

Cutthroat Sioux

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 01 Sep 1997

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Alice Turner — 01 Sep 1997, 17:52

mantis,

I discovered that Sioux=Cutthroat on an elementary school website, maybe not the most reliable place in the world, but considering how disappointing both the OED and the Britannica are on the subject, I don't know that it's wrong. I'm inclined to think that it's a fact(oid) that Wolfe ran across somewhere that amused or charmed him enough to appropriate it in his usual underhandedly cryptic way.

I guess I'm wrong about Squanto being a Bumpopo alias. I have the entire Leatherstocking saga in an omnibus, but cannot face even browsing it. The various introductions refer to Hawkeye and Deerslayer and if Squanto were in there, they would probably mention it.

Sioux as French for "cutthroat" (er, "cultellarii"?) now =that= is very interesting, since it ties in =exactly= with the element of "The Tale of the Boy Called Frog" of TBOTNS, wherein the teacher of all these animal Kiplingoids is called, not the expected Baloo the Bear (hmmm), but the Naked One, "who was also called the Savage, or Squanto" (III, ch. 19). This character is the one who taught Frog to plough the fish, leading Frog to plough his twin brother Fish; this name belongs to a Native American Indian of the Pawtuxet tribe who is said to have taught the pilgrims how to plough the fish.

I just read that again...gee, I wish it went on longer. I've always been a sucker for Mowgli. Let's see, I count Cain and Abel, Romulus and Remus, all the birth-from-a-god stories, Moses, Japanese fairy tales...and Squanto.

Interesting that the teacher character in both stories (TS and TBCF) is linked to a Native American Indian name.

Would you call Cutthroat a teacher? To me he seems the universal learner. Who does he teach?

OTOH, since he looks like his throat has been cut, does this mean that we have at long last determined the group that cut him? (One presumes that the "Cutthroat Tribe" got their name for doing unto others rather than self-inflicting, no?)

Well, I think that's taking rather a long jump to a shaky conclusion. It really could be a birthmark, you know, and we'll never know one way or another. I suppose those who argue that he is not from the Great Sleight could use it as proof that all the tribes we meet are (say) part of the big Algonkian (or Iroquois or Athabaskan or whatever) confederation, while he is a Siouan Winnebago (don't laugh, that's the only Sioux group in Illinois), who speaks a different language and has different customs---a native translator thrown off the Sleight when he is no longer useful. But that's getting awfully both literal and theoretical at the same time, and I don't really buy it. (Though it has some exciting parallels to Fifth Head.)

-alga-

Ron Crown — 02 Sep 1997, 12:55 · follows Alice Turner

[donning pedantic mask] Not that it makes a great deal of difference to anything BUT in the interest of accuracy, I checked in a couple of reference sources here and, although the Sioux were known as "cutthroats" in both spoken and sign language, the word "Sioux" apparently comes from a combination Ojibwa(Chippewa)/French word "nadouessioux" which means "little snakes" or "adders." Furthermore, the French rendering of the common sign language name was, not too surprisingly, "coupe-gorges."

mantis, did you say that Severian is referred to as a "cutthroat"? Do you have a reference? I mention it because something else my reference source tells me is that one name given to the Sioux (by the Chippewa) means "roasters" "from their custom of torturing foes." Two other names given them by the Comanche and Yakima tribes respectively both mean "beheaders."

Now what can we make of that? Just another factoid, if that, which has gone into the mix?

Ron Crown