

gammadion

The Whorl list — 4 messages, 4 voices, 30 May 1997

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/318>

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Ron Crown — 30 May 1997, 10:07

Since things seem to be rather quiet right now, perhaps this is an opportune moment for my first post. I've been lurking almost from day one on WHORL but haven't had much time to contribute and am also somewhat daunted by the detailed knowledge of the text displayed by so many of you! I've only read BotLS once and Nabokov's dictum that "you can never read a book; you can only reread it" (or something like that) applies to Wolfe with a vengeance!

As a reference librarian, I can offer one tidbit of information re the gammadion question: from Christian Symbols Ancient and Modern: A Handbook for Students by Heather Child and Dorothy Colles, p. 40--"The voided cross or gammadia [note alternate spelling] is composed of four Greek gammas, emblematic of Christ as the Corner-stone of the Church; it is frequently seen on vestments in the Greek Orthodox Church."

There's a picture of a gammadion(a) on the next page which looks the same as the Gammadion (1) on the Compendium of Crosses website that someone referred to way back when (for recent subscribers the URL is www.amulet.co.uk/symbols/crosses). The Greek Orthodox connection is interesting for one thing since Byzantine history obviously influenced tBotNS; the four gammas arranged in the form of a plus (+) sign also has the advantage (over the swastika form of the gammadion; see Gammadion (2) on the Compendium website) of corresponding to the "sign of addition".

Ron Crown (who has made sure that everything of Wolfe's in print AND Lexicon Urthus are in the Saint Louis University library) Reference Librarian Saint Louis University crownrw at sltu.edu

m.driussi — 30 May 1997, 19:53 · follows Ron Crown

Reply: Item #6419145 from WHORL at LISTS.BEST.COM@INTERNET#

Ron Crown,

Welcome aboard! Good points re: voided cross (especially since I agree with you!). I'm happy to learn that there is such a Wolfe book bastion ("bookstion"?) at Saint Louis University library--keep up the good work!

=mantis=

Michael Richman — 31 May 1997, 21:24 · follows m.driussi

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the advantage (over the swastika form of the gammadion; see Gammadion (2) on the Compendium website) of corresponding to the "sign of addition".

While it may be a symbol of the Greek Orthodox Church, the gammadion as it appears in the Book of the Long Sun seems more reminiscent of the T symbol from Aldous Huxley's Brave New World. In that book, the T of the Model T became the symbol of the state religion; the purely material becomes divine. The gammadion in Long Sun is just a set of screwdrivers that can be joined end to end for ease of storage; again the purely material becomes divine. In Brave New World I think it is a case of people having forgotten what the divine really is. As for Long Sun, Comely Kypris herself says that the Chapter was set up as a parody of the state religion on Urth.

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Doug Eigsti — 02 Jun 1997, 10:19 · follows Michael Richman

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I agree. Remember that in NEW SUN, Wolfe was acting as the "translator", and something is always lost in translation. If we can presume the same scenario for LONG SUN then the choice of the word "gammadion" may be just the closest approximation describing the artifact worn by members of the Chapter. Obtaining a definition out of our contemporary dictionary cannot be seen as authoritative, only suggestive. As Michael Richman points out the object in question is clearly joined out of separate pieces. "Our" gammadion is four gammas placed to form a cross out of the void, yet they do not touch, a necessity for a physical object. Pas's gammadion may, indeed, be a parody of the gammadion listed in the citation and not a precise duplicate.

=Talon=