

Jurupari

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 21 Feb 2006

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Macronaut — 21 Feb 2006, 03:06

In Shadow on p. 273, Severian describes a design he encounters outside Agilus' cell:

"When I left him, the orichalk was gone. In its place -- and no doubt with its edge -- a design had been scratched on the filthy stones. It might have been the snarling face of Jurupari, or perhaps a map, and it was wreathed with letters I did not know. I rubbed it away with my foot."

My brief Internet search on Jurupari describes him as a demonic male god of the Tupi-Guarani tribe of Brazil, born when the male sun shone on the sap of a tree branch pruned by the goddess Ceucy. He tried to create a male-only world, and was thwarted somehow. His worship was limited to men only, with the penalty of death imposed on women who witness his rituals. I offer this mostly as a curiosity -- I don't think this information strongly supports any particular theory about TBOTNS.

However, a long while back Robert Borski did suggest that Agia and Agilus were members of the cult of sorcerers dedicated to preventing the appearance of the New Sun (described in Sword). I think the passage quoted above, read with this information, provides some support for this. The writing around the Jurupari symbol recalls the designs Severian encounters at the sorcerers' camp:

"Before we had gone another hundred paces, there were strips of red cloth suspended from the trees; some of these were plain, but others had been written over in black in a character I did not understand — or as seemed more likely, with symbols and ideographs of the sort those who pretend to more knowledge than they possess use in imitation of the writing of the astronomers." (p. 134).

In accordance with the Jurupari legend, all of the sorcerers are men, and the jungle setting and their painted faces and bodies evoke the Brazilian Indians who once believed in him.

Furthermore, as in the legend, the sorcerers sentence Severian (himself partly a woman) to a fate they believe will lead to his death as punishment for ignoring their posted warnings and stumbling into their rituals.

At the same time, there is one final curious fact about Jurupari that suggests an entirely different connection: nowadays the name Jurupari refers mostly to a fish: *Satanoperca jurupari* (the "devil fish of Jurupari"), which is of a category described as "earth eaters." I'm stretching here, but to me this points to Abaia, a demon surrounded by devil fish (in the form of undines) who together desire to eat the earth, either by enslaving it or, through preventing the coming of the New Sun, by forcing it to subsist on its own depleted resources until it consumes itself.

Anyway, I have been away from this list for a few years, so I hope you will forgive the length of this post.

Macronaut