

Urth Digest, Vol 73, Issue 45

The Urth list — 9 messages, 7 voices, 23 Sep 2010

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5752>

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Andrew Mason — 23 Sep 2010, 20:00

First, if you are born in the capital, you could not choose to make it your capital---it would already be the capital. You could only "choose" to make another planet your capital, anywhere there is a capital there are entrenched power structures.

Granted, we don't even know there was already a capital or already an empire. Typhon may have created the empire rather than inheriting or even seizing it.

I has assumed that Typhon created the Empire - that seems to be Cyriaca's view (or that he tried to); that the ruler she's talking about is Typhon is supported by his bringing the books to the Citadel, which is explicitly ascribed to Typhon in _Urth_.

Third, I don't see why an origin in the stars would be inconsistent with a desire to return humanity to the stars. It strikes me as much more sensibly consistent than an origin on Urth, where by Severian's time no one cares about them but Vodalus, Inire, Baldanders, and the Autarch.

And the Ascians. And Vodalus seems to think it will get him support.

But actually I agree with you; if it's just Typhon by himself, arriving from the stars and trying to stir up Urthians to an interest in them, there's no inconsistency. What worried me is the image some people have, I think, of Typhon as ruler of a galactic empire, with people coming and going all the time, which would leave it very puzzling what point there would be in sending out a Whorl. Whereas I would argue that though _New Sun_ clearly says nothing about actual Whorls, it does paint a picture of Typhon as trying to recapture the long-lost stars, and sending out a once-for-all expedition to them.

By the way, I like your translation of "Bird in the Wood." Nice work!

Thanks!

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes — 23 Sep 2010, 20:07 · in reply to Andrew Mason

On Thu, Sep 23, 2010 at 1:00 PM, Andrew Mason

<[andrew.mason53 at gmail.com](mailto:andrew.mason53@gmail.com)> wrote:

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Ummmm.

Typhon is the _last_ Monarch. That there were more than one is evidenced by the chain of mountains carved into the likenesses of Monarchs; that he is the last is evidenced by his being succeeded by the first Autarch.

Ergo, I don't believe he built the Empire.

Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

DAVID STOCKHOFF — 23 Sep 2010, 21:01 · in reply to Andrew Mason

Exactly. I see Typhon as far from a galactic conqueror, that he ruled a handful of star systems. I see him as a minor despot who is a towering figure only because the true emperors are gone. Nor do I imagine starliners ever going back and forth between worlds, like trains. But that's just a suspicion, and it's based on Severian's world. Maybe the robot-culture empire was indeed more familiar to us than his viewpoint makes it; maybe Typhon was more like the Mule than I think.

Anyway, even if he created his empire I'd apply the same logic, because it would be natural for an Urthian to make Urth his capital.

Another assumption I admit to is that I don't see Typhon's empire as created from scratch---I see him as going out and roping together a number of planets like ancient city-states that were once united. They were colonized long ago, in other words, and at the time rivaled Urth.

I get no sense from Typhon that any world in his empire lorded it over any other. Rather, he owned, possessed, and ruled them all. If Urth were still the mother planet, she would be the metropole and would suck up all the others' resources, which would almost demand Typhon's identification with the mother world's elite and thus his location of his capital there. But again, he seems to have chosen Urth deliberately for personal and political reasons, which suggests Urth was not the center of the human universe at the time.

If so, another world may have been greater than Urth ever was, which again provides an explanation for whatever technology (if that's what it is) produced him. Possibly his planet's elite practiced genetic modification on themselves, just as Urth's did, but discovered how to produce greater mental powers, as they did not. Perhaps the mandragora came from there. So as to the "monster" question, Typhon would then have been created from human stock. Baldanders created himself. I can see both as Monsters.

--- On Thu, 9/23/10, Andrew Mason <andrew.mason53 at googlemail.com> wrote:

From: Andrew Mason <andrew.mason53 at googlemail.com>

Subject: Re: (urth) Urth Digest, Vol 73, Issue 45

To: urth at lists.urth.net

Date: Thursday, September 23, 2010, 4:00 PM

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By the way, I like your translation of "Bird in the Wood." Nice work!

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DAVID STOCKHOFF — 23 Sep 2010, 21:04 · in reply to Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

You're right---but his place in a chain of Monarchs doesn't mean he didn't make himself Monarch by brute force.

Monarchs do not always inherit, and their territories can change dramatically---greater or smaller---while their titles grow ever longer. Again, the Romans and Byzantines are a model.

--- On Thu, 9/23/10, Dan'I Danehy-Oakes <danldo at gmail.com> wrote:

From: Dan'I Danehy-Oakes <danldo at gmail.com>

Subject: Re: (urth) Urth Digest, Vol 73, Issue 45

To: "The Urth Mailing List" <urth at lists.urth.net>

Date: Thursday, September 23, 2010, 4:07 PM

On Thu, Sep 23, 2010 at 1:00 PM, Andrew Mason

<andrew.mason53 at gmail.com> wrote:

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Typhon is the _last_ Monarch. That there were more than one is evidenced by the chain of mountains carved into the likenesses of Monarchs; that he is the last is evidenced by his being succeeded by the first Autarch.

Ergo, I don't believe he built the Empire.

Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

Mr Thalassocrat — 23 Sep 2010, 21:34 · in reply to Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

On Fri, Sep 24, 2010 at 5:37 AM, Dan'I Danehy-Oakes <danldo at gmail.com> wrote:

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Hang on - I'm pretty sure that it says somewhere that Typhon was the *first* to carve a mountain, and that the *Autarchs* continued the silly practice. No?

Jane Delawney — 23 Sep 2010, 21:46 · in reply to Dan'I Danehy-Oakes

On 23/09/10 21:07, Dan'I Danehy-Oakes wrote:

Ummmm.

Typhon is the _last_ Monarch.

True, that's made quite explicit in BOTNS

That there were more than one is evidenced by the chain of mountains carved into the likenesses of Monarchs

On the contrary I believe it is stated quite clearly in UOTNS that Mount Typhon is the first to be carved in this way. Severian-the-Conciliator is struck by the unmodified mountain peaks when he revisits the Cursed Town as Typhon's prisoner and he is able to tell the Chiliarch that from the observed state of the works, Typhon has little longer to live (presumably he remembers the positions of the (stopped) digging machines and the exact state of the carving from his earlier/later visit).

There's no suggestion that any of the other peaks are similarly carved at this stage, indeed I think it is stated clearly that they are not. Typhon was the first to have the massive ego I suppose! Later, some Autarchs adopted the 'tradition' and had their own likenesses carved into other mountains; at Severian's (original) time they've been carved that way for so long that the bare peaks seem strange to him.

Shame we're not told who some of the others might have been!

Typhon didn't build the Empire though; that's very clear. He was a (monstrous) product of its last days and its decadence - to the extent that having despatched various ships including the generation ship the Whorl, he found himself marooned on Urth and unable to leave.

I do wonder (as one who has not read the Long Sun / Short Sun books) whether Typhon sent out the Whorl as some kind of last hurrah, a message from the vast ego of the last Monarch of Urth to the galaxy that his predecessors once dominated.

jd

Jeff Wilson — 23 Sep 2010, 22:29 · in reply to Mr Thalassocrat

On 9/23/2010 4:34 PM, Mr Thalassocrat wrote:

On Fri, Sep 24, 2010 at 5:37 AM, Dan'I Danehy-Oakes <danldo at gmail.com
<mailto:danldo at gmail.com>> wrote:

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Hang on - I'm pretty sure that it says somewhere that Typhon was the **first** to carve a mountain, and that the **Autarchs** continued the silly practice. No?

Typhon is the first to carve his face into the western Andes, at least. The Autarchs that follow do likewise, but there seems also to be a succession of Autarchs before Typhon, or at least a succession of people whose minds are inherited by the post-Typhon succession. URTN, XLI: "and I began, as I walked on, to search those veiled lives that lie behind the last, memories that I have scarcely mentioned in this narrative, that dim as they grow stranger and stretch backward, perhaps, to Ymar, and behind Ymar to the Age of Myth."

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
Computational Intelligence Laboratory - Texas A&M Texarkana
< <http://www.tamut.edu/CIL> >

Roy C. Lackey — 24 Sep 2010, 05:49 · in reply to Andrew Mason

Andrew Mason wrote:

I has assumed that Typhon created the Empire - that seems to be Cyriaca's view (or that he tried to); that the ruler she's talking about is Typhon is supported by his bringing the books to the Citadel, which is explicitly ascribed to Typhon in *_Urth_*.

Yes, her story seems to link him to the library at the Citadel, and the physician who looked in on Severian there after the "earthquake" lends that some support. But Typhon had dreams of a Second Empire, as her tale specifies. The First Empire had covered the whole galaxy and maybe others. The old spaceships at the Citadel in Typhon's time were rusting relics of any earlier wave of spacefare; the Citadel is even referred to then as the "old port". Typhon evidently ruled some undetermined number of planets, some of them probably outside of Urth's solar system, but such planets as he ruled paled in comparison to the First Empire.

[snip]

But actually I agree with you; if it's just Typhon by himself, arriving from the stars and trying to stir up Urthians to an interest in them, there's no inconsistency. What worried me is the image some people have, I think, of Typhon as ruler of a galactic empire, with people coming and going all the time, which would leave it very puzzling what point there would be in sending out a Whorl. Whereas I would argue that though *_New Sun_* clearly says nothing about actual Whorls, it does paint a picture of Typhon as trying to recapture the long-lost stars, and sending out a once-for-all expedition to them.

I don't think anyone has claimed that Typhon ruled a galactic empire, and he didn't. But it is also true that humans were already spread all over the galaxy, at a minimum. As Apheta told Severian: "Because your race is important to us. It would be far less laborious if we could deal with it all at once, but you are sown over tens of thousands of worlds, and we cannot." (URTH, chap. XIX, p-135)

Typhon's *_Whorl_* expedition was more of a gesture than anything else, a one-finger salute to the universe and a sop to his ego. It had absolutely nothing to do with preserving the human race or spreading it around the galaxy.

BTW, in another thread, it is true, as others have pointed out, that Typhon was the first to carve one of those mountains into human likeness. When Severian was taken to meet Typhon on the mountain, he stepped out of the flier and saw: "All around us ragged, faceless peaks loomed through pent clouds. We were among mountains, but mountains that had not yet put on the carved likenesses of men and women--such unshaped mountains, then, as are to be seen in the oldest pictures." (URTH, chap. XXXVIII, p- 271)

-Roy

Jane Delawney — 25 Sep 2010, 23:21 · in reply to Jeff Wilson

On 23/09/10 23:29, Jeff Wilson wrote:

On 9/23/2010 4:34 PM, Mr Thalassocrat wrote:

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Surely the operative word here is *'perhaps'*?

jd