

4 February 1996 - Zork: Nemesis Packaging, Part Two

[The following is a portion of a journal belonging to someone doing research into the history of alchemy. I presume it to be Sartorius. Everything in italics is in his hand. The other entries are cut-outs from other sources, printed or hand-written, that have been taped or included loose-leaf into his journal.]

Entry on St. Yoruk in the Encyclopedia Frobozzica, 883 Unabridged Edition:

Saint Yoruk: Opinions differ as to the exact nature of the myths regarding this saint. The chief traditions regarding Yoruk come from the Eastlands, and are unbelievably ancient in origin. Recent archaeological expeditions in Fenshire and the Flathead Mountains have proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that a vast and ancient civilization flourished in the Eastlands centuries before the arrival of Duncanthrax and his armies. It is likely that the traditions regarding Saint Yoruk survive via oral legend from this otherwise forgotten empire.

The many different stories regarding Yoruk all have several elements in common. Yoruk, a simple merchant and tradesman from an unnamed city, had apparently grown dissatisfied with his life, and with the falsehoods in the ruling religion. One late evening, Yoruk secluded himself in a cave and was visited by supernatural visions that took control over his body. Wandering deep underground, Yoruk found himself guided down the descent to hell, deeper into the bowels of the earth than any human had yet dared to go. On his first of many visits to the Land of the Dead, Yoruk was imparted with certain arcane mystical secrets regarding the nature of the elements, and the forces that bind together the universe.

Over time, Yoruk came to achieve a deeper understanding of the arts of magic and science, and began to share this wisdom with those close to him. The legends disagree as to Yoruk's final fate, the most common thread being that he was taken up to the Planes of Atrii while still alive, to commune forever with the Implementors. Whatever the truth may be, modern guardians of the alchemical secrets still maintain that their knowledge exists via a direct line of tradition stemming from Yoruk's original descent into the underground.

For centuries, the Yoruk stories have been dismissed as nothing but mere myth. The Brogmoidists in particular have hotly denied the truth of these stories, fearing that the tale of Yoruk contradicted the fundamentals of their religion. However, recent efforts to translate certain ancient manuscripts and inscriptions have succeeded in providing evidence in support of Yoruk that is over a thousand years old. The modern historical community seems to have reached a general consensus that, while details of the story might have been changed over the centuries, the bulk of the legends surrounding Saint Yoruk are in fact historically accurate.

Horrible fire last night. A miscast 'gondar' spell only made things worse. Maybe I should leave the magic to the magicians. Most of father's notebooks caught in the blaze. Currently piecing together what little I can. One fragment:

I believe I have traced the origins of the secret alchemical society as far back as it is possible to go. The crucial place seems to be the Temple of the Ancients, deep in the Eastlands and now supposedly inaccessible to all except the alchemical initiates. When Duncanthrax's armies conquered the area, there was nothing at the site but ruins of an even more ancient structure. The wreckage was thousands of years old, dedicated to some dead and forgotten god. From what the researchers could tell, the ritual involved the worship of elements and base metals. Some say the ruins go back to the days of Yoruk, but I suppose there is no way to be sure.

At any rate, Duncanthrax gave the entire area to the Agrippa clan in a land grant that they held onto for another two hundred years. The temple got rebuilt eventually. Some say Locksmoore was responsible, but that doesn't seem likely. The head of the Agrippa family in the 670s was the only person outside of Duncanthrax himself that could have afforded the job.

Agrippa himself seems to have been the first head of the modern alchemical order, the first in a direct line of succession that still survives today. Perhaps in his exploration of the temple ruins, he discovered some way to unlock the secret science of the ancients. Agrippa was one of the few friends that Duncanthrax kept with him throughout his whole time as king. He was also one of the first engineers and explorers to accompany Duncanthrax with him during his first expeditions into the newly-discovered underground caverns in the east. Perhaps there, Agrippa too discovered the alchemical truths that had been revealed to Yoruk a millenium before.

I do not know why the secret order did not remain at the temple forever. Maybe the mystical aura of the place simply became too intense for daily life. Malveaux's book on revelation is bringing people back to the fire-cult by the thousands, but I suspect there is more to the man than he lets on. The notion of fire-worship is close enough to the alchemical tenets of respect for the elements to make me suspicious. I was right to contact him. His reply was guarded, but he will open up should I pursue him further. Here is a brief piece he sent me on the monastery, which I suspect to be the new center of the alchemical cabal.

Although the worship of fire and its corresponding elements has its roots in the primitive tribal cultures that thrived before the Age of Entharion, the modern form of the religion traces its origins back several hundred years to the time of Locksmoore.

That long-lived ascetic wise man was one of the first to establish friendly contact between the conquered tribes in the Eastlands and the armies of Duncanthrax from the west. He became well-versed in the lore and religions of the primitive society, and shared this information with the Quendoran newcomers, even befriending Duncanthrax and Agrippa during their visits to the east.

Through his intense study of the ancient secrets, Locksmoore gradually found his way to the truth regarding the purifying religious power of fire. His holy and ascetic nature had won him the approval of the divine forces, who granted him an extremely long span of life. He managed to outlive the first six ruling members of the Flathead Dynasty before being executed inadvertently by one of Dimwit Flathead's overzealous governors.

Before his death, he had founded an ascetic order of monks that still survives even today. Perched high atop the lonely mountains of the Steppinthrax Peninsula, our monastery keeps alive the fire of our ancient beliefs.

The brochure goes on, but says little more of importance. The connections at least have become more clear. From Malveaux and the fire-worshippers of today, there is a direct line of succession back to Agrippa, Locksmoore, and perhaps through them even back to the ancient knowledge of Yoruk himself. I must go there, and learn the truth for myself.

It is ironic that modern thaumaturges and enchanters try to claim Ozmar as one of their own. They quote that one sentence of his until they are blue in the face, yet they ignore the rest of his words. How clear that he was one of us! Read:

What most of us have failed to realize is that there are indeed two paths to the truth, two differing roads with the same identical goal. The path of Magic is hazy and unclear. Even the most brilliant minds have failed to penetrate it. Magic elicits amazing effects from trivial causes. It

makes something out of nothing, and no one can comprehend how! The path of the Alchemical Sciences lies along different steps, and makes different claims. This science offers a clear-cut path to purity, through the transmutation of the six baser metals into their pure and virgin state. Magic would attempt this task by reliance on the invisible, on the supernatural. Science offers a different approach, through the four visible elements of earth, air, water, and fire.

It is true of course that the Quintessence, the Fifth Element, remains undiscovered. Not until this elusive element is found can the process begin that will result in the creation of the Philosopher's Stone. It is possible that the Alchemical Science alone is not sufficient to this task, but it is also true that Magic itself has already failed. Perhaps the two together would provide the necessary wisdom. One day, perhaps, a great union will be formed between Magic and Science, and the final mysteries will be solved.

Excerpt from the Minutes of the Sixth Ecumenical Council of Enchanters and Mages, dated 4 Oracle 895 at Accardi-by-the-Sea, from the concluding declaration.

The ancient truths discovered by Bizboz and Dinbar, and all the Holy Fathers of Thaumaturgy are eternal and unchanging, and the assembled brethren of this Council affirm these truths for all time.

There are, as it is written, but Three Essences of Magic, namely the Presence, Incantation, and Unusual Effect. It is the belief of the Fathers and of this Council that these Three Essences represent the Cause, the Action, and the Result, a chain of events that no science can overturn. It is further our belief that Presence is perfect and intransmutable, existing eternally and forever out of the grasp of mankind. We believe that Presence can be placed upon scrolls, wands, and liquids, but that no other form of magical art is possible.

Thus we condemn and decry the unholy alchemists whose misguided ideas pervade our society. We laugh at their creeds proclaiming four or even five essence. In their foolishness they maintain that Magical Presence can be changed and altered, and that it is susceptible to the faulty laws of science. In their trickery they preach that Presence is not eternal, but begotten from both Incantation and Unusual Effect. This eternal circle of nonsense is only compounded by their deeper lies, that the essence of Presence can be found in base metals and common elements. The alchemists claim that through these elements, mankind can be purified and rise above its mortal self.

These ideas are dangerous, foolish, and erroneous!

This Council hereby declares that all who remain faithful to the stated views of the Alchemical Heretics are from this moment forward anathema. All alchemists, all sympathizers with the alchemists, and all who have ever held an alchemical belief, are hereby ostracized from the holy and universal Guild of Enchanters, and from all contact with those whom the Guild serves and protects.

Adopted into Guild Law by a hand vote of 187 to 6.

A personal letter from Belboz during the proceedings of the Sixth Council of Thaumaturgy, not included in the official minutes of the Council for obvious reasons.

Mumbar-

This haggling bores me. I think I'd rather be trapped in a cage full of babbling brogmoids. I don't think any of these fools even understand what it is that they're arguing about. I for one don't

give a damn whether Presence comes from the Implementors or from a piece of yipple dung. All I know is that our magic works, and theirs doesn't!

Ever since the last emperor vanished, it's been the same old story, over and over again. The alchemists trying desperately to take over our organization, and us stopping only to issue these silly decrees. No one really cares whether or not they ever find their Philosopher's Stone, but heaven forbid they try to take over the Guild! Once the chapter's old men get defensive, they drag us here from all corners of the land and watch our beards grow long...

I wish we'd hurry up and vote already.

Belboz

Belboz might have been right. Half of the fierce animosity against the alchemists might have simply been fear that the success of alchemy would spell the end of power for the magic guilds. But then again, "the chapter's old men" wouldn't have gotten so loud and defensive if there wasn't some truth to alchemy after all.