

# “LAST ENEMY”—PIPER’S FIRST BORN?

## PART ONE



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## 1. Introduction

In August 1981, H. Beam Piper's story "Last Enemy" was published in the *Paratime* collection. John F. Carr introduced the story with these words. "*Last Enemy*" has my own personal nomination as the best *Paratime* story in this volume."<sup>1</sup> After reading it in that halcyon summer of forty years ago, I wholeheartedly agreed with him. In fact, it remains my favorite *Paratime* tale to this day, with the possible exception of *Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen*. The Second Level Akor-Neb Sector was indeed "fascinating";<sup>2</sup> the Society of Assassins, the political parties based on reincarnation (Statisticalists and Volitionalists), and even the naming conventions (adding *-irz-* and *-arn-* to make Virzal out of Vall, for instance), all held a great appeal for me. Piper's story had a wonderful feel, or aura, of creativity about it.

Almost thirty years later—and almost twenty after I had read the Martian novels of Edgar Rice Burroughs—I finally realized where that feeling came from. It was a Barsoomian aura. "Last Enemy" seems to be Piper's version of a 'Black Martian' story, or 'what the First Born of Barsoom would look like in the *Paratime* universe'. He incorporated a great many Burroughsian elements in his tale of the Akor-Neb Sector. The planet-wide Society of Assassins appears to be modeled on the Assassins' Guilds of Barsoom, ubiquitous on the Red Planet of ERB. The Akor-Neb people are described as a dark-skinned but handsome race, and so are Burroughs' Black Martians, also called the First Born. In order to operate incognito among the Akor-Neb, Verkan Vall and other white Paratimers have to get their skins pigmented dark brown; this parallels how John Carter and his fellow American, Ulysses Paxton, occasionally have to change their skin color to pass as one of the native Barsoomians. Usually as red Martians (in *A Princess of Mars*, *The Master Mind of Mars* and *Swords of Mars*), but also as a yellow Martian (Carter in *The Warlord of Mars*), and even one of the dark-skinned First Born (Carter in *Lana of Gathol*).

Nor is that all. There are many other parallels, and the Barsoomian model can even explain minor details Piper included, such as what the name "Akor-Neb" signifies, why "zortan" is a particularly nasty dirty-word, the reason Verkan Vall and Hadron Dalla have not seen each other in twenty years, the underlying meaning of Vall's joke that she is "the daughter of the Emperor of Arcturus", and even why Beam called the story "Last Enemy".

In sum, it appears to be the most Martian story he ever wrote.

## Part One. Akor-Neb Terra Parallels Barsoom

### 2. The Society of Assassins Parallels the Assassins' Guilds

#### a) *Guilds and Lodges in Every Major City*

Piper's Society of Assassins, which operates all over the Terra of the Second Level Akor-Neb Sector, appears to be modeled on the Assassins' Guilds of Barsoom, which operate all over the Red Planet of Edgar Rice Burroughs. In keeping with the *Paratime* setting, in which the Old Martians colonized Terra and then invented transposition domes, Beam simply 'transposed' the concept from Mars to Earth.

The Assassins' Guilds are apparently spoken of in the plural because they have branches in every major city on Barsoom. In *Swords of Mars*, Rapas of the Ulsio says that "I don't belong to the Zodangan Guild". This is "one of the most powerful guilds of assassins on Mars", and its leader is a man named Ur Jan.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Gantun Gur is said to be the former leader of the Assassins' Guild of Amhor, and Gor Hajus is a famous assassin from Toonol, who presumably belongs to the Guild of that city.<sup>4</sup>

The Akor-Neb have a similar setup. In "Last Enemy", Olirzon mentions going to "Assassins' Hall" in the capital city of Darsh, and entering "the Lodge Secretary's office, where nobody but Assassins are ever admitted. They have a big panel in there, with the names of all the Lodge members on it in light-letters; that's standard in all Lodges."<sup>5</sup> The word "Lodges" suggests that, besides Assassins' Hall in Darsh, there are Assassins' Halls or Lodges in the other major cities of the Akor-Neb sector. Verkan Vall arrives in the city of Ghamma, on the Nile, where fellow Paratimer Zortan Brend is stationed. Brend brings a few Assassins to his meeting with Vall; he probably recruited them at Ghamma's Assassins' Hall or Lodge.<sup>6</sup>

Parenthetically, Beam appears to have improved on Burroughs by uniting the Assassins' Guilds into a single unit. Led by "Klarnood, President-General of the Society of Assassins",<sup>7</sup> Assassins' Hall in Darsh seems to be the planetary headquarters of the entire organization. But there is no paramount leader of assassins on Barsoom, and no overall headquarters. Each city's Guild seems to operate independently.

### **b) “Assassination is the Order of Society”**

In addition to moving the scene from Mars to Terra, Beam changed the color of the people involved. The Assassins’ Guilds of Barsoom are mainly staffed by red Martians, the currently dominant race on that planet. The Society of Assassins, however, is staffed by the dark-skinned Akor-Neb, the dominant race on the Terra of this Second Level sector. The Akor-Neb can therefore be called ‘black Martians’, since they “descend from...one or more shiploads of colonists having come to Terra from Mars about seventy-five to a hundred thousand years ago”, and they “have legends, maybe historical records, of their extra-terrestrial origin.”<sup>8</sup> This of course parallels Burroughs’ black Martians, who were also said to have an extraterrestrial—or rather, extra-Barsoomian—origin. “They were popularly supposed to inhabit the lesser moon [Thuria, or Phobos], from which they descended upon Barsoom at long intervals.”<sup>9</sup>

“Here assassination is a profession; kidnapping, a fine art. Each has its guild, its laws, its customs, and its code of ethics; and so widespread are their ramifications that they seem inextricably interwoven into the entire social and political life of the planet.”<sup>10</sup> Sounds like Terra in the Second Level Akor-Neb Sector, doesn’t it? But it’s actually John Carter’s description of the Assassins’ Guilds (and, presumably, Kidnappers’ Guilds) of Barsoom.

In fact, Piper may have derived the name “Society of Assassins” from *The Master Mind of Mars*, in which Ras Thavas mentions that Barsoom is “where **assassination** is the order of **society** and natural death one of the rarest of phenomena.”<sup>11</sup>

Beam’s story begins with “the voluntary discarnation feast—suicide party—of a prominent nobleman named Garnon of Roxor...when the Akor-Neb people get tired of their current reincarnation they invite in their friends, throw a big party, and then do themselves in in an atmosphere of general conviviality.” Since it is further stated that “The voluntary discarnation was just a routine social event”,<sup>12</sup> in which an Assassin plays a prominent role, we can paraphrase Burroughs: Piper’s Society of Assassins ‘seems inextricably interwoven into the entire social life of the planet’. Incidentally, that could explain why Beam changed Assassins’ “Guilds” to “Society”—because of their *social* role in the life of the Akor-Neb people, including when individuals of that society decide to end their lives.

### **c) Becoming Involved in the Political Life of the Planet**

A big difference from Burroughs is that Beam has his Society try to stay out of the *political* life of their planet. Klarnood says “As President-General of the Society of Assassins, I must be nonpolitical. The Society is rigidly so; if we let ourselves become involved, as an organization, in politics, we could control the System Government inside of five years, and we’d be wiped out of existence in fifty years by the very forces we sought to control.” But since politicians among both the Statisticalist and Volitionalist Parties employ personal Assassins, the Society slowly gets drawn into the fighting. Especially because Dalla’s work in reincarnation “has absolutely disproved the theory of Statistical Reincarnation”. Or in a more violent metaphor used by Dr. Harnosh of Hosh, “since Statistical Reincarnation is an exploded psychic theory, Statisticalist Socialism has been caught in the blast area and destroyed along with it.”<sup>13</sup>

Before that happened, the Statisticalists “were the dominant party, controlling a majority of the seats in Parliament and on the Executive Council. Only the Constitution kept them from enacting their entire socialization program years ago, and they were about to legislate constitutional changes which would remove that barrier.” Being so close to ultimate victory, they will not quit without a fight. The increasing violence causes a great many casualties, especially among the non-political assassins. Olirzon says that “It’s getting to a point where these political faction fights are being carried out entirely between members of the Society. In Ghamma alone, last year, thirty or forty of our members were discarnated that way.” And at the end of the story, Assassin-President Klarnood finally does something about it, stating that “It’s about time our members stopped discarnating each other in these political squabbles.”<sup>14</sup>

That’s just after a fission bomb has been detonated, threatening the planet with nuclear civil war, which enables Vall to persuade Klarnood to finally intervene in politics. Thus, given a big enough threat, Piper’s Assassins *do* get involved in the political life of the planet. But Beam apparently gave the matter more thought, as their original nonpolitical status seems to be another improvement on Burroughs.

Since the Assassins’ Guilds of Barsoom are so powerful and feared, and so interwoven into the whole social and political life of the planet, why don’t they just take over? Because overt control would bring them out of the shadows, their preferred theater of operation. That’s what makes the Assassins’ Guilds so powerful and so feared—the unknown, their ability to strike when you don’t expect it, and then

disappear. Out in the open, they would be just another gang of murderous rulers, and therefore vulnerable to all those who fear and hate them, and would like to see them destroyed. And sooner or later, they would be.

Likewise, if the Akor-Neb Society of Assassins did take over the planet, one would guess that Klarnood follows through on his wish “to see the Statisticalist Party destroyed”.<sup>15</sup> With the Statisticalists gone, they would be left with a one-party state, politically controlled by Volitionalists, but actually controlled by the Society of Assassins. Klarnood would undoubtedly make a benevolent ruler, but he would essentially be a dictator nonetheless.

#### **d) To Serve and Protect—and Assassinate**

Faithful service is a characteristic among Barsoomian assassins. “When a person of importance hires a bodyguard, such hireling often is expected to serve not only as his protector but also as his personal assassin.”<sup>16</sup> In *The Master Mind of Mars*, for example, the assassin Gor Hajus pledges himself to Ulysses Paxton (alias Vad Varro), and serves and protects him faithfully through many adventures; in the Tower of Thavas, the city of Toonol and the city of Phundahl.

Right off the bat, Gor Hajus asks Paxton whom he wants assassinated; stipulating only that he will not assassinate Ras Thavas, who “has saved me from utter destruction”. But he would be more than willing to kill Vobis Kan, his personal enemy and the tyrannical Jeddak of Toonol. Paxton refuses the offer, and reveals his quest to capture Xaxa, the Jeddara of Phundahl, in order to regain Valla Dia’s body so that he can reunite it with her brain. Gor Hajus replies, “You have a large contract on your hands”, which seems to be an assassin’s term. And even though the first stop in their journey is Toonol, Gor Hajus puts his service to Paxton above his own quest for vengeance. Mu Tel, a Prince of the House of Kan, offers Gor Hajus “a high place in the affairs of Toonol” if he will assassinate Vobis Kan, “but he tells me that he has first to fulfill his obligations to you, Vad Varro”.<sup>17</sup>

Faithful service is also the case in Piper’s tale. Right at the beginning, Garnon of Roxor is discarnated by “his personal trigger man”, Dirzed the Assassin. Through an entranced psychic, the discarnate Garnon communicates to Dirzed that “*You have served me faithfully, in the last ten years, never more so than with the last shot you fired in my service.*” Afterward, Dirzed takes service with the Lady Dallona of Hadron (Hadron Dalla in disguise). He rightfully believes that she “*will need the protection of a member of the Society of Assassins*”, and from newcasts becomes known as “her faithful Assassin”.<sup>18</sup>

And when Verkan Vall arrives on that Sector, in the role of Lord Virzal of Verkan, he is provided with two personal Assassins by Zortan Brend (alias Brarnend of Zorda). Brend introduces the men as Olirzon and Marnik, and a quick exchange formalizes their new relationship. “Virzal of Verkan”, he identified himself. “I am satisfied to entrust myself to you.” “We’ll do our best for you, Lord Virzal,” the older of the pair, Olirzon, said. He hesitated for a moment, then continued: “Understand, Lord Virzal, I only ask for information useful in *servicing and protecting* you.”<sup>19</sup> Later, Vall’s personal assassins back him when he confronts the Statisticalists in the Martian Room of the Solar Hotel, and then serve as his seconds in his duels with them. Olirzon even loans his dagger for Vall to use against their leader, Marnark of Bashad.<sup>20</sup>

In the end, during the late-story firefight in the hunting lodge of Starpha, Olirzon and Dirzed are both killed defending their clients, Vall and Dalla. Faithful to the last.<sup>21</sup>

#### **e) Honor, Illegal Assassinations and Suicide**

The fact that Piper made assassination an honorable profession, with members respectfully addressed as “Gentlemen-Assassins” or “Honorable Assassins”, and their leader as “Honorable Assassin-President”,<sup>22</sup> parallels Burroughs, but seems to be an improvement as well. Because while all of Beam’s Assassins seem like honorable men, John Carter says that “Most of these [Barsoomian] assassins are entirely without honor; they are merely killers”.

And yet, there are enough assassins who are a credit to their profession as to raise their stature among Barsoomian society at large. “Entrenched behind age-old ramparts of habit and tradition, [the assassins] occupy a position in the public consciousness that has cast a certain glamour of romance and honor upon them...among the more notorious assassins are men who hold much the same position in the esteem of the masses as do your great heroes of the prize ring or the baseball diamond.”<sup>23</sup>

One of the most famous assassins, already mentioned, is Gor Hajus, “a notorious Toonolian assassin, whose audacity, fearlessness and swordsmanship had won for him a reputation that had spread far beyond the boundaries of his country... Gor Hajus had [been] raised still higher in the esteem of his countrymen through the fact that he never struck down a woman or a good man and that he never struck from behind. His killings were always the result of fair fights in which the victim had every opportunity to defend himself and slay his attacker; and he was [also] famous for his loyalty to his friends.”<sup>24</sup>

Yet although this “grim calling is not without honor upon Barsoom”, many of the assassinations carried out are actually illegal. “Certain types of killings upon Mars are punishable by death, and most of the killings of the assassins fell in such categories.”<sup>25</sup>

Piper similarly mentions the occurrence of illegal assassinations. Sarnax says that “lethal-gas and radio-dust” are “illegal methods” of assassination. And when Nirzav of Shonna announces his resignation from the Statist Party, “he was shot immediately afterward, while leaving the Council chambers, along with a couple of Assassins who were with him. Some people in an airboat sprayed them with a machine rifle as they came out onto the landing stage.” The two Assassins exclaimed in horrified anger over this. “That wasn’t the work of members of the Society of Assassins!” Olirzon declared. “Even after he’d resigned, the Lord Nirzav was still immune till he left the Government Building. There’s too blasted much illegal assassination going on!”<sup>26</sup>

Even the connection with Assassins to suicide, as at Garnon’s suicide party, is an echo of Burroughs. Of his conflict with the Assassins’ Guilds, John Carter muses that “in the war that I was waging upon them, I was also handicapped by the fact that I must fight almost alone, as even those of the red men of Mars who felt as I did upon the subject also believed that to take sides with me against the assassins would prove but another means for committing suicide.”<sup>27</sup>

#### **f) Rules, Ethics and Customs**

**Burroughs.** As stated above, on Barsoom “**Most of these assassins are without honor**”. How ethical an individual assassin is seems to depend on the character of the man himself. It may also depend on which city’s guild he belongs to. Gor Hajus, the Assassin of Toonol, is an exemplar of honor; but in Zodanga, the assassins seem much less so. Uldak, sent by Ur Jan to kill John Carter, is “tricky and unscrupulous”. And Rapas the Ulsio, the assassin employed by Fal Sivas, is well named “the Rat”, for he is untrustworthy and treacherous. He does not face his enemies openly, he strikes from behind or through others. Of Rapas, John Carter (in the guise of Vandor, the panthan) says, “I imagine that as a killer he is more adept with the dagger and poison.”

Another characteristic is that **employment of non-Guild assassins is frowned upon by the Guild**. When Carter, as Vandor, enters the service of Fal Sivas, he is told why the inventor needs a good swordsman. A rival inventor, Gar Nal, “has employed an agent of the assassins’ guild to make away with me. This guild is headed by Ur Jan, and he personally has threatened my life because I have employed another than a member of his guild [Rapas] to do my killing.”<sup>28</sup>

Quite logically, Burroughs’ **assassins hold secret meetings**. When ‘Vandor’ informs his new employer that he plans to seek out and learn more about Ur Jan, Fal Sivas warns him against it. “[T]heir meetings are secret. Even if you could gain admission, which is doubtful, you would be killed before you could get out again.” Carter of course goes anyway, and is able to penetrate their headquarters and spy on one such meeting. There, he hears Ur Jan tell Rapas (who is betraying Vandor), “you have come here where it is forbidden that outsiders come”.<sup>29</sup>

Parenthetically, Piper is not explicit, but one would guess that meetings of his Assassins’ Society are likewise secret. Because Olirzon mentions that only Assassins are allowed in the Lodge secretary’s office. By extension, only members of the Society can go further into the building, which would include entering conference rooms to attend meetings.

And finally, **truces can apparently be called**. Because in an interesting twist, John Carter and Ur Jan later agree to cooperate. While upon Thuria, they—along with Jat Or, Zanda, Gar Nal and Dejah Thoris—are captured by the Tarids. Carter proposes that they work together to escape. But Gar Nal objects. “We cannot work together...while half of us have it in our hearts to kill the other half.” Carter replies, “Let us call a truce on our own quarrels, then...until we have escaped from these people.” Gar Nal and Ur Jan agree to this. Carter then has them formally affirm it. “And now...let us raise our hands and swear to abide by this truce until we have all escaped from the Tarids and, further, that each of us will

do all in his power to save the others.” Once they escape, Carter counsels that they continue working together, because they are still on Thuria. “First, I am going to try and get your ship [Gar Nal]...for even if we extend our truce, we shall stand a better chance of returning to Barsoom if we have both ships in our possession, as something might happen to one of them.”<sup>30</sup> The others agree to prolong the truce.

Here it should be noted that in *Swords of Mars*, John Carter is actually acting as the head of a clandestine group of anti-assassins, whose members are going around assassinating real assassins. Carter says, “I had gradually evolved and organized another means of combating them. This consisted of a secret organization of super-assassins. In other words, I had elected to fight the devil with fire. When an assassination was reported, my organization acted in the role of detective to ferret out the murderer. Then it acted as judge and jury and eventually as executioner. Its every move was made in secret, but over the heart of each of its victims an “X” was cut with the sharp point of a dagger.”<sup>31</sup>

The truce between John Carter and Ur Jan can therefore be viewed as not only one between two individual assassins, but also between the leaders of two rival groups of assassins. As such, it may have been an influence on Beam’s concept of the “Assassins’ Truce”. So now let’s look at the rules and customs of his Society of Assassins.

**Piper.** A master at playing with ideas, Beam appears to have thought out, in much more detail, how such a society would operate. Its rules and ethics, and even the clothing worn.

First, **prospective hit-jobs are supposed to remain confidential.** During a newscast, “the Assassin Hirzif” is quoted “in an exclusive interview” that he “he had already refused an offer of ten thousand System Monetary Units to discarnate the Lord Virzal for the Statisticalist Party.” Upon seeing and hearing this, the Assassin-President, Klarnood, frowns. “Hirzif shouldn’t have talked about refusing that retainer ...That isn’t good Assassin ethics.” This confidentiality also pertains to the clients of other Assassins. “Of course, they never tell one Assassin about the client of another Assassin; that’s standard practice.”<sup>32</sup>

Next, **an Assassin can kill his own employer, if requested to do so.** Moreover, the act seems to be performed in a ritual manner. After what is in effect his ‘last meal’, Garnon of Roxor presents his son and friends with tokens of his esteem. Then he stands, his son Girzon and his friend Nirzav of Shonna to his left; and Hadron Dalla and Dr. Harnosh of Hosh to his right. They walk between the arms of a U-shaped table, while the guests to either side stand and watch. When they come close to the end of the table, Dirzed the Assassin shoots his employer in the back of the head, killing him instantly. However, “The others went on as though Garnon of Roxor were still walking among them.”<sup>33</sup>

**Assassins have a specific uniform.** Burroughs’ assassins seem to wear the harness and metal of all Barsoomian men, usually in the style of the city to which they belong, and upon which their various weapons are openly attached. But while Piper’s assassins similarly “openly displayed pistols and knives on their belts”, their garb is different from that of other men. For example, the nobleman Marnark of Bashad wears “a gold-laced cream-colored dress tunic”, while a newscaster wears “a gold-laced green suit”, and “a tall man in a tan tunic” is also mentioned. This implies that average Akor-Neb males wear tunics of various colors. But all of the Assassins wear “the black tunics and the winged-bullet badges of the Society of Assassins.” The only exception is that the Assassin-President, Klarnood, bears a different badge. “The red badge on his breast was surrounded with gold lace, and instead of black wings and a silver bullet, it bore silver wings and a golden dagger.” Additionally, though it seems to be distasteful to respectable ones, Assassins wishing to avoid being recognized can wear “a cowllike mask”.<sup>34</sup>

**Double-crosses are not allowed; a formal withdrawal of protection must be declared before hostilities commence.** At Starpha Dome, Verkan Vall and Hadron Dalla are under the protection of Prince Jirzyn, when suddenly they are attacked, without warning, by the Prince’s servants. An Assassins’ Truce (see below) is declared, whereupon Sarnax the Assassin approaches the Paratimers and their Assassins. “I and my colleagues, Erarno and Kirzol and Harnif, offer our apologies for the barbarity of the servants of the house of Starpha, in attacking without declaration of cessation of friendship.” It is formally stated as “I and my colleagues, in the employ of the family of Starpha, have received orders from our clients to withdraw our protection from you, and to discarnate you, and all with you who undertake to protect or support you.”<sup>35</sup>

**Whenever a parley is desired, an “Assassins’ Truce” is called.** This is sometimes accompanied by a ritual gesture. “The young Assassin with the mustache and chin beard emerged from the descent tube, his weapons sheathed and his clasped hands extended in front of him in a peculiarly ecclesiastical-

looking manner". All fighting ceases, until the parley is finished. Then one side or the other can declare "Assassins' Truce is over!" upon which fighting recommences.<sup>36</sup>

Incidentally, as stated above, the concept of Assassins' Truce may have been inspired by the truce agreed upon in *Swords of Mars*, between John Carter, the leader of the "super-assassins", and Ur Jan, leader of the Assassins' Guild of Zodanga.

**"Assassins' Truce is binding even upon non-Assassins"**. This makes perfect sense. How can the Assassins of two opposing sides have a peaceful discussion if their employers and/or their servants keep the fight going all around them? Klarnood stipulates that this is "not exactly" a formal rule, but "it's generally kept by such non-Assassins who want to remain in their present reincarnations".<sup>37</sup>

This is not a formal rule on Barsoom, either, yet it is nevertheless true. For the truce between John Carter and Ur Jan, the super-assassin and assassin leader, is also binding on the non-assassins among them. These include Dejah Thoris, Zanda, Jat Or and Gar Nal.

**Violations of Assassins' Truce result in Assassins' Justice.** Violating an Assassin's Truce is a serious offense, punishable by physical abuse and the execution of the offender or offenders. When Tarnod the gamekeeper violates the Assassins' Truce at Starpha Dome, his face is beaten and his jaw broken by the Assassins on his own side, who then bring him before their enemies. "Here he is!...He fired during Assassins' Truce; he's subject to Assassins' Justice!" The beaten and bloody Tarnod is then "shot... through the head" by Sarnax, who says "Any more of these people who violate the decencies will be treated similarly".<sup>38</sup>

In Burroughs, this happens as well. Gar Nal violates the truce, kidnapping Dejah Thoris back to Barsoom, and abandoning the others on Thuria. This infuriates Ur Jan, who throws in his lot with John Carter, whom he has come to admire. When they later return to Barsoom in Fal Sivas' ship, they catch up with Gar Nal. For breaking his oath, Gar Nal is run through the heart by Ur Jan.<sup>39</sup>

**Changes of allegiances are allowed, but providing information about one's previous side is not.** Because the violation of Assassins' Truce resulted in the death of Olirzon, which left his side short a man, Sarnax switches sides to compensate. Dirzed says "He's entitled to do that, Lord Virzal; the Assassins' code provides for such changes of allegiance." However, even though allegiances can be changed, turning informer on your former side is unethical. When Vall understandably asks Sarnax "What's the situation, up there?...What force have they, and why did they turn against us?", Dirzed is "scandalized". "Lord Virzal!...You have no right to ask Sarnax to betray confidences!"<sup>40</sup>

This aspect may owe something to Ur Jan's change of heart, after Gar Nal violates the truce and kidnaps Dejah Thoris. For it effectively leaves the escape party on Thuria 'short' two people, and, enraged at Gar Nal's treachery, Ur Jan changes sides, becoming a staunch ally of John Carter.

**Attacking after withdrawal of protection, but before declaration of hostilities, is a violation.** Sarnax says, "We warned Marnik about the change in the situation, according to the code, expecting Marnik to go down here and join you. Instead, he lifted the airboat, zoomed over Girzad's boat, and let go a rocket blast, setting Girzad's boat on fire. Well, that was a hostile act, so we all fired after him." But although he seems to have violated the Assassins' Truce, Marnik escapes justice. Fortunately for Vall and Dalla, because he is able to bring back help, including the Assassin-President himself, thereby saving their lives. In that sense, Marnik was being faithful to his oath to serve and protect them.<sup>41</sup>

**Assassins can offer temporary protection in return for favors.** Marnik's boat is downed by the return fire, so he has to proceed for help on foot. He finds a family in the woods, who are hiding from the political violence in Darsh. "They had an airboat; a good one...I offered them Assassins' protection if they'd take me to Assassins' Hall, and they did."<sup>42</sup>

**Assassins can temporarily transfer protection of their client to another Assassin.** When Dirzed was sent to bring Vall to Dalla, he told the former that "I left one of the Starpha Assassins guarding the Lady Dallona when I came for you, under brotherly oath to protect her in my name till I returned." When Dirzed does return, Sarnax tells him "Ah, Dirzed...the Lady Dallona is within; I return her to your care."<sup>43</sup>

**Assassins can order a non-Assassin to provide protection.** This is probably only in rare and special cases. Because even though Verkan Vall isn't actually a client of the Assassin-President, Klarnood tells the manager of the Solar Hotel that "I'll hold you responsible with your carnate existence for the Lord Virzal's safety in this hotel."<sup>44</sup>

**"In a place of danger, an Assassin was obliged to shield his client."** Like a Secret Service agent protecting the President, an Assassin may have to take a bullet or a bomb so that his protectee can live.

In Starpha Dome, Dirzed and Sarnax do just that. With their enemies closing in, Vall and Dalla are ordered to hide behind their Assassins. Then Dirzed jumps on Vall, covering him from several dropped grenades, and soon after is killed. Soon after, Sarnax is overcome by sleep-gas, but it is not stated if he is still alive when Marnik returns with Klarnood and three boatloads of Assassins.<sup>45</sup>

**Killed Assassins may require avenging.** Olirzon says that if an Assassin “is discarnated, his name’s removed entirely [from the lighted board in the Lodge secretary’s office], unless the circumstances of his discarnation are such as to constitute an injury to the Society. In that case, the name’s in red light until he’s been properly avenged, or, as we say, till his blood’s been mopped up.” One would guess that the violation of Assassins’ Truce, in which Olirzon himself was killed, means that Olirzon’s death must be avenged. In this instance, it is quickly taken care of by Sarnax, who executes Tarnod.<sup>46</sup>

Finally, **private quarrels must wait until an Assassin’s current contract is fulfilled.** At the Solar Hotel, Olirzon takes offense when Marnark says that Assassins are unfit to be seconds in a duel between noblemen. He replies, “is your objection personal to me, or to Assassins as a class? In the first case, I’ll remember to make a private project of you, as soon as I’m through with my present employment”.<sup>47</sup>

This is true in Burroughs as well. For as we’ve seen, Prince Mu Tel offers Gor Hajus “a high place in the affairs of Toonol” if he will assassinate Vobis Kan. But Gor Hajus replies that his private quarrel with Vobis Kan must wait until he has fulfilled “his obligations to...Vad Varro”.

### 3. Parallel Geography-Based Surnames

Tortha Karf tells Verkan Vall that “all Akor-Neb family-names are prepositional; family-names were originally place names.” Thus, noblemen are formally described by their family’s place of origin; for example, Garnon of Roxor, Nirzav of Shonna, Harnosh of Hosh, Larnov of Horka, Sirzob of Abo and Mirzark of Bashad.<sup>48</sup>

This follows Burroughs, many of whose Martian nobility are addressed in reference to their place of origin. Such as Gahan of Gathol, Llana of Gathol, Tan Hadron of Hastor, Tara of Helium and Thuvia of Ptarth. In Tara’s case, somewhat surprisingly, her own parents call her “Tara of Helium”; and she even refers to herself that way!<sup>49</sup>

Garnon of Roxor is formally referred to as “Lord Garnon”, while Jirzyn is styled “Prince Jirzyn” of Starpha.<sup>50</sup> This also parallels Burroughs, where Gahan is ‘jed’, or king, of Gathol, while Llana, Tara and Thuvia are all princesses of their respective city-states.

Beam’s use of these geographic surnames is a natural extension of “Genesis” and Home Time Line, in which his Martian-Paratime names are also modeled on those of Barsoom. Characters like Kalvar Dard, Seldar Glav, Tortha Karf and Verkan Vall are in the same style as Burroughs’ characters like Kantos Kan, Thuvan Dihn, Tardos Mors and Vobis Kan. In fact, Piper’s main female character, Hadron Dalla, provides a direct connection between Paratime and the Martian tales of Edgar Rice Burroughs, because ‘Hadron’ is a famous name on Barsoom. Tan Hadron of Hastor is the hero of *A Fighting Man of Mars*. And when Dalla travels to the ‘black Martian’ Akor-Neb Sector, she takes the name “Dallona of Hadron”, paralleling Hadron of Hastor even more closely.<sup>51</sup>

“Last Enemy” was published in 1950, nineteen years after *A Fighting Man of Mars* in 1931. This would appear to make Hadron Dalla a ‘literary niece’ of Tan Hadron. That in turn may be related to the fact that H. Beam Piper had many “honorary nieces and nephews”.<sup>52</sup>

The exception to the family-name rule are Beam’s assassins, who go by a single name; such as Dirzed, Olirzon, Marnik, and even Klarnood, the President-General of the Society, himself. It is not made explicit, but one would guess that joining the Society of Assassins required dropping their geographic surnames. Possibly in order to demonstrate their undivided loyalty to the Society, but also to conceal their origin, thus protecting their families back home. If Olirzon, for instance, assassinates someone, that person’s family won’t be able to retaliate by killing a member of Olirzon’s family. His ‘family’ is now the Society of Assassins. So dropping their family name (and even better, also changing their proper name, though that doesn’t seem to occur) would be a good way to ‘cover their tracks’, in the Piper manner.

But whatever the reason, this is still consistent with Burroughs. Because although he provided names for only a few assassins, none of them include a geographic descriptor. Gantun Gur, the former head of the Assassin’s Guild of Amhor, is not addressed as “Gantun Gur of Amhor”; likewise with Gor Hajus, an honorable, popular and famous assassin from Toonol; Povak, Rapas and Uldak, Zodangan assassins; and Ur Jan, leader of the Assassins’ Guild of Zodanga.<sup>53</sup>



#### **4. Reincarnation Parallels “I Who Have Died Twice and am Still Alive”**

In “Last Enemy”, the “Akor-Neb people have actually demonstrated, as a scientific fact, that the human individuality reincarnates after physical death—that your personality, and mine, have existed, as such, for ages, and will exist for ages to come. More, they have means of recovering, from almost anybody, memories of past reincarnations.”<sup>54</sup>

This is one of Piper’s most fascinating ideas in the story. But while it certainly seems to be an original concept, it at least owes a partial debt to John Carter, whose personality has apparently existed for ages. At the very beginning of *A Princess of Mars*, he writes, “I am a very old man, how old I do not know. Possibly I am a hundred, possibly more; but I cannot tell because I have never aged as other men, nor do I remember any childhood.” This is not a single lifetime we’re talking about, either, because John Carter dies at least twice. First, he dies in the Arizona cave, after which he finds himself in another body, which then flies to Mars, where he awakens. Later, he dies in the Atmosphere Factory, after which his Martian body returns to Earth and he wakes up again, reunited with his old body. He therefore describes himself as “I who have died twice and am still alive.”<sup>55</sup> This certainly seems to be a form of reincarnation.

Later in the series, Burroughs introduces another Earthman who dies and is ‘reincarnated’ on Mars; Ulysses Paxton, an American soldier who is killed on a battlefield in France in 1917, only to find himself in a new body, which flies to Barsoom. Upon arrival, Paxton meets the very old scientist Ras Thavas. Thavas is a medical genius who has discovered how to reanimate corpses, thereby bringing the dead back to life; another form of reincarnation. The first former corpse Paxton meets is Dar Tarus, a man who was assassinated. Coming into possession of his body, Ras Thavas sells it to a wealthy nobleman, but transfers the brain into another body, which he revives to become one of his personal slaves.<sup>56</sup>

After being trained in these techniques, Paxton transfers the brain of the dying Ras Thavas into a strong, youthful body, thereby giving the Master Mind a ‘second life’. For his own purposes, Paxton then revives Dar Tarus again (who he had killed earlier, when Dar tried to kill Ras Thavas), thereby giving him a ‘third’ life; he also resurrects an executed Toonolian assassin named Gor Hajus, who therefore also receives another life. Needless to say, Dar Tarus and Gor Hajus remember their previous lives before they died.<sup>57</sup>

This is paralleled in Piper’s Akor-Neb Sector, where one test-subject provides “a fine set of memory-recalls...for four previous reincarnations and four intercarinations.” In one of the latter, he “waited for fifty years in the discarnate state for an opportunity to reincarnate as the son of an over-servant.”<sup>58</sup> So the four previous lives and discarnate interludes he remembers presumably cover several centuries of time.

Several centuries of life is also a fact on Barsoom. “The average life expectancy of a Martian after the age of maturity is about three hundred years, but would be nearer the one-thousand mark were it not for the various means leading to violent death.” The almost-constant warfare between the various city-states of Mars is certainly a major reason for their shortened life-span, but the most notable cause is the planet-wide reach of professional assassins. As John Carter puts it, “Assassination is the ever-present fear of all Barsoomians”.<sup>59</sup>

#### **5. Voluntary Discarnation Parallels Voluntary Pilgrimage**

To reiterate from above, Beam’s story begins with “the voluntary discarnation feast—suicide party—of a prominent nobleman named Garnon of Roxor...when the Akor-Neb people get tired of their current reincarnation they invite in their friends, throw a big party, and then do themselves in in an atmosphere of general conviviality.” The son of Garnon, Girzon, elaborates on his reason for doing so. “My father had been considering voluntary discarnation for a long time...Ever since the discarnation of my mother.”<sup>60</sup> From this we can deduce that Garnon was very attached to his wife, and did not want to continue living without her. So he had himself assassinated, in order to follow her into the afterlife.

This is very interesting, because it actually parallels how many Barsoomians voluntarily end their lives, by taking “the long, last pilgrimage down the mysterious River Iss”; also called “the voluntary pilgrimage” down “the River of Mystery”. And usually, the journey is undertaken after the loss of a loved one.

The River Iss ends at the Lost Sea of Korus in the Valley Dor, at the south pole of Mars. This is the “Heaven” of the cult of Issus, the supreme religion on Barsoom. Tars Tarkas calls it “the valley of love and peace and rest to which every Barsoomian since time immemorial has longed to pilgrimage at the end of a life of hate and strife and bloodshed”. In his own case, Tars Tarkas long knew that he would

eventually take the voluntary pilgrimage. He finally does so because he wishes to be reunited with John Carter, whom Tars believes took the pilgrimage after his disappearance at the end of *A Princess of Mars*; but also because he wants to be reunited with “the woman who taught me to love...She, I thought, awaited me by the Lost Sea of Korus.”<sup>61</sup>

Dejah Thoris does something similar. Ten years after the loss of John Carter, her son Carthoris likewise disappears. Her father and grandfather, Mors Kajak and Tardos Mors, take two great fleets to search for him, “but rumours were rife that they had met with a terrible disaster and that all were dead.” The loss of her closest kin, combined with the unwelcome advances of the evil Jed of Zodanga, Zat Arrras, who desires her hand in marriage, cause Dejah to give up on her life and take the voluntary pilgrimage.<sup>62</sup> She undoubtedly hopes to be reunited with her loved ones at the end of the journey.

In Earthly terms, the voluntary pilgrimage is of course a parallel of death, in which we leave our mortal lives behind, and follow the loved ones who have gone before us into the mysterious Beyond, hopefully to be reunited with them in Heaven. But for Barsoomians, the voluntary pilgrimage really does mean death, just as it does in the Akor-Neb Sector. Because the ‘Heaven’ which allegedly lies around the Lost Sea of Korus at the end of the River Iss is really a Hell. Once pilgrims enter the Valley Dor, they are set upon by plant men and white apes, who kill and devour them. The few who manage to survive are enslaved, and some are eaten by the Holy Therns, who are cannibals.<sup>63</sup>

Here, Piper’s improvement on Burroughs is threefold. First, while voluntary discarnation does involve death, the Akor-Neb people know that they will be born again, reincarnated in a new body. So they really can be reunited with their loved ones in the next life. Unlike Barsoomians, who are not reunited with their loved ones in the Valley Dor, save by simply being killed in the same gruesome manner.

Second, Beam made the voluntary discarnation a party. If you are leaving your current life behind, confident that another life will soon follow, why wouldn’t you want to say goodbye to your family and friends? But in Burroughs, people taking the pilgrimage just up and leave; apparently because they are disconsolate over their grievous loss. In Dejah Thoris’ case, she took “a dozen of her household guard and body servants, including Sola the green woman”. However, “No word left they of their intentions, but it is always thus with those who go upon the voluntary pilgrimage from which none returns.”<sup>64</sup>

His third improvement? Making the voluntary discarnation an almost painless event. A single shot to the back of the head, as in Garnon of Roxor’s case, is certainly preferable to being mauled and torn limb from limb by white apes, or having your blood sucked out by the disgusting plant men; or worse, being captured and enslaved, only to later have your blood sucked out by plant men, after which your flesh is devoured by the Holy Therns!<sup>65</sup>

## 6. A Modified Barsoomian Greeting

In “Last Enemy”, the men of the Akor-Neb Sector have a distinctive manner of introduction. When Verkan Vall first meets the two men who will be his personal Assassins, Marnik and Olirzon, he “hooked fingers and clapped shoulders with them.”<sup>66</sup> He does the same when he is introduced to Klarnood, President-General of the Society of Assassins. “Klarnood...came over, hooking fingers and clapping shoulders with Verkan Vall.”<sup>67</sup> And when Dirzed comes to deliver Dalla’s message, Vall and his Assassins “all hooked fingers and clapped shoulders with the newcomer.”<sup>68</sup> This was another one of Piper’s really neat ideas, and back in 1981 I wished for a group of noble friends I could greet like that.

However, this Akor-Neb custom appears to be a modified Barsoomian greeting. “Generally, when two Barsoomians meet each places his right hand on the other’s shoulder—the equivalent to our handshake. A stronger show of friendship would be to place both hands on each other’s shoulders. Only on rare occasions do Barsoomians actually embrace.”<sup>69</sup> One such meeting is in *A Princess of Mars*, when John Carter escapes from the Atmosphere Factory, and heads toward Zodanga to rescue Dejah Thoris. He encounters several red men, and upon assuring them that he is not an enemy, “They lowered their rifles and advanced pleasantly toward me placing their right hands upon my left shoulder, after the manner of their custom of salute.”<sup>70</sup>

Another is found in *The Master Mind of Mars*, when Vad Varro is introduced to “Mu Tel, Prince of the House of Kan.” “I bowed and the prince advanced and placed his right hand upon my left shoulder in true Barsoomian acknowledgement of an introduction; when I had done similarly, the ceremony was over. There was no silly pleased-to-meet-you, how-do-you-do? or it’s-a-pleasure-I-assure-you.”<sup>71</sup>

As a prince, Mu Tel is royalty, and Vad Varro's bow to him is echoed by Verkan Vall. Upon meeting Klarnood, the President-General of Assassins, "Verkan Vall turned and bowed as to royalty."<sup>72</sup> And public embraces seem to be as rare among the Akor-Neb as they are among Barsoomians. Because the only instance of an embrace in "Last Enemy" is actually performed by the disguised Paratimers. When, after their twenty-year separation, Vall finally reaches Hadron Dalla, she is ecstatic. "Why, Va-a-a-ll!" she whooped, running into his not particularly reluctant arms."<sup>73</sup>

Thus, Akor-Neb men clap shoulders like Barsoomians, but it is not a 'true Barsoomian' greeting, because Piper added the 'hooking fingers' element. This presumably changes which shoulder is touched, from left to right. At least, I always envisioned the men hooking the fingers of their right hands, similar to a handshake, while placing their left hands on the other's right shoulder. That parallel would make the Akor-Neb gesture a sort of combined Barsoomian (clap shoulders) and Jasoomian (handshake) greeting. Perfectly reasonable, since the Akor-Neb people are Black Martians who evolved on Terra.

That their method of introduction is similar to, but not exactly a Barsoomian greeting, also makes sense within the Paratime universe. Because originally, Beam's Akor-Neb civilization was fully Martian, but it suffered several dark age interludes. The current Akor-Neb culture is therefore 'essentially' Martian, but somewhat changed compared to the true Martian, or 'Barsoomian', culture, of First Level.

Incidentally, the 'hooked fingers' element may have actually come from the Freemasons. H. Beam Piper's father, Herbert Piper, was apparently a mason. He not only got Paul Schuchart into Altoona's Logan Lodge 490, "he also arranged some for some sort of special dispensation so that I got all three degrees at one time, rather than one degree each month."<sup>74</sup> To reiterate from above, Olirzon the Assassin goes to Assassins' Hall and enters "the Lodge Secretary's office, where nobody but Assassins are ever admitted. They have a big panel in there, with the names of all the Lodge members on it in light-letters; that's standard in all Lodges."<sup>75</sup>

This suggests that, besides the Assassins' Guilds of Barsoom, Beam had another model in mind. He also seems to have considered the Society of Assassins a Masonic-like 'secret society', with lodges in all the major Akor-Neb cities, and having its own secret oaths, passwords and hand signs. One of these hand signs is mentioned when Verkan Vall and his Assassin, Marnik, visit the Independent Institute of Reincarnation Research. "A number of Assassins loitered in the hallways and offices...and they were stopping people and questioning them. Marnik needed only to give them a quick gesture, and the words "Assassins' Truce," and he and his client were allowed to pass." And Klarnood later gives Verkan Vall "a code word to use at Assassins' Hall" in case he needs help.<sup>76</sup> Certainly a 'secret password' of sorts.

Since his father was a Freemason, one would think that Piper was at least somewhat familiar with Masonic practices. And it is interesting that the "Pass-grip of a mark master mason" involves hooking the fingers and touching thumbs. (Figure 1.)



Figure 1. The 'hooking fingers' pass-grip of a mark master mason. Piper's possible model for the Akor-Neb style of greeting.<sup>77</sup>

Thus, Beam could have gotten the 'hooking fingers' idea by simply watching two Master Masons of the Logan Lodge greet each other.

In a strange coincidence, Edgar Rice Burroughs was also the son of a mason. “Burroughs’ father was a Freemason. There is likely an autobiographical touch to the words the author put into the mouth of his fictional character, James Blake: “My father is a thirty-second degree mason and a Knight Templar.”<sup>78</sup> Piper, too, seems to have put an autobiographical masonic touch into one of his stories. In *The Cosmic Computer*, Conn Maxwell’s father, Rodney Maxwell, uses a masonic reference when Wade Lucas figures out what they’re really up to. Rodney (parallels Beam’s father) tells Conn (parallels Beam), “He’d figured most of it out for himself. The only thing to do was *admit him to the lodge and give him the oath.*”<sup>79</sup>

## 7. Yellow Moss

In the Martian Room of the Solar Hotel in the Akor-Neb city of Darsh, Verkan Vall and his Assassins eat dinner. Their provocative post-meal encounter with Marnark of Bashad and the other Statisticalists includes an interesting detail. The soup Vall throws on Marnark “was a dark brown, almost black. It contained bits of meat, and mushrooms, and slices of hard-boiled egg, and yellow Martian rock-lichen. It produced, on the light tunic, a most spectacular effect.”<sup>80</sup>

This ‘yellow Martian lichen’ sounds very much like the base vegetation on Burroughs’ Mars. “When [John] Carter opens his eyes that morning in March, 1866 (Earth calendar), he sees before him mile upon mile of yellowish, moss-like vegetation. It spreads across a deep, circular basin until it merges into a series of low hills. Outcroppings of quartz-bearing rock show through in places. There is no sign of water nor of any growth other than moss...The endless acres of yellow moss were once the beds of Barsoom’s five mighty oceans and numerous seas, waters that vanished half a million years before.”<sup>81</sup>

Lichens and mosses are similar in that they are “small...plants growing in tufts, sods, or mats of moist ground, tree trunks, rocks, etc.” Moreover, “certain lichens” are considered to be mosses, such as Icelandic moss.<sup>82</sup> The “moss-like” vegetation of Barsoom could therefore be a form of lichen, as in Piper.

The major differences I think are in quantity and extent. In Paratime, Beam’s Martian uplands are presumably barren deserts, such as are seen in the THFH tale “Omnilingual”.<sup>83</sup> Assuming so, then his “yellow Martian rock-lichen” is probably common in the lowland areas which contain more moisture (such as the bottom of Syrtis Major), but not in the higher, dryer regions of Mars. Barsoom, however, is more vegetated. Indeed, it is practically covered in yellow moss. “[W]ith the exception of the polar regions, it would appear that the ochre moss-like vegetation has spread across Barsoom, moving from the dry sea basins to the fertile lowlands and onto the plains, the plateaus, and even the hills themselves. Only in the very arid regions do we find naked rock and barren gullies.”<sup>84</sup>

## 8. “About Two Hours”

The Barsoomian model for the Akor-Neb Sector is supported by the setup of the Martian Room. “It had been fitted to resemble one of the ruined buildings of the ancient and vanished race of Mars who were the ancestors of Terran humanity. One whole side of the room was a gigantic cine-solidograph screen, on which the gullied desolation of a Martian landscape was projected; in the course of about two hours, the scene changed from sunrise through daylight and night to sunrise again.”<sup>85</sup>

Anyone who has read the Martian tales of Edgar Rice Burroughs can recognize the parallel with the ruined buildings (usually inside empty cities) of the ancient and vanished race of Orovars, which are found all over Barsoom. And although Beam cleverly glosses over how long it takes the cine-solidograph screen to go through a Martian day, “about two hours” is similar to a Barsoomian hour; a zode. A zode is “A Barsoomian unit of time, one-tenth of a Barsoomian day, and containing fifty xats [Barsoomian minutes]. It is equal to 2.462 Earth hours.”<sup>86</sup>

This cannot be a coincidence, because in reality, a Martian day is 24.6229 hours long; only slightly longer than an Earth day.<sup>87</sup> Dividing that number by ten is how Burroughs derived the Barsoomian hour, ten of which make up a Barsoomian day. Thus, if Beam were being more honest, and not covering his literary tracks, he would have written that the cine-solidograph scene changes through a full day in ‘about two and a half hours’.<sup>88</sup>

That a Barsoomian hour is meant is confirmed by Beam’s statement that the screen begins a Martian day at “sunrise”. Unlike a Terran day which officially begins at midnight, the Barsoomian day, or *padan*, begins around sunrise, too. “The Barsoomian day is approximately 24 hours and 37 minutes long—Earth time. *Their day starts at the equivalent to our 6 a.m.* and is divided into ten equal parts.”<sup>89</sup>

Thus, Piper's quote can be translated to read, "in the course of a zode, the scene changed through a padan." That would make perfect sense; *in the Martian Room, a Martian day passes every Martian hour*.<sup>90</sup> And in keeping with the story's Paratime setting, one merely has to 'transpose' the adjective Barsoomian for Martian to discover the real meaning. Verkan Vall and his Assassins actually dine in the 'Barsoomian' Room.

Incidentally, the existence of a Martian Room suggests that the Solar Hotel also contains halls for the other planets of the system; a Jovian Room, a Saturnian Room, and so on. There should also be a Venusian Room, depicting the alleged home planet of Verkan Vall and Hadron Dalla.<sup>91</sup> The Burroughs influence on "Last Enemy" suggests that the Venusian Room may resemble Amtor, Edgar's version of Venus. Amtor is a "primarily oceanic" world, whose "vegetation...tends to be gigantic", while "Amtorian animals likewise tend to be larger than their Earthly equivalents, and the large species are much more common than they are on Earth, which makes them much more dangerous than Earth fauna".<sup>92</sup>

Piper provides some details of his version of Venus, which suggests a similarly wetter planet whose animal life is larger and more dangerous than that on Terra. In "Police Operation", we are introduced to the "Venusian nighthound", which is "a creature of the hot Venus marshes".<sup>93</sup> Parenthetically, this clawed carnivore seems rather Barsoomian in inspiration, as it has six limbs like a white ape, a green Martian, an apt or a sorak; but in this case, the middle two appendages end in septic, disemboweling claws, rather than another set of hands or clawed paws.<sup>94</sup>

At least some of these extremely dangerous nighthounds have been domesticated, like Terran dogs, in order to protect their owners' properties from the other perils of the Venusian jungle. Foremost among these perils is a "two-and-a-half foot insectlike thing"; called a "giant poison-roach, the one creature for which the nighthound bore an inborn, implacable hatred."<sup>95</sup> And in "Last Enemy", Verkan Vall, disguised as a Venusian planter, mentions other fauna. "I have enough troubles, with the natives, and the weather, and blue-rot in the *zerfa* plants, and poison-roaches, and javelin-bugs, without getting into politics." Like the huge poison-roach, the javelin-bug sounds like a large insect whose stinger is of impressive (and scary) size.

That Venus is a hot and humid planet is further suggested by the "drying sheds" Vall also mentions, after which the dried *zerfa* leaves are ground up to produce a sort of concentrated super-nicotine in granular form. In fact, the impression one gets from Beam's words is that this more potent Venusian tobacco is similar to Terran marijuana or opium in its addictive and stuporizing effects. And even Venusian microbial life seems pretty dangerous. In "Time Crime", the Terra of Third Level Esaron Sector was all but depopulated by "green-vomit fever" brought back from Venus.<sup>96</sup>

Now let's return to the Barsoomian—pardon, Martian Room.

## 9. Under the Moons of Mars?

It is also interesting that Beam never mentions whether the movements of Phobos and Deimos are depicted on the cine-solidograph screen. Given the accuracy of the landscape projected on its surface, and the time element it follows—not to mention the Martian Room's Martian fittings—one would expect the moons to be included. Also to complete the ambience, or illusion; failing to show the moons of Mars would be like building a Terran Room on Mars, fitted to look like a Terran building, with a huge screen showing an accurate Earthscape, going through a Terran day every Terran hour, but forgetting to occasionally put Luna in the sky.

We can therefore assume that Mars' satellites are indeed shown. "It was high noon when [Vall and his Assassins] entered and found a table; by the time they had finished their dinner, the night was ending and the first glow of dawn was tinting the distant hills."<sup>97</sup> In screen-time, their meal lasts about 18 hours; from noon to around 6 am. Phobos circles Mars every 7 hours and 39 minutes, while Deimos takes about 30 hours.<sup>98</sup> So Vall and his men should have seen Phobos pass by on the screen twice, and Deimos probably once.

Moreover, while leaving the Martian Room, they quickly encounter Marnark of Bashad and his associates, whom Vall provokes into challenging him to a duel.<sup>99</sup> Thus, if the moons are on the screen at that time, Vall's provocation and his adversaries' challenges are not just issued 'on Barsoom', as it were, but 'under the moons of Mars'; the original title for *A Princess of Mars*. (See **Martian Challenges**, below.)

Assuming it was deliberate, Piper may have had a couple of reasons for omitting any mention of

Phobos and Deimos. First, he was a subtle man, and mentioning the moons might have overemphasized the 'Martian' feel to the scene. (Indeed, it is already understated, since one really has to think through Piper's concise description to visualize just how Martian it is.) This ties into the second reason, already mentioned, that Phobos, or Thuria, was originally believed to be the home of the Black Martians. As John Carter relates in *Swords of Mars*, "For ages, there was a Martian legend, which remained for me to explode, that the black race, the so-called First-born of Barsoom, lived upon Thuria, the nearer moon; but at the time I exposed the false gods of Mars, I demonstrated conclusively that the black race lived in the Valley Dor, near the south pole of the planet."<sup>100</sup>

Having 'Thuria' in the Martian sky when the dark-skinned Vall confronts the dark-skinned Akor-Neb men in what looks like an ancient ruined Martian building might have been too big a clue toward Beam's literary model.

## 10. From Doorsha to Darsh

The capital city of Akor-Neb Terra is called "Darsh".<sup>101</sup> Back in 1981, I remember thinking that Darsh was a rather poor name for a planetary capital, and indeed the capital of the whole unified Akor-Neb solar system. In this, Darsh paralleled 'Dremna' in "The Keeper", which I thought was an unimpressive name for the capital of the Fifth Galactic Empire.

However, just as Dremna seems to have a hidden meaning, the connection with Mars does the same for Darsh. Piper's Martian name for Mars is "Doorsha".<sup>102</sup> If we 'transpose' the o's and a (and we will see Beam use this method again later), we get 'Darshoo'. I assume that Beam derived Darsh by simply dropping the double o at the end. Because if he used "Darshoo", its derivation from Doorsha would be too obvious; but more importantly, Darshoo looks too much like 'Barsoom', which would give the whole game away. As I've stated on many occasions, Piper appears to have derived Doorsha itself from Barsoom. He started by transposing the a and o's, changing Barsoom into 'Boorsma', and then combining Barsoom with Dor—Boorsma to 'Door'sma, Doorsma to Doorsha.

Thus, Darsh seems to mean "Mars", being the corrupted Akor-Neb form of 'Doorsha', or Barsoom. That the Akor-Neb name would be a corrupted form makes sense, since their Second Level civilization "developed out of the wreckage of several earlier civilizations",<sup>103</sup> during which the language and culture must have undergone changes. This is in contrast with the Home Time Line, which is 'completely Martian', having kept their ancestors' culture fully intact.

In fact, Beam may have felt compelled to transpose the vowels in Doorsha, because if he hadn't, the black Akor-Neb capital would have turned out as 'Dorsh'. That is too close to 'Dor', the Martian south polar valley beneath which the Black Martians, the First Born, actually reside.<sup>104</sup>

Barsoom contains many ancient cities, most of them being relics of the old Orovar civilization, which had "flourished over a hundred thousand years" ago.<sup>105</sup> Many of these cities are now empty; on his march from Korad to Thark, John Carter says that "We were twenty days upon the road, crossing two sea bottoms and passing through or around a number of ruined cities, mostly smaller than Korad."<sup>106</sup> Some of the empty cities, such as Aanthor and Xanator, have become the lair of white apes and rest-stops for tribes of wandering green Martians. But others have been permanently reoccupied by green Martians, including Thark and Torquas, from which the tribes have taken their names.<sup>107</sup> It is also possible that some of the red Martian cities of modern Barsoom are reoccupied Orovar cities.

And as a 'Martian' city, Darsh, the Akor-Neb capital, may be ancient as well. It is located in the valley of the Volga River, presumably on the otherwhen site of Volgograd.<sup>108</sup> This is not far north of the Caucasus Mountains, and from "Genesis", we know that this mountain range is one of the three possible landing sites of the original Martian colonists. Moreover, it's the first one named. "They left the mountains—were they the Caucasus? The Alps? The Pamirs?—and spread outward, conquering as they went."<sup>109</sup>

Darsh may therefore be one of the first Martian cities built on Terra in the Second Level Akor-Neb Sector, and possibly the very first, having been founded at least 75,000 years ago. That would make it a stereotypical ancient Martian city, now inhabited by a different-colored race of men; just like the ancient cities on modern Barsoom. (See section **A New Barsoomian Race**, below.)

The capital of Home Time Line is Dhergabar, which seems to be located near the Alps.<sup>110</sup> Thus, it makes sense that the Second Level capital would be near the Caucasus. Piper just flipped the two from

his list in “Genesis”. (By extension, a highly-civilized Third Level civilization could have its capital near the Pamirs.) Assuming that it’s an ancient city, Darsh’s original name might then have been ‘Doorshabar’, paralleling Dhergabar. And further assuming that the Martian suffix –bar means city or new, Doorshabar would have meant ‘Mars City’ or ‘New Mars’.

Over tens of thousands of years, and after several dark-age interludes which involved the collapse of the original Martian civilization and rise of the Akor-Neb, Doorshabar was corrupted to Darsh. This parallels the way in which, over 30,000 years, Australia and Antarctica are corrupted to Awster and Antark by the far future time of “The Keeper”.<sup>111</sup>

Like the name ‘Darsh’, back in 1981 the city’s location made no sense to me. Since the Akor-Neb are dark-skinned, they must have evolved in an equatorial area; and being “Malayoid” in appearance, that should specifically be Southeast Asia and/or Indonesia. One would therefore expect their capital city to be located in that region, or at least in a warm climate somewhere else on Terra. So why did Piper place the Akor-Neb capital in Eastern Europe, a much colder climate?

I think partly this can be attributed to the Akor-Neb conquest of the previous Martian civilization(s). Having taken over their enemy’s capital city, the Akor-Neb make it their own capital, possibly representing and solidifying their ultimate triumph. But the connection with Barsoom reveals some interesting parallels.

Beam located Darsh in a forested river valley, one of whose rivers, the Volga, flows into the Caspian Sea, while the other, the Don, flows into the ‘Black’ Sea. And between the Black and Caspian Seas lie the Caucasus—Caucasian, or ‘White’—Mountains.<sup>112</sup>

Similarly, on Barsoom the black and remnant white Martians live close together. The whites, or therns, live within the Otz Mountains which surround the Valley Dor. “The Holy Therns abide upon the outer slopes of these grim hills...Labyrinthine passages connect these caves with the luxurious palaces of the therns...[a] vast network of winding passages and countless chambers”.<sup>113</sup> The Otz Mountains can therefore be called a ‘white’, or Caucasian, range.

Within the Valley Dor is the Lost Sea of Korus, fed by the outflow of the River Iss; these are paralleled by the Volga river-valley, and the Volga River which flows into the Caspian Sea.

Meanwhile, the black Martians live on the shores of an underground sea, Omean, which lies beneath the Valley Dor, and can therefore be called a ‘black sea’. Omean is mainly fed by channels leading down from the Sea of Korus; these channels parallel the Don River.

Moreover, the ‘capital’ of the First Born is the Temple of Issus, which is located in a forested area of the Valley Dor, between the shore of Korus and the Otz Mountains, and connected by at least one submerged tunnel to Omean.<sup>114</sup> Similarly, the capital of the Akor-Neb is Darsh, located in a forested river-valley not far from the Caucasus Mountains and the shores of the Black and Caspian Seas, to both of which it is connected by rivers. “This kept up all the while the ship was passing over the Caspian Sea; as they were turning up the Volga valley...Verkan Vall...could see the white and pastel-tinted towers of the city rising above the hardwood forests that covered the whole Volga basin on this sector.”<sup>115</sup>

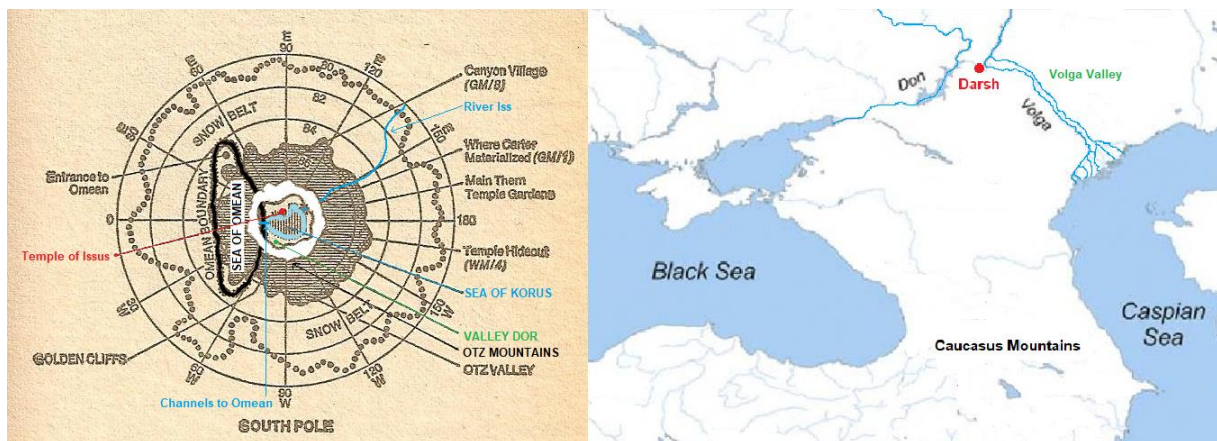


Figure 2. The home of Burroughs’ black Martians, the First Born, compared to Piper’s capital region of the Akor-Neb Sector.<sup>116</sup>

Thus, in both Burroughs and Piper we have a range of 'white' mountains (Otz, Caucasus); two seas, one of which is 'black' (Korus and Caspian, Omean and Black); both seas are fed by rivers (Iss to Korus and channels from Korus to Omean; Volga to the Caspian and Don to the Black Sea); the former river of which flows into or through a forested region (Iss into verdant Dor, the Volga through its forested valley), within which is the capital of a black Martian nation (Temple of Issus, Darsh).

Even the colder climate of Darsh is now explained. Darsh is located in an otherwhen Russia, and Russia is one of the countries closest to the North Pole. While on Barsoom, Dor, Otz, Korus, Omean and the Temple of Issus are all located at the Martian South Pole. (Figure 2.)

## 11. Pigmenting to Disguise

In order to operate incognito among the black Akor-Neb, white Paratimers have to change their skin color. Verkan Vall is told by Tortha Karf to get his skin pigmented and his hair turned black. After this is done, "The First Level cosmetologists had worked miracles on him with their art. His skin was a soft chocolate-brown, now; his hair was jet black, and so were his eyes."<sup>117</sup>

This parallels how, on several occasions, John Carter pigments his skin in order to blend in with the variously-colored human races of Barsoom. Usually as a red man (in *A Princess of Mars* and *Swords of Mars*), but on one occasion, he pigments his skin yellow to blend in with the Okarians at the North Pole (in *The Warlord of Mars*), and once also he becomes black to blend in with the First Born of the Rift (in *Llana of Gathol*).

In *Swords of Mars*, John Carter disguises himself to penetrate the Assassins' Guild of Zodanga. This seems to be the plot model for Verkan Vall disguising himself to penetrate the Akor-Neb Sector and its Society of Assassins. And near the beginning of the story, John Carter describes his transformation. "Disguise for me is a relatively simple matter. My white skin and black hair have made me a marked man upon Mars, where only the auburn-haired Lotharians and the totally bald Therns have skin as light colored as mine." So before he reaches Zodanga by flyer, "I applied...red pigment evenly to every square inch of my body; so that after I had finished, I could have passed anywhere on Mars as a member of the dominant red race of Martians."<sup>118</sup>

And in *Llana of Gathol*, John Carter describes how he disguises himself as one of the First Born.

Quickly I ran back into the next room, stripped Myr-lo's harness and weapons from his corpse and removed my own; then from my pocket pouch I removed the article that I had purchased in the little shop. It was a jar of the ebony black cream with which the women of the First Born are wont to conceal the blemishes upon their glossy skins. In ten minutes I was as black as the blackest Black Pirate that ever broke a shell. I donned Myr-lo's harness and weapons; and, except for my gray eyes, I was a noble of the First Born.<sup>119</sup>

John Carter has black hair, which is natural among the red Martians, Okarians and First Born. So he never has to bother with that. But he only gets his skin pigmented; Burroughs seems never to have bothered with disguising John Carter's gray eyes, which one would think should have been noticeable among the non-white Martian races. Indeed, it should have immediately given him away as an imposter. The detail-oriented Piper, however, took Carter's gray eyes into account, by making sure to mention that Verkan Vall's eyes were darkened to the correct, "jet black" shade. Moreover, while I always pictured Vall's hair as being black, it is apparently not black enough to pass on the Akor-Neb Sector, where the people apparently have the glossy, jet-black hair of their "Malayoid" ancestors.<sup>120</sup>

As we've seen, John Carter disguises himself as "a noble of the First Born"; and not surprisingly, Verkan Vall does likewise. His cover identity is "Lord Virzal of Verkan", a nobleman of the chocolate-brown Akor-Neb. But Vall is only Lord Virzal "temporarily";<sup>121</sup> for after he escapes from the Akor-Neb Sector with Dalla at the end of "Last Enemy", he undoubtedly resumes his normal appearance as a white-skinned Paratimer. This also parallels John Carter, who, after escaping the Rift with Llana of Gathol and Pan Dan Chee, soon resumes his natural color.<sup>122</sup>

## 12. "Her Skin was Considerably Lighter than Usual"

Continuing with the skin color theme, Piper appears to have introduced a new twist. Because to my knowledge, Burroughs never had a Martian woman change the color of her skin to disguise herself as a member of another race. But Beam did, which brings us to an interesting detail.



Verkan Vall is preceded to the Akor-Neb Sector by Hadron Dalla, who for some reason does not get her skin pigmented to the correct hue. “Novelty had something to do with it—her skin was considerably lighter than usual, and there was a pleasing oddness about the structure of her face.”<sup>123</sup> This is hardly standard Paratime practice, where blending in with the local culture is of paramount importance. And she knows this well, because in “Time Crime”, Dalla herself muses that “Smart parasites never injure their hosts, and try never to reveal their existence.”<sup>124</sup> And Dalla is not only smart, she’s brilliant. So brilliant that “even in the present incomplete form, her reports [on reincarnation research] have opened whole new horizons in [psychical] science.” As Tortha Karf observes, “she probably had trouble keeping down to the local level of psychic knowledge.”<sup>125</sup>

So if smart parasites “try never to reveal their existence”, and Dalla is a smart parasite but still gets noticed, she must have had a reason. And although Piper does not make the reason explicit, it appears to be vanity; Dalla *wants* to be noticed. She is used to attracting the attention of men, which gives her “a feeling of pleasure. Men often looked at her that way, especially here at Darsh.”<sup>126</sup> Dalla therefore deliberately kept her skin color lighter, in order to stand out from Akor-Neb women, who themselves can be quite beautiful. A prime example being the visicaster in Darsh, who is “an extremely well-designed young woman” possessing “magnificent natural resources”. And the visicaster herself calls Dalla “the beautiful Lady Dallona of Hadron!”<sup>127</sup>

Dalla’s vanity is certainly a logical reason within the framework of the story, but in a Barsoomian context, her choice of skin color gains meaning. Of Dalla’s lightness, “Her alleged Venusian origin was probably accepted as the explanation for that, as of so many other things.”<sup>128</sup> *Thus, keeping herself lighter hints at Dalla’s “otherworldly” origin; in truth not Venus, but the Terra of Home Time Line.* This connects Dalla to several Barsoomians whose lighter skin tone points to *their* otherworldly origin, which is also Terra; or as Burroughs called it, Jasoom. These are the children of John Carter and Dejah Thoris; Carthoris and Tara of Helium. Carthoris is described as “very light in color for a red man”, and elsewhere, “his skin was but faintly tinged with the copper color that marks the red men of Mars”.<sup>129</sup>

Although I have found no direct reference to Tara’s skin color, she is undoubtedly a similar shade as her brother; darker than her white Jasoomian father who left his world behind, yet considerably lighter than her Martian mother and her people, the dominant red race, among whom she lives. Piper parallels this by making “the Lady Dallona of Hadron” darker than the white Martians of Home Time Line whom she left behind, yet lighter than the black Martians of Second Level Akor-Neb Sector, among whom she now lives.

And of course, the deduced connection between the light-skinned Tara and the light-skinned Dallona extends to their geography-based surnames; “of Helium” and “of Hadron”. The more so because the home city of Tan Hadron is Hastor, which is part of the Empire of Helium. In that sense, the Lady Dallona of Hadron is really “of Helium”.

Now let’s proceed to Part 2, and look at the parallels between the Akor-Neb and the First Born.

# ENDNOTES

## 1. Introduction

1. John F. Carr, Introduction to "Last Enemy", *Paratime* (New York, NY: Ace Books, 1981), p. 76
2. Ibid.

## Part One. Akor-Neb Terra Parallels Barsoom

### 2. The Society of Assassins Parallels the Assassins' Guilds

3. Edgar Rice Burroughs, *Swords of Mars* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1989), pp. 10, 19, 25
4. John Flint Roy, *A Guide to Barsoom* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books), 1976, p. 62; and Edgar Rice Burroughs, *Synthetic Men of Mars* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books), 1983, p. 65
5. H. Beam Piper, *Paratime* (New York, NY: Ace Books, 1981), p. 105
6. Ibid., pp. 92, 93
7. Ibid., pp. 109-110
8. Ibid., pp. 85, 86
9. Edgar Rice Burroughs, *The Gods of Mars* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1991), p. 56
10. Burroughs, *Swords of Mars*, pp. 10-11
11. Edgar Rice Burroughs, *The Master Mind of Mars* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1984), p. 23, emphases added
12. Piper, *Paratime*, p. 88
13. Ibid., pp. 103, 106, 118
14. Ibid., pp. 96, 102, 144
15. Ibid., p. 118
16. Roy, *Barsoom Guide*, p. 142
17. Burroughs, *Master Mind*, pp. 73, 94
18. Piper, *Paratime*, pp. 82, 88, 122
19. Ibid., pp. 93, 94, emphasis added
20. Ibid., pp. 108, 109, 110, 113, 114
21. Ibid., pp. 130, 140
22. Ibid., pp. 97, 110, 120, 127
23. Burroughs, *Swords of Mars*, pp. 11, 46
24. Burroughs, *Master Mind*, pp. 64, 65

25. Ibid., p. 65; and *Swords of Mars*, p. 11
26. Piper, *Paratime*, pp. 96, 135
27. Burroughs, *Swords of Mars*, p. 11
28. Ibid., pp. 23, 24, 25, 46
29. Ibid., pp. 32, 42
30. Ibid., pp. 134, 152
31. Ibid., p. 11
32. Piper, *Paratime*, pp. 105, 119, 120
33. Ibid., pp. 79-80
34. Ibid., pp. 93, 107, 109, 119, 122, 141
35. Ibid., pp. 129, 130, 131
36. Ibid., pp. 129, 131, 132, 141
37. Ibid., p. 143
38. Ibid., pp. 131
39. Burroughs, *Swords of Mars*, pp. 159, 184, 188, 190, 191
40. Piper, *Paratime*, pp. 131, 132
41. Ibid., pp. 133, 142
42. Ibid., p. 142
43. Ibid., pp. 124, 126
44. Ibid., p. 116
45. Ibid., pp. 138, 140, 142
46. Ibid., p. 105
47. Ibid., p. 109

### 3. Parallel Geography-Based Surnames

48. Ibid., pp. 77, 80, 81, 83, 87

49. Edgar Rice Burroughs, *The Chessmen of Mars* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1981), pp. 14-15, 18, 22-23, 32, 35-36, 38-46, 49-71, etc. In her parent's case it's almost laughable; shouldn't John Carter and Dejah Thoris simply call her Tara? At least in private! One can understand when Carter introduces his daughter to Gahan of Gathol as Tara of Helium; it's a formal occasion and Gahan is a visiting monarch. But after all the guests have left and the family is relaxing, her parents still call her Tara of Helium. Moreover, on the very first page of *The Chessmen of Mars* (after the introduction), the phrase "Tara of Helium" appears no less than five times. (ibid., p. 11)

The phrase "Llana of Gathol" is found in Edgar Rice Burroughs, *Llana of Gathol* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1990), pp. 40, 41, 42, 43, 46, 47, etc.

"Tan Hadron of Hastor" or "Hadron of Hastor" is found in Edgar Rice Burroughs, *A Fighting Man of Mars* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1989), pp. 1, 3, 6, 7, 13, etc.

And “Thuvia of Ptarth” in Edgar Rice Burroughs, *Thuvia, Maid of Mars* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1981), pp. 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, etc.

50. Piper, *Paratime*, p. 126

51. *Ibid.*, p. 77 Burroughs was inconsistent in his naming conventions. Some of his Barsoomian characters are addressed using their place of origin; such as Tara of Helium, Thuvia of Ptarth, Tan Hadron of Hastor, Gahan of Gathol and Llana of Gathol. But most are not, including Dejah Thoris, Kantos Kan, Kulan Tith, Thuvan Dinh, Valla Dia and Gantun Gur. Piper therefore improved on Burroughs by separating and standardizing the two types of naming conventions. The more common ‘two name’ version became the standard for the completely Martian First Level Home Time Line, while the smaller ‘geographic descriptor’ version became the standard on the not-quite-as-Martian Second Level Akor-Neb Sector.

In the ‘two name’ version. Burroughs sometimes placed the longer name first (Kantos Kan, Tardos Mors, Valla Dia), and sometimes the shorter name first (Tan Hadron, Ras Thavas, Mors Kajak). So Beam further improved on Burroughs by having the longer names consistently first among his Martians and Paratimers.

52. John F. Carr, *H. Beam Piper, A Biography* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2008), pp. 90, 91

53. There are a few exceptions. The most famous assassins are given an honorific title, which includes their city of operations. Thus, Gantun Gur is known as “the Assassin of Amhor”, while “Assassin of Toonol [is] A title used by the people of Toonol when referring to Gor Hajus, a popular assassin of that city.” (Roy, *Barsoom Guide*, p. 141)

#### **4. Reincarnation Parallels “I Who Have Died Twice and am Still Alive”**

54. Piper, *Paratime*, pp. 87-88

55. Edgar Rice Burroughs, *A Princess of Mars* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1983), pp. 1, 8-10, 144-145

56. Burroughs, *Master Mind*, pp. 24-25, 64, 72-74

57. *Ibid.*, pp. 51-53, 64, 72-74

58. Piper, *Paratime*, p. 102

59. Burroughs, *Princess of Mars*, pp. 17, 106

#### **5. Voluntary Discarnation Parallels Voluntary Pilgrimage**

60. Piper, *Paratime*, p. 88

61. Burroughs, *Gods of Mars*, pp. 30, 31, 42

62. *Ibid.*, pp. 139-140 Another case is the mother of the slave girl Zanda, in *Swords of Mars*. By her looks and grace, John Carter surmises that Zanda was not always a slave. The girl admits it, saying, “my father was an officer in the old Zodangan Navy. He was of the lesser nobility. He was killed when John Carter led the green hordes of Thark upon the city. *In grief, my mother took the last long journey on the bosom of the sacred Iss to the Valley Dor and the Lost Sea of Korus.*” (Piper, *Swords of Mars*, pp. 66-67, emphasis added)

63. Piper, *Gods of Mars*, p. 43

64. *Ibid.*, p. 140

65. The last was supposed to be Thuvia’s horrible fate. She tells John Carter that the therns “have tired of me and become fearful of the power which my knowledge of their ways has given me...The Holy Therns eat human flesh...but only that which has died beneath the sucking lips of a plant man...And to this cruel end I have been condemned. It was to be within a few hours, had your advent not caused an interruption of their plans.” (*ibid.*, pp. 42-43)

## 6. A Modified Barsoomian Greeting

66. Piper, *Paratime*, p. 93
67. Ibid., p. 116
68. Ibid., p. 122
69. Richard A. Lupoff, *Master of Adventure: The Worlds of Edgar Rice Burroughs* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), p. 132
70. Burroughs, *Princess of Mars*, p. 115
71. Burroughs, *Master Mind*, p. 93
72. Piper, *Paratime*, p. 111
73. Ibid., p. 126 This happy reunion seems to parallel the reunion of John Carter and Dejah Thoris, near the end of *The Gods of Mars*. (Burroughs, *Gods of Mars*, p. 182) See section **Married, Separated and Reunited**.
74. Carr, *Piper Biography*, p. 19
75. Piper, *Paratime*, p. 105
76. Ibid., p. 97
77. Kate Buck, “Freemasons definitely have a secret handshake but they won’t tell us what it is”, *Metro News*, 8 February 2018. (<https://metro.co.uk/2018/02/08/freemasons-definitely-do-have-a-secret-handshake-but-they-wont-tell-us-what-it-is-7295849/>)
78. Dale R. Broadhurst, “The Religion of ERB Fiction”, <https://www.erbzine.com/mag11/1133.html>
79. H Beam Piper, *The Cosmic Computer* (New York, NY: Ace Books, 1963), p. 188, emphasis added

## 7. Yellow Moss

80. Piper, *Paratime*, p. 109
81. Roy, *Barsoom Guide*, p. 12 In Piper’s story “Omnilingual”, the Terran crew find breathable air in the basin of Syrtis Depression, an erstwhile Martian sea or gulf. (H. Beam Piper, *Federation* (New York, NY: Ace Books, 1981), p. 43) This air may therefore be produced by the photosynthetic action of yellow Martian rock-lichen, growing in the stony basins of Mars’ former oceans.
82. Clarence L. Barnhart, Editor, *The American College Dictionary* (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1950), p. 793
83. Piper, *Federation*, p. 2
84. Roy, *Barsoom Guide*, p. 13 However, Piper could have used that idea too. Thanks to the Atmosphere Factory—and probably aided by all that mosslike vegetation—the entire surface of Barsoom is covered with breathable air. And in “The Edge of the Knife”, Professor Chalmers mentions that Mars will eventually undergo the “First Terraforming and colonization” of Mars. (H. Beam Piper, *Empire* (New York, NY: Ace Books, 1981), p. 54)
- The beginning of that process may therefore entail expanding the areas of yellow Martian rock-lichen, from the sea bottoms into the barren lowlands. This would produce more breathable air, and anchor sandy soils in preparation to making them fertile once again. As the Terraforming continues, the expanding mossy regions would then make possible the planting of grasses, and grains, and finally bushes and forests. Since the surviving Martian vegetation in “Omnilingual” is so meager, the additional vegetation would likely have to be transplants from Terra; but the yellow Martian rock-lichen—possibly reinforced by Terran mosses and lichens—may be the foundation of the whole process.
- Though Piper never wrote any later stories about Mars, one can surmise a few things. First, the First Terraforming

presumably begins in the early Twenty-First Century, but this is only about 50 years before the Northern Hemisphere of Terra is destroyed in the Fourth World War (AE 106-109, or 2049-2052 AD). Thus, lessons learned during the early years of Terraforming Mars may assist in planning and implementing “the reclamation projects” in North Terra, presumably begun not long after WWIV. (Piper, *Federation*, p. 213)

Second, Beam mentions that nuclear weapons are tested on Mars just prior to Atomic Era 526. (H. Beam Piper, *Uller Uprising* (New York, NY: Ace Books, 1983), p. 4) Since you wouldn’t want to test nuclear weapons on reclaimed Martian soil, this must mean that the First Terraforming leaves some desert areas of the Red Planet intact. Likely to preserve that climate type in the planetary ecosystem, but perhaps partly also as a nostalgic or romantic memorial to what Old Mars used to look like, before the Terro-Humans came. By extension, the reclamation projects on Terra—undoubtedly concentrated on revivifying the once-fertile areas of North America, Europe, and Asia—will leave some desert regions, such as the Sahara, intact.

## 8. “About Two Hours”

85. Piper, *Paratime*, p. 107

86. Roy, *Barsoom Guide*, p. 164 The number is found in *A Fighting Man of Mars*, p. 22

87. Patrick Moore & Garry Hunt, *Atlas of the Solar System* (Chicago, IL: Rand McNally & Co., 1983), p. 212

88. Besides being a gloss meant to confuse the issue, Beam’s “about two hours” could have also been meant to adapt the Barsoomian hour to Terran timekeeping. Because an official Terran day is exactly 24 hours, this can be conveniently divided into two-hour segments. Thus, for example, patrons arriving in the Martian Room could see a Martian sunrise at 6 pm, 8 pm, 10 pm, and midnight; rather than circa 6 pm, 8:28 pm, 10:56 pm, and 1:24 am.

89. Roy, *Barsoom Guide*, p. 116, emphasis added “These Barsoomian terms—“padan,” [day] “teean,” [month] and “ord” [year]—are not used in any of the eleven tales but do appear on Burroughs’ worksheet “Characters, etc. in GODS OF MARS.” (ibid., p.89)

90. In Beam’s Future History series, we see the same Burroughs influence in timekeeping. In his *Guide to Barsoom*, John Flint Roy says, “While on the subject of time, one might wonder how the Barsoomians divide their year...Earth uses the revolutions of her moon to arrive at a twelve-month year, but in no practical way can Barsoomian months be figured from either of her two satellites...A Barsoomian year is...668.6 mean Martian solar days...If the customary decimal system is used, the year would be divided into ten parts of 67 days each, with minor adjustments from time to time—like our own leap year—to even things out.” He adds that among Edgar Rice Burroughs’ papers was found one that confirms this deduction. “10 zodes = 1 padan (day), 67 padans = 1 teean (month), 10 teeans = 1 ord (year)”. (Roy, *Barsoom Guide*, pp. 118, 119)

It is therefore not surprising that in Piper’s story “Omnilingual”, the first Terrans to Mars discover that the extinct Old Martians likewise divided their year into ten months. “They also found [a] Martian calendar; the year had been divided into ten more or less equal months, and one of them had been Doma.” (Piper, *Federation*, p. 42) Notice that Beam’s characters call the Martian divisions ‘months’, glossing over the fact that “in no practical way can [Martian] months be figured from either of her two satellites” as Roy says. Most likely, Piper’s Old Martians use a simple decimal system, like that of Barsoom. Because Martha Dane eventually realizes that “the names of the months are simply numbers, one to ten, spelled out.” (ibid., p. 51) In other words, on Beam’s Mars 10 hours equals 1 day, 67 days equals 1 month, and 10 months equal one year. Just like on Barsoom.

Since the Burroughs influence is found in both the THFH and Paratime series, this means that during the colonization of Terra in the First Level of Paratime, the Martians may have brought the ten-month calendar with them. As we’ve seen, the Barsoomian/Doorshan month has no relation to the motions of Phobos and Deimos, so there would be no need to relate it to the motions of Luna. The Terra of Home Time Line could therefore use a ten-month calendar of 36 days each, with five intercalary days; alternately, they could have five months of 36 days, and five of 37 days, to equal the 365 day Terran year. The latter option seems preferable, because it could be phrased as “the year had been divided into ten more or less equal months”, just as on Old Mars in “Omnilingual”.

However, it appears that the Martian colonists just did away with the months altogether. In “Time Crime”, the journalist Yandar Yadd breaks the news of the Wizard Traders by saying “The existence of a huge para-temporal slave trade came to light on the afternoon of One-Five-Nine day”. (Piper, *Paratime*, p. 185) If the Paratimers still used Martian-style months, Yadd would have said “Month Five, Day Thirteen.” Interestingly enough, Month Five would be Doma, the Martian word for five and name of their fifth month. (Piper, *Federation*, p. 51)

Does the ten-month Barsoomian/Doorshan year apply to the Akor-Neb Sector? It is quite possible that the original colonists on Second Level dropped counting months altogether, just as they did on First Level. But in the dark age interludes preceding the rise of the present Akor-Neb civilization, the culture undoubtedly changed somewhat. So

they potentially could have converted to a twelve-month year, based on the motions of Luna.

91. Piper, *Paratime*, pp. 78, 94, 118

92. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amtor>

93. Piper, *Paratime*, p. 66

94. *Ibid.*, pp. 55, 71, 72

95. *Ibid.*, pp. 67, 70

96. *Ibid.*, pp. 94, 117, 167 “Last Enemy” was published in 1950, while in 1951 came Robert Heinlein’s novel *Between Planets*. It is very interesting that, similar to Piper’s narcotized *zerfa*-cigarettes from Venus, Heinlein included a Venusian narcotic in cigarette form, called “crazy weed”. (Robert A. Heinlein, *Between Planets* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1951), p. 115)

Is this just a coincidence, or was Heinlein inspired by reading “Last Enemy”? Because it’s not difficult to derive crazy from *zerfa*. By changing the f to a c, *zerfa* becomes ‘zerca’, which rearranged becomes ‘craze’. Simply pronounce the last letter to make ‘craz-e’, or crazy.

## 9. Under the Moons of Mars?

97. *Ibid.*, p. 107

98. Moore & Hunt, *Solar Atlas*, p. 240

99. Piper, *Paratime*, pp. 108-110 However, while it is ‘morning’ on the screen in the Martian Room, it is actually evening outside. The verbal and physical altercation between Vall and the Statisticalists attracts the attention of the room’s other patrons. “A crowd had begun to accumulate around the table. Some of them were persons in evening dress...” (*ibid.*, p. 109) Darsh is therefore heading into nighttime.

Nighttime on Terra implies the presence of Luna, and although the challenges and counter-challenges between the men take place in the Martian Room, the actual duels occur in a nearby Terran hallway, which only takes a little time to arrange. (*ibid.*, pp. 112-115) Piper never mentions the position of our satellite either, but since Vall isn’t really on Mars (and no longer in the Martian Room), his personal combat with the Statisticalists is fought at night on Terra—and thus quite possibly ‘under the Moon of Jasoom’. A ‘transposed’ variant of the challenges John Carter fights on Barsoom, by night and day.

100. Burroughs, *Swords of Mars*, p. 13

## 10. From Doorsha to Darsh

101. Piper, *Paratime*, p. 87

102. H. Beam Piper, *The Worlds of H. Beam Piper* (New York, NY: Ace Books, 1983), pp. 148, 170

103. Piper, *Paratime*, p. 86

104. Burroughs, *Swords of Mars*, p. 13 Darsh is also better in that it is very similar to ‘Harsh’; an appropriate term to describe the Akor-Neb Sector, where life is not highly valued, and people are discarnated right and left.

105. Burroughs, *Princess of Mars*, p. 52

106. *Ibid.*, p. 76

107. Roy, *Barsoom Guide*, pp. 22, 40, 41, 43

108. Piper, *Paratime*, pp. 87, 95, 97

109. Piper, *Worlds*, p. 170

110. In “Police Operation”, Verkan Vall transposes from “Logansport”—possibly Logansport, Indiana—to the First Level equivalent. From there, he takes a three-hour strato-rocket ride “across the pole and southward to Dhergabar”, which places that city in the Eastern Hemisphere. Then in “Last Enemy”, Vall and Dalla are returning to Dhergabar from Ravvanan, on the upper Nile River. Their “ship was driving north and west”, and “dead ahead, spilling up over the horizon, was a golden glow—the lights of Dhergabar and home.” (Piper, *Paratime*, pp. 49, 74, 91, 127)

The Nile River is mostly in Egypt and Sudan. Northwest from there should place Dhergabar in Spain, southern France or Italy. That’s assuming the Martians of First Level build their capital city on the site of their first landing, which should be in the same region as the Cro-Magnon remains found on our timeline. (Piper, *Worlds*, p. 170)

111. H. Beam Piper, *Empire* (New York, NY: Ace Books, 1981), p. 222

112. “Pliny the Elder’s *Natural History* (77-79 AD) derives the name Caucasus from Scythian *kroy-khasis* (“ice-shining, white with snow”). (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caucasus>) When racial theories were developed “In the eighteenth century, the prevalent view of European scholars was that the human species had its origin in the region of Caucasus Mountains.” ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caucasian\\_race](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caucasian_race)) The white or ‘Caucasian’ race was therefore held to be the original human race, from which the other races were later derived.

This seems to be the case in Piper’s *Paratime* and *Future History* series as well. The Old Martians who make it to Terra in “Genesis” seem to be Caucasians. The females include “tall blonde Olva, the electromagnetician...[and] dark-haired Analea”, and their landing place is either the Caucasus Mountains, the Alps or the Pamirs. (Piper, *Worlds*, pp. 148, 170) These three ranges are believed to be the original homeland of the Indo-European or ‘white’ race. Thus, the Asian and African peoples presumably evolved from Caucasians who migrated there, and then evolved to adapt to these climates.

That the Old Martians are a lighter-complected people makes sense. Mars is much farther from the sun, and, receiving less radiation, should have had an overall cooler climate, even before the time of “Genesis”. A cooler climate with less light would favor the evolution of a light-complected people.

This coincides with the Burroughs influence on Piper’s Mars and Martians. Because 100,000 years ago, Barsoom was dominated by a white race, the Orovars. So Beam’s overall scheme of Martian colonization seems, at least in part, to be an attempt to explain why modern Earthmen and ‘alien’ Barsoomian women—like John Carter and Dejah Thoris—can have children. They are both descendants of the white race of Martians which were dominant in ancient times.

113. Burroughs, *Gods of Mars*, p. 43

114. *Ibid.*, pp. 28, 77, 81, 177

115. Piper, *Paratime*, p. 97 The “white and pastel tinted towers” of Darsh may be an echo of the colorful gardens around the Temple of Issus. As John Carter relates, “When we emerged from the little building which houses the upper terminus of the elevator, we found ourselves in the midst of a veritable fairyland of beauty...One may speak of scarlet sward and ivory-stemmed trees decked with brilliant purple blooms, of winding walks paved with crushed rubies, with emerald, with turquoise, even with diamonds themselves; of a magnificent temple of burnished gold, hand-wrought with marvelous designs”. (Burroughs, *Gods of Mars*, p. 82)

116. The map of Mars’ South Pole is modified from of the one “Adapted by Gene Siegel from a design and graphics by John F. Roy and E. Campbell.” (Roy, *Barsoom Guide*, p. 19)

The map of the Black Sea-Caucasus-Caspian region is modified from of an internet source. However, the link to the original map is broken, so I cannot properly attribute it.

## 11. Pigmenting to Disguise

117. Piper, *Paratime*, p. 92

118. Burroughs, *Swords of Mars*, pp. 12, 14

119. Burroughs, *Llana of Gathol*, p. 95

120. Piper, *Paratime*, p. 104

121. *Ibid.*, p. 92

122. Burroughs, *Llana of Gathol*, p. 103



## 12. “Her Skin was Considerably Lighter than Usual”

123. Piper, *Paratime*, p. 78

124. *Ibid.*, p. 164

125. *Ibid.*, p. 87

126. *Ibid.*, p. 78

127. *Ibid.*, p. 104

128. *Ibid.*, p. 78

129. Burroughs, *Gods of Mars*, p. 90; and  
Burroughs, *Maid of Mars*, p. 8