

Landanomikle



Introduction

This small book, written by the scribe Palve of Tiliomse in 1384, has come down to us centuries later as one of the few historical records of Alphistia in pre-modern times. It provides invaluable information about the pre-Christian religion and the core legend of Sevander and Ardal. It accurately reflects the continuous struggle for a peaceful existence and a philosophy of duality, i.e. both good and evil is contained in each individual. Even the cruel personality of Skar Vapnesker of Lalk is ambiguous and capable of regret and shame. As in all Christian cultures, and as a priest, Palve attempts to guide his readers toward the good. But the Pest bewilders him, as it did all Alphistians. They had been good, but their lives were still destroyed. In sadness, Palve tries to save as much as he can of what his people treasured most: their books, and the knowledge they contained. We know that most of these treasures were lost as the few survivors dispersed throughout Europe. At least this historical account, and the tales of the Skansatala that include much more detail of the legends of the pre-Christian days, have survived intact.

Prologue

These are our stories, these are our tales, about our lives and our country, from long ago until today.

We call our land Alvestea, it is said, after the name of the mother of our people, Alvea. We believe sometimes that the whole world is our country, because we have gone to live in many lands, but the country in our souls is the land of Alvea. Our word for our own nation is lesenum.

Alvestea is a northern land, where the winters are long and dark, where there are forests and lakes, and more forests and lakes. In the winter, the sun rarely visits. Then we have the northern lights, and in our ancient tradition, the ancient gods Matva Alvea and Tas and all the Vaeren would appear. But in the summer, the sun is always with us. The Vaeren are away then. But with the snows and the darker days, they would arrive again with the rainbows of the night.

It has always been so.

About Ennis Island

In the northern seas, far away from the lands where Matva and Tas came to visit our ancestors, a beautiful island was given to us. Its mountains and glaciers are a frightening sight from the north. Visitors with unfriendly ideas had often gone away when seeing the rough vista from their boats, but the children of Alvea learned to go to the other side of the island, where less frightening mountains protected valleys and hills along a river, with many lakes and forests, with calmer weather and safe harbors.

Our people came to the valley, and lived peacefully for many years. They worshipped their gods Matva and Tas, and all the other Vaeren. They called their land Onaste, which from the ancient language has come to us as Ennis, which means island. They called the valley where they settled, Dalvarna.

The darkest mountains in the north of Ennis Island became home to the Dredva, a group of bandits. For a long time, they knew nothing of our people in the valleys to the south. Then the young priest Sevander became their prisoner, and the Dredva learned of our peaceful lives. Sevander and his friend Ardal saved their people from the Dredva, through their clever knowledge. But in the end, the Dredva nearly destroyed us all.

About the Ancient Times

The tale is told that our world came to be when Matva Vaera sailed through the air. As she

breathed outward, the stars and the world we call our own were created. She gave this place to her friend Tas. Through the years, Tas was not too concerned with Arde, as Matva Vaera named this world. From time to time he came to our ancestors. He showed favor to a peaceful people, led by a woman named Alvea. During the northern lights, Tas came from the heavens and shared knowledge of many magical and mysterious things. Alvea chose priests to worship Tas with her and spread what she had learned with her people. The priests were called "derodren" which means "tree-knowers", since Tas always appeared at night in the forests.

After a time, Tas gives Alvea the aravad. With the aravad, one can find direction. If the holder of the aravad has a good heart, he will go to a good place. But if the holder has a bad heart, the aravad will take him to evil and death. With the help of the aravad, Alvea takes her people to our land, to Onaste Island, to what was known as Alvealanda, the lesenum. A happy life for many years was the fate of our ancestors.

Long after Alvea had joined Tas in the heavens, two young men became friends while studying the ways of the derodren. Sevander was a fair lad from the valley of Lonera, the joy of his mother. His friend Ardal was from a farm on the shore of Lake Vasa. His loyalty to his friend was great but Sevander was a youth of many moods, wild or dark or sunny like the weather of our island, and just as difficult to predict.

In a dark mood, one day Sevander left his home and his friends, taking with him the aravad. He wandered through the forest of Kemarle, where witches warned him of terror ahead. He headed north to the most northern mountains, and there he was taken prisoner by the frightful tribe of dangerous men, the Dredva. Their leader was the most frightening of all, Skar Vapnesker of Lalk. He cast a spell over Sevander and took him as his personal slave.

Sevander's mother begged Ardal to find her son, and with much fear, he went to the north to search for him. After a long wandering, he reached the camp of Lalk. By night he sneaked into the midst of the snoring Dredva. He found Sevander chained with the horses. To Sevander, seeing Ardal was like a dream, since he had forgotten his friend and his mother. When Ardal tried to take Sevander away, the noise alerted Skar Vapnesker, who with fearsome noise screamed that Sevander would not escape alive.

Ardal though, did escape. He hid in the mountains, but the next morning he witnessed the execution of his beloved friend. In sorrow he returned home.

Skar Vapnesker regretted his terrible temper and in his grief over the loss of Sevander forever, took the aravad and went to sea. Did the aravad lead him to good or ill? No one knows for he was never seen again.

Sevander's mother, Ardal and all the people of the land grieved for Sevander. One night Ardal had a vision. He dreamed that when Sevander suffered the torments of Skar Vapnesker, he did not die. And this was true. Sevander pretended to be dead, and after Skar Vapnesker went to sea, Sevander dragged himself away. His sorrow was great, and he wanted to beg forgiveness of his friend, but he knew that the remaining Dredva would come to destroy the beloved lesenum and he had to give warning.

The Dredva without Skar Vapnesker were even angrier when they learned that Sevander's body was gone. They knew he had somehow survived his tortures. They gave chase and caught him. They took him prisoner and forced him to tell them the way. He promised to guide them to his homeland, but instead he led them up the side of a mountain on a foggy morning and sent them flinging over a cliff. As the fog clears, he could see Alvestea in the distance. He returned home to the love of his family and Ardal, and the respect of his people.

But not all the Dredva died through Sevander's brave trickery. Years later, the Dredva attacked our peaceful people, and nearly all who survived were sold into slavery.

About the Monks

Many years after the Dredva took the people of Dalvarna into slavery, a few priests from Erlenda drifted in their round boats to Ennis Island. They knew this was a place for them where they could live and pray. They were Christian monks and they knew little of the ancient religions, except not to believe in them.

The monks thought that Ennis Island was a lonely place, but soon they learned that a very few heathen people had escaped the Dredva and returned to their beloved Dalvarna. But there was little left for them, and they lived a hard life.

On the north coast of the West Fjord, the monks built their first church, which they named after Saint Michael. Those who escaped the Dredva befriended the monks, because they knew they were men of peace. In their language, the spot where the cloister of Saint Michael was built had been called Leva. They settled in a village with this name, and soon became Christians themselves.

The monks and the village grew. More brothers from Erlenda came to live at the cloister, and farmers with their families came across the sea too. They lived without fear, because the Dredva took their slaves away from Ennis Islands years ago, and never came back. They cursed the land that caused them the death of so many of their kin and the loss of their great leader, the Skar Vapnesker. The monks knew of the Dredva, who had come to Erlenda and destroyed many churches and killed many priests. They wrote down many of these stories about Ennis Island which the people of Dalvarne told them and made them into books. These

have come to us to our day and tell the history of the early people of the lesenum, and their legends from ancient times.

For many years Leva was the only place in Dalvarna where people lived. The cloister educated the sons of the farmers, and some of them became monks. There was no king or prince in Dalvarna. The ruler was the bishop.

About the Lost Northmen

As the winter turned into spring one year, the people of Dalvarna were surprised to see two boats come into the West Fjord. They were afraid and ran through the gates of the cloister. The bishop and the monks prayed that the Dredva had not returned. The boats were similar to Dredva boats.

But these were not Dredva coming to take their revenge. Soon the mysterious visitors came to shore. They were dressed somewhat like the Dredva, but there were monks among them, and the people of Dalvarna were relieved. There were also people from Erlanda among them, and they spoke a similar language.

The bishop invited their leader into the church to pray, and then they learned the story of their visitors. Three years before, several ships from the Northmen's island of Fron went far west across the sea and found a wonderful land. They tried to live there, but each winter they were attacked by the people who lived there already. Several of the Northmen were killed. They called these people Skralenten, because of the cries they made when they attacked.

In fear the Northmen left the rich and beautiful land to go home to Fron, but the winter seas were unkind, and they lost their way. Finally they saw the mountains of Ennis Island, which resembled their own land. But when they sailed into the West Fjord, they knew they were not at home. When they saw the church tower of Leva, they were happy to have arrived in a place that was also Christian.

The bishop of Leva welcomed the Northmen to stay and live among them. To this the Northmen agreed, for their homeland of Fron was too full of their kinsmen already, and they were too weary to go to sea again. The two boats carried more than 100 Northmen, Erlander servants, and also a few Skralenten. They had brought with them several Skralenten women, who had become Christian. The next year they went to Fron to tell their kinsmen there was a friendly land two days' voyage south. There was land for farms and a peaceful Christian life. Over the next 10 years, more of the people from Fron came to live on Ennis Island.

Soon the people of Dalvarna and the people from Fron married with one another. They began to speak a common language with the structure of the Northern language of Fron with many words

from the Erlander language too. The Northmen had called the land they found before coming to Ennis Island Vestlanda. The monks combined this name with the word Alvealanda, which the people of Dalvarna at times called themselves. The land from then became known as Alvestea, which in the common language of the world is spelled Alphistia.

About the Lesenum

Alphistia became a nation, and far from the rulers of the old lands, its people were free. Visitors from outside were very rare, and it was also rare for Alphistians to travel from Ennis Island. The monks had come to be away from the crowded world, so they brought with them only a few of their countrymen to farm and fish. The Northmen were looking for somewhere less crowded than their homeland, but in the Western Lands, they could not live in peace. For them, Alphistia answered their prayers.

The monks in their cloister in Leva chose the abbot Danil to be their bishop. Danil was a learned man, and also a wise man. He looked for the common good in all things, and he knew this was important with people from Erlanda and people from Fron living together. He invited each group to come together twice a year to tell their ancient tales, and he told his monks to write down these stories in books, in the common language that was now growing. So the Skansatala came to be, and so the Alphistian language was preserved.

Danil the Learned also told the people that cloisters would be established in other parts of Alphistia, to the south of the West Fjord, with its many lakes and a river, which was named Sioto. The new cloisters would have schools, hospitals, as well as beautiful stone churches. Towns would be started at each cloister, and certain other towns would be markets for the surrounding farmers. Danil ordered that cobbled roads connect the towns all together. So the Five Cloisters and the Nine Towns of Alphistia came to be.

The assembly of storytelling twice each year was held on the Sioto River on the edge of a forest. Soon, the assembly was a place to discuss all the important affairs of the communities, and Danil the Learned declared that all the men of Alphistia would help to make the laws of the land, at this spot called Kilreti. They chose a chief lawgiver, whom they called the Spor. The Spor was not a king to declare laws, but a leader who was to listen to the people, who decided themselves their own laws, their tithes to the Church and to the towns. The Spor was judge in disputes, except when these involved the priests. Then Danil the Learned or the bishop would judge them.

The people chose Duren to be their first Spor. Duren was a farmer from Erlanda, but who had married the daughter of the Northmen's chief. This brought the two peoples together closer.

About the Five Monasteries

Danil the Learned chose four places to start new cloisters. Three of these were for monks, and one was for nuns. Leva was to be the seat of the bishop, which all the senior monks would choose themselves, and send to Rome for approval. It was to be many years before word would return to Alphistia from Rome. The Church in Alphistia was in this way very independent.

The first of the new cloisters was opened in Morea, a two days walk from Leva, near the south coast of Ennis Island. Farmers and fishermen went with the monks to build a town. A beautiful church dedicated to the Virgin Mary was built.

A half day's walk to the east, a convent was started, named after Saint Anne, mother of Mary. Two of the Skralenten from the Western Lands became nuns, and they helped to build an infirmary to nurse all the sick of Alphistia.

One day's walk from Leva, on the Sioto River, Danil the Learned established a monastic school for the boys who would write books and be trained as future abbots. The monastery was dedicated to Saint Colomba, who established a similar cloister in Iona. The town that grew next to it was given the name Tiliomse.

And one day's walk east from Tiliomse, the last of the five monasteries was established, in an area which would soon become rich farmland. The monastery was named after Saint Patrick.

About books and learning

Danil the Learned went to Tiliomse to establish the special cloister to teach young men the art of writing books. Twice each year, the scribes from this monastery went to the Kilreti assembly to hear the tales of all the people of Alvestea, and to record the laws agreed and the judgements passed by the Spor. Thus the library of Tiliomse quickly grew, and its books were in the language of the people.

As was the tradition, these books were full of beautiful pictures and elegant letters. A visit to the library of Tiliomse was a wonderful experience for the people of our land. Danil the Learned wanted the people, even the common folk, to read these books. And so the idea that all of God's children should be able to read was an important part of our Alphistian life, even from the earliest years.

Danil the Learned chose the most promising and talented boys in the land who had learned to read and write, and he sent them to Tiliomse. They not only learned the art of bookmaking, but they read many of the books in the library themselves. Some of the scribes would become the most learned men in the land, teaching in all the cloister schools. Others of these learned men advised the Spor and became leaders as well.

About the fish and the farms

Man cannot live by books alone. The life of prayer and learning and of tellings tales and recording them at the Kilreti are important to who Alphistians are. But the tasks of everyday life give us our daily bread.

The people of Fron were great seamen, and their talents included harvesting the sea. Their boats would go beyond the West Fjord into the open sea, and they also knew the lakes and rivers of our land to get our fish. The people of Erlanda who came with the monks were farmers. They would place their plots near the cloisters, and grow food for their families, while selling the remainder at markets or to the monks.

As time passed the people of Fron mixed with those from Erlanda, and now it is common for all to farm and fish. The fruits of the sea and the bread from the land and the meat of our cattle and sheep gave to us a good life. Blessed have been the people of our lesenum through these years of work and prayer.

About the nine towns

In the first years, there was only the cloister at Leva, but soon there was a village that grew next to it, since the men and their families from Erlanda had come to farm and live a godly life. This became the most important town of our land, with a market next to the cathedral, with stone houses and shops of workmen and artisans.

At Morea, Tiliomse, and Revel towns also grew up next to the cloisters. These also were market towns with farms nearby. Along the coast of the West Fjord the fishing town of Aviolta was settled, and near Morea the fishing town Visne was settled. Along the northern shore of Lake Vasa the town of Brane was settled, and became known both for its fishermen and farmers. Near the convent, the town of Varakloster grew. Near the meeting place of the Kilreti, a town called Sporete grew next to the farm of the Spor, the elected leader of the Alphistian people.

Around the towns farmers have lived, but much of our land is forest. To the north of the lesenum the trees are fewer, where the mountains are, where the ice rivers are. We have chosen to leave these lands alone. These were the dwellings camps of the Dredva.

Through the years roads were built between all the towns and they are the finest in our age. Danil the Learned instructed us so when he read of the roads in the days of the Romans. All parts of our lesenum are within one day's journey by horse, and two days by foot.

About the Golden Years

Far from the peoples of the known world, Alphistia was left alone from war. For many years the valleys of the lesenum gave the people of Alphistia a quiet and good life. There were of course problems, such as when Tozur, the bishop of Leva declared that the word of God was more powerful than the judgements of the Spor. Revald, the Spor of that time, removed the mitre of Tozur at the Kilrete. The people at the Kilreti knew then where their loyalty for unchurchly matters lay. And thereafter Tozur was known as Kaler, the bald.

The few visitors from abroad were rare trading ships. The people of Fron were not reluctant to come, but those in Erlanda or the countries east would venture seldom to these seas far from land.

Froder, a wiser bishop than Tozur de Kaler, instructed all those who were to visit Fron, Erlanda or anywhere in the civilized world that they must bring books back with them for the library at Tiliomse. In this way, one of the remoter parts of the world had one of the best libraries in the world.

The towns of Alphistia grew and had many stone and brick houses. Each town built a beautiful church and market halls. At the Kilreti site, inns were opened for the great number of visitors twice each year and grand trade fairs were held.

These were the golden years for our people, and they lasted a long time.

About The Time of Troubles

In the year 1382 after our Lord's birth, a ship came to the harbor at Leva. It slowly drifted into dock, and no one stepped onto land with the required case of books. The porters of the harbor stepped onto the ship and were terrified to see that every man on it was dead. Their bodies were blackened and it was a great ordeal for them to be buried in the Christian way.

The bishop Storel and the Spor Evand knew that this ship was a terrible omen for Alphistia. They called the people together to pray for deliverance, but it was already too late. The Pest had arrived in Alphistia.

Within a few months it had spread from one end of our lesenum to the other. The sisters of the hospital at Varakloster had all died, as had most of the people of the city of Leva, including the bishop and many priests. The towns were emptied of their citizens, but were family members were turned away from their relations' farms. People fled into the mountains north, but they died on the ice or wherever they fell.

For more than a year the Pest raged, and finally the Spor declared that all those strong enough to do so must leave our beloved land. Few were able to do even that, but this is where the

history of our lesenum as we have known it is ending.

I, Palve, the scribe of the Tiliomse cloister school, have packed as many books as I can carry, and in two days, those who can, will go to lands we have never been. Some will go to Erlanda, some will go to Fron, I will go to Enlandea. We pray and hope that the Pest will not go with us. But our memories of Alphistia will go with us, and our books will live on to tell our story.

So ends this book about our land.