we’re talking about less than five hundred students, right?” asked Chris, calculating. “The annual textbooks cost 1.25 dhanay per pupil. I’ll supply any new or used texts that Pédru can’t get from his school system. I’ll make sure you get fresh worksheets for the kids, too.”

“Thank you, Lord, for your generosity,” said ɛndranu.

“If there is anything to give a village, it is textbooks for its children,” replied Chris. “They will pay for themselves many times over.”

“Maybe we should coordinate our textbook buying,” suggested Brébéstu. “It’s complicated for me because Brébatroba’s school population more than doubles in the winter when south shore farmers bring their families to their farms in Brébatroba. Consequently, we are already buying hundreds of extra texts a year and the kids often take them back to their schools on the south shore when the weather gets warmer. It’s a kind of charity Brébatroba’s already supplying!”

“Same with Mɛddwoglubas,” added Estodhéru. “We buy new texts every three years and pass our old ones to poorer villages nearby.”

“Khɛrmdhuna can send our old ones here and to the Krésonɛ,” said Pédru.

“Excellent; this is progress, and we are grateful,” said ɛndranu. “It is getting very late for me and Patékwu; perhaps we can resume again tomorrow afternoon?”

The next day proved relaxing and informal. Pédru and Chondu didn't rise until almost noon, which was still before dawn for either of them. The group had a long "lunch" together—it felt more like breakfast for several—then did a long, slow, walking tour of Wurontroba. They met almost everyone—the exceptions were the men hunting or in the fields, and teenagers watching animals in the pastures—and in the process got a survey of skills, interests, and aspirations. A small crowd followed them around and added comments and suggestions to the conversation, making the tour a mini-town meeting.

The one-room schoolhouse was one of their last stops, which was across the river from the center of the village and next to some grain storage silos. Déodatu and the two Bahá'í youth serving with him were staying in the school for the summer and came out to greet the arrivals. "These three have been a great gift to us," said ɛndranu. He affectionately put an arm on the shoulders of the two of them closest to him. "They have said many of the same things as we discussed last night. And they have a plan for this field."

"I'd call it a dream, not a plan," replied Déodatu. "The bridge is a bit old, but it's strong enough for people to cross easily; that's why the silos are here, because wagons laden with harvest from this side of the river can't cross. So we need to ask the army to install a proper stone bridge, so vehicles can cross. Meanwhile, this school needs to add at least two classrooms, an office, two large bathrooms, and running water. A good well with a pump can supply a public tap where anyone can get water. Across the road I see a Bahá'í Center with a hall able to hold everyone. It'd have bathrooms as well. Finally, next to the Center would be the gabruli building, which would have a large room for caring for small children, a classroom, and several rooms for sewing and cooking."

“The Central Spiritual Assembly will provide a nickel-steel roof and two toilets if a community builds a Bahá'í Center,” said Stauréstu.

“Excellent; we’ll make it a priority, then,” said ɛndranu. “I suppose we could use it for classrooms temporarily as well.”

“Bahá'í Centers are used by gabrulis as well, until they get their own building,” added Estodhéru.

“I suggest you consider adding some public baths,” said Liz. “Six rooms with bathtubs and running hot and cold water would be a valuable service for the village. Women could wash clothes as well as children and themselves. How much would it cost, Chris?”

“This village really needs about ten bathing areas and ten clothes washing stations, I think,” he replied. “A building with them, running water, a large water heater, and a sewage system to remove the soapy water to a marsh would cost about five thousand. If the labor is provided locally, maybe half that.”

“Too much, for now,” said ɛndranu.

“By next year we may be able to find a grant to cover the equipment,” said Chris. “It might be better to put two of the bathing rooms at the school, for men, and the rest at the Bahá'í Center or gabruli, for women. That arrangement would require two water heaters, but that may be good, because sometimes they break.”

They chatted further about the value of cleanliness as they walked across the bridge and back to ɛndranu’s house. It was just about time for the village meeting, so they drank tea and chatted about the value of a community clock and bell tower until everyone

gathered. Chondu spoke about Dhudrakaita, followed by Liz, who spoke about the spiritual principles behind development. Then villagers spoke up, expressing their interests and desires for their village, families, and the world.

After supper (lunch for some), they sat in a circle in the lord's great room, prayed for twenty minutes, then resumed their discussions. "I think we made a lot of progress yesterday," said Stauréstu. "We have no particular agenda, so I suggest we go around the room and share impressions."

They went around and everyone commented on what they saw and heard. Liz pulled out big sheets of paper and began to write it down and post them on the walls. Chris was last. "My impression of Wurontroba may sound contradictory to the laudatory comments I've heard," he began. "I saw an ordinary rural village in many ways; a bit smaller than average, but otherwise much like the average village of ten or fifteen years ago. But so-called ordinary villages are full of immense potential, and that is true here as well. Villages like this generally have two strengths: agriculture and handicrafts. Both of those things are becoming liabilities because technology is changing them. But they don't have to be liabilities; agriculture is competitive and can make money with the right tools. That's true of handicrafts as well. That's the path of Khɛrmdhuna, Dhudrakaita, and Krésona: updating their strengths."

"So, what are you suggesting?" asked Stauréstu.

"Developing Wurontroba's agriculture and handicrafts. The palace has just approved an effort to develop granges and they have agreed to fund it. I've started doing fundraising to increase the money available because it isn't enough. Wurontroba needs to organize a grange. We can get that process started in the next few days."

“What can the grange do?” asked ɛndranu.

“Buy a tractor and equipment; granges are primarily agricultural. Wurontroba is just about the right size for one tractor. There will be some extra for fertilizer or starting a small handicrafts operation.”

“That’s perfect!” said ɛndranu. “How do we apply?”

“Organize a grange first! By then, I’ll know. We have to figure that out. You don’t need a tractor until spring anyway. You’re getting a pickup, right?”

“Yes, thank you for arranging it, it’s arriving in a few weeks.”

“What products should you concentrate on?” asked Brébéstu, who, as governor of South Shore for a while, was also an expert on development.

“Based on what everyone has said so far, woolen goods, pork, and dairy. I suppose we can export more corn and wheat as well.”

“I’d add pitch,” said Chris. “There are a lot of pine forests around here, and the demand for pitch exceeds supply.”

“Good, then you have a phase two in mind, after the grange has been established,” said Brébéstu.

Pédru promised some help with woolens and Patékwu promised help with the dairy, as the Krésonɛ were forming one. They went on for several hours, talking about a long list of products the kingdom needed, a list that gave everyone ideas for their own development. Then it was time to go to bed again.

The next morning they rose a bit earlier—the lords from western places were adjusting to the much earlier time zone—and finished their discussions of products in the

late morning and early afternoon. Then they turned to a compilation of Bahá'í quotations about the development of human potential and talked about health, education, prayer, studying the Word of God, and the next world.

That afternoon the focus of the village-wide meeting was the grange. Chris and Brébéstu spoke about the granges they knew about; Chondu and Pédru spoke about the granges in their villages; Patékwu described his tribe's tomi. Then questions came fast about allocation of equipment, the percentage of the harvest needed, and the benefits, like medical coverage. That moved everyone for a time into a digression: how to get a doctor and nurse in the village regularly, but in the end there was a thorough discussion and considerable interest in trying a grange.

The lords retired to ɛndranu's great room again for their evening session and ɛndranu began by saying, "I feel pretty confident we now have a plan involving various tasks over five years; expansion of a school, building a Bahá'í Center and a gabruli, building a bath facility early and adding a second one later, building a grange building that will eventually include a dairy, adding a woolen textile mill, and building a wool clothing sewing facility. I see two flaws; first, finding a doctor; and second, paying for everything."

"No one knows where the money will come for anything, so don't worry too much about that," said Brébéstu. "You pay the palace about ten thousand dhanay per year in taxes and collect half that for local use. If you can get back from the palace 2,000 or 3,000 per year, contribute 1,000 from your own taxes, and maybe another 1,000 in labor,

you'll have a budget of 5,000 to 6,000. That's a lot of money in five years and you can do a lot with it."

"I agree," said Chris. "Those are good estimates. As for a doctor, I'll see whether we can arrange for one to visit one day a week. You need to give him an office out of which he can work and where medical records can be stored. When you expand the school, add an extra office there."

"What about the mobile clinic?" asked ɛndranu.

"Maybe we can get them to come here more regularly. They have a staff of four and that's too many for a small place like this, unless it comes only once a month. But a mobile clinic with a local nurse would work well. She'd keep the local medical records and see people between visits. If there were a serious case she'd get on the telephone with Gordha Hospital and examine the patient while a doctor asked her questions."

"That's probably enough," said ɛndranu.

"I'd like to propose a new topic for us, if I may," said Stauréstu. "We have six Bahá'í lords gathered here. What can they do together to advance the Faith? And how can our communities do more to advance the Faith, individually and collectively?"

There was silence for a moment as they all considered the question. "We can all advance the Faith if we encourage our youth to spend a period of time in service; at least six months and preferably a year," said Pédru. "This summer, a third of our high school age students went out to serve the Faith and the people. They've had fun and tests, they've come home excited by the experience and wanting to go to génadɛma, they've brought about 150 people into the Faith in Jérnstisér and Rudhisér, and they've helped to

build lots of houses and barns and done other service. Next summer I hope we can send a dozen down here."

"We'd love that," said ɛndranu. "And perhaps we can send some youth to Khɛrmdhuna as well."

"They would be welcome."

"And be sure to steer some of the kids to Mɛlwika Génadɛma," added Chris. "We'll find scholarships for as many of them as we can."

"What I'd like is someone to teach Bahá'í courses at our high school," said Patékwu. "If the kids can study some gɛdhéma history and culture, why not Bahá'í history, texts, and teachings? Gordha High School includes the hymns of Widumaj in some of its classes."

"I'd love that as well," agreed Pédru. "We have a high school with big classes; two classrooms of thirty each for ninth grade, two with twenty-two each for tenth grade, one class of thirty for eleventh grade, and a class of twenty in twelfth grade, plus we offer génadɛma classes at night. We could easily offer an entire semester on Bahá'í scriptures, but no one has materials to teach, lesson plans, or anything."

"We could get classes like that in Mɛddwoglubas High School as well," agreed Estodhéru. "They would have to be optional. We have to make that a priority, Chris. We need an Institute to train high school and college teachers so they can offer such classes."

"I agree," said Chris.

There was silence for a moment. "I think there is something else I'd like to see the lords do," said Wéré, ɛndranu's wife, who had been silent through all the previous

sessions. “Teach the Faith to other lords. I think the Kaitɛrɛ and Mémɛnɛghonɛ lords would be sympathetic to the Faith if we approached them properly. There must be others.”

“I agree,” said Liz. “That’s an excellent suggestion. Perhaps the Central Spiritual Assembly should consider preparing a special letter with a compilation of Bahá'í texts that the local Bahá'ís could present to their lords.”

“I think the time for that has come,” said Staurést u, with a smile. “There are now enough Bahá'ís, they have enough confidence, and the lords have heard enough to be open. We must consider that at the next Central Spiritual Assembly meeting.”

“We will have many things to consider from these three days,” agreed Estodhéru.

Reread and edited 6/15/13, 8/30/17, 11/29/24

379.

Step by Step

Early Brénménu/late Sept, 16/634

It had been a tense session of the House of Lords, with shouting and heckling on several occasions. Chris was relieved it was over; his robe was itchy and his legs were feeling tired. As he headed for the door, Duchess Sugé nodded to him and smiled; he had supported her arguments and she had been both surprised and pleased. He nodded back.

General Roktɛkɛstɛr and Lord Aryékwɛs Domo-Dwobrébɛsi of ɛjnopéla, who had been sitting in the visitor's gallery, were coming down the stairs by the door. He nodded to them and Aryékwɛs said, "Thank you, Lord, for your words of support."

"You're welcome, lord. I am not totally opposed to a graduated income tax, but I think the palace's proposal is too steep and too sudden."

"If they implemented this, we'd make half as much money!"

"I know, and this is a bad time to do that. I worry what that would do to private investment."

"I wouldn't be investing anything!" said Aryékwɛs.

That was an exaggeration; Aryékwɛs earned about a hundred thousand dhanay per year and invested about two thirds of it. But Chris nodded anyway. "Say, Lords, I've wanted to ask you something. I think you heard that about three weeks ago, the palace agreed to support the formation of more granges. I'm spearheading the effort, though between a meeting in Wurontroba and two weeks of consultative assembly, I haven't had much time. The effort still needs more financial support and I've been seeking

contributions. So far, I've raised over fifty thousand. I think you will agree that granges are the basis of our prosperity and the prosperity of the lower valley. Without them our towns would be mostly uninhabited and the farmers wouldn't have any money to patronize our stores. The machinery they can use together has increased their acreage and yields, have stabilized prices, and have improved their health, which means larger families. We can show our gratitude for this change by helping it spread to the rest of the world."

Aryékwɛs looked at Chris, astonished. "Lord, our prosperity is also based on an inflow of peasants from other provinces! ɛjnopéla, Béranta, Ornakwés, and the Swadnoma towns still have a lot of unassigned land. In my town, a third of the land is still unfarmed because the estate lords either can't hire more farmers to work their land or can't find farmers to buy land from them. We need farmers, and what you are proposing would stop the flow. No, I can't support that."

"Lord, most additional farmers in our towns come from the north and south shore, and our granges are already loaning equipment to their home villages. If they form granges, it won't change things much for us. Rudhisér and Véspa are the big sources of outmigration and the limitations there are on arable land; granges will make the farms more productive and the farmers more prosperous. A lot of the young people will flow out anyway because they can't start new farms. We need to consider the good of all, not just ourselves."

"Up to a certain point, yes, but this may be crossing the line. I'll help people whose prosperity will benefit me. That's not true of farmers in Véspa and Rudhisér."

"My situation is similar to Lord Aryékwɛs' but I am willing to be strictly philanthropic," said Roktɛkɛstɛr. "Especially if my contribution can support granges in Lɛpawsona. The current system where lords buy tractors and rent them to farmers has not worked well."

"I'm hoping if granges get started, lords will have to reduce their fees or will sell their used equipment to the granges. I think the lords will earn more if they encourage more mechanization anyway."

"That's probably true in a few years. What about farm prices?"

"They may fall if a lot of new land comes under cultivation. But it's fairer to everyone if it happens because everyone has more land. Right now it forces outmigration and our areas benefit at the expense of others."

"You see, you admit it!" injected Aryékwɛs.

"I do, and it isn't fair."

Roktɛkɛstɛr nodded. "Alright. Five thousand next year. I don't have any cash left this year."

"Thank you. Next year and the year after? We have usually asked for two-year commitments."

"Fine, five thousand for two years, starting after the harvest next spring."

"Thank you, Lord, I am very appreciative."

"I'll ask my brother if he's willing, too," promised Roktɛkɛstɛr. Aryékwɛs growled a bit; he didn't like being shown up. But he wasn't going to contribute.

They exchanged a few words of departure and Roktɛkɛstɛr and Aryékwɛs turned to leave the hall. Chris made a move to accompany them, but then he saw Duke

Kandékwɛs beckon him over. Kandékwɛs was trying to boost support for the palace's bill; he had been busy talking to the lords from Kɛrda, but now they were leaving as well. Reluctantly, Chris walked over. Aryéstu, Chris's friend, whose economics skills had led to the proposal, was with the Duke.

"Greetings, lord," said Kandékwɛs. "I was most surprised by the speech you gave today. The palace, I think we can assume, will be most disappointed, especially considering how closely we've worked together in the past."

"Please convey my deep and humble apologies to the palace, my Duke. But in a legislative body, people must vote based on what they think is right, not based on friendships. I hope they understand that." Chris paused and, from the ensuing silence, saw he would have to justify his argument, so he continued. "I am in favor of a graduated income tax. But right now the impact, I fear, will be adverse. The wealthier families are the world's main source of private investment. Tomis are excellent; I have supported them with many hours of my time and thousands of dhanay of my money. I am very happy the palace is devoting more money to investments, both in tomis and in private businesses. But this world needs private investment as well, and more of it, not less."

"But lord, there are so many families living in great luxury, in huge houses, with dozens of servants," said Aryéstu. "Surely you agree that such an arrangement is excessive? Some families have more servants than the queen herself had sixteen years ago!"

Chris doubted that. "Friend Aryéstu, if you raise the tax on the wealthy to fifty percent, they will cut back on investments, not on servants. If you want to cut back on

personal expenditure you need to institute a property tax; then people with large houses pay more than people with small houses. That would keep buildings smaller."

"But Chris, instituting a whole new kind of tax is much harder than tinkering with the existing system. Right now, wage workers pay income tax only after it exceeds a certain amount. That's fair. Everyone else pays a third, whether they are a poor peasant farmer or a wealthy lord. And many wealthy lords pay less than a third because of various loopholes; virgin land granted by the queen to a lord can be sold to farmers tax free."

"Indeed, I am the beneficiary of that arrangement. I am in favor of lowering the tax on people who earn under a thousand a year to a quarter; that puts eighty-three more dhanay into their pockets. Your estimate that it will cost three million sounds about right to me. So does your estimate that raising the tax on everyone with incomes over fifty thousand will bring in six million more. But cutting six million out of private investment; *that* worries me immensely. Right now, taxes are increasing by three million a year anyway because the economy's growing by ten million. Last year when the economy grew more than expected and the palace had a windfall, you had to struggle to spend it all."

"Remember, Lord, we propose to put four million a year into the banks; Prosperity Bank and Wiki Bank included. They are private institutions and they will provide private investment more systematically and routinely than lords investing in the businesses of their friends and relatives."

"A lot of what you call private investment is in family businesses and just makes the rich richer," added Aryéstu.

"Some of that is true," said Chris. "But some people, like the Kérékwɛs family, are investing in huge numbers of partnerships. They have so much money, they can't manage the businesses themselves."

Aryéstu sighed. "Chris, what *will* you support?"

"I'd favor raising the tax on the wealthy, sure, but not all at once; in stages, so we can see what happens. Raise it from a third to forty percent, for example. I bet that would raise three million. And I'm not necessarily in favor of lowering taxes on the poor; I'd rather see them get free medical care. Cut their tax rate to thirty percent, for example, and give them free medical, or greatly reduce medical costs. Our population doesn't have to have a life expectancy of less than sixty years. People can live to see their grandchildren."

"Then you're also increasing the number of elderly we have to support," said Kandékwɛs.

"That's true, but is that bad? Maybe, in ten years, economic growth will slow to five percent because of medical insurance and pensions. But is that bad? Our society won't be as rich as the richest on Gɛdhéma, but extreme poverty will be at an end. How rich do we need to be?"

"We don't know the answer to that, Chris!" replied Aryéstu.

"I suppose we don't. I'm in favor of rapid growth, but we can't keep that up for more than two or three decades; we'll destroy the world. Gɛdhéma is being destroyed."

"So, Lord, will you support a forty percent tax on the rich and a thirty percent tax on the poor?" asked Kandékwɛs.

"Yes, and I think many will as a compromise."

“I think so, too,” agreed Kandékwɛs. “Alright. Very well. I’ll add two things to that: medical insurance for the poor and more money invested in banks, to support investment.”

“Where will we get the money for that?” asked Aryéstu, alarmed.

“We’ll print money for a year or two, until the taxes increase enough. And I’ll squeeze the palace. They’re in favor of cutting back on conspicuous consumption as long as it is someone else’s.”

“They could save money,” agreed Aryéstu. “And we can increase the money supply to some extent without inflation.”

“I’d support those things. Give companies a tax break for paying for the health costs of their workers and families. Help the granges to provide health insurance to their members; it’ll save the palace money in the long run.”

“I think we can push those sorts of changes through, especially if there are more granges,” said Kandékwɛs.

“My goal is to start a major effort to form granges this winter. Legislation to help them provide medical insurance would be a useful incentive.”

“Alright,” agreed Kandékwɛs. “But I think you are asking for too much, lord, and I think the palace won’t support it all. They might with a 45% tax on the wealth, but not a 40% tax.”

“That’s too much.”

“You may have to take it or leave it, Lord.”

“I’ll think about it.”

Kandékwɛs shrugged. “I’ll see you tomorrow, Lord.”

Chris nodded. “Greetings to Her Majesties. Until tomorrow, then.” He turned and headed out the door.

Kalané closed the cover of Ruhi Book 12.2. “I am so grateful for this extra hour of review,” she said. “I didn’t just want to finish the book, I wanted to go over it all quickly, beginning to end. When you study something for three hours a week for nine weeks, it’s really hard to remember the beginning when you get to the end.”

“I know what you mean,” said Tiamaté, nodding. “When I first took this book, I really couldn’t grasp it very well. It’s just too much.”

“I’ll go over my notes.” Kalané patted her big, fat notebook. “This has been absolutely indispensable to me. It has made me think about my job in an entirely new way.”

“How so?”

“Some of it is obvious, I guess. Family prosperity: what theme could relate to Wiki Bank better? I’ve helped a thousand women open bank accounts of their own to save money, and half of them have borrowed money to improve their lives. So far, I’ve been talking to women about saving, planning, taking out small loans to move their plans forward, and paying the loans back. But now I have to talk about a much bigger picture: of fundamental equality of men and women, the need to educate women and girls, supporting community schools—volunteering at them to help them out—keeping a house clean and hygienic, taking the children to the doctor and the dentist regularly for checkups, developing personal vocational skills, and getting loans to achieve any of these goals.”

“Don’t the solidarity groups pledge themselves to some of these ideals already?”

“Yes, theoretically. But in practice we have focused on making little savings to demonstrate one can plan one’s finances, then borrowing for anything one wants.”

“I’ve heard of women borrowing to buy clothes.”

“Exactly. We have tried to encourage long term goals, but the message doesn’t always get across.”

“Will Wéroimigu object if you change your speech?”

“No. He talks to men and I talk to women. We already make different arguments.”

“You have to. You can always emphasize the solidarity pledge more and elaborate on it.”

“Exactly. My challenge will be to get him to talk more about education, equality of men and women, encouraging wives to learn literacy and vocational skills, encouraging them to serve their families through work that fits the family’s situation, and planning their families better so children are spaced out and there’s money enough to support them.”

Tiamaté smiled. “That might be a challenge!”

Kalané nodded. “He still doesn’t know I’m on the pill. He wants to have three or four more children at least.”

“Would he be willing to study Book 12 with you?”

“With me? But I’m not a tutor!”

“That doesn’t matter. I’m talking about an informal review of the material together.”

Kalané nodded. “That might work.”

“Now that we’ve done book twelve, would you like to start another book? Ruhi Book One is nice and basic, covering prayer, the spiritual purpose of life, and the afterlife. Book Four covers the lives of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh.”

Kalané opened her mouth, then closed it. What she really wanted to say was that she believed in Bahá'u'lláh. Over the last two months, her interest in Bahá'u'lláh’s teachings had gradually grown from respect to admiration to love. Her experience with the poverty of the villages—and especially of the women, who were oppressed by their situation and their men in ways neither they nor their menfolk completely realized—led her to believe that Bahá'u'lláh’s teachings were the key to reform, if they could be accepted and applied. Rural Bahá'í women and men were trying and had already made some small changes. Usually, once she met them, she admired them. Few others had even thought about the situation.

“Ah . . . yes, I’d like to study Book 4 next. Do you plan to teach it?”

“I’d like to; are Dwodiu evenings still good for you?”

“Yes, most of the time. We usually travel the last half of the week.”

“Good. Let me take next week off so I have time to invite a few others to take the book. Let’s close with a very special prayer. I really love this one. It’s recited for `Abdu'l-Bahá on the anniversary of His passing. It’s a prayer about service.” Tiamaté opened her prayer book and recited:

He is the All-Glorious!
O God, my God! Lowly and tearful, I raise my suppliant hands to Thee and cover my face in the dust of that Threshold of Thine, exalted above the knowledge of the learned, and the praise of all that glorify Thee. Graciously look upon Thy servant, humble and lowly at Thy door, with the glances of the eye of Thy mercy, and immerse him in the Ocean of Thine eternal grace.

Lord! He is a poor and lowly servant of Thine, enthralled and imploring Thee, captive in Thy hand, praying fervently to Thee, trusting in Thee, in tears before Thy face, calling to Thee and beseeching Thee, saying:

O Lord, my God! Give me Thy grace to serve Thy loved ones, strengthen me in my servitude to Thee, illumine my brow with the light of adoration in Thy court of holiness, and of prayer to Thy Kingdom of grandeur. Help 320 me to be selfless at the heavenly entrance of Thy gate, and aid me to be detached from all things within Thy holy precincts. Lord! Give me to drink from the chalice of selflessness; with its robe clothe me, and in its ocean immerse me. Make me as dust in the pathway of Thy loved ones, and grant that I may offer up my soul for the earth ennobled by the footsteps of Thy chosen ones in Thy path, O Lord of Glory in the Highest.

With this prayer doth Thy servant call Thee, at dawntide and in the night-season. Fulfil his heart's desire, O Lord! Illumine his heart, gladden his bosom, kindle his light, that he may serve Thy Cause and Thy servants.

Thou art the Bestower, the Pitiful, the Most Bountiful, the Gracious, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

When Tiamaté finished, Kalané took a deep breath like she was startled. “To ‘serve Thy Cause and Thy servants.’ It’s just like what Widumaj said in the Hymn of the Lamp, ‘love my servants as you would love me, and serve all to the extinction of your life.’ But how do you do it?”

“Service is our principal purpose in this world. Bahá'u'lláh says to prefer others to oneself, which is a constant struggle. Every day, one tries to serve others; every day. That’s easy for you to do, it’s your job!”

“True . . . but there’s a big difference between serving people because you earn money doing so, and serving people because you love them.”

“Then do both.”

Kalané chuckled. “Perhaps I should call on Bahá'u'lláh and `Abdu'l-Bahá for assistance, so I can learn to love people more. You are right, that is something I can learn to do, and Bahá'u'lláh can help.” Her voice quavered and a tear formed in her eye when she said that He could help.

Tiamaté was surprised. She looked at her friend, who opened her mouth wordlessly again, then struggled to speak. “What is it, Kalané?”

“Tiamaté, I believe in Him. I do. I want to be a Bahá'í.”

“Really?”

“Really! I believe.”

“Then welcome to the Bahá'í family, Kalané.” Tiamaté hugged her friend.

Thank you! I . . . still can’t believe it, but it’s true. I believe! I’m not sure how it happened!”

“Faith is a mysterious thing.”

“It really is. So, what do I do now?”

“You pray and serve. I hope you want to be part of the Bahá'í community; we help each other, strengthen each other, and we serve the Bahá'í community as well, so it can grow.”

“Yes, I want to be a member of the Bahá'í community, of course!”

“Then I will arrange a quick meeting between you and some members of the Spiritual Assembly, so they can ascertain that you want to join and have the spark of faith. And . . . let’s find Jordan!”

“Yes, I want to tell him, too!”

Chris and Thornton looked out the windows of the rover at the rolling grass and scattered brush that extended from Route 2, east and west to the horizon. Ahead was a small pile of stones to the left of the gravel road. Chris slowed and spotted the faint trace through the grass. He turned left and followed it eastward.

“So, this is the southern border of South Ménwika.”

“Indeed, Lord,” replied Chandu Chartagrasi, the twenty-nine year old head of the South Ménwika grange. “As you can see, the soils here are reasonably good; the prairie grows fairly well.”

“But it’s dry in the summer.”

“Indeed. There are some people farming along Route 2, but they use windmills or electric pumps to irrigate.”

“Let’s look.” Chris stopped the rover and they stepped out. He reached down and pulled out some of the dry grass, yellowed from drought. He sniffed the roots, then wet his finger, touched the soil, and tasted a bit of it. “It’s not salty, though it’s a light brown; it has lime in it. It doesn’t have much humus.”

“This was desert until a few years ago; not much time for humus to accumulate,” noted Thornton.

“But it is accumulating,” replied Chandu. “If you add water and a little guano, crops grow quite well in this soil. The growing season is long enough that you can plant corn in late spring or early summer, harvest it, and plant winter wheat. You can get two good crops. With some fast-growing vegetables you can get three.”

“You’re a good advocate of the town, Chandu.”

“Well, Lord, I moved here when I was sixteen, I’ve been here thirteen years, and I now have four children. This is my adopted home and I love it.”

“Like most of us Mɛlwikans; we’re all transplants.” Chris looked over the grassland, which stretched ten kilometers northward to the Arjakwés and east-west for

ten kilometers along the river. “Twenty-eight thousand agris, and so far only eight thousand are farmed. It’s time to open the rest to agriculture.”

“The grand plan put together several years ago called for fifty kilometers of irrigation canals and either a pump to lift the water thirty meters to the high point of the town, or a canal twenty kilometers long to divert water from the river east of here,” noted Chandu.

Chris nodded. “We won’t seek a diversion canal from the Tutanɛ. It’s not clear which tribe owns the land and they all may oppose such a canal. We’ll pump the water up to the highest point in a pipe. And we’ll use pipelines, not ditches, to distribute it. They’re cheaper to run along the top of the ground and will leak less water into the ground than ditches, and they don’t have to be sloped. We’ll need to build extra water storage ponds, though, which we can fill when demand is low, so we can supply irrigation water when demand is high. The Arjakwés has plenty of water.”

“There’s plenty of ground water now, too.”

“Indeed, but it requires deep wells, especially where the land is higher above the river. We’ll have to pump the water to get it up here. We can install a basic fourteen-kilometer system of pipes and a storage pond this winter and if the first allotment of land sells, we can add twelve kilometers of pipes and one storage pond at a time. We can expand the township southward in a stair step fashion into higher and higher prairie. I’d like to see the whole township sell in three or four years.”

“I think that’s possible,” agreed Chandu. “There are five thousand newly wed couples a year and most want to move. Seven hundred to a thousand of them could

purchase the rest of the township. But I suspect you'll get complaints from the towns west of here that are also seeking settlers."

"They will complain. They need to offer better terms. Farmers will go where they get the best deal."

"We'll need a network of farm roads, too," noted Thornton. "At about a thousand dhanay per kilometer. The pipes will cost that as well, and the storage ponds are about five thousand."

"Don't forget that the grange will have to expand. It'll need twenty tractors and equipment for twenty thousand agris; that's one hundred thousand dhanay more."

Chris nodded. "We'll need to invest two hundred twenty thousand to open the whole township to farming. But the grange can purchase the equipment using a loan. The mortgages will total about twelve dhanay per agri per year, or 336,000, and my share of the taxes will be three dhanay per agri more."

"In short, it'll just about cover the *increase* in our taxes," commented Thornton.

"That much?" said Chandu, shocked.

"Don't remind me," growled Chris. He turned toward the rover.

"I was surprised the House of Lords accepted the 45% tax rate," said Chandu.

"Everyone knew the House of Commons would vote enthusiastically in favor, and the crown was exerting extreme pressure behind the scenes. If the lords had rejected the law they would have angered the palace, and the palace is already pretty angry with them. I voted in favor because the law lays the foundation for universal health care and lowers taxes on the poor. It'll take about three years to bring about the transition, but after that, everyone will have access to a doctor, a nurse, and a hospital. That's revolutionary."

“The provision to cover half the medical costs of granges and tomis is revolutionary, too,” said Chandu. “We welcome that.”

The three of them got back into the rover and Chris carefully turned around and headed back along the dirt track. “The grange can organize work crews to lay the pipe and dig the storage ponds?”

“No problem. Everyone has time on their hands over the winter and they’ll welcome the extra cash. We have plenty who can serve as foremen. As for selling the land: I’ll write my cousins scattered across southern Véspa and see who will come!”

“That’s right, you’re from Chartagras, now under the sea.”

“Indeed, and I still miss the place. I hear you plan to organize efforts to form granges all along the western shore. My cousins will be glad to hear about it.”

Chris smiled; a light bulb went off in his head. “How many villages are they in?”

“They’re scattered in Ora, New Chartagras, Kadakvas, and Akɛlmora.”

“Interesting.” He looked at Chandu, who had arrived poor, skinny, beardless, and illiterate, and now could now read, write, and do accounting quite well even though he had still never taken a college course; very smart, very articulate, organized, and a bit rough; a self made man from a poor village. “Say, Chandu, you may want to know about this project. The palace has given me permission to organize granges. I’ve got about a hundred twenty thousand a year for two years from different sources; the palace is contributing almost half of that. I figure a grange needs about four thousand to get started; that’s enough to buy a tractor, some basic equipment, and a bit of fertilizer.”

“That’s not much; pretty bare bones.”

“You’re right, but the grange can get local labor and maybe local financial support as well.”

“Maybe a few lords will help. But other granges will. Our grange has loaned equipment to other granges.”

“Exactly, we’re counting on those sorts of support. The new law helps, too, because right now lords are shelling out cash to pay for emergency medical care, but if they donate that to the grange the palace will match it, so it’ll go farther. If someone gets sick and they aren’t a grange member, they can join for a few dhanay.”

“Really? We aren’t that flexible here.”

“No, the existing granges aren’t, but that may change because I would prefer to route my medical charity budget through the granges and tomis. It’ll go twice as far.”

“That’s true. Will all these new granges require everything Mɛlwika does? The rules are getting pretty unpopular here.”

“I agree, and that may have to change as well. Rather than charge one twelfth of the crop for those fields that use machinery, they should charge separate fees for each service, whether plowing, harrowing, seeding, threshing, medical insurance, life insurance, selling crops, special classes, or whatever, all payable at harvest time. A combined fee for everything would also be offered and would be lower. Mɛlwika has experimented with that in the past and it worked alright.”

“The problem is training; it’s a lot of paperwork,” said Chandu. “Last time the problem wasn’t the fees but keeping track of who paid for what. But the procedures have gotten simpler and clearer.”

“And there are more accountants around,” agreed Chris. “Even three years ago, the average grange could barely keep track of a basic package of services and offered no choices. But we can now create a ledger book that is all set up and ready to use.”

Chris slowed the rover as they entered South Ménwika, a village of two thousand people just south of the Arjakwés and across the river from Dɛksawsupɛrakwa. At its center was a grange–for the eight thousand agris that 300 farmers already worked–an elementary school, a middle school, a soccer field, and a building housing a market and several stores. Chris stopped in front of the grange, but before Chandu could get out he said “Wait a moment, Chandu. Does this project to start granges interest you?”

“Yes, Lord, it’s badly needed. I thank Esto it’s being done!”

“Because I need someone to be the director; to visit villages, go on the radio, be quoted in newspapers, hire staff to train people, develop ledger books, standardize procedures . . . everything.”

“I thought you were doing that!”

“I can do some of it, but I need someone who isn’t gɛdhému and isn’t a Bahá'í to be director and do most of the work. And preferably someone from the western shore! You have the right accent for the job, not to mention the experience, talent, and training.”

“I’ve never gone to génadɛma, remember, even though you urged me to do so a dozen times!”

“This requires experience and leadership, not book learning.”

“I see.” Chandu thought a split second, then nodded. “I would be interested, lord, assuming I can continue directing the grange here.”

“Winter’s quiet time at the granges; so yes, if you delegate a lot, you could do both.”

“Then yes, I’d love to do it!”

“Okay, let me get back to you about it tomorrow, alright? I have someone else to talk to, but I doubt it’ll work out.”

“Alright . . . tomorrow, then.”

“Thanks for the tour, Chandu. Pull out the old plan for irrigation canals, because we’ll put the pipelines in the same location. I’ll have Luktréstu find our copy and order the pipe, and he’ll call you to let you know when it can be available. I’ll also have the tomi’s new marketing department start thinking about how and when we’ll market the land. We’ll see what they come up with.”

“Alright, lord, we’ll get started on that as well! Thank you.”

“Thank you. Goodbye.”

“Goodbye. And don’t forget the South Ménwika City Council meeting on Kwétɛrdiu.”

“Thank you, but Thornton will attend on my behalf.”

“Oh?” said Thornton, surprised.

“Very well, then.” Chris and Chandu shook hands, then the latter stepped out of the rover. Chris put the vehicle in gear and headed over the viaduct to Dɛksawsupɛrakwa.

“So, two birds with one stone,” said Thornton. “The settlement of the rest of South Ménwika and the selection of a director for the grange project.”

“I never thought of Chandu, and I was wracking my brains. But he’s perfect. A bit gruff and not always courteous, but I think those will be minor problems.”

“I hope so. Who else do you have to talk to?”

Chris laughed. “I guess you! See, we’re talking about it. I don’t have another candidate; I just want to sleep on this before making a final decision.”

“I see.” Thornton looked at the rolling fields, now fallow from their second harvest; Ménwika was a lot hillier than South Ménwika. Chris slowed the rover and turned right to follow another road to Bolakra, a hilltop village of a thousand in east-central Ménwika. “You know, I can’t make it to South Ménwika council meetings on Kwétɛrdius. I’m in Sullɛndha on Tridius and Kwétɛrdius for this entire term,” said Thornton.

Chris sighed. “Alright, I’ll attend this time and ask them to move the meeting to any other night but those two.”

“This is becoming a lot, dad. I’m attending Mɛlwika City Councils once a month and the Streets and Recreation Department Advisory Committee has been meeting twice a month lately. The City Planning course is draining away a lot of time, too.”

“I know, but I really appreciate your help. I have almost as many things on my plate and I’m almost twice as old. Your work with Streets and Recreation is great, too; I think your beautification plan will be well received once the Council gets it in two months.”

“I hope so. But you’re right, I can’t complain; you’re more stretched than I am!”

Reread and edited, 6/15/13, 8/30/17, 11/29/24

380.

Gentle Persuasion

Early Prusménu/late Nov. 16/634

Thornton hurried home from the génadɛma in the late autumn chill. The eclipse had just begun and Mɛlwika's power had failed—demand for power during the eclipse always skyrocketed, and lately the grid hadn't been able to cope—so the crowded streets were dark. As soon as he came in through the doors, he heard the sound of *The World Table* on the radio; Kɛkanu was interviewing Chandu about the establishment of granges. He had hoped to hear the interview and looked forward to sitting on the couch next to Lébé to listen.

But she shattered his plans. "My father wants to see you right away."

"Now? I want to listen to this."

"You had better not wait; he'll just get angrier."

"The smoke stack?"

"I think so."

Thornton sighed. "I should never have sent him the report."

"You should never have *written* the report."

"Well, people are getting sick."

"I know, and you're right. Shall I come along?"

"No, wait and rescue me later." Thornton put down his satchel of papers, gave her a kiss, gave his kids a kiss—for they were listening as well—and walked to the door leading across to the Miller household.

His father in law was listening to *The World Table* in his office with Awsé. When he heard someone at the door, he looked up. “Ah, it’s the environmental activist! So, I’m Mɛlwika’s major polluter, am I?”

“Well, dad, you are by far the largest employer, so it would be hard for you *not* to be,” replied Thornton.

“Never mind. You want me to add at least fifty meters to the smoke stacks? Do you know how much that’ll cost?”

“About twenty-five thousand. But the health data from the hospital is clear; kids living on top of the ridge or on the top of north hill are twice as likely to suffer from respiratory illnesses as people elsewhere in the city. When the wind blows out of the west or south, those hills are wreathed in smoke. You’ve probably noticed; there are times the hilltops are invisible. Down here we’re below the smoke and the air is clear.”

“Thor, these are inevitable costs of living in a city. There are poorer areas and richer areas. People can choose where they live; they can even commute every day from Nénaslua or farther. And I can’t solve every consequence of industrialization. We have a hazardous waste storage area and removal procedures. We have separate sewers for sewage and industrial wastes. But fifty meters of smoke stack, plus a water sprayer to remove particles from the exhaust, plus fans to push the cooled exhaust out of the chimneys; these are expensive countermeasures! I’m not made of money and I can’t afford to tackle every possible pollution problem.”

“But this is a fairly big one; it’s not a minor consequence. Kids *are* getting sick; that can be demonstrated. Maybe their parents have a choice where to live, but they don’t. Besides, we’re talking about a major part of your side of the city. I’m sure you don’t want

it poor and run down. Smoke stacks that clean the air will encourage businesses to open on the hill and you'll collect more taxes. A clean and attractive city will attract more residents. And if you are a good neighbor and citizen by keeping the air clean, people will remember and will respect you even more."

"I don't need their respect, and it isn't clear that your proposal will make me money in the long run. It's easy to predict that the equipment will require one or two full time maintenance people, so you're asking me to spend two to five thousand a year, every year. So: just drop the matter, okay? Because otherwise your city beautification plans will be dead for this year."

Thornton was startled by that. Neither lord officially had veto power, but in practice they both had to agree for something to proceed. John was upset.

But so was Awsé, with John. She poked him in the ribs. "Come on, John, this is your son in law, and he loves you as well as Mɛlwika. Twenty-five thousand: is that really so much, to clean up the air?"

"Yes, it is, if you reflect that's twenty-five thousand dhanay less money to invest in the Palace Hotel Mɛlita and other projects!"

"We've got plenty of money; we can stretch something out. How will a taller smoke stack help, Thor?"

"The smoke will travel farther before the particles fall out of it and they'll be more dispersed, so the air near the ground will be cleaner."

"Ah, I see. Come on, John. Do this without any report coming out first and everyone will think you are the kindest, nicest lord in the world!"

"And they'll want me to give them money!"

“That’s alright.”

John could see he was losing. “Alright, I’ll look at the specifications. Is this in your beautification plan for Mɛlwika?”

“No, the plan focuses on trees and planters with flowers to make the streets more beautiful, a comprehensive plan for parking and adding roundabouts, and a plan to redesign the green belt to make it more beautiful and useful.”

“Weren’t you also working on a plan to expand the city to fifty thousand?” asked Awsé.

“That was a class project last term and it didn’t finish, so we’re running a second course to finish up the expansion plan. It assumes that Mɛddoakwés will grow to fifty thousand and that the towns in between will total about fifteen thousand.”

“We don’t want to get too far ahead of Mɛddoakwés,” growled John. “Alright, I’ll look at the data and see whether we can plan the smokestack for this winter or spring. That’s the best I can offer.”

“Thanks,” replied Thornton, nodding in thanks to Awsé as well.

The Bahá'í House of Worship in Mɛddwoglubas echoed with the prayers of the Central Spiritual Assembly, the six Auxiliaries, and representatives of the area teaching committees of the world’s fourteen Bahá'í clusters. Then they all braved unseasonably cold winds—it was the beginning of Prusménu, the month of frosts, corresponding to late November in the Gregorian calendar—and hurried to the Haziratu’l-Quds or Bahá'í office building to begin their consultations.

"This is the first time we have been able to invite all of you here," began Staurέstu, the chair of the Central Spiritual Assembly, once they settled into the conference room. "This time last year, there were only six Cluster Committees. A year before that there were only two. The year before that we were still debating how many clusters to create and whether we had enough resources for so many committees and institute coordinators. But the experience of the last year—especially the last half year—has vindicated the decision. The average cluster is divided into three zones—we have forty altogether—and all but two of those zones now have an institute coordinator. Every cluster is served by at least one Assistant and we hope they will all have two soon. The institute coordinators are getting around by car, bus, and bicycle, visiting Bahá'í communities and encouraging study circles, children's classes, youth classes, and devotionals. Thirty zones have now held at least one reflection meeting; eighteen have initiated at least one cycle of growth. As of last night we know of one hundred ten regular devotionals, fifty-two children's classes, fifty youth classes, thirty-five service projects, and eighty active study circles. While growth has slowed in the last two years, it is interesting to see how it has slowed. This summer, one hundred youth teams concentrated on supporting local community efforts rather than intensively bringing people in and starting them on study classes. As a result, nine hundred became Bahá'ís. Of course, the entire Wuronɛ tribe joined as well; 400 more souls. But local growth separate from the youth volunteers, which stood at two hundred last summer, grew to almost four hundred this summer. That underlines the importance of this effort; the local communities are beginning to take on responsibility for growth themselves."

Liz raised her hand at that point. Stauréstu nodded. “If I may add, Mr. Chair, I see some important changes in the last two years that made this possible,” she began. “In the past, new Bahá'ís were immediately put into study circles and they studied the Ruhi books. But the students were often interested in basic literacy rather than implementing the Ruhi skills. They studied the books, enjoyed them, started saying the Bahá'í prayers, but they did not consider holding a devotional in their house or supporting a devotional sponsored by a friend, let alone starting or supporting a children’s or youth class. That’s the change I see. The grass roots are now beginning to become more involved in Bahá'í activities.”

“The number voting in Ridván elections went up, too,” agreed Modolubu, the Assembly’s secretary. “We are also seeing more contributions to local funds; several communities are building or expanding Bahá'í Centers and have said they do not need help from the Central Bahá'í Fund, or that they need only a little help.”

“The really rapid growth of several years ago did not prove sustainable and we were not able to consolidate everyone,” added Liz. “Some of those new believers have drifted out; a lot have acquired the habit of saying they are a Bahá'í and leaving it at that. But they will be stirred to more activity gradually by the coordinators and the study circles.”

“The news really is encouraging,” said Stauréstu. “Efforts to offer classes on specific Bahá'í books or teachings to supplement the institute process have also generated good numbers. People want to know about Bahá'u'lláh’s writings. Clearly, the core activities are becoming more vigorous. That’s the primary criterion we need to consider to rate clusters as milestone 1, 2, and 3, weakest to strongest. Of our fourteen clusters,

twelve have ten or more persons who have completed all the Ruhi books, but the number of tutors alone is not sufficient to consider a cluster strong. The trick is getting the students and even the tutors to start practicing the skills. That has started to happen. Mɛlwika has resumed door to door teaching and Ora has started it. Mɛddoakwés will start door to door efforts in the spring. All three places have many devotionals, children's classes, youth classes, and study circles; plenty of opportunities for seekers to investigate the Faith and become active members. They will almost certainly be milestone 2 clusters by Ridván. We think five more clusters could be milestone 2 by the Ridván after."

"Which five? The ones with large cities?" asked Nérgalu, Auxiliary from Sumilara.

"Exactly; Bɛllɛdha, Anartu, Néfa, Pértatranisér, and Tripola," replied Stauréstu. "Direct teaching is part of the plan for those places. We need to wait on Isurdhuna because of the opposition there."

"Don't count out other large Sumi cities like Kalageduru and Gadauru," added Nérgalu.

"Alright; seven more, then," replied Stauréstu. "At that point we could have nine milestone 2 clusters out of fourteen. That would be quite impressive."

"So, we've had about 1,700 new believers since Ridván?" asked Déoimigu, a member of the South Shore committee.

Stauréstu nodded. "Yes, that's correct, 1,700 since Ridván. We'll probably have another one or two hundred during the fall and winter. That's ten percent growth, which is pretty good, but remember that three years ago we grew fifty percent in one year."

"But we couldn't handle it well," noted Modolubu.

“And what is the goal?” asked Déoimigu.

“Fourteen milestone 2 clusters, which means every region will be able to handle a steady flow of new Bahá'ís, a flow that can get faster over time as capacity increases,” replied Stauréstu. “This entire world is confused by all the changes that are occurring and is ready to accept Bahá'u'lláh. We could see mass conversion of most of the population in our lifetime. Indeed, we have already seen it in four all-Bahá'í villages. We have three other villages that are close to half Bahá'í. These places are not very different from the rest of the world in terms of culture. They show what is possible.”

There was a pause in the conversation, so Estodhéru said, “Maybe this is the time to go around the room and give reports of the different clusters.”

“Yes, let’s do that,” agreed Stauréstu, looking at Déoimigu to start. The young man—an accountant working for the Mennea Tomi in Tripola—began a summary of the activities in the South Shore cluster, the efforts of the eight youth teams of three or four youth each in the southern, central/Tripola, and eastern zones, their success at opening Olkrua—the last village in the province without Bahá'ís—to the Faith, the construction of a fourth Bahá'í Center, and the strengthening of the Tripola community by activating more of its youth. It was a rather long report.

It set the pattern. The remaining thirteen reports took almost two hours. The efforts, successes, and new ideas were fascinating; many of the committee representatives had never experienced a discussion of this sort before. At the end, Liz Mennea, Stauréstu Aywɛrgui, and Modolubu Papɛrkwéri offered summaries of the fourteen reports and led a discussion of what could be done next. They continued the latter informally over lunch. In the afternoon, the attendees broke into four regional groups and brainstormed further

about specific goals each representative could take back to his or her committee, goals the Auxiliaries pledged to support.

That evening the cluster representatives left and the Central Spiritual Assembly and Auxiliaries headed off to separate meetings. “I think we can expect this meeting to produce results,” said Chris. “Attitudes were so positive and optimistic! And we finally have the capacity to implement these efforts systematically.”

“It’s a great relief for me,” agreed Modolubu. “It used to be that I didn’t even have people I could write to, in many areas. I think the efforts to send out youth teams over the last four years have been the key. Yes, the youth enrolled a lot of people who couldn’t be consolidated, but the youth themselves became firm and active, and they experienced the problem themselves. Almost all the cluster teaching committee members and institute coordinators have gone out as members of youth teams.”

“And went to génadɛma for at least a year,” added Chris. “So they have some basic, formal skills.”

“A lot of the people who came in three or four years ago still can be consolidated, too,” said Aréjé. “I meet many more educated people who attended our conferences, for example, and were attracted to the Faith. If we ask them to do something for the Faith, I think they will.”

“That’s true on Sumilara, too,” agreed Randu. “The conference there brought in twelve or fifteen very capable people, but they haven’t been very active. For some of them, Ruhi hasn’t been attractive. I think we need a project for them. I’d like to ask some of them to proclaim the Faith to the island’s lords.”

“That gets us back to the issue of a special proclamation to the lords of this world,” said Mitrubbéru. “From what I just heard today, we now have Bahá'ís in just about every village in the world; I’d guess there might be thirty without any Bahá'ís, but that’s less than fifteen percent of the total.”

“We have the people to do it,” agreed Brébéstu. “But we don’t have something to give them.”

“On Gɛdhéma, a compilation of writings on Bahá'u'lláh to the kings and rulers was published with a very nice cover and given to rulers,” said Chris. “I was a very young man when that was done. We could take that book, perhaps drop a few parts that would seem exotic here, translate it, and give it to lords.”

Modolubu nodded. “Yes, I think we should do it.”

Jordan slowed the car as he approached a house trailer with a large tent adjoining. “This should be it,” he said, and Tiamanté nodded in agreement. It was the only house trailer parked near the Tritɛjna Grange. House trailers usually were a plaything of the rich and it looked out of place. But behind it were the excavations for biogas digesters. She pointed to a pickup truck with an enclosed back that said “World Water Company” on the side. “Looks like Primanu’s here, too.”

Jordan parked the steam car and they stepped out. Primanu and Tomasu were standing about thirty meters away by a pile of pipes talking, so they waved and walked over.

“You made it, great! Welcome!” said Tomasu, pleased to see his old friends.

“It was pretty easy to find,” replied Jordan. They shook hands, then Jordan shook hands with Primanu. “How are you?”

“Great!” replied Primanu. “Having the time of my life!”

“You’re building a lot of water systems.”

Primanu nodded. “Five in four months. We’re not as fast as Tomasu; sewers take a lot longer to install, and I have a much smaller crew.”

“It’s a shame we can’t coordinate our digging better, but it’s too late now,” said Tomasu. “This winter we aren’t installing gas lines at all, just digesters.”

“But we have all the gas line maps,” said Jordan. “So that speeds up the planning. We’re using the same sets of aerial photos to plan both sets of pipes.”

“I don’t know what I’d do without you guys,” said Primanu to Jordan and Tiamaté. “I’m good at digging and building things, not at the paperwork side.”

“And they get paid to do the paperwork!” added Tomasu, slapping Jordan on the back. “What a great arrangement! You’ve improved my profitability, too!”

“The palace is happy to pay the five percent surplus to make sure there’s a good plan,” said Jordan. “And my people have gotten pretty good at making the plans. It’s working out well for everyone.” He pointed to the hole behind them. “So, this is a private job, eh?”

“Yes; no palace grant, so no commission for you, unfortunately,” said Tomasu. “Tritɛjna Grange, ten digesters for local cattle and pig waste, feeding the methane straight into the World Gas Company’s pipeline. The two big private jobs in Mɛlita will keep us busy for a while; twenty and thirty-two digesters each. Then I’ll be installing thirty or forty digesters in Mɛlwika.”

“Mɛlita and Mɛlwika have a lot of cattle, pig, chicken, and turkey waste,” agreed Jordan.

“How’s business for you?” asked Primanu.

Jordan looked at Tiamaté, then nodded. “Pretty good. The initial flood of calls is over, but we’re still getting a dozen a day, most asking for free advice for minor things. Some people never call back after they hear we have to audit the project after it is finished! We have a backlog of sixty projects and are getting one new project a week. We’re getting a lot of requests for help to obtain factories; villages want to keep jobs at home.”

“People are figuring out the new reality,” said Primanu. “What was once considered normal life is now seen as ‘underemployment.’ People want decent jobs that they enjoy doing and that earn them a reasonable living.”

“Which puts us in a strange position,” said Jordan. “Because we have all the plans of the tomis to establish factories and other facilities and the Seven Year Development Plan’s projections about demand. Dairies, bakeries, shoe factories, and textile weaving or sewing facilities are the most popular desiderata. But when a lord calls us and says ‘I want a shoe manufactory’ we try to tell him ‘Look, your province already has two and there are plans for three more, so if you build a shoe manufactory your people will either have part time work or will have to be paid half of a proper wage.”

“Are you referring them to the tomis?” asked Tomasu.

“Yes, and sometimes they can get a tomi-planned plant moved to their village. The tomis are willing to move facilities that don’t produce hazardous waste *if* the village has access to fire protection.”

“That explains the pressure I’m feeling to build water and sewer systems,” said Primanu. “I want to go to a province and build a series of systems, then to move to another province, just like Tomasu’s plan for gas. But lords or headmen are saying ‘No, we can’t wait until next winter, we need a water system now!’ Some of them are citing the need for fire protection.”

“I’m getting similar pressure,” replied Tomasu. “Because half the villages with gas systems are complaining they need more digesters. Of course, they don’t have enough manure; they have to set up poultry or meat operations or purchase guano to help digest plant waste. World Gas will need more pipelines, even though they want to avoid laying pipe. Demand for gas keeps going up.”

“My grandpa is worried about that constantly,” said Jordan. “Per capita income has increased two and a half times in sixteen years, but demand for energy has probably quadrupled. Manure, grass, wood, sugarcane, coal . . . we’re already using a lot of available sources, and how much can we expand them?”

“A lot,” replied Tomasu. “We can plant a lot of forest! And we have vast grasslands. The Kwolonɛ can become energy giants.”

“Hey, why are we standing here?” asked Tiamaté. “Let’s go inside and see Sulokwé.”

“And she has quite a supper cooking,” added Tomasu. He turned and led them toward the house trailer.

They opened the trailer’s rear door and entered the common room. Sulokwé was in the kitchenette corner at the opposite end and immediately walked toward them. “Welcome! I’m glad you made it!”

“Thank you for inviting us,” said Jordan. He gave her a quick kiss, as did Tiamaté. “Alláh-u-Abhá.”

“Alláh-u-Abhá,” added Sulokwé.

“This is a beautiful trailer!” said Tiamaté.

“Thank you,” said Tomasu. “We’ve had it for six months and it is very comfortable. It’s a standard 2.5 meter by 8 meter, just like the mobile clinics. Wéroimigu and Kalané Wɛsénakwénu just got one for Wiki Bank so they can take their family on round-the-world trips. But we have something they don’t.” She pointed to a door at the far end.

“What is it?” asked Tiamaté.

Sulokwé walked over and opened the door to reveal a compact but luxurious bathroom. “Big sink, shower, toilet, and a very large water heater. And the door there on the right leads to the outside. Our crew washes here every day; their tent is always only a few paces away. But we let villagers use it; women wash themselves, their kids, and their laundry here.”

“And the water is heated by gas?” asked Jordan.

“Of course!” said Tomasu. “We have a big methane tank. We have a compressor, so we can buy it from anyone. They usually give it to us for free. We can demonstrate gas this way.”

“The stove is gas, too,” added Sulokwé. “I often invite women in here to see it.”

They walked back into the common room. “And this is your office?” asked Primanu, pointing to a desk.

“Exactly,” said Sulokwé. “We hook up the electricity and telephone and I work here paying bills, tracking income and expenses, and answering calls.”

“At night, the two couches facing each other can be pulled together to make a double bed,” said Tomasu. “This is our house and office.”

“That pickup is *my* home and office!” replied Primanu. “I eat in the cook tent with my men and make calls in the back of the truck.”

“You don’t have a wife,” said Sulokwé, with a smile.

“And my business is now a year and a half old,” added Tomasu. “I had a pickup truck, then. In a year or so, you might have a trailer to pull behind your pickup as well!”

“Let’s sit and eat,” said Sulokwé, pointing to the table between the kitchenette section and the sitting area. She had already put her office work away and had set five places. They all sat and she began to ladle out a vegetable soup while Tomasu distributed bread and butter. “This is really good bread; the bakery here is excellent,” she added.

For a few minutes no one spoke; they ate. “So, do you cook for the crew?” asked Tiamaté, finally.

“No!” replied Sulokwé. “I run the office; that’s my job. We’re in villages where we can hire someone to cook pretty cheaply. In fact, I don’t cook more than two or three times a week because *I* eat with the crew.”

“And after Arjakwés, where are you going?” asked Primanu.

“North to Pékɛnwika, Akɛldɛdra, and the Pɛnkakwés for two to three months, then some time in early summer we head east to Tutanɛ country. We’ll install gas in Krésonɛ territory, at Gordha where they have mountains of cattle manure, Wurontroba, then the Kwolonɛ and Kwétékwonɛ lands. By fall we should be settling into Mɛlwika and

will be shifting into phase two, building supplemental digesters all over the world and maintaining or refurbishing the ones we've already built."

"Can I buy the trailer, then?" said Primanu, half joking.

"Maybe!" replied Tomasu.

"I have a question for all of you," said Jordan. "In your many years of experience in villages, what needs do villages have that remain unfulfilled?"

"There are so many," replied Sulokwé. "Tritɛjna for example has a child with serious epileptic seizures who is getting no treatment, I suppose because of superstitions."

"Mental illness is widespread and untreated," added Tomasu. "Budhéstu has his work cut out for him."

"The average village needs jobs," said Primanu. "The average village has about 120 to 150 houses and 600 to 750 people. Ten to twenty men take a bus somewhere else to work each day. It has six teachers, a policeman, a village clerk, a part time switchboard operator/postmaster, and a storekeeper. Add to that village fifty manufacturing jobs and you'd probably bring twenty-five more support jobs in accounting, banking, baking, sewing, sales, and small businesses like a barber shop. That would mean more than half the village work would be non-agricultural. The fifty manufacturing jobs would cost 100 to 150 thousand dhanay; multiply that by 250 villages and we're talking about twenty-five to forty million dhanay, which is only a few years of investment. So it's possible."

"Except the villages are competing against the cities, which are soaking up most of the investment and expanding in population," said Jordan. "They're also becoming the

center of commuting from the villages. Mitru told me he estimates his buses are now moving eight thousand commuting workers each day."

"Five percent of the workforce," said Tomasu, impressed. "With biogas, though, villages can compete better, and water systems will help them even more."

"I make that argument every time I speak to village representatives seeking advice," said Jordan.

"But villages need better fire protection," repeated Primanu. "We're installing water towers large enough to fight a two-house fire and fire hydrants every eighty meters. But if there is a fire, it takes up to an hour for a fire engine to arrive and meanwhile people form bucket brigades!"

"They need smaller fire districts," agreed Tomasu. "The South Shore is one district with all the fire engines in Tripola. All of Véspa's are in Ora. All of Kɛrda's are in Isurdhuna. Rudhisér has two fire stations in Néfa and Pértatranisér. All those provinces need at least three districts."

"More fire engines would probably result in less work, because fires would be fought before they get big," agreed Jordan.

"True, but what would be even better are voluntary fire companies trained to put out local fires," said Primanu. "With hoses and hydrants you don't need fire engines as much, unless the fire gets really hot. That's where I'd start: organizing volunteer fire companies in every village."

"That's a great idea!" said Jordan. "I'll try to persuade Amos to take up that project."

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381.

Yellow Journalism

Mid Bɛlménu, 16/634

Thornton was nervous as Mayor Kérdu called for the vote on his beautification plan, after three hours of active debate. “Alright, everyone in favor, signify by raising their hands,” he said. Kérdu raised his hand, as did Thornton, Mitru, John Miller, Dumuzi, and Génésé. “Opposed?” Ornéstu, Lasu, Bɛlékwu raised theirs. “The ayes have it; the plan is passed,” announced Kérdu.

“Let’s just hope they don’t undermine our defenses at a crucial point,” growled Bɛlékwu, a prominent foreman at Miller Motors and labor representative, who had become particularly concerned about the green spaces around the city walls being obstructed by trees and bushes, rather than providing clear bowshot for the city’s defenders.

“Indeed,” agreed Kérdu, though he had never worried much about that. “Congratulations, Dhoru, on a very carefully developed plan. I hope, next month, we can hear a detailed presentation of your fifteen-year development plan.”

“I’d be honored to present it. I didn’t develop it to become the official plan; it’ll need some modification for that purpose.”

“Then why don’t you make those modifications,” replied the Mayor. “We need a master plan. Whether we adopt it or not, we need to study it carefully. Do I hear a motion to adjourn?”

“So moved,” said John.

“In favor?” Kérdu saw everyone’s hand go up; it was late. “Then we are adjourned until the third Primdiu of Plowménu.”

They all rose from the council table. Thornton collected his papers while Mitru walked over, followed by John. “It was an impressive presentation,” Mitru said.

“Congratulations,” added John.

“Thanks,” replied Thornton, with a smile. He lowered his voice a bit. “I’m disappointed the vote wasn’t unanimous.”

John chuckled. “Votes are almost never unanimous! You can count on Lasu to be opposed.”

“Because he doesn’t want a tree obscuring his store?”

“That’s his excuse, but he hates to spend city money on anything. Ornéstu’s worried about the education budget and Bɛlékwu’s worried about defense; he was on the wall both times the city was attacked.”

“So were we,” said Mitru, wryly.

“Let’s go.” John headed toward the exit. Thornton grabbed his heavy coat and buttoned it up tightly; a blizzard had been raging when he walked to the new City Hall from his house. Momentarily he was lagging behind Mitru as well, so a man who had been in the public gallery during the debate approached him.

“Honored Dhoru,” he said. “Congratulations on the beautification plan.”

Thornton turned to the man, whom he didn’t know; he was about thirty, with a long, reddish black beard. “Thank you, honored,” he replied.

“I take it you don’t think the city’s defense is as high a priority as it used to be?”

“Yes and no. I don’t think any Tutanɛ tribe will attack Mɛlwika again. They are too tied into the economy and see that their strength flows from participation, not aggression. As for an attack like the one that happened three years ago when two armored steam wagons tried to break through the walls to assassinate the queen, beautifying the green belt won’t change the result because there won’t be any trees near the walls or gates anyway.”

“I see. That makes sense. Your father wasn’t here tonight; have you replaced him as the lord on the Council?”

“I have been attending the City Council meetings on his behalf for almost six months now. He is planning how he uses his vigor.”

“He is vigorous?”

“Yes, absolutely.” Thornton frowned. “Who are you, anyway?”

“Mitréstu.” He offered two hands, but Thornton hesitated.

“What’s your last name?”

The man hesitated as well. “Mitréstu. My name’s Mitréstu Mitréstu.”

Thornton recoiled a bit. It was an easy name to remember; a certain number of families had chosen the father’s first name as their last name as well. “Your article about our family in this week’s *New Times* was quite unfair and inaccurate.”

“How so?”

“We had no choice but to assist the army during the Sumilara rebellion. We were tainted because we had provided education to all, regardless of their background, and our Sumi students had become some of the leaders of the rebellion. That was not true of our Tutanɛ students or our Eryan students; it had to do with the personalities and

circumstances of the Sumis. We were ordered to provide our rovers and radios. If we had failed to do so, we would have violated a Bahá'í principle and would have been executed or imprisoned, and Sumilara might have required a long, bloody campaign to pacify. Is that better?"

Mitréstu shook his head slightly. "That's one scenario. Who knows what persuasion can accomplish? Your family is famous for its ability to persuade!"

"Then why haven't I been able to persuade you?"

Mitréstu smiled. "You see, you didn't try hard enough then and you didn't try hard enough now!"

Just then, Mitru put his hand on Thornton's shoulder. "That's enough; he'll use your comments against you."

Thornton nodded. "Have a good night, honored," he said, then turned away. He could feel his hands beginning to tremble from anger, frustration, or fear; he wasn't sure which.

"I read that article and it made my blood boil," said Mitru as they walked out of the room.

"What article?" asked John, who had missed the whole thing because he had been waiting outside the room.

"The *New Times* article about the Mennea family and the Sumi rebellion! The reporter, Mitréstu Mitréstu, was at the hearing and asked Thornton some questions without identifying himself!"

"He did? I read that article; it was slanderous. Your father should sue. Or maybe I should have the guy beaten up."

“No, dad, nothing like that,” replied Thornton to his father in law.

“I wouldn’t do that, even if I am tempted. The article said he planned to do an investigative report on my family, too, so if your father doesn’t sue him, I might.”

They stepped outside, into the storm. It wasn’t snowing too heavily, but in three hours the street had accumulated six centimeters, so they trudged home carefully. “No plowing?” said Mitru, shaking his head. “This is a main street, after all.”

“They’ll get to it soon,” replied John. “The city has only one plow.” He glanced at the hill behind the foundry. “And pretty soon, Mɛlwika will have a new fifty-meter smokestack.”

“Oh?” said Thornton.

John nodded. “We signed the contract today. Once the weather improves, we’ll do it.”

“Thanks,” said Thornton.

They finished the walk in silence. When Thornton entered his house, he saw his father and mother in the great room reading and chatting. “Did the Council pass the plan?” asked Chris.

“Yes, six to three.”

“Opposed were . . . Lasu, Ornéstu, and hum, Bɛlékwu?”

“Exactly right.”

Chris nodded. “Congratulations.”

“I also met Mitréstu Mitréstu.”

Chris was startled by that. “Really, he was there? Did he ask you questions?”

Yes, about the city's defenses, then about whether I was replacing you on the city council, then I got suspicious and asked him who he was."

"Don't talk to him. I don't trust him."

"Neither do I, I assure you!"

"I still wonder whether someone's paying him to write these articles," said Liz.

Chris shrugged. "Who knows. Controversy sells newspapers and press censorship is dead at the moment. That combination produces ample motivation. The *New Times* wants to build its readership and we're rich and well known, so we're an obvious target."

"But at what a cost!"

"To us, but not to the *New Times.* We have to respond, and the *Mɛlwika Nuɛs* has said they'd publish a response, but who will write it? Meanwhile, I have to deal with lords and all sorts of people—regular people too—and I have to look them in the eye. And next week is the worldwide grange conference, right after *another* article comes out." Chris shook his head and sighed. "I'm getting too old to deal with stuff like this."

"Oh, dad," said Thornton.

"No, seriously, Thor. When you get older, you'll see. Stress is harder to take. But I know, we have to fight."

"May could write something. It could be published anonymously or under her name."

Chris nodded. "Yes, she'd be the best. Good idea; why didn't I think of that? I'll call her right now."

"We have to do something," agreed Liz.

May reluctantly agreed to write something, even though she had no stomach for a fight in print. After two days Chris was about to call her to remind her when he received a visitor: Skandu, the historian. “My Lord, the army was furious about the article in the *New Times,”* he said over tea. “If we could, we’d arrest Mitréstu Mitréstu, throw him in prison, and throw away the key. He raises the issue of Sumi independence indirectly in his piece, and that is causing trouble on Sumilara.”

“I’m sorry for that,” replied Chris. “The palace has been moving very positively to incorporate Sumilara into the kingdom fairly and on an equal basis. I’ve asked May to write up our side, but I’m afraid she hasn’t brought herself around to it, yet.”

“No need; I’ve done it! I was on that campaign as well, I have access to all the documents, I can interview the officers in charge, and as someone the Sumi trust, I can write from both sides. You aren’t in the position to refute his charges that a peaceful approach would have worked, but I am. The island was pacified with minimal bloodshed, and only at the Battle of the Palisade. Our field hospital saved the lives of several hundred wounded Sumi fighters, and they were spared, not executed. In fact, the accusation has prompted me to start researching a book on that campaign. It’s time to publish everything. I’ve even written to Rébu asking for an interview, and I suspect he will say yes; my book may be the best way for him to get rehabilitated.”

“What does the army say?”

“Roktɛkɛstɛr says yes. I haven’t heard from the queens, yet.”

“Impressive. There are a few statements in the article you may not have information about, though.”

“I’m here to arrange a time when we can review all of that.”

“Good. Now isn’t good; I have a meeting in an hour. But maybe later today or tomorrow. I’d rather not wait.”

“I can imagine you’d like a reply printed as soon as possible.”

“Exactly, the misinformation is very embarrassing.”

“I’ve drafted much of the article and it’ll be in print in the *Royal Standard* in two days. The *Mɛlwika Nuɛs* can copy it when it publishes, or supplement it.”

“Great. You should talk to Rébu. He kept a diary when he was at the génadɛma, so you may want to ask him for access to any diary he kept during the revolt. I’m not sure I’d trust his memory to be impartial, especially where his own role is concerned. He has mellowed a lot and makes his living translating scholarly articles into Sumi.”

“Yes, I visited him two years ago. Fascinating character.”

“How will this project impact on your history text?”

“It’ll slow down work on volume 3, but ultimately it will help, because I want to include an accurate summary of the Sumi revolt.”

“How’s your archeological work?”

“Pretty good. As you know, the sea rose a meter higher than it had been before the great drought, so parts of Lilalara flooded and were badly damaged. Since then, sea level has dropped half a meter and most of the flooded areas are dry again. Restoration work on Mɛdha proceeded fairly well while Mɛméjékwu was alive, but the current governor of Dɛlongisér has no interest in the greatest Eryan city of the ancient world, so we are getting minimal funding. A lot of the city is falling down, but we have recovered over a thousand inscriptions and can now read old Eryan fairly well. The work will continue for a century.”

“That’s the way it is,” agreed Chris. “But think of the progress that has been made in the last sixteen years! The history of Éra has unrolled before our eyes.”

“It really has. Can I stop by later today at 4 p.m.?”

“Yes, I’ll be home at that point for the evening. You can stay for supper and we can talk as long as you’d like.”

“Thank you, I’m very appreciative.”

Time seemed to fly over the next week, as final preparations were made for the all-grange meeting in Mɛlita. For the “white month,” the weather was pretty good; sunny and almost warm. They took over Mɛlita High School’s gymnasium for three days, and it was packed.

When Chris arrived, just before the meeting was to begin, he was shocked by the size of the crowd. “How many people are here?” he asked.

“Almost four hundred!” replied Wokwéstu, the manager of Mɛlita’s Grange. “It’s absolutely amazing! Look, there are even a few lords here!” He pointed to a small group of men nearby with red-edged togas.

“And they registered?”

“Yes, they want granges in their villages!”

“Really.”

“Go to the registration table and look at the list of registrants. They come from *everywhere.* I never could have imagined this.”

“The palace is supporting granges. Maybe the lords have learned it’s the best way to enrich their villages and therefore themselves.”

“I hope so!”

Chris nodded and walked over to the lords. He recognized one; Lord Jéndu of Kadakwas in southern Véspa. He had been friendly to the Bahá'ís and the village now had a large Bahá'í community. “Hail, Lord. Welcome to the all-grange gathering. I’m so happy to see you here.” He extended both hands and they shook.

“Hail, Lord Krisoféru,” replied Jéndu. “This is quite an exciting gathering.”

“I apologize that I don’t recall meeting the rest of you.”

“This is Lord Nénasandru of Nénaskaita.”

“Oh, of course, I have met you before! Welcome!” said Chris. He was surprised; Nénaskaita was less than a dozen kilometers northwest of Pértatranisér and had fiercely fought the town and everything it stood for. He offered his hands to the older Lord, who hesitated slightly, then shook hands.

“Thank you, I look forward to this gathering.”

“What do you hope to learn from it?”

“How to establish a grange!”

“I am pleased we can be of service to you, Lord.”

“Thank you. Times have changed; if a village wants to stay even or get ahead, it has to have a grange.”

Chris nodded and Jéndu pointed to the other gentleman. “Lord Wodranu of Oyapéla.”

Chris smiled and offered his hands. Oyapéla was a Fish Eryan settlement at the mouth of the Rudhisér River. “I’ve met you before as well. Welcome.”

“Thank you. We can’t fish and log forever; we need agriculture. Besides, we could establish a maritime grange, could we not?”

“Indeed!” agreed Chris. “That would be a very useful innovation.”

“We understand that there’s seed money to establish granges,” said Jéndu.

“Some, but with a gathering like this, we may need more,” noted Chris.

“How many did you expect?”

Chris shrugged. “Maybe half this many?”

Nénasandru chuckled. “After all these years, granges have proven themselves.”

“Besides,” added Jéndu, “a grange will pay half the medical bills, and they keep getting more expensive.”

“I know. The prosperity of Mɛlwika was partially built on its grange. If you will excuse me, gentlemen, I need to go up front to assist with final preparations.” Chris nodded in goodbye to the lords and walked slowly to the front of the room, reading as many name tags as he could. There were headmen, prominent farmers, and businessmen from all over the world. The only province missing was Dɛlongisér.

When the chanters went onto the stage, the crowd quieted and sat in their folding chairs. Three hymns to Widumaj and one Bahá'í prayer followed; Chris was impressed by inclusion of the latter, as it was not his idea. But the grange movement had indeed attracted a lot of Bahá'ís and some grange people had converted, so it was appropriate. The devotional materials were followed by a welcome by Wɛrétranu Mɛlitai, head of the Mɛlita Grange and mayor of the city.

“Welcome to Mɛlita and the all-grange conference,” he began. “We are thrilled to have so many of you come; this is more than double our previous attendance. The time

for granges has come. Two developments in the last few months have made this so: first, support of the grange movement by their royal majesties; and second, the new universal health coverage law, which matches the health fees raised by granges and businesses with equal amounts of local and royal tax money.

"We have not counted up the reasons everyone is here, but at our last meeting thirty-two granges had representatives, and a dozen people came because they wanted advice to form a grange. As far as we know, the world now has thirty-four granges serving about sixty villages, but it appears that we have over two hundred people here interested in starting granges! That is a huge change from two years ago.

The agenda of this meeting is fairly simple. Lord Kristobéru Ménnéa will address us in a moment about the new program for establishing granges, then we will take questions. We will break for lunch at the Mɛlita Grange building, which will include a tour of the facilities. This afternoon we will break into small groups to discuss ways to improve granges and their services, then get reports about the groups' conclusions. Tomorrow we'll have a plenary session about grange services in the morning and one about establishing new granges in the afternoon, followed by breakout sessions to discuss the ideas. The next day, our last day, we will elect an All-Grange Coordinating Council, a body that will provide granges with advice and coordination of services and will help set up new granges. Representatives of all established granges will be able to vote. Right now that's up to three representatives each of thirty-four recognized granges. But if your village or area wants to establish a grange, and if there are at least two of you present who can serve as representatives, the two of you will be able to vote in the election. You will need to fill out a form stating what grange is being formed. We'd love to see the

number of granges double at this meeting. If there is only one of you present from your village, you have two days to get someone else to come here and complete the paperwork with you!

"Now let me introduce Lord Chris to tell us about this new program to establish granges."

Wɛrétranu stepped down and Chris stepped onto the stage with a page of notes. "Thank you, Mayor Wɛrétranu. The palace has agreed that the time has come to encourage the formation of granges, because they bring prosperity, education, training, mechanization, and health services to the rural population. Previously, many lords feared granges because they feared loss of power and a competing source of authority in the village. But granges have found ways to cooperate with the local lords; the movement is politically neutral, and by and large that has been maintained; and as the granges have raised the income of farmers, the lords have found their tax revenues increasing as well. I had feared a major backlash against this reinvigoration of the grange movement, but the last few months have seen no negative reaction at all. Indeed, the presence of lords at our gathering shows how much the times have changed. Lords are welcomed. The new universal medical coverage law has increased our welcome even more.

"For those wishing to establish a grange and seek financial assistance, here's how we propose to proceed. In the last four months, a substantial sum has been pledged—240,000 dhanay over two years—partly from private industry and partly from the crown. If we agree to establish an All-Grange Coordinating Council and that it will administer the grants to new granges, it will become the granting agency.

"What is a grange? It is any large group of workers in a particular place or region who have banded together to pool their resources to improve their lives. They can be farmers, fishermen, lumbermen, cattlemen. They meet to decide what services they want to provide themselves and what fee they will pay. They elect a five to nine member board, which draws up a budget to spend the money to provide the services. In the past, granges often did not have access to trained accountants who knew how to track the income and expenditure of money, they faced hostility from those who did not want them to succeed, they lacked start-up funds, and they did not know what they wanted to do. Various efforts to provide a simple formula of tasks, fees, and procedures did not always work. But now all four obstacles appear to have been eliminated or reduced.

"Accountants are now widely available, as are professional services. Hostility appears to be greatly reduced; granges have proved themselves in terms of raising incomes, reducing illness, improving nutrition, and spreading education. We now have a startup fund far larger than anything existing granges could have provided. As for the simple formula, in another month we will have a new guidebook, improved forms, a staff person to help implement them, and grant monies to ease the founding difficulties any organization has. In the past the grange fee was an eighth of the crop, or 12.5%. About a quarter of that—3% —covered health expenses. With the new universal health coverage law, half of those expenses will be covered via taxes, and Lords will want everyone in their villages to join some organization that provides health services so that their budget is stretched further, so now the entire village has an incentive to join the grange.

"Another one percent went toward 'insurance'; helping to rebuild burned houses, funerals of members, supporting families of deceased members for a year. Four percent

covered equipment costs, four percent staffing costs, and 1.5% covered purchases such as seeds and fertilizer. Equipment costs have continued to drop and the grants will help cover them, so we think a grange can now operate on a total of a tenth of the crop, rather than an eighth. Supporting this view is the fact that the large and 'mature' granges consistently return one or two percent to their members as profit and have savings funds they invest in businesses being started by grange members.

"A typical village of 100 households and 600 people will need two tractors and their attachments, totaling 7,000 dhanay. With a 4,000 dhanay grant, the grange can obtain one tractor and gradually learn how to use it to make agriculture more efficient. When it is ready for a second tractor, it will have a track record that will allow it to borrow the money to buy it. The grange can also provide a mechanism whereby farmers loan or rent teams of draught animals to each other and help each other with harvest, because through the grange there is a wider range of services that are available for exchange. By buying farmers' harvests, negotiating deals with buyers, and paying their members' taxes, granges can bring more money to both farmers and lords.

"So, that's the plan. I no longer need to devote significant time to Mɛlwika Genadɛma, Mɛlwika City Council, Mɛlita City Council, the regional tomis, or the utility companies; they run themselves. The granges are my next project, if you desire that service from me. I am now seventy years old and no longer have quite as much energy as I used to, but I can still circle this world, visit villages, and help them set up granges. I will not be alone; there are several others who have acquired experience and can do the same. I hope this conference will establish the conditions that will allow granges speedily to spread and flourish."

When Chris finished the audience rose to their feet and applauded. The standing ovation startled him. He smiled and nodded to the audience. Wɛrétranu came to him, shook both hands, and hugged him. When the audience began to quiet, he said, “Lord Chris, we are all immeasurably grateful to you for your services, which have raised tens of thousands of us from poverty and hopelessness. Only Esto can give you an ample reward, may it be long delayed.” The audience then applauded again.

Chris retreated off the stage and Wɛrétranu reassumed the floor. Chandu Chartagrasi had his hand raised, so the mayor called on him. Chandu came to the stage.

“I want to echo everything Honored Wɛrétranu just said about Lord Chris. I arrived in Mɛlwika thirteen years ago as a penniless sixteen year old. I wanted to farm, so with a group of friends we became squatters on a piece of land as far from Mɛlwika as possible, but still in its township, because we feared the Tutanɛ. Lord Chris soon came along in his rover, and rather than kicking us off his land, he showed us what piece to farm, added us to his grange, and encouraged us to learn how to drive a tractor. That was a thrill, for a sixteen year old! Within a year I had a large farm, a house, new clothes, shoes, and enough money to return to southern Véspa to ask permission to marry the girl I wanted to wed.

“I also want to add a few observations to Lord Chris’s comments. One major obstacle to establishing granges was seed money. Tractors used to cost several times more than they cost now, and the money even to lease them was unavailable until the tractor allowed the larger harvest that generated the surplus to cover its cost. Without the tractor, there was no money to lease or buy the tractor. Now that’s solved, especially if the 240,000 dhanay in hand or pledged is supplemented by local funds. I can’t imagine

some local money wouldn't be available, and any committee allocating grant money to a new grange will want to see a local financial commitment.

"The other obstacle that has often been quoted in the past was that villages only had so much land, and tractors weren't needed unless more land were to be farmed, but land was not available anyway. But in my travels, that's not what I see. Yes, all the land within an hour's walk of a typical village is intensively farmed. But all the land within an hours *drive* is not, and that is now the situation. Farmers have been acquiring more land if they have horses or oxen because they can get to more distant plots. Tractors and pickup trucks—the other purchase every grange needs—will widen the circle of available land around every village, and that will itself give all village members an incentive to join. The time for granges definitely has arrived."

He sat to applause and Wɛrétranu began to acknowledge questions. Quite a few hands went up; answering the questions kept Chris and Wɛrétranu busy for the next hour. When the morning session finally adjourned, Chris was surrounded by people wanting to shake hands, ask questions, and introduce themselves. It was quite clear that the *New Times* article had become irrelevant; whether people had read the refutation or not, it had been forgotten.

Among the last were the three lords. They waited for the others to finish, so Chris hurried through the other conversations. "How much will we need to invest, lord?" asked Nénasandru, turning immediately to the bottom line.

"It isn't just a matter of money," Chris replied. "First, a grange needs more than one person, even if that person is a lord. Can you get one or two more villagers here by Primdiu morning to serve as delegates from your grange?"

Nénasandru was startled by that, but nodded. “I can make a few calls. Do they have to be farmers?”

“No; anyone willing to join the grange. If there’s a farming family with a school teacher, ask the school teacher to come; the education will be helpful. The conference organizers will find housing.”

“I think they may need to find quite a lot more housing!” said Jéndu.

“That was your first point; what else?” asked Nénasandru impatiently.

“We need help to encourage more villages, especially in Rudhisér,” replied Chris. “The basin has plenty of additional land along the rim. A few large landowners have displaced hundreds of renters and have seized land of uncertain ownership and that has caused poverty and instability, which have set the province back. A dozen granges would stabilize the place and spread prosperity widely.”

“I agree. I will indeed call my fellow lords. Many of them have opposed you and opposed Pértatranisér. They have had to watch Pértatranisér grow wealthier while their own wealth has stagnated; their renters have fled or taken jobs a bus ride away and they have had to pay the remaining farmers more. They’re better off selling the land to farmers and letting them develop their farms. What else?”

“As I said, the grange grants will not cover all the costs of starting a grange, we need to stretch the money as far as possible, and local money demonstrates a serious commitment. Can you provide three thousand?”

“I’m not made of money!”

“Two thousand, then.”

“Alright, that’s good.”

“Lord, Kadakvas has a tractor already,” said Jéndu. “It’s my property and it is available to our villagers at a reasonable price. Can I donate it as part of my contribution?”

“Yes, of course. That would be a marvelous addition.”

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Granges

ɛjnaménu/March 16/634

Dawn light crept into Chris and Liz's bedroom through the high windows. Chris opened his eyes and noted that Liz had already gone downstairs. It was the first day of the Bahá'í Fast and she was getting the food ready.

He rose, pulled a sweater over his pajamas—it has been a cold end to the winter and the house was chilly—and headed downstairs. Thornton, Lébé, Lua, Behruz, and Liz were already at the table eating their predawn breakfast.

"What are you doing here?" asked Thornton. "I thought you were going to sleep late and enjoy your first fast when you didn't actually have to fast!"

Chris smiled. "I'll eat breakfast with everyone, but I'll have lunch at midday."

"You could have stopped fasting last year," said Liz, pushing the pancakes in his direction as he sat.

"Yes, I was 70 Earth years old last year, but I didn't want to confuse people. It's rather strange to be a certain Earth age when you arrive, then add Eryan years to it. You aren't sure how old you really are!"

"Next year I'll have been on Éra half my life," reflected Thornton.

"When are you going to Sullɛndha?" asked Chris.

"Dwodiu; two days from now. I'll start two short-term courses on ecology and geology. It's a pain to be teaching during ɛjnaménu, but a holiday month is a good time to study there, and it'll strengthen the school's offerings."

“At least the fifteen-year city plan passed the City Council.”

“I was pleased by that. We’ll have the master environmental management plan ready by fall. The route to the North Polar Basin is problematic; the City Council approved it in the master plan because it increases the area where Mɛlwika will have influence, but environmentally speaking, it’ll open some alpine tundra wilderness to heavy truck traffic and possible over-exploitation.”

Chris nodded. “It is a problem, and now we have to be careful about every environment on this world. I worry more every year!”

“I think we can plant forests faster than we cut them,” said Thornton.

“Extending Route 21 southward to Mɛlwika would make Bahá'í activities in the North Polar Basin easier to support,” said Liz. She looked at Chris. “It does look like we’ll need to swing through Véspa, Lɛwéspa, and the South Shore starting about ten days before the Central Bahá'í Convention. I’ll confirm a few stops today.”

“Okay. Chandu will be swinging through Véspa at that time to start six granges. I want him to do most of the organizing.”

“If we’re based in Pértatranisér some of the time, I can drive south every day and you can work on granges in Rudhisér. Because of the involvement of the lords there, you need to take the lead.”

Chris nodded. “I agree.”

He went to refill his coffee. Everyone was almost done eating because the sun was coming up. He hurried to finish, then joined them for prayers in the garden, which was still closed up against winter cold. After running upstairs to shower, shave, and dress, he

headed to the Bahá'í temple to say even more prayers. Since he no longer needed to fast—persons 70 and older were exempt—it felt necessary to pray more.

It was a cold walk to the temple past piles of slowly melting dirty snow, from there to the génadɛma administration building, and from there to his office in the tomi building. He skimmed the latest issue of the *Mɛlwika Nuɛs,* which was carrying yet another rebuttal to an "exposé" of his family's wealth in the *New Times.* The accusations were extremely frustrating, but most people didn't take them very seriously. As he finished, Chandu called.

"Lord, this morning I checked the mail and the telephone messages for the previous two days, while I was supervising the South Ménwika irrigation project," he said. "We have seven messages or letters from new granges asking us whether we can get them tractors and equipment for planting next month. We also have another letter requesting assistance to form a grange. It's from Moruagras. I'm leaving the tutanɛ to you."

"That's fine. I probably can't get there until very late spring or early summer, but I can make a few calls to them. How many granges is that?"

"Sixty-nine, if they all really happen! On Dwodiu we plotted all of them on a map to figure out the fastest route to visit them all. They'll serve about 150 villages, which means 80% of the rural population will have a grange available to them. But Lord, they *all* want to be set up for spring plowing."

"And they'll be ready?"

“A lot of them will be ready. That’s the problem. We have only 120,000 dhanay this year. Even with a thousand or two dhanay of local support, we don’t have the money.”

“Even if we did, we don’t have the tractors.” Chris thought for a moment. “Miller Motors has increased production, but I doubt they’ll have more than thirty ready. We might be able to borrow fifteen or twenty from granges.”

“A few lords are giving tractors, too. There are a few tractors that can be rented, and a few old ones that can be refurbished. But there’s no time!”

“A little spring in the air will concentrate the mind. We need to provide tractors to every new grange; otherwise they’ll be discouraged and the all-grange council’s reputation will suffer.”

“We can lease some tractors, too, but that won’t be easy, either. The granges with spare equipment are mostly on the eastern shore; the new granges are on the western shore. Tractors need more than a day to drive back and forth. If demand for tractors shoots up, their price will go up as well.”

“And people don’t like plowing their fields at night. I’ll call Miller and find out how many tractors we can get and when. Maybe he can speed up production for us, probably for a fee. Can you call the granges around here, explain the situation to them frankly, and find out what they can do?”

“I’ll do that, Lord, but then there’s no time to answer the calls from the new granges or oversee the expansion of South Ménwika’s irrigation system. I guess I’ll have to work extra hours.”

“We’ll have to get you more help. If you have any ideas, let me know.”

“Help? No, I can work extra hours.”

“Chandu, this is a good example of a situation when one needs to delegate, and we have the money to hire staff.”

“Déngéstu: he’s on the All-Grange Council and might do it for free. I bet he could strong arm the granges around here to provide tractors.”

“Yes, he’d do a good job, but he might be a better choice to take over installation of the South Ménwika irrigation system.”

“Which he’ll charge us for.”

“True, but we know he’ll get it done. The men like working under him. There’s no way you can get all these things done. Snékwu can help you arrange to borrow tractors.”

Chandu sighed; he wasn’t happy. “There are more spare tractors in the lower Arjakwés anyway. South Ménwika will need additional tractors to break the prairie sod, so Mɛlwika Grange won’t have any to spare.”

“You’re right. Léféstu can help contact some of the new granges on the western shore, and the last ten days of next month I’ll be in Pértatranisér and Mɛddwoglubas. I’ll focus on organizing granges in Rudhisér, since the lords there are very involved.”

“I’ll be glad to have your help; all I have to do is open my mouth, the lords hear my accent, and half of them won’t give me the time of day. But I don’t need Léféstu’s help.”

“Chandu, sixty-nine granges; no one person can do it. Léféstu, Snékwu, and Déngéstu are on the Council and they’re all very capable. We need their help.”

“I don’t know how to delegate this, though, and keeping everyone coordinated will take as much time as we’ll save.”

“No, we’ll save more time and get more done, trust me. We’ll divide up the tasks: Snékwu can obtain tractors, Déngéstu can complete the South Menwika irrigation system, Léféstu and I will handle Rudhisér and the North Shore, and you can handle Véspa, Kɛrda, and the South Shore. We can brief each other once a week on Dwodiu or Suksdiu.”

“Alright Lord, if that’s what you want.”

“Let’s give it a try, okay?”

“Okay, that’s fine. But we still have a major financial problem. We only have 120,000 and won’t have the other 120,000 until the fall. That’s not enough for 69 granges, and a few more might form in the next few weeks!”

“I’ll work on that, too; we should be able to get the second half after the early summer harvest, and we can borrow against the pledges before then. We’ve got to make this work, Chandu. This is the big break for about half the population of this world. We can’t tell them to form a grange and then make them wait two years.”

“But Lord . . . we don’t have enough money to do this.”

“I’ll work on that. Let’s get this expanded team to do its part so we can get the granges started and functioning.”

“Alright. I’ll call you tonight with an update.”

“Excellent. Good bye.” Chris hung up the phone and looked around his office for a moment. All his plans had to change. It would not be an easy day. Good thing he didn’t have to fast.

It was a long day; Chris argued with John Miller about tractors, negotiated with Déngéstu about South Ménwika, and talked to his accountants about money. He called several donors about moving up their donations, then called Lords who wanted granges and finally, as the day was ending in Mɛlwika, he called the Ghéslonɛ village of Moruagras about their needs. He came home at sunset, as the family was gathering to break the fast.

"How was the first day of the fast?" Liz asked everyone as they sat around the table to say prayers before drinking tea.

Chris had to laugh at that. "I just spent a hundred thousand dhanay."

"What?" she replied.

"Everyone wants a grange and resources are inadequate. So I'm squeezing more matching funds from the lords who will benefit and supplementing the bank account."

"How many granges?"

"It was sixty-nine this morning, but it's seventy now."

"Seventy?" said Thornton, shocked. "How can we form so many?"

"How can we deny a hundred thousand people access to a grange?"

"I think we better say a few more prayers!" said Liz.

They said a round of prayers, then the cook brought out the food. "So, you're going to Sullɛndha on Dwodiu," Chris said to Thornton. "Can you work on four granges?"

"Four? Dad, I have to teach two courses!"

"I know, and we have to form seventy granges by planting season. You know everyone in Lɛpawsona, so you're the one to do it."

"Where are you getting tractors?"

“Lɛpawsona already has tractors, so start by arranging to use them. Snékwu’s in charge of reallocating tractors, but he’s got to send as many of them west as possible. John’s expanding production, but I doubt he can give us more than thirty-five by the end of planting season.”

“Wow; this will be challenging. Okay, I’ll handle Lɛpawsona.”

“I may need your help with Morana as well.”

The main doors of the house opened and a steam car drove into the garden. Amos stepped out. “I hope I’m in time for supper!”

“Of course!” said Liz. “But I hope you’ve already broken the fast!”

“Yes, I started fasting at dawn this morning in Sértroba, so I broke the fast there three hours ago, then drove here.”

“Sértroba?” said Thornton. “Oh, that’s right. A volunteer fire department.”

“The Krésonɛ and Wuronɛ are our guinea pigs; we’re testing a training program with them, and both tribes are getting volunteer fire departments and the equipment for free as a result. The Wuronɛ sent fifteen men to Sértroba and they’re very serious about it.” Amos sat at the table and filled his plate with pasta.

“How are the Wuronɛ doing?” asked Liz.

“They seem to be doing pretty well; they’ve been building their Bahá'í Center all winter and apparently it’s finished. They’ve built a new grain silo and added another classroom to the school. The Wuronɛ Company’s set up and they’re looking forward to getting a tractor. The army has promised to build a new bridge over the Dhébakwés this summer.”

“How did the fast go at Sértroba?” she added.

“Pretty well. Half the village turned out for dawn prayers right after sunrise and it was a very moving program. We had prayers again when the Wuronɛ arrived, and a big break fast at sunset after prayers. They were taking the Faith quite seriously.”

“I think both villages are doing very well now,” said Chris. “I need some ideas, Amos. There are now plans to form seventy new granges and there aren’t enough tractors.”

“How short are you?”

“We’ll have thirty five new tractors, we can probably borrow a dozen or 15 and lease another dozen on and off.”

“That won’t work.” Amos ate pasta for a moment and thought. “When pickup trucks first came out, Miller Motors produced a plow attachment, but it wasn’t well designed. Pickups don’t have as much torque as tractors, so the plow had to be smaller. The tires got mired if the field’s muddy or soft, or slip if the sod’s too hard to break. But if we equip the tires with chains, we can solve that problem, and a lighter plow will solve the torque problem.”

“Those problems can be solved,” said Chris. “And there are several thousand pickups! Can you design a special plow?”

“We have older plow designs that were smaller and can be adapted. It’ll take longer to plow a field, but many pickups have headlights.”

“Can we have something ready in a month?”

Amos smiled at that. “I think so. I can get a team to drop its current project and work on that right away. Miller’s plow works can make a lot more plows than his tractor line can make tractors, so that’s not a problem.”

“There are a lot of tractors out there, too,” added Thornton. “Lɛpawsona may not have granges, but I think more than half the farmers arrange to get their fields plowed already. Some villages have tractors. Sullɛndha has a fire engine and it does plowing if the field is dry. Most fire departments rent out their fire engines. It's doable.”

“I agree,” said Chris. “The key word is ‘arrange.’ Ten thousand households used to make all sorts of arrangements to buy plowing services, and now ten thousand more households will want to make them. Farmers will also be planning expansions of their fields. We need to pursue every option.”

“It’ll cost a lot of money,” warned Amos.

“I know,” agreed Chris.

Chris worked even on the next day—Primdiu, the Eryan Sabbath—and hoped for a quieter Dwodiu. Amos stayed over in Mɛlwika to talk to the engineering teams about manufacturing a lighter plow, which was easy because their earlier models had been lighter, because the older tractors had had less horsepower. They tested an earlier model plow with a pickup truck in a fallow field to plan modifications. He spent the day talking to Miller and his department supervisors about manufacturing the plows and tire chains.

Chris called lords whose villages wanted granges to see how much money or equipment they would pledge. Many had access to tractors, fire engines, or heavy trucks already. He called back a few lords he had already talked to in order to ask about what equipment they had. He went to lunch feeling like the crisis could be managed.

When he came back from lunch he had a message that Governor Modobéru of Sumilara had called. He called back, fearing for the worst. “Good morning, governor,” he began, remembering that the day had just begun in Sumilara.

“Good day, Lord Krisoféru. I see in the newspapers that plans for granges are rolling along quite well. How many of them are in Sumilara?”

“I apologize, Governor, but I don’t know. Last I saw, there were two or three.”

“That is correct. I understand three have been proposed. I talked to Mayor Dingiramarru of Amurueqluma this morning. He attended your conference, three months ago, on behalf of their grange and said there were no other Sumis present.”

“I think that is correct. We issued invitations to all existing granges, all places where granges were under consideration, and to many other contacts. A notice went to newspapers, radio stations, and the Bahá'í bulletin published a note about it as well.”

“I see. I’m disappointed, lord. Perhaps partly in you, but certainly in my own people. Sumilara badly needs granges, especially once the palace begins to subsidize medical treatments. Almost no one uses tractors here.”

“True, but all Sumi farmers have oxen, and rice paddies are difficult to plow with tractors.”

“The paddies are dry part of the year and you can plow them then. Oxen are more expensive and time consuming than tractors, and old fashioned.”

“They also power the island’s biogas digesters.”

“You’ll have the same problem elsewhere, won’t you? Granges also coordinate sales of crops, labor for harvesting, and provide courses. I’m writing a letter to every village and city on the island urging them to establish a grange.”

“Every village? That’s excellent, governor, but seventy granges are forming in the next month or two, and our support services will have to serve them in order.”

“I understand. Sumilara has no winter and can plant almost any time, so we can wait until after everyone else plants their crops. It’ll take us three or four months to get organized anyway. Can you send us a representative of the All-Grange Council?”

“I’ll get back to you about that. We’ll need someone who speaks Sumi.”

“Call Dingiramarru, he can send someone to get trained.”

“I’ll do that. Perhaps we should talk again in a few days? There will be a huge shortage of tractors, so we’re arranging for use of pickup trucks. Sumilara has fewer of them than the other provinces, but you’ll need to use what you have more efficiently.”

“We’re already using what we have very efficiently!”

“I’m sure. Granges require start-up money, governor, and our funds are already stretched too much. We’ll need as much help as possible.”

“How much?”

Chris made a fast calculation. “Sixty or seventy thousand altogether.”

“Wow. Can you get more from the palace?”

“I’m trying to get an appointment right away to ask for more.”

“I’ll see what I can do. I can find twenty or thirty thousand from next year’s budget and press the villages and cities to match it.”

“That may not be enough, but I’ll ask the palace. Thank you, governor. We’ll need to talk later this week.”

“Pɛnkudiu; all government offices on Sumilara are switching to a four day work week next month, and most staff have already started! I’m much less available Suksdius and Primdius now. Call me this time on Pɛnkudiu.”

“I will. Thank you. Good bye.”

“Good bye.”

Chris hung up the phone, uncertain whether to be angry at himself, the governor, or the unpredictability of efforts to spread ideas in Sumi. He thought for a moment, then picked up the phone and called Jordan. “How’s your fast down there?” he asked, after exchanging hellos with his grandson.

“Pretty good. You aren’t fasting now, right?”

“Not in the physical sense, no, but I’m praying more. How’s business?”

“Slower, which gives us time to catch up and plan project reviews. The fall is the time people plan and the winter is the time they submit projects to us. The palace wants them before ɛjnaménu, so they can review them for two months and finalize which ones they’ll approve once the harvests start to come in.”

“That’s very systematic of them. Say, I badly need your help. I just got a call from Governor Modobéru. Sumilara has one grange and there are plans to form three more, but he wants every village and city to form one. Someone who speaks Sumi has to go there and work on it.”

“How can we do that? We’re running a business! What about Thor?”

“Thornton’s busy with the new granges in Lɛpawsona and I hope he’ll take the ones in Morana as well. We now have seventy new granges forming—before the call from Sumilara—and we’re overwhelmed. I think what we need is a two-day conference

at Amurueqluma Grange for representatives across the island. We can meet them, brief them, give them a tour of the grange there, and answer questions. They'll have to go home and get things organized. Phase two—which we're planning now for the other provinces—is a series of small meetings for two or three granges at a time where they bring their accounting books and we review them, stop by to see their facility, approve their budget, etc. We can probably find someone on Sumilara to do that; that's another priority of the Amurueqluma meeting."

"And people can call me as well. We can handle budget requests here."

"That's a good idea; in fact, we can route all the grant requests through you! You can standardize the process, evaluate requests, help improve them, and give us recommendations."

"For seventy granges? Well, with Sumilara, closer to eighty-five. That'll take a lot of time and will require additional staff."

"Hire them and we'll pay the usual five percent. Chandu doesn't have the skills or the staff. I think we'll have to have you meet with the All-Grange Council so we can shape priorities and criteria for approval."

"We'll need that. Grandpa, you've got to use the tomi's resources to make this happen. It's too big for a half dozen people who are just starting."

"I agree. Okay, let's talk tomorrow about times we can hold the meeting. You can go to Amurueqluma?"

"Yes, next month. I need three or four weeks notice."

"Okay, you've got it. Thanks, Jordan."

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Proclamation

Dhébɛlménu/Apr.-May, 17/635

Jordan drove the pickup slowly up the steep hill to Mɛddwoglubas's old fort above the town. He had six passengers in back and had almost bounced someone out an hour earlier when he hit a deep pothole on the road from Pértatranisér, so he didn't want to repeat that incident. When he reached the top and turned to the Bahá'í House of Worship a hundred meters from the fort, he saw a large crowd gathered on the grass.

"What's that?" asked Tiamaté.

"It may be the spot where the Central Spiritual Assembly plans to build the Institute for Bahá'í Studies."

"That's right, the cornerstone laying ceremony was scheduled for National Convention."

Jordan put the pickup in the muddy parking lot and they all walked over. Sugérsé was completing a short speech. "Hence for us Bahá'í youth, this Institute represents a very exciting development. Behruz Shirazi has promised to give us courses in the Arabic and Persian languages this summer, and May Keino will teach a course about the symbolic and mystical language of scripture. Liz Mennea has promised a course about the spirituality of study and Stauréstu one about health and spirituality. We hope everyone will want to come here and participate in some of the informal classes and many will stay for the formal courses as well. It will bring the Faith a glorious future."

The five hundred people crowded around the hole in the ground applauded. Modolubu, secretary of the Central Spiritual Assembly, stepped forward. “Sugérsé, please come help me, and Lady Liz also.” The two women stepped forward while two masons brought a container full of mortar. The three of them took turns spreading mortar around a gap in the foundation, then they picked up the cornerstone and placed it in the hole. Everyone applauded.

A chanter stepped forward to chant a Bahá'í prayer and everyone bowed their heads. When she finished, Stauréstu thanked everyone for coming and suggested they return to the basement of the House of Worship for the rest of the convention.

Jordan walked to the hole in the ground and surveyed the thirty by fifteen meter outline of the foundation. Its three stories would hold classrooms, offices, and a Bahá'í library in six or eight months. Chris saw his grandson and hurried over. “Jordan, you made it! How was the meeting at Amurueqluma?”

“Alláh-u-Abhá, grandfather. It went well. There were grange representatives from all eighteen villages and cities on the island, about one hundred altogether. Ten were Bahá'ís; I just drove six of them here. In most cases, the four to six representatives had been chosen based on some sort of inclusive process. Most were farmers, though a few were wealthy landowners and not many were poor peasant farmers. When they left, every single village and city had completed a form to join the All-Grange Coordinating Council.”

“Excellent. And they all took instructions back home about electing a Grange Council?”

"Yes. I also identified a potential All-Grange Council agent for the island; a young man whose family is a medium-sized farm owner and who has training in accounting and business but who has taken a few agricultural courses. He says he's studied with Randu and knows Nérgalu."

"Good, we'll have to ask both of them what they think. How did Chandu do?"

"Pretty well. All the way to Arjdhura in the truck he said stereotypical things about Sumis and I got very worried, but he was getting them out of his system. Once he was immersed in Sumis, at first he was quiet—like he was in shock—then something clicked, he became himself, and he voiced all the grange language about treating all farmers equally. But I felt in his voice that there was a new sense of what it meant."

"Good! I was worried, too. Did you hear about the article in the latest *New Times*?"

"No, they don't read it on Sumilara."

"Not yet. It claims to be an exposé of our involvement in the grange movement, notes that you're processing grant requests and that my tomi's coordinating a lot of the work, implying we're making a huge profit off the whole thing."

"I suppose you won't authorize a response that notes it's costing us over a hundred thousand."

"Nothing that specific, but it is time to hire an official spokesman and respond professionally to these slanders." He spat out the last word. "On his radio show yesterday, Widulubu claimed that the granges in Kɛrda province are a plot to convert everyone to the Bahá'í Faith, to take over all the villages, and to remove the lords. I've had to call a few lords to reassure them, but most don't believe him."

“He’ll just destroy whatever credibility he has left.”

“Let’s hope so.”

“What have we missed?”

“Here at convention? Yesterday everyone gave reports about the progress in their districts, which was very inspiring. Then last night we talked about youth and people began to make commitments about numbers of youth they’d send into the field or accept as volunteers. The pledges totaled five hundred! I doubt that many will go out, but it was incredible. I think we’ll see lots of children’s classes, deepenings, Ruhi classes, and development projects this summer. This morning was the vote; results should be announced at the end of the afternoon. I asked the Central Spiritual Assembly to release me from service on the body and they turned me down, but they did announce my request to the delegates.”

“Really?”

“I was surprised, too; I’m not sure that was right. Everyone reports a lot of receptivity. The public is listening to Mitrubbéru’s Bahá'í radio program, thanks to all the attacks by Widulubu on *his* radio show, and they’re picking up a lot of the principles. The door to door efforts in Ora, in particular, are finding a lot of seekers.”

“I heard. I’ll be going there for two days after the convention to review development projects.”

“Good. How’s the business?”

“I’ve been keeping up, wherever I am. This is the quiet season, in terms of new projects. But the requests for grange grants have been coming in. Did the crown finally approve an extra fifty thousand?”

“Yes, just before I left I was able to meet the queens about it. They’re pleased that we’re getting all the granges set up.”

They entered the basement of the House of Worship and followed the crowd into the auditorium. Chris had to sit in front; Jordan found Tiamaté, who had been talking to someone else, and they sat in the visitors’ section in the back. Soon Staurέstu rose to call the meeting to order. “Let us begin the afternoon session,” he announced. “We will have the results of this morning’s voting at the end. Allow me to remind everyone that delegates sit up front and only they can address the gathering, in addition to the members of the Central Spiritual Assembly and the Auxiliaries. Modolubu will address us about this new publication, *The Proclamation of Bahá'u'llah.* Modolubu.”

The secretary of the Central Spiritual Assembly rose and walked to the stage. He held up a dignified leather-bound volume. “This is our new publication, *The Proclamation of Bahá'u'llah.* It is based on a volume the Universal House of Justice published some decades ago when they decided to proclaim the message of Bahá'u'llah to the kings and rulers of Gɛdhéma. We have cut a few parts out because they make no sense here and have added explanatory footnotes about a few other parts. The Central Spiritual Assembly has also composed a lengthy introduction where we explain the nature of our proclamation, its purpose, and what we hope to achieve. This book is now available to give to every duke, count, and lord on Éra. I am happy to say that three days ago a delegation of members of your Central Spiritual Assembly met with both queens and presented copies to them.” He paused for the wave of applause. “They received the volume very enthusiastically and Queen Duktɛrésto even said she would read her copy

carefully. The presentation was mentioned on Widulubu's radio program three days ago, so the event has already received some publicity.

"The path is now open to give the volume to every lord, headman, and members of the Old Houses. The Central Spiritual Assembly reserves the right to present it to royalty, dukes and counts. Local Spiritual Assemblies should make arrangements to give it to the lord in their locality. If a village has no lord, the Bahá'ís should talk to their regional council about plans to present it.

"Friends, we now number 19,000; we are five percent the population of this world. We have Spiritual Assemblies in 100 localities. We are a significant force on this world already, after only seventeen years of expansion. It is time to take Bahá'u'llah's ideas to everyone, so that even if they do not accept them fully, they may consider them carefully and adopt some of them. We do not expect lords to join the Faith by reading these volumes. Perhaps some will; who knows. But the purpose of the campaign is to introduce and spread the ideas in the revelation; public discourse. That's one of our major tasks as Bahá'ís. The other major tasks are personal transformation and spiritualization; teaching the Faith to others; raising up exemplary Bahá'í communities; and social action to contribute to an ever-advancing civilization. Let each one of us devise the means personally to contribute to these goals."

Modolubu stepped down to applause and consultation on the proclamation began. Jordan and Tiamaté sat politely listening, but pretty soon they began to feel the effects of their long drive, so they stepped out. Soon they found friends who also were not delegates and chatted about summer plans and finishing their *kwéteryɛris*.

They returned to the convention just before the consultation ended. Stauréstu called for the teller's report. The chief teller, Golbéstu, had a smile on his face. "We had a remarkable election," he began. "Of the 171 delegates, 170 voted; 167 in person and 3 by mail. There were no invalid or spoiled ballots. The following nine were elected to the Central Spiritual Assembly: Dr. Stauréstu Aywɛrgui, Modolubu Papɛrkwéri, Lord Estodhéru Doma-Mɛddwoglubasi, Aréjé Aywɛrgui, Brébéstu Doma-Slirbrébu, Mitrubbéru Kanéstoi, Jonu Obisbu, Randu Maradar, and Lord Patékwu of the Krésonɛ."

There was a gasp in the audience. "Grandpa was replaced by a Tutanɛ!" exclaimed Jordan, uncertain whether he was upset Chris was off or pleased that the Assembly's diversity had significantly increased. The audience began to applaud. Stauréstu invited the others to the stage; Patékwu, shocked, stumbled up the stairs and had to be helped by Modolubu, who embraced him. The audience jumped to its feet and cheered as the nine stood before them, heads bowed in humility.

"Still only one woman, though," said Tiamaté, disappointed.

"Another year," replied Jordan.

The convention ended the next afternoon. The Mennea clan gathered for a long family dinner, then went their various ways. Tiamaté headed back to Mɛlita with Thornton and Lébé; Chris and Liz headed for the South Shore; Jordan headed for Ora. The next morning he headed north on a wide gravel road, Route 51, to Mitranimɛla, a village of 3,500 people in a highland bowl twelve kilometers from Véspa's main city. As the road descended into the depression he was impressed by the beautiful rice paddies on the floor and the fields of vegetables and corn climbing the slopes. The village itself was new—it

had been carved from the forest by people fleeing the rising waters of the sea some ten years earlier—but it had not progressed much.

The road did not switch from gravel to concrete as it entered the built-up area, though it did cross a large river—the Achmáni—on a modern concrete bridge. A small, muddy village square had a store and three shops; like most of the village, they were built of brick. A very attractive fountain bubbled water on one side of the square. Jordan looked for the mill—the village name meant "Mitranu's mill"—but did not see one. He noted the hydrants along the street and spotted a water tower on top of a nearby hillock, which he headed toward, because the biogas works were at its base, as was the new grange. After five minutes of wandering about the maze of alleys he found both next to the Lord's impressive, new mansion.

The lord's twenty-five year old son, Mitranu—also the name of the lord—was waiting for him. They shook hands. "It's very good to meet you, honored Jordanu. I enjoyed our many conversations over the telephone."

That wasn't how Jordan recalled the conversations, which often had been tense. "It's very good to meet you face to face. I much appreciated the contact with you as well. Mitranimɛla is in a beautiful location, has thriving agriculture, and looks prosperous."

"Thank you, we're coming along bit by bit and are less of a country backwater. But I wouldn't compliment this place in front of my father; he'll just complain. He wants to meet you after the tour. Shall we start here?"

"Yes, I want to see the biogas works as an audit of that job and I'd like to see the grange site, since I'll be handling those grant requests as well. Then I need a tour of the town so I can inspect the hydrants."

“I’d like to talk to you about other possible grants, too.”

“If you have ideas, let’s talk about them and show me where they’d go, so that when the grant application comes in I’ll have a feel for the details. What do you have in mind? I assume you have a factory or mill already.”

“No, the name of our village is wishful thinking. When Lord Mitru of Ora allocated this land to my father—they’re cousins—my father was ambitious to develop the industry here because the Achmáni offers a lot of waterpower where it flows into the bowl. But no one in Ora would invest in it.”

“You now have electricity, so waterpower’s less important.”

“Don’t tell father that, either!”

Jordan started to walk toward the biogas building, next to the digesters. “Do you have mechanics and skilled craftsmen here?”

“Some. Most people here are farmers. Some take the bus to Ora every day to work in factories. We have a few businesses, too, but most people shop in Ora on Primdiu.”

“Ora pulls in a lot of labor and business.”

“They’re leeches! We’re large enough for a high school if the villages nearby sent their students here! But our kids take the bus to Véspa North High School, on the northern side of Ora!”

Jordan nodded, seeing he had stepped into a sensitive subject. He pointed to the biogas building and they entered. Jordan glanced at the various meters and tapped them to make sure they were working; the pressure they were showing was normal. He

attached a small gas lamp to a valve, opened the valve, and lit it; the blue color of the flame told him the gas was mostly methane, with little carbon dioxide.

At that point the biogas manager—a toothless, lame farmer—came in to ask what they were doing and they had a ten minute conversation about the facility, then he gave them a tour of the digesters and the manure and straw storage sheds. Jordan counted carefully; there were twelve installed and functioning digesters, as specified by the grant. He wasn't worried about that because he knew Tomasu was honest, but he did want to make sure the system was still working over a year after installation.

He stepped outside. The biogas manager pointed and said, "we plan to build our grange in that vacant field, honored."

"Thank you, I was wondering about that. How far along are your plans? Have you elected a grange board yet?"

"We did that last week and we've started working on a budget. But we have ten thousand agris; that means eventually we will need ten tractors. Do you think we can get one right away?"

"Does your lord have one he can loan to you?"

"Loan? The lord has a tractor and charges us a high fee for every use! He has said he does not intend to give it to the grange!" The manager looked at Mitranu uneasily; Mitranu looked uncomfortable.

"Is he providing your grange any start-up funds?"

"No, lord."

"That's unfortunate. You need to tell the All-Grange Council. They may be able to provide more, or guarantee a bank loan."

A few more farmers came along, also pointed to the vacant field nearby, and began to ask about a dairy, a creamery, a cheese-making plant, and facilities for raising chickens, turkeys, and pigs. They had all sorts of ideas. They also wanted to know when they'd get a tractor and noted that they needed five to supplement the one the lord already rented out at high prices.

The crowd kept getting larger and asking more questions, so Jordan listened and offered ideas for an hour, then apologized he had to move on. He walked up to the water tower and climbed to the top to verify it was full, then walked back to the valley to see the well and pump where the water came from. Mitranu took him downstream to the artificial marshes that received the village's sewage—former rice paddies—and he took notes about what he saw.

Then they jumped into the pickup and drove to the southwest corner of the village—the part farthest from the water tower—and stopped so that Jordan could open a hydrant. The water gushed out. "Good pressure!" he said, smiling. "How many houses are connected?"

"About half. We've got ten fountains scattered across the village where people can fill buckets, if they don't have pipes."

"You have an impressive public water and sewer system; one of the best in the kingdom. Have you seen an improvement in health?"

"Definitely, there's a lot less intestinal and stomach illnesses. Of course, father says it'll take fifty years for the decreased medical costs to cover the increased water costs!"

“That’s because he can’t measure increases in tax revenues. Workers who aren’t sick earn more.”

“How much more?”

A few percent.”

“Tell father that.”

Jordan nodded and closed the hydrant. They got back into the pickup and headed for the lord’s mansion. “He devoted extra personal money to this system, didn’t he?”

“Yes, he was moved to make a contribution. I was very pleased. I’ve completed a dwoyɛri at Génadɛma Mitrui in engineering—that’s what my father wanted—but I was able to take one of Lord Kristoféru’s courses about administration two years ago, and I have been using it to develop this place.”

“Has your father given you some development responsibility?”

“No. Sometimes I can convince him about specific projects, though.”

Jordan nodded. Mitranu pointed to an alley and he turned right. It wound around, but took them to the mansion.

Mitranu led them inside and Lord Mitranu rose to greet the guest. “So, I hope you are pleased with how we have spent the palace’s money!”

“Yes, Lord, it’s quite impressive. I like the public fountains; they’re beautiful as well as useful.”

“We imported the statues from Anartu! I’m amazed the Sumis can make statues of the god Mitru. So, are you here to give me a copy of this Bahá'í book, *Proclamation of Bahá'u'llah?* Because I don’t want it.”

“No, lord, I don’t know the Bahá'ís here in the village, I’m here to review the way the various grants my company helped to arrange for Mitranimɛla have been spent.”

“Oh, of course. Tell the Bahá'ís not to bother to give me the book; I’m not interested. Putting the book on my shelf would displease the divine Mitru. Besides, it has such blasphemous things. Your prophet says he prefers a parliament and monarchy together? Widumaj is turning in his tomb, the way his hymns have been interpreted! Sit and have some tea.” The lord pointed to a pot; Jordan sat. But the lord didn’t pour him a cup. “I hope everything is in order with the grants. We were very careful.”

“Yes, everything appears to be in order. The water and sewer systems and the biogas seem to be working well. We have a few more checks to make—”

“Like what?”

Jordan wasn’t going to mention random polling; on Primdius when people shopped in Véspa, they talked pretty freely. “We have ways to check customer satisfaction; random telephone calls, for example. I was telling your son that Mitranimɛla has one of the best water systems in the world. The biogas digesters are all working, too—”

“It’s easier than hauling in wood from the hills. Did you know we’re the largest place on the western shore without a connection to the gas pipeline? I’ve been trying in vain to get a pipeline laid along Route 51. Now that you’re sure we haven’t wasted the money, do you think we can get a grant for waterpower and a factory?”

“A factory, yes. You already have waterpower, according to my information.”

The lord shook his head. “That was an unfortunate effort; it didn’t work out.” He glanced at the walls around him and his son twitched nervously; Jordan suspected the

development grant had been spent on the house. That was common. “I still hope we can get a dam and hydropower.”

Jordan shook his head. “The palace is making grants for irrigation systems, but not for hydroelectric power. We have many large installations and they make power cheaply. The Achmáni is too small; its power would be expensive.”

“Expensive or not, it’d be *ours*.”

“Jordan reminded me that factories can be run on electricity,” said the younger Mitranu. “We could build it right here, rather than over by the canyon.”

“That’s true.” The lord nodded. “Can we get a grant for a factory?”

“Sure, but you need to decide what kind you want, what skills your people have, and what local raw materials are available. The palace usually doesn’t approve grants for factories that make something there’s too much of; everyone wants a shoe manufactory, for example, and leather is cheapest on the eastern shore, so any new shoe manufactories will go there. Mitranimɛla has agricultural products: rice, vegetables, corn, dairy. The grange people want a creamery or a chicken or turkey raising facility.”

“The grange!” he spat. “Democracy again. If I could, I’d ban it, but that’ll cause more trouble than it’s worth. I’ll leave projects like that to them. Can you help us get a metal-working factory?”

“I’ll be happy to help writing a grant for a factory, but we need to be specific—what kind of work it will do, what market it will serve, how big it will be—for the grant to succeed.”

The lord looked at his son. “Is this something you can pursue, between hunting trips?”

“Yes, father.” The younger Mitranu looked at Jordan with a slight smile.

“Good. I named this place Mitranimɛla because of the waterpower. I really don’t care what sort of mill or factory we get, but I want something!” The lord reached over and poured Jordan a cup of hot tea. He took it and sipped while the lord talked about all the things Mitranimɛla could become if people would only invest in the place. “How much can we get?” he said in conclusion.

“Let’s see,” replied Jordan, calculating. “Ten percent of the palace’s cut of the local taxes every other year; you have about 700 households and they pay about 300 dhanay to the palace annually, so that’s 700 times 30 or about 20,000 dhanay every other year.”

“Cheap of them,” replied the lord. “We got that much from them already for water, sewer, and biogas. But see what you can do.” He directed the last remark to his son.

“We will, father.” Mitranu rose, so Jordan did as well. He shook hands with the lord again, thanked him, and stepped out. “So, what’s the next step?” asked the younger Mitranu when they had reached Jordan’s pickup.

“Can you send me some idea how many people here engage in specific vocations? Not just farmer, but ‘rice farmer’ or ‘cattle raiser.’ If you can get me some idea of what resources exist, I can write you back with some ideas, then we can discuss them by telephone.”

“I hate talking on the phone.”

“Well, I don’t get to Véspa more than twice a year. I have a lot of places to visit. That’s even true today; I have an appointment in Rudhisér province this afternoon.”

“I see. Alright, we can talk by phone.”

Chris slowed the rover and stared at a tree on the right. “Hollow in the middle, with a broken limb; that looks like the one.”

“I guess. I wish we’d stick to real roads,” replied Liz.

“I think a dozen Wuronɛ told us about this hunting road, though.” Chris drove forward slowly and sure enough, a hundred meters beyond the distinctive tree was a rutted dirt track on the right. “This must be it.” He turned right and proceeded across the piney woods on the unimproved track. “It’s chewed up; it must be the Kwétékwonɛ hunting road. Gréjpola is less than twenty kilometers from here, and there’s a village half way. If, instead, we drive all the way back to Wɛranopéla, north to Brébatroba, then south and east to Gréjpola, it’ll take two hours.”

“And if we get stuck in the mud, it’ll take a day!”

“True, but I want to see the land. We can always call for help.” He looked around as they headed northwestward at twenty kilometers per hour. “This whole area is Kwétékwonɛ hunting grounds. The pickups come down this track to Route 69, then east and west along the route, dropping off and picking up hunters. You can see that fifteen years ago, before the sea started to fill, this area was marginal for forest; the mature trees are far apart and the areas in between are filled with small pines. Now the mature trees are really big because they had plenty of sunlight and the rainfall increased.”

“So, you’re looking at the timber?”

“Exactly. You can’t clear cut this area because most of the trees are too small, so the Kwétékwonɛ won’t be tempted to destroy the forest. Removing the big trees will

create holes for a new generation of seedlings and the timber quality should be high. And they won't disrupt the hunting too much."

"How much forest are you talking about?"

"Two or three hundred square kilometers. The South Shore's largest forests are in this area. Two companies could manage the whole area sustainably and usefully."

Liz nodded. "You're always thinking of a new project."

"Maybe Thornton can do most of the work on this one. The Lɛpawsona forestry efforts are pretty much self-sustaining now."

She nodded again and said nothing while his eyes feasted on the woods. They were pretty, filled with sunny meadows.

In eight kilometers the mature trees became few and far between, seedlings became rarer, and the grass grew two meters high; they had reached the planet's southeastern savanna. They went up a long, gradual slope and suddenly descended into a large grassy bowl that was the heart of the Kwétékwonɛ tribe's territory. The dirt track suddenly became graveled and took them to a spring around which a village of adobe houses clustered. As they drove slowly through—carefully avoiding chickens, dogs, and kids—Liz waved and Chris counted. "About sixty houses; that sounds right, I think I heard this place has three hundred people. And I count four pickups!"

"They're doing better than the Wuronɛ; but they're selling gypsum and nickel-iron, right? This must be the Kwétakwés; see the white gypsum around the spring?" She pointed and he nodded; the name of the river meant "white water." "If I remember, it has four or five Bahá'ís and one study circle."

“Even here.” They reached the edge of the village and a sign that said, “Route 73 Gréjpola 10 km.” Chris smiled at that and accelerated to 50 kilometers per hour, which was easy and safe on the gravel.

They passed herds of grazing cattle and fields of corn, wheat, and vegetables surrounded by barbed wire fences. They had to slow for grazing animals on the road occasionally, and once for an approaching pickup truck and its dust cloud, but the trip took only fifteen minutes. As they passed the school on the edge of Gréjpola, a settlement of a thousand people and two hundred adobe houses, they saw teachers watching the children playing. One recognized the rover and waved. “Stop!” said Liz. “That’s ɛndrudatu. He’s secretary of the Spiritual Assembly.”

Chris stopped and backed up. “Alláh-u-Abhá!” exclaimed ɛndrudatu. “I didn’t see you come into the village.”

“We’re just arriving now from Wurontroba,” replied Liz. “Chris is meeting with Lord Mɛnɛgékwɛs.”

“I heard; the Spiritual Assembly is scheduled to meet with him and present the *Proclamation of Bahá'u'llah* to him. He wanted to wait until Lord Chris was present.”

“Oh, dear. I’d rather not mix the presentation with a discussion of development,” said Chris. “He might feel inclined to be nice about the book in order to get development money. It confuses everything.”

“Perhaps we can separate the meetings, then. I’m sorry, Lord Chris.”

“That’s alright. I’m going to Lord Mɛnɛgékwɛs’ house now. Maybe I can talk to him quickly before the Spiritual Assembly can assemble. Maybe that will separate the events.”

“How are things here?” asked Liz.

ɛndrudatu nodded. “Quite well. Those of us who attended the Convention gathered the friends together two nights ago. They were fascinated and asked a lot of questions, and two people are asking about the Faith as a result.”

“Excellent,” said Liz. “Maybe I can meet them and encourage them to investigate the teachings.”

They exchanged goodbyes and Chris started forward again. Two minutes later they parked in front of Lord Mɛnɛgékwɛs’s compound. By the time they had gotten out of the car, the lord himself had come outside to greet them. “Lord Chris, thank you for coming! When I got your letter and when we spoke on the telephone, I thought ‘how fortunate the Kwétékwonɛ are to have such a friend!’ We always welcome your visit.”

“Thank you, Lord Mɛnɛgékwɛs. I was inspired by my conversation with Déodatu last week about all your plans and I recalled our warm conversations last year at the Grand Court. Have you met my wife, Liz?”

“I have not. An honor, my lady.” He offered his left hand.

“I’m very pleased and honored to meet you, my lord,” replied Liz, shaking his hand.

“Please come inside, rest, and have some coffee. I always have a pot ready.” He led them inside and sat them on soft pillows in his main audience hall, poured them

coffee, and sat with them. His wife came out with bread and jam and joined them, a gesture that surprised Liz.

"I was speaking to Déodatu Ekwɛsmani a week ago," Chris said, referring to an active Kwétékwonɛ youth who was at the annual Bahá'í convention six days earlier. "He told me he had returned here and you had hired him to serve as Development Officer for Kwétékwona. Not only is this a brilliant decision, lord, but you could not have chosen someone more capable."

"Thank you. Déodatu has wandered the world doing Bahá'í work for two years, he wanted to get married, I wanted him back here, and I have an eligible niece who took a certain interest in him. It seemed a perfect arrangement for everyone."

"I agree, and I hear they are happily married. I am very happy for them. You know, lord, not all provinces have Development Officers, only a few cities, no villages, and yours is the only tribe. It is a very foresightful decision."

"So far, he has brought us some grants, loans, and other programs, too; he has paid for himself! If he can't do that, the job will have to end. Have you any ideas for us? Perhaps we should get him."

"Yes, it would be good if he could join us. When we spoke, he had quite a few ideas."

Mɛnɛgékwɛs nodded to his wife; she rose and went to find Déodatu. "Did he speak to you about timber and sugarcane?" asked the chief.

"Indeed, we talked about them. I just drove up the hunting road from the Dhébakwés; we were visiting Wurontroba earlier today. You have extensive new forest in the southern areas of your territory. You could install logging roads throughout the area

and thin the forest by cutting the mature trees. The forest is spreading northward; you could transplant seedlings. The Lɛpawsonɛ have been doing the same with their forests."

"Déodatu told me about your conversation. Ah, here he is! His house is just across the way!"

Déodatu entered and greeted everyone. There were a few moments of social pleasantries, then he sat on pillows with a cup of coffee in hand. "Are you discussing the timber idea?"

"We just started," replied Mɛnɛgékwɛs. "I'm very interested in a partnership to establish a timber company, lord, like the arrangement you made in Lɛpawsona. I am also interested in pursuing the sugar cane idea."

"We need land to raise more sugar cane and the Kwolonɛ have indicated they want to continue with the crops they are currently raising. If you send people to Mɛlita, we can train them how to raise sugar cane. Once you plant the fields, I'll invest in a plant to make sugar, molasses, and fuel alcohol."

"How much?"

"The sugar cane plant will cost fifty thousand. The forestry company will cost sixty, spread over two years. Both will generate about a dozen jobs, maybe eighty thousand a year of revenue, and thirty thousand in taxes. Sugar cane farming will create maybe a dozen more jobs. Assuming the projects succeed, of course. But demand for timber and alcohol are growing fast."

"You are assuming risk, then?"

“Yes, if the projects fail I’ll lose my money. Your tribe will gain jobs, taxes, and the chance to buy the sugar cane processing plant and take it over. The timber company would be a long-term partnership.”

“What about expanding our gypsum mine?” asked Déodatu.

“With your own revenue, you mean? You just expanded it last year and it worked out pretty well, right? I was surprised; I didn’t think you’d sell the additional production.”

“We didn’t, completely. No expansion this year,” replied Mɛnɛgékwɛs. “Demand for nickel-iron is flat. But we’re doing pretty well. Until a few years ago we were isolated, and then we almost went to war over our western shoreline. Losing that land was very painful, but it forced us to develop the nickel-iron and gypsum, and since then we’ve been doing quite well.”

“And we’ve been exporting corn, grains, winter vegetables, cattle, and wild meat,” added Déodatu. “Lord, we’d like to establish a slaughterhouse and tannery as well. Gordha and Mɛdhpéla both have them, and they are very successful.”

“I am willing to invest in such a facility. That would make a bank loan possible, especially if the tribe invested as well. How many cattle do you have?”

“Twenty thousand,” replied the Lord. “Our herds are the third largest. Right now we drive our animals to Mɛdhpéla and sell them. If we slaughtered them ourselves and tanned the hides, I understand we’d earn twice as much.”

Chris nodded. “I think that’s correct. A slaughterhouse and tannery would cost about eighty thousand. This development plan is getting expensive.”

“We have some to invest, we can get bank loans, and we have friends.” The lord looked at Déodatu. “Can you research these matters and draw up the plans?”

"Of course, lord."

"Ask Jordan for advice. His development consulting business has become quite good. But it needs income to survive. The palace has agreed to give him a five percent commission on top of any grants he sets up and audits later. Prosperity Bank just agreed to pay him a commission to review a development loan, and I may start paying him to oversee the effectiveness of my investments."

"It sounds like he's providing a very useful service," said Mɛnɛgékwɛs, though his voice betrayed worry about the oversight it entailed. "Good, we have a plan. Now we need to finalize it in writing." The lord poured himself another coffee. "Tell me, Lord Chris, what is your philosophy about using your money to make money for yourself and to assist others? How do you balance the two?"

Chris was surprised. "You ask a complicated question. As a gɛdhému, sometimes I am viewed with suspicion, as one who may want to take advantage of others. The suspicion can be deepened if the other group is one that has been oppressed; Tutanɛ, Sumi, rural villagers, the poor. I can't give away my money for two reasons: I wouldn't have any left for my family, and I wouldn't have any left to help others in the future. If I give things away, also, I do not help the others as much as they think, because they begin to think the money was owed to them and they could become dependent on it. So I seek projects of mutual benefit, which will help others become prosperous and independent while increasing my prosperity as well. Does that answer your question?"

"I think that is a very clear and illuminating answer. But don't you have a first obligation to Mɛlwika?"

“I have a first obligation to the people with whom I am in financial partnership. If I invest in Kwétékwona, I have a first obligation to devote those profits to that place. But that is not my only obligation with those profits; if so, I’d still be investing only in Mɛlwika. If I had done that, also, I’d be much less rich than I am and much less able to help others.”

“I understand. I passed by your house in Mɛlwika and was struck by the fact that it was so small.”

“I have not invested in large and beautiful houses, huge closets full of clothes, or golden objects of art. I prefer to invest in businesses, tomis, partnerships, and of course in the Bahá'í Faith, so that it can grow as well.”

“Of course. I understand the Spiritual Assembly wants to give me a book, the *Proclamation of Bahá'u'llah.* Does it say anything about how to spend one’s wealth?”

“It has some advice Bahá'u'llah gave to kings about investing in their people rather than in armaments. There are other books that provide more detailed advice about how to spend one’s wealth and spread prosperity to all. We believe, lord, that we can bring into existence a world where there is no extreme poverty. There will always be some people with more property and others with less; that is the nature of society. But we believe we can create a world where everyone can read and write, pursue a profession, have a comfortable house, marry, raise a family, contribute to humanity’s progress, and be secure from starvation, injustice, and avoidable suffering. That is the world to which I devote my wealth.”

Mɛnɛgékwɛs looked at Chris very respectfully and nodded. “That is a very high ideal, lord. I never would have thought that such a world was possible; even imaginable.

But the last fifteen years have seen changes of a sort no one could have imagined. They have been frightening, they have horrified some, they have required a lot of adjustment, but overall they have been to our benefit."

"The changes have resulted because of the new knowledge. Everyone has been quick to acknowledge the scientific side of the new knowledge, but they are much slower to acknowledge the spiritual source of it. That is why we are sharing *The Proclamation of Bahá'u'llah* with the lords of this world."

"Then I look forward to receiving the book," said Mɛnɛgékwɛs. "I will read it very carefully."

Reread and edited, 6/16/13, 8/31/17, 11/30/24

Liz (68): Splitting her time between ABM work and Women's Gabrulis. Two

world-round trips

Chris (70): Focuses the fall and winter on spreading the grange movement.

May (43); Amos (45); Lua (48); Behruz (52); Thornton (33); Lébé (33)

The children: Rostamu Shirazi (15, summer); Skandé Keino (14, spring); Jalalu Mennea (13, spring); Kalé Mennea (11, June); Marié Keino (same); Jonkrisu (8, Aug.)

Tiamaté (21-22) Jordan (21-22): Focusing on Swadnoma

Goal established of universal literacy among Bahá'ís; how is it going?

Behruz admits the Fischer-Tropsch process works, but is uneconomical and apologizes to Chris. Wɛrontroba has a tractor and a company/tomi. Chris works on the publication for all lords. Chris talks to Chandu about grange progress. Jordan's development work going well. Thornton advocates for Mɛlwika to help fund a road to the north basin. How are things in Pɛnkakwés? Sumilara? Wiki Bank?

Apr: Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh to all lords and counts is now necessary because of the publicity. It is planned at National Convention.

Round-the-sea bicycle race planned. It includes Kɛrda, too.

The year of the consumer: new appliances, more social safety net.

Started July 16, 2008; switched to the Mars Frontier novel in September 2008; resumed work in March 2009; finished April 16, 2009. Reread and edited, July 9-12, 2011, June 14-16, 2013, August 27-31, 2017; reread and edited, Dec. 29, 2023, Nov. 29-30, 2024.