

Antechamber through the Age

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 09 Jun 1999

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/1677>

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 09 Jun 1999, 16:46

Mitchell A. Bailey wrote:

My take has been that the House Absolute was reclaimed as a residence/command center rather early in the Monarch's Empire, several millenia earlier; the painted ceiling could date from a time when that part of the antechamber had been an apartment for the monarch or his family or an important minister or staffer; the text clearly states that several rooms were consolidated as the antechamber grew. Wouldn't you think the monarch's retinue would include a good few Doctor Strangeloves?

I suppose. But I'm not clear on your reference points--by "Monarch" of "Monarch's Empire," are you referring to Typhon, the Man Who Would Be Monarch of the Second Empire, or some Monarch of the First Empire (Frog, for instance)? Because you use the timeframe "several millennia," well, I'm confused.

...(I thought Severian saw these in the tunnels of the Citadel, =not= in the House Absolute) and rows of stopped clocks are.

I saw that too. This was after he returned as Autarch. One of the perks of office is that you get a decent flashlight to take with you down into the Citadel tunnels. Apprentice Sev was in utter darkness and couldn't see the signs or anything else.

It was at the door to Inire's specula chamber in the Second House that the "crimson teratoid sign" Sev surmised to be of extraterrestrial origin appeared. That seems to be what we're interpreting as radioactive or biohazard warning symbols.

And Jonas seems to interpret those same symbols as some form of writing; he seems to read the one as saying "Urth," or words to that effect. FWIW.

Why is this 'spaceport' underground? Protection against the backblast of more primitive chemical thrusters?

I'd say =nuclear= thrusters, myself. "NERVA to the Moon!" "All the way with KIWI!" <g> Chemical thrusters are so primitive, they are a non-starter--a literal evolutionary dead-end.

I don't much buy the idea of HA being a spaceport. OTOH, there is another port, somewhere in Typhon's time, since Citadel Hill is called Old Port; and there is some sort of capital city that almost certainly is =not= Nessus.

I also think "executive bunker" more likely than missile center--the two are rather exclusive of each other, unless the silos are for anti-missile missiles, I guess . . .

The Navigator. ... so KLS was imprisoned for trespassing or whatever it was at least 160 years ago (seven generations at 20 years plus one more generation). If there was only one guy from a starship, then it seems somewhat more likely that he himself was the

navigator. And he was the first prisoner, ...

Can't be; the antechamber/holding cell used as such, by your own chronology in Lexicon Urthus, has to be over a millenium old since it seems to predate the autarchs.

I guess I should have been more complete: the "first" prisoner, since KLS is designated "first prisoner" by the prisoners themselves.

(And for clarity, I should always distinguish between the physical building itself (more or less like a cave) and the various hypothetical uses to which it has been put during the Ages of the Monarch and Autarch.)

("It was a donut shop, then a record store, then a head shop . . .")

(The vincula of Thrax is rumored to have originally been a mausoleum, iirc.)

The Age of the Autarch didn't start off with all the bad stuff hitting the fan, and then a chiliad of that sticking in place. Things start off relatively better than during the time of wars, and gradually the situation deteriorates. For example, we know that the roads were closed to civilian use only in relatively recent times.

So! There was a period when the antechamber was used as a temporary place, as per Nicarete's story. Then, over time, it changed into the situation that Severian finds: where prisoners are kept for life, over generations, and exultant rowdies (male and female) torture them for kicks.

Now then: to put all these things together, into something like this--

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c. 1100 PS -- Typhon moves his capital-of-many-worlds to somewhere on Urth. The structure that will become the House Absolute is reopened and used for one thing or another.

c. 1000 PS -- Antechamber open for business, your host Ymar. Detainees are treated to coffee. Flavor of the year: hazelhut. Cases cleared within a day. (Inire arrives and adds Second House to HA.)

(c. 1000-700 PS -- the Yellow and Green Empires end their war?)

(c. 690? PS -- Autarch Maxentius orders execution of Saint Katharine)

(c. 350 PS -- the brown book is published.)

(c. 300 PS -- Autarch Sulpicious on throne; the torturers have a guest at their feast)

c. 220 PS -- KLS becomes the first lifelong prisoner (by dying, of course; presumably of old age, after many years in the antechamber). This is the point of division; this is the line that separates detainee from prisoner-for-life. (Yeah, counting =only= from the "seventh" generation means I =ignored= the group younger than the oldest women! The children of the group are something like tenth generation.)

(c. 70 PS -- Autarch Maruthas closes the roads.)

66 PS -- scandal in reign of Autarch Appian; Lomer sent to antechamber (thus, it is still being

used).

? PS -- Nicarete enters the antechamber voluntarily.

1 PS -- Severian and Jonas are put into the antechamber; the torturers are widely considered to be only a legend, even in Nessus.

2 SR -- Severian has the antechamber emptied, prisoners forced out at spearpoint.

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From a certain standpoint there is not a lot of difference between the antechamber and the Well of Orchids (oh, hey--=Orchid's= place). Once the practice of holding exultants hostage against bad behavior is in place (and that must have happened relatively early in the Age . . . but wasn't the Well of Orchids originally the Autarchia's section of the HA? These aren't exclusive of each other, of course), then it becomes easier to see the antechamber as a sort of mirror image (held hostage because of bad behavior) for those under exultant status.

Or maybe it is all just an ant chamber. <g>

=mantis=

Mitchell A. Bailey — 21 Jun 1999, 20:10 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

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I'll have to confess to a minor goof, inasmuch as I intended to stick to your chronology and not try to construct one of my own. Writing from the seat of my pants, I momentarily forgot that the new Monarchs didn't reside on urth until Typhon returned. That of course, is not debatable since Typhon himself stated it (and if you want to argue with Typhon...)

I'm assuming it was originally probably was constructed as a command bunker complex and then became obsolete (as all military assets tend to do) a few centuries from our time. Then, after the fall of the great stellar empire, it could have been rediscovered and reoccupied. OK, the HA was not the Monarch's residence, but it still could have been the residence or headquarters of his planetary governor, and possibly before that the stronghold of any number of petty ethnarchs since the fall of the K3 Empire some undefined length of time ago. That would tend to account for the appearance of rather decadent pre-Commonwealth and even pre-Typhon occupation. ...

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or, he recognizes the symbol (Danger! Highly Curved Space Hazard! You May Be Disintegrated or Teleported Somewhere Unpleasant!) as being peculiar to the Earth he remembers or has researched.

Interesting, though - one would think Inire would have posted that sign, in which case the language and content would indeed be alien (that doesn't rule out Jonas knowing it). Maybe Inire followed a practice of posting a sign with the name of the place, to orient new arrivals, kind of like the place-signs you saw at railroad stations?

...

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or spy satellites, or cruise missiles, or manned rockets for various missions...