

Meeting Father Inire

The Urth list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 20 Apr 1999

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Dan Rabin — 20 Apr 1999, 21:24

Robert Borski writes:

As with the oft-mentioned Fechin, we never actually meet Inire. He's always offstage or discussed in anecdotal fashion by others who've met him (Thecla, Odilio, Hildegrin).

Then again, given the importance of masks in New Sun...

From *_Citadel_*, ch. 28 "On the March":

For guides our column had three savages: a pair of young men who might have been brothers or even twins, and a much older one, twisted, I thought, by deformities as well as age, who perpetually wore a grotesque mask. Though the first two were younger and the third much older, all three of them recalled to me the naked man I had once seen in the Jungle Garden. They were as naked as he and had the same dark, metallic-looking skin and straight hair. [...]

....and one night when my guards were chattering among themselves and I sat crouched over our little fire, I saw the old guide (his bent figure and the impression of an immense head conferred by his mask were unmistakable) approach this palanquin [holding the Old Autarch (DR)] and slip beneath it. Some time passed before he scuttled away. This old man was said to be an *_uturuncu_*, a shaman capable of assuming the form of a tiger.

The bent figure meets descriptions of Father Inire elsewhere. Father Inire is a Hierodule; Hierodules wear masks. Father Inire is in the habit of conferring with the Autarch.

In *_Citadel_*, ch. 35 "Father Inire's Letter", Rudesind mentions that his master (Father Inire) "went away north", but is hesitant to dwell on the point. In Severian's reply, he says, "We even know that your master was with us in the jungles of the north, where he tried until it was too late to rescue my predecessor". Inire's letter itself alludes to recent events with Agia and Vodalus that imply that he was nearby.

So, Robert is wrong: we *do* actually meet Father Inire in the main narrative, and Robert is right, masks have to do with the matter.

Too bad we don't get to see him do the tiger trick, though...

-- Dan Rabin

Nicholas Gevers — 21 Apr 1999, 06:44 · follows Dan Rabin

I very much like Dan Rabin's reading of the *uturuncu* as Inire. But I think we encounter Inire directly much earlier, in Chapter XXI of *CLAW*: "[The Autarch] clapped his hands, and a bent little man slipped silently into the room. He wore a cowed habit like a cenobite's. The Autarch spoke to him, something I was too distracted to understand." Of course, when Sev doesn't

listen, we know a significant conversation is taking place just beyond reach. The "cowled servitor" then guides Sev through "many leagues of the contrived corridors of the Second House" to the Vatic Fountain - a confidential route to a highly significant location. The servitor is no more a servitor than the Autarch is a low-level official at the House Absolute.

//----- Nicholas Gevers potto at webmail.co.za

Robert Borski — 21 Apr 1999, 02:36 · follows Nicholas Gevers

<So, Robert is wrong: we **do** actually meet Father Inire in the main narrative, and Robert is right, masks have to do with the matter.>

Congratulations, Dan! You're absolutely right, of course--the shaman is Father Inire, although, as I very clearly state, he's not in his Inire guise--so we don't really meet him as Inire, but as Inire masked. It's also the uturuncu/Inire that provides Appian (who's already been searched) with the cutting instrument Sev later uses to access his predecessor's skull-encased brain. Also, I believe that somewhere--can't find the reference--Father Inire's apemen, the guardians of Saltus, are described as

tiger firefly men. Still and all, it's nice to know at least one other person shares my opinion.

My challenge to you, however: can you find at least one more instance where Inire is met in disguise? (There are actually several.) I'll even advance you one, and then leave a clue or two. In Chapter XXI of CLAW ("Hydromancy"), after being shown the Book of Mirrors by Appian, Sev asks for directions to the Green Room, so he can rendezvous with Dorcas, Dr. Talos, et al. He's told by Appian (who doesn't realize Sev is on to his real identity) he must take the autarch's life if the autarch ever comes near Thrax. Writes Sev: "His tone betrayed him as much as Thecla's thoughts. I wanted to kneel, but he clapped his hands, and a bent little man slipped silently into the room. He wore a cowled habit like a cenobite's. The Autarch spoke to him, something I was too distracted to understand." The cowled figure--who I submit is Father Inire, and may be even addressed as such by Appian--then shows Sev to the Vatic Fountain.

Now for the clues I mentioned. Notice that the uturuncu carries "a staff crooked as himself, topped with the dried head of a monkey." Who else carries a similar staff? Moreover, this staff-carrier has a mythic name--which makes him an alien. I also mentioned him in a post not that very long ago. (Think younger, earlier--a herald.)

((All answers to the above and more will be covered in the longest essay of UNDINES, "Masks."))

Robert Borski