The Olania Conflict

Geography

Olania is a small tropical island nation somewhere near the archipelago of Indonesia. It is a long, narrow country, situated on the NW-SE axis, with mountains and hilly forests comprising its western area, giving way to an arid plain in the center. Its entire eastern strip is accessible coastline, with many nice beaches and harbors. Its western sector has numerous silver mines and tropical forests rich in timber resources and medicinal plants. Where the forests have been cleared and in the rolling foothills, agriculture flourishes. Neither the central plain nor the coast are especially suitable for food production. Oil has recently been discovered in the northwestern corner of the country. The country takes its name from a quasi-dormant volcano which towers above the other mountains and has religious significance for its original inhabitants.

Population

Olania is home to approximately 1 million people from two major ethnic groups, the Olans and the Vihacs. The Olans, 65% of the population, are the indigenous people of the island. They have lived in the mountains, forests and hills of the west, according to their legends, since the creation of the world. They are excellent farmers, of crops and of the forest, and exquisite artists in their native silver and wood. Although they became Christians during the 16th century, their Christianity is overlaid upon a rich traditional religion with a strong reverence for sacred places and a deeply mystical inclination. The Olans have an extended family culture that honors its elders and communal life. Their poets, religious leaders, healers, philosophers and artists are the most highly valued community members.

The Vihacs, 35% of the population, came from Vihaca, a nearby larger island, by boat in the 14th century and settled along the Eastern coast. There they built cities and engaged in shipping, fishing and trade. Indeed, they have created a significant commercial hub that serves the entire region. The Vihacs brought Christianity to Olania, and follow a somewhat more fundamentalist or traditional religious life than the Olans. The Vihacs live in nuclear families, send their children to the Motherland or abroad for
education, and pride themselves on their modernity. Business leaders, politicians and practical “can do” types are their most esteemed citizens.

**History:**

The history of Olania has 4 significant periods:

1. **The Golden Age (1537-1620).** The first Vihacs arrived in 1537 in a shipwrecked trade delegation from the Motherland. This first group, and subsequent waves of settlers, were welcomed by the local Olans, who saw that the shipping and commercial acumen brought by the “strangers” could serve the well-being of their own highly evolved civilization. This era is characterized by cooperation among the two groups, and even some intermarriage. Vihacs were encouraged to settle along the coast, and developed commercial outlets for the Olan artisans. They also became trusted advisors to the Olan leaders, bringing ideas and contacts in from the outside world (including Christianity, which was introduced in 1590 and formally adopted by the Olan royal household and thus the entire community in 1596), as well as representing Olan interests regionally and internationally.

2. **The Olan Domination (1620-1915).** When a large new wave of Vihacan settlers arrived in 1620, the Olan leadership became afraid of losing their land to “foreigners,” and instituted a repressive regime in which Vihacs lost their privileged positions as advisers and were subjected to oppressive Olan rule. Although they continued their vital role in the commercial sector, the Vihacs found their movements were circumscribed, their incomes highly taxed, and their rights as citizens severely limited. During this period Vihacs on Olania became to be called by the Olans, derogatorily, “the little ones,” even though they are significantly taller than the Olans, referring to their reduced position in society.

   This period also saw the decline of the high Olan civilization and artistry, as much of the energy of the people went into subduing the Vihacs and maintaining the military force capable of sustaining the status quo. Some of the Olan rulers during this period became known for their cruelty.

3. **The Colonial Period (1915-1947).** World War I brought a European presence to Olania, under the guise of military necessity, which introduced massive changes to every aspect of Olania life. With the coming of the Colonial Power, the stranglehold of
the Olan rule was broken, and Olans retreated to their mountain villages, where they soon found themselves serving the economic interests of an alliance between the Colonial Power and the Vihacs. Because of their more recognizable form of Christianity, their urbanity and their commercial resources, the Vihacs were adopted by the new masters as local partners and given preferential treatment in every realm.

This period saw a great modernization on Olania, politically and economically, and an enormous plunder of the natural resources of the western sector for the enrichment of the Colonial Power and its Vihacan allies. Roads were built into the interior, modern mining and logging methods introduced, factories were established on the central plains, and the east coast became a modern international center of business and trade.

4. The Modern Period (1947-present). When the Colonial Power dismantled its overstretched empire in 1947, it left Olania firmly in the hands of a well-trained, well-educated, flourishing Vihacan political and economic establishment. The Olans had lost much of their sacred lands to new Vihacan and overseas owners, who continued to develop the riches of forests and mines. Nor did the Vihacs forget how they had been suppressed and humiliated by previous Olan rule. Over time, and under the guise of modern democratic nation-building, the Vihacs managed to build a social, economic and political infrastructure where the Olans were a distinct second-class citizenry, losing even their right to maintain their indigenous religious rituals and to speak their own language. This led to the current situation, which was precipitated by what is commonly called “the Massacre at Kailip.”
The Guerrilla War

In 1987 the Vihacs began stockpiling arms near the mining center of Kailip, ostensibly for security purposes. The Olans, probably correctly, read this as an intention to instigate a reign of terror against their people. On the night of October 24 they broke into the arms warehouse, distributed the weapons to their own men, and sought to return to their towns and villages with the new ability to protect their families in the event of armed attack. Their way was blocked by a military patrol that happened to be in the area, and a vicious battle ensued, in which 90 of the 110 Vihac soldiers were killed. Realizing that retaliation would be swift and brutal, the Olans melted into the hills and became a guerrilla force.

Their assessment was correct, as the Vihacs, in retaliation, murdered much of the remaining population of Kailip, including women and children. Thus there were actually two “massacres,” although each side uses that phrase to refer to the actions of the other party. They refer to their own behavior as self-defense or preventive action.

Since that time, the Olan population has undergone a transformation. While only a small number of guerrillas are actually fighting the Vihacan soldiers and sabotaging mining and industrial installations, most of the Olan people are caught up in the struggle for their rights. Rallying around the cry of “self-determination” and empowered by a cultural renewal of their traditional language, religion and artistry, the Olans are seeking every possible avenue of overthrowing what has become an increasingly onerous Vihacan yoke and asserting their independence. This has included terrorist attacks on civilian populations.

The Vihacs, meanwhile, in the interest of internal security, have fielded a powerful army that, in its attempt to search out and destroy the guerrillas, has launched wholesale attacks and repressive measures against Olans everywhere. The prisons are full of Olan political leaders, newspapers have been shut down, Vihacan settlers from the Motherland have been brought in to do the mining and lumbering, and many potential rebel leaders or sympathizers have “disappeared.” There is also a right-wing militia with shadowy ties to the government that engages in the most brutal atrocities.

The people of Olania are stalemated and polarized. Both sides have blood on their hands; both have committed serious human rights abuses. All attempts at international
mediation have failed, and any efforts at international intrusion have been strongly rebuffed under the claim of national sovereignty. The economy of Olania is suffering greatly, and the newly discovered oil reserves, which lie in Olan-held territory, cannot be developed.