

The Power Behind the Phoenix Throne I

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 12 Jun 1999

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/1682>

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Mitchell A. Bailey — 12 Jun 1999, 17:29

Of everything which has been said thus far about Father Inire, it strikes me that the most germane point has thus far been missed.

Father Inire is not merely an incidental, eccentric appurtenance to the Autarchy. I have come to believe that Inire had a mission to define and shape the very nature of Autarchy, which he did. The Commonwealth as a state is practically identical with the millenia-long stewardship of Inire. I think that an important key to understanding Inire is an understanding of the nature and purpose of the Autarchy, his special charge.

His name, per Lexicon Urthus, means “to enter” or “to begin” and is related to a term for the commencement of a reign. The Autarchy began and effectively ended with Inire. Did the Monarch Typhon engage the services of Inire? Somehow I doubt it seriously, although I believe there is one instance in which Inire might conceivably have influenced Typhon. Who was the first Autarch to take on Inire as vizier? Why, the first Autarch, Ymar! Who was the last true Autarch? Severian! Who was the last Autarch to have been served by Inire? Severian, evidently. Valeria apparently lost the services of Inire, and - therefore? - was perceived to have lacked the credentials of a true Autarch.

Inire is credited with “many marvels”: his specula, the Autarch’s House Absolute and its Second house, the Botanic Gardens, all of which have peculiar spatial and temporal properties. There are some other “marvels” I think we can also attribute to Inire: certain facilities in the Citadel such as the Atrium of Time, and the implied hyperspatial connection between the Citadel and the distant House Absolute which allows such as Rundesind to walk back and forth as if they were adjacent hallways. Then there is the presence of the Cumaeon (for whom, it is said, the Botanic Gardens were built) and her kind, and by extension the sisterhood of witches. These again seem to have power over time and distance. Many of Inire’s “marvels” seems to be characterized by the manipulation or transcendence of time and/or space.

Another related province of Inire’s was the preservation of (and/or access to) the past. The Curators Guild seem to be Inire’s agency. It is populated with special operatives such as Rundesind who take orders from Inire and have the run of the House Absolute and the Citadel. Note that the Curators are also the custodians of the Botanic Gardens and the Library. They wear Inire’s color, gray. Typhon is generally identified as that ruler credited in legend with establishing the archive which became the Library; I have to wonder if Inire didn’t somehow contrive to inspire that idea.

I don’t think I am out of line to suggest that it was probably Inire who introduced what is perhaps the defining characteristic of Autarchy: that practice of transference of memories, via the autarchial pharmacon and eating of the living forebrain of the predecessor, in an unbroken succession by each incumbent. It seems clear that the monarchs prior to Ymar had no such rite for continuity.

It would appear that Inire expended much time, effort, and energy to ensure that this chain of Autarchs was never broken in all the centuries of the office, while the incumbent retained the necessary freedom and opportunity to act and to take risks. One need look no further than the episode wherein Severian and the dying Autarch were captured by the Ascians and the Vodalarii to see how precarious this succession could be. This continuity and accumulation of diverse wisdom and experience might well be the key to the Autarchy's purpose and Severian's eventual success in bringing the New Sun.

Once in BNS we get to see actual words of Inire addressed to the Autarch, which might offer a clue regarding Inire's motivations and allegiance. First he calls the Autarch by several titles denoting identity with solar deity. It seems to be axiomatic that the New Sun is expected to emerge from the Autarchy and nowhere else. Father Inire expresses his reverence to his Autarch not as his superior or as head of state, but as the New Sun to come, no less.

He goes on to lament that his "cousins" help only reluctantly and do not seem to regard Urth, still less the Commonwealth and its Autarch, as worthy of special consideration. It was Inire's job to plead on behalf of Urth to seemingly indifferent ears until the Epitome was prepared.