



The Pillars of Sand

Mark T. Barnes

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The epic conclusion of the Echoes of Empire trilogy.

Prophecy declared that corrupt politician Corajidin would rule the Shr'anese Federation, even become its new Emperor—and sinister magic has helped him defy death in order to do it. But his victory is not assured, thanks to clashing rival factions that hinder any attempts to unify the nation. Though he has taken increasingly brutal measures to eliminate all obstacles in his path, the dark forces supporting him grow dangerously impatient. And the harder they press, the more drastic Corajidin's actions become.

Soon, only his most powerful adversaries will stand in his way: Indris, the peerless swordsman and sorcerer who has long fought to end the Federation's bloody turmoil; and the warrior-poet Mari, Corajidin's own daughter and the woman Indris loves. Fate has torn them apart, forcing them into terrifying personal trials. But if Indris can bring to bear the devastating knowledge of the Pillars of Sand, and Mari can rise up as a rebel leader, Corajidin's enemies will rally—and the decisive battle for the soul and future of the Shr'anese will begin.

This epic tale of intrigue, love, and betrayal, painted in the blood of allies and enemies by Mark T. Barnes, concludes the Echo of Empire trilogy that began with *The Garden of Stones* and *The Obsidian Heart*.

The Pillars of Sand Details

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From Reader Review The Pillars of Sand for online ebook

Cathleen says

I received an ARC from the publisher through NetGalley in exchange for my honest review.

“The Pillars of Sand” is an amazing addition to the “Echoes of Empire” series. Out of the three books this one is my favorite.

There are 3 points of view used in book 3, Indris, his lover Mariam and the greatest warrior-poet Corajidin. Corajidin is also Mariam’s father and the one man who will lead Shrian to greatness.

Corajidin is similar to Macbeth in his absolute belief that he is the true ruler of Shrian and he does all he can to realize his destiny. Having descended into the depths of dark magic and madness to bring about his destiny he willingly ignores the prophecy that also predicts he will not be able to hold on to anything or anyone he conquers.

Mariam is the lover of Indris and was raised to think for herself and have her own purpose in life. She believes in the reason Shrian was founded and a force not to be taken lightly.

Indris, continues to be a ruler that doesn’t seem to do much about anything though he continues to always be on the winning side. He appears to be afraid of the power he holds within himself and it is eventually shown that it is for the best that he is afraid for it will take control of him.

I sincerely expected this story to end differently, but in the end the author did it just the right way. The whole series is about the good and the evil of men and women and how far people are willing to go to achieve their desires.

The author has an amazing ability at storytelling and setting the stage to draw the reader in and keep them fascinated to the very last word. This is truly an epic story and one I would love to see on the big screen. It would make for an amazing movie. Move over Dune...

Scott Hitchcock says

Book 1: 3*

Book 2: 3.25*

Book 3: 3.5*

The series was OK. There are better series of a similar nature such as Moontide Quartet, Sorcery Ascendant, Dagger & Coin and others which have many of the same themes but were more complete stories.

The first problem is the author went for Epic. He should have kept it simple and not included hundreds of different names that were never explained in more than a cursory manner. If you take as an example Lord of the Rings when Tolkien explains the myths of the age before with all of the names of Elves and Dwarves he gives them content through stories that bring them to life and they visit these places and they become Epic

through generations who have dealt with them. The Misty Mountains, Moria, Mordor and on and on they have context larger than life. I can't give context to so many of the ancient races, places and events in this series.

The second problem is the old axiom show don't tell. The perspective of the view is always one of two camera views. One is a 20,000 foot narration telling us what's happening. The second is through the eyes of the character in direct action. The second is better than the first which is what made the series readable. However great writers are able to shift the views so you get a view from how did it feel from an casual observer, how did the perspective change as the lead protagonist advanced through the battle scene, how did the doom change when the chief antagonist descended upon the army.

In short it just fell short on a lot of levels. If I hadn't bought all of the books on a one day sale I don't know that I would have finished it off. Glad I did but still there are better options.

Algernon says

The land within and around Shrian was littered with the detritus of past empires, echoes of glory and the high watermark of civilizations lost to time, internecine war, and blind ambition.

The author deserves full praise (and probably a much higher rating than my lukewarm three stars) for the grandiose concept and for keeping a tight control over plot and pacing in his debut epic fantasy series. The final (for now) entry is worthy of the previous set-up and ramps up both the action and the plot twists considerably. . . leaving the door open for a follow up series in a fictional world that still promises more adventures, more danger, more secret societies and more history, mythology, politics and monsters.

I think I've said it before in one of my previous two reviews that the plot and the characters, even the narration style, are reminiscent of Dune and of Malazan. Both Herbert and Erikson are probably among the favorite authors of mr. Barnes, but I must also underline that this debut series is much more than a simple fan-fiction project , and that my (relatively) poor rating comes from personal peeves and nitpicking. I know for sure I might have enjoyed the series a lot more ten or twenty years ago, but today it was a bit of a struggle to keep a straight face and to get emotionally involved in the fate of overpowered and slightly pastiche characters :

Indris dropped his metapsychic vision and called upon his psychokinesis to gently lower the Skylark to ground.

I am not planning to write any sort of plot synopsis or to go into the heroes motivations. It's basically a civil war in the former empire of Shrian, with a lot of magic thrown into the mix, and with the numerous factions involved ultimately boiling down to a fight between the two leaders : the evil overlord Corajidin of the Great House Erebus versus the rogue knight AmonIndris . There are fireworks, some humorous banter, some romance and a lot of gnomic utterances from sages of the past empires:

The Pillars of Sand, Indris. For all things we make, all the things we dream, and all the things we learn are based upon foundations that can shift, and disappear from under our feet.

My recommendation: give the series a try if you are into epic fantasy and make up your own mind.

David Sven says

For those who came in late

This is High Fantasy which draws inspiration from the likes of Frank Herbert's Dune and the Star Wars franchise - but without the space or scifi elements.

If you haven't started the series yet or if you've read up to book 2 and want to know if it gets better as it goes - it does. There is an initial learning curve with a lot of weird sounding names and cultures, but this is compensated by a glossary of names and cultures and terms that is in itself a delight for those who love complex and structured world building.

I think readers who persist through the initial orientation will find the effort rewarded from book one and more so in the subsequent books with this final book being the best, bringing the trilogy to a satisfying conclusion. My only other advice from experience would be it is maybe best not to leave too much time gap between books to maintain continuity. Oh, and I wasn't a fan of Nick Podehl's audio narration in book one. Sticking to the print/e-ink version also gives you easy access to the glossary.

My Review of Book 1

My Review of Book 2

Review

Amon-Indris - Dragon-Eyed Indris - Badass Indris. This book we continue with the three main POV's of Indris, Mari and Corajidin - but really, Indris is the star of the show.

This book Indris must travel to the dreaded Pillars of Sand to find a key to unlocking his memories buried inside the *Anamnesis Maze* erected within his mind. Mari is sent into exile to be tormented by her insane grand mother - and Corajidin descends further into the Drear and continues his transformation into Darth Vader (sorry, couldn't resist at least one Star Wars reference) (view spoiler)

I might have said it before, but I really like how the magic is described in this series - ie in terms of algorithms and equations and formulae and puzzles. Even the names just sound cool. Like *Anamnesic Maze*. And *Disentropy* - what better word to describe magic than as the *opposite* of Entropy.

I also really appreciate how Barnes really works at ensuring Indris, with all the levelling up he does this book doesn't become a *Deus Ex Machina*. I think Indris must have read Herbert's God Emperor of Dune and taken heed of what a "Man as God" would look like. Within his grasp is almost limitless power - but what is the cost of taking it to oneself? In this, both Indris' and Corajidin face the same struggle. Both know and fear the cost of absolute power. While Indris seeks to delay and resist his Awakening, Corajidin is seduced by the idea that regardless of the cost now, he will be able to put the brakes on later and make things right once he has won all.

The series ends well and there's plenty of room for more stories set in the same universe. I'm giving this

book...

4.25 stars

Samir says

Actual rating: 3.5 stars.

Kasey Cocoa says

Having read the first two books I have become accustomed to Barnes style of writing and I must say, I like it more so now. The writing is very well done, very detailed and informative, and well edited. The characters have evolved, developed and have a very real feel to them. This is carried on through the three books in a fluid manner. The plot flow is nicely done. I like how the threads are brought to conclusion. This author is one to watch. I received an evaluation copy of the book in exchange for my honest opinion. No compensation has been or will be received beyond the evaluation copy.

KostasAt says

8/10

The third book in the *Echoes of Empire* series continues even more powerfully than its predecessors with Barnes bringing us this time in a more epic scale story full with betrayals, unexpected twists, lots of mystery and some incredible ideas; and with the characters having to face a great war, while the addition of a few sci-fi elements brings a completely different taste to the story, and making it even better.

A disease has broken out in Shr'an; a disease that threatens to kill the Rahns and, with the machinations of Corajidin for the power continuing to grow, it could bring chaos to the world, and also a great war like never before if nobody finds a solution before it's too late.

Indris and his friends will decide to take this mission and find a solution to the Rahns' disease, but it may prove something more difficult than they expected when in their way gets the mystery of his forgotten past, which only he can discover, and will put them on an even greater adventure and on a journey through unknown worlds and dimensions.

On the other side, Corajidin will try, through the machinations and help of his mysterious allies -which the only thing they want is to get the power of Shr'an in their hands and also of the entire 'a-, to stop them with any way he can. Only along the way he will find that the risk is probably higher than he thought and it may cost him more than he expected. Meanwhile Mari, as she will find herself captive in a place that she would have never believed to be, she will have to face her own adventures for her freedom; and it will only bring her against her family and a old, and cunning, enemy that the only thing that wants is to destroy her.

In this book Barnes continues to surprise even more than before as, with his writing seeming to flow much better, and showing now to be a bit more comfortable, he manages to bring a much stronger story with lots of action and many twists; but also handling the characters, and their points of view, even better than the

previous books.

However, what I particularly liked in this book is that, besides from his incredible ideas and his world-building, he manages to add a taste of sci-fi elements, which, along with the mysteries of the Emissaries and Indris's past, brings a much different flavour to this world and gives it even greater dimensions than before. While in the finale Barnes closes his first trilogy very strong, and clever, without hesitating to show his hard side on some characters, but also changing entirely their future and that of the world.

Overall, this trilogy certainly had many problems but Barnes proved with each book that, besides his strong ideas and the high expectations of this world, he can also bring some powerful stories and closing this trilogy very strong in a world that, I believe, can bring many, many more books. Definitely an author that deserves to look out more in the future.

Bookwraiths says

Originally reviewed at Bookwraiths Reviews

The Pillars of Sand is a fitting ending to the *Echoes of Empire* fantasy series. It is filled with intense action, revelations of ancient secrets, and the continued development of one of the most interesting and fully developed fantasy worlds on the shelves today. If you are a fantasy aficionado who adores world building, voluminous lore and ancient history, then you will be hooked on *Echoes of Empire* from the first chapter of book one, and very quickly, Mark T. Barnes will become one of your must read authors.

As for the story in *Pillars*, it continues to explore the political and social upheaval of the Shr'anese Federation, as Corajidin leads his land down a road to recover its ancient greatness at any price. Standing against him are his own daughter Mari, warrior-poet of renown, and Dragon-Eyed Indris. These two are now lovers but have been torn apart by circumstances and are forced to walk different roads – even though those roads are not theirs by choice and might not lead them back together. And as these three people's story progress, the very future of Shr'an and the world itself begin to subtly take shape before a reader's eyes.

The hero of this tale is, without a doubt, Indris. He is the mysterious sorcerer, whose power is only rivaled by his absolute dedication to not acquiring too much of it. For Indris has learned wisdom during his troubled life, and that wisdom teaches him too much power leads one to become addicted to it, wanting more and more until eventually you are the tyrant that you once abhorred. A fate that Indris realizes he is not immune from. So while he is forced by circumstances to travel down paths to acquire power, Indris fears to embrace it, ever struggling to find the correct balance between what he must have to save his nation and what other people are trying to force him to take in order to fulfill their own selfish and mysterious designs.

Standing directly opposite the decency of Indris Dragon-Eyed is the vile evilness as represented by Corajidin. Throughout the series, Mr. Barnes has showed this powerful ruler slipping into insanity, forging pacts with evil beyond his conception, and doing horrid deeds to fulfill his destiny and bring greatness to his people. However, Corajidin has also become a three dimensional character, waxing sentimental about his love for family one minute before committing his next horrendous act the next. Few villains in fantasy have as many well intentioned reasons for their actions as Corajidin, and fewer still have as well developed humanity as he does. And Mr. Barnes does an excellent job of not just telling his readers this but showing them, as Corajidin casts aside his own honor to save his son, is willing to pay any price to aid his wife, and then looks the other way to help aid his beloved daughter Mari. When coupled with the revelation that

Corajidin's descent into insanity was not an accident, I found myself almost feeling sorry for this villain, wishing that fate had allowed Corajidin to be the decent person that he could have been in a different life.

As for Corajidin's beloved daughter, Mari, she starts out this book by reaching her full potential as a kick-ass character. Throughout the series, Mari has fallen in love with Indris, tried to juggle both her personal convictions and her devotion to her family, and attempted to find a way to save her father and brother from their ambitions and sever their pacts with evil beings, but in this book, her circumstances have finally forced her to accept the fact that she is a woman on her own. Her family has abandoned her. Indris has been taken from her. She is a woman confined to the camp of her enemies, and only she can save herself. So Mari must forge her own destiny; a destiny which she has determined is to stop her family and its shadowy allies from destroying Shrian, no matter the cost! So while her love for Indris remains and her desire to find him again is still paramount, it is past time that she assumed the mantle of true warrior-poet!

Before I read *The Pillars of Sand*, I was desperate to discover what happened next in Mr. Barnes intriguing trilogy, and this story did not let me down. It roared out the gate at full speed, delivering twists and turns that I had not expected. At the halfway point, I could hardly put my e-reader down for fear of missing something. Unfortunately, around the halfway point, the story slowed down considerably. The plot continued to progress, but the pace began to crawl somewhat. Thankfully, the mid-book swoon did not continue for long, for soon Indris, Mari, and Corajidin's stories converged and merged into a satisfactory ending that tied up many of the loose ends in this trilogy and surprised me in many ways. (Okay, some of it was surprising and some of it wasn't.) However, what this ending did a spectacular job of doing was setting up the next series of books about Indris and Mari.

Mr. Barnes is already working on the sequel, right? :)

So if you love epic fantasy and have not tried out this series, you need to pick up *The Garden of Stones* and give *Echoes of Empire* a try, because this is a series that is only going to get better and better as Mr. Barnes expands upon it.

I received this book from Netgalley and the publisher in exchange for a fair and honest review. I'd like to thank both of them for allowing me to receive this review copy and inform everyone that the review you have read is my opinion alone.

jonathanka K says

The epic conclusion of the series *Echoes of an Empire*. Thrilling plot, very nice characters and perfect World building. This book contains schemes, twisting plots and fascinating character development that give the book and the series as a whole a very exciting flavour from different genres (drama, sci-fi, paranormal and a very light taste of romance). I have spoken with the author of the series via email and he told me that there are going to be more than the three already published books. In my opinion this is a very good decision because this book as a kind of conclusion has many gaps and threads that should be more exploited. As for the writing style of the author you should be informed about the fact that many new readers may find it a bit difficult to read, BUT I think because of the author's passion and technique we can bypass this small problem.

Kdawg91 says

Have you read any of the Echoes of Empire trilogy by Mark Barnes? Then go NO further, hit your library, Amazon, your bookstore, your neighbor, that weird scifi kid down the street, go READ them.

One of the most incredible, intriguing worlds I have ever read about in recent memory, great action, and again I use the word INTRIGUE, but great story and tension and I cared what happened. Lots of time you read something and can't wait for it to be over, all I wanted at the end of The Pillars of Sand was MORE BOOKS.

check this out, I know I say that alot, but THIS you won't regret, that I promise.

8 stars out of 5, 27 stars for the whole series. (out of 15)

Dawne says

Phenomenal! Watch out GRR Martin!!

Absolutely riveting, breathtaking and prosaic.

Stunning world within a world. This new author has the makings of becoming the next GRRM or possibly even my favorite, Erickson. With time, growth and patience I think he may challenge them both.

Bravo,bravo bravo!

one thing though, don't say it's a complete series when the story isn't complete. lots of us HATE cliffhanger! LOL

otherwise great job. Keep up the good work!

Kristobelle says

This needs to be on every fantasy fan's shelf (or kindle, or MP3 player)

Too busy wiping away emotional tears right now to write anything of much use - except that I'm wiping away emotional tears. For someone so deeply buried in a nihilistic philosophy these days, that means a heck of a lot. Not much really makes the insides flop anymore, but this did, especially this book of the three. I even teared up for the bad guys.

Truth is, the older I get, the less the big explosions matter - cause they'll never cover up a lack of depth, originality, or purposeful character development. The Echoes of Empire needed no masks.

This trilogy was truly masterful. In all the ways that matter to me. And damn if that isn't the only thing that matters.. To me. I really hope to see more stories set this world - hopefully with these characters, but I'll take just this atmosphere if I must.

Bravo Mr Barnes, Bravo!

(and well done to the audio narrator Nick Podehl, too!)

Joecrash411 says

Awesome book! I loved all of the characters (well, the ones you were supposed to anyway) and liked that the majority of the characters were not human. I guess because Mr. Barnes made them all have human feelings, emotions, and goals. (like survival, love, power, loyalty, etc) - one one hand, I liked the characters, but if they are going to be non-human, why not ascribe non-human goals and emotions to them? In spite of that, it was a great read, and I'll buy (or borrow) any future books that Mr. Barnes puts out. I was happy to find out after reading the 1st book that the trilogy was complete - I hate getting 2 books into a series I am reading and find out the 3rd book has not been written yet, and it might literally be years before the next one comes out. (Here that all you Rothfuss fans? I'm never buying the 3rd kingkiller book!)

Good read, happy I found it!

Katie Burton says

I'd read some reviews of people who'd seen the ARC of this and I will admit to being somewhat jealous. The Garden of Stones was excellent, and challenged many of the fantasy genre tropes. A brave move for a debut author but one that might see this series as a high watermark of the genre. The Obsidian Heart took what Barnes had given and ramped it up: he was obviously more comfortable as a writer, with his innovative world, and the characters that inhabit it.

Though all three books were released in just under a year, I had to WAIT for The Pillars of Sand. And then like the Mark T Barnes fangirl I admit I've become, and due mostly to this man's incredible talent to paint a scene, do dialogue, and develop characters and story, I read the entire thing in a couple of days. Part of me wanted to pace myself, but I needed to know what was going to happen next as Barnes took me on a journey through the light and darkness and wonder of his final instalment of the Echoes of Empire trilogy.

In the space of three books Barnes has become one of my go to writers. I will read everything this man publishes. Not only does The Pillars of Sand have the same amazing world building, the character and story development is breathtaking. All the characters are committed to their causes, and the cost for all of them throughout the book is very real and personal. I loved that Barnes showed us the epic struggle of a nation in the way it impacted characters I came to respect greatly. Even Corajidin, mongrel that he is, showed glimmers of redemption and the occasional crack in the mask that showed that once he may have been other than what he became.

Indris is one of the best heroes I've read in epic fantasy. He's a man a reader can understand, admire, and like. He's not a typical fantasy protagonist, but a real classic hero who while powerful and compelling, is wonderfully flawed. Mari goes up again in my estimation of epic female characters in the genre: I loved her before and adore the character even more now as she has shrugged off the last tethers to her old life and is a vibrant force for change. She's strong, determined, smart, a leader, and not once did she need to sacrifice being a woman to do it. 10/10 points to Barnes on his female characters across the board. Corajidin is still driven and clearly doesn't have the best grip on reality, but the way Barnes shows his personal relationships and the dynamic of the Great House of Erebus puts everything in context, and I did feel for the villain at

times. The supporting cast are likewise compelling, with some new characters that I instantly took a liking to.

I read that *The Garden of Stones* is a finalist for the best debut of 2013, and I threw my vote his way. Barnes' follow up books just get better. Part of me is sorry I didn't savour the book and take longer, part of me couldn't help herself. I've no idea when there'll be more books from this author, but until then I will certainly be reading *The Echoes of Empire* again.

Steve Caldwell says

Wow, I finished this yesterday and I am already waiting for the next one! What an incredible ride! The Author does a great job of tying up loose plot threads, while leaving some open for future installments. Leaders fall, new leaders rise and conspiracies are revealed for what they are. Some epic magic and some epic battles really top it all off. There is so much character growth, and the revelations about some characters actual just leave you breathless, wanting more. I can't wait for the next book. Read this!!
