

The Far Future Theory: Petrification, Forgetfulness and a Cool Urth

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 31 Mar 1999

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Mitchell A. Bailey — 31 Mar 1999, 15:06

Matthew Malthouse wrote:

Mitchell A. Bailey wrote:

...

Well, the conclusion is inescapable, given this many examples of constellations of our time still recognized by Severian, that Urth's sky as described in BNS is not consistent with the theory that Sev's time lies in a "far future" millions or tens of millions of years hence.

I've seen this discussed more than once but remain unhappy with the "sooner rather than later" conclusion.

How can this be reconciled with:

- 1: The mining industry of Saltus
- 2: The cliff face Sev descends to Cas' cottage
- 3: The 'sharp' peaks of mountains thrust up after those older ones carved into the likenesses of Autarchs?

I can't avoid the conclusion that geological ages have passed since our epoch. Yet other thing otherwise (which is presumably the function of others. :))

Matthew

...

Thanks, Matthew. I myself have always been a "far future" partisan too. It pained me to reach that conclusion, believe me!

I'm glad you mentioned Casdoe's cliff - that seemed to me one of the more compelling pieces of hard evidence in support of the "far future" theory. Clearly, petrification and the burial of eons of civilization occurred there in the same fashion as today we find strata of mineralized dinosaur bones. So, too, to a lesser extent, with the mine at Saltus.

I would cite furthermore that practically all of history of our time, and of millenia to come, are forgotten or are rendered into legend (cf. the "legend of the Historians" cited by the master curator Ultan, the tale of the "lost archives" related by Cyriaca). It seems to me that such a phenomenon would require both passage of much time, and tremendous social upheavals (occurrence of which are implied in the legends and in Typhon's story). Clearly a Kardishev Level III civilization rose and fell millenia before Sev's time.

Typhon's time, although near the decadent end of a decadent empire which succeeded "the [galactic] empire which was built entirely upon order", was itself practically forgotten by Sev's time. Or was Sev "inattentive" when Masters Malrubius and Palaemon covered the reign of Monarch Typhon in history class?

Note that Jonas, a survivor of much earlier times, clearly remembers many things we know. Also, the legend of the patroness of the Torturers' Guild, St. Katherine, is taken faithfully from the story of 4th century St. Katharine of Alexandria, right down to the name of (Roman) Emperor Maxentius, her persecutor. I wonder over what issue the guild thought St. Katherine was martyred, or of what they thought Maxentius was the ruler?

Regarding evidence of geologic activity, I would have pointed out that cooling and solidification of Urth's interior, occurrence of which was strongly implied in the description of the Lake of Birds and elsewhere, would take billions of years naturally. However, I seem to recall some old letters in the URTH archives opining that an aggressive program of exploitation of geothermal energy in the distant past (K-level I +? stage civilization?) might have greatly accelerated this process. Might be worth exploring the ramifications of this idea.