

Floating Islands

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 30 Sep 1999

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Greene, Carlton — 30 Sep 1999, 18:46

Just wanted to cast my votes for those who argue that the backdrop for the events in TBOTNS is a much transformed So. Am.

In addition to Severian's description of the autochthons, the town of Apu-Punchau, pampas, jungles at the waist of the world, blood bats, mate (so. am. tea -- very good), and countless other references, I note that lake Diuturna bears a strong resemblance to Lake Titicaca at the border between Peru and Bolivia. In SOTL the lake is described as an enormous freshwater body at an elevation significantly above sea level. Lake Titicaca fits this description. But the real clincher is the existence of floating islands made by binding river rushes together to form platforms. The Aymara indians of the lake Titicaca area make such rafts, and a small few still live on such islands to this day. They also make and use reed boats of the type Severian describes in the Hetman's village. Another note: I believe, though its been a while, that the Aymara in the Titicaca area have a long running rivalry with the land based Quechua that inhabit the shore regions around the lake, the same Quechua who inhabit Peru's Cuzco -- ancient home to Inti, the head of day. These same Quechua appear to be the model for Wolfe's autochthons. Thus, I believe Wolfe's depiction of the rivalry between the lake people and the shore people is based on this real, historical rivalry between Quechua and Aymara.

One final note: Cuzco (which I believe is the stone town of Apu Punchau) lies to the north of Lake Titicaca. Since Severian recounts travelling northward from the stone town to the lake, could it be, as others have suggested, that the magnetic poles are reversed in Sev's time? Does he ever talk about the sun rising in the east?

C/