Oswald Spengler's Three Culture Circles

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Conan comes and goes. In Atlantis the sun rose lazily. The savage Cimmerian barbarian unsheathed his sword and let it sing the song of glory and carnage, slaying the subhuman attackers, with fountains of blood spraying his face and chest, dripping onto his loincloth. He was not yet king but merely a wanderer in an antediluvian world, where empires clashed and thieves stole fist-sized jewels from elephantine towers in the thick of night.

In his posthumously published work Early Days of World History, Spengler talks about three primal culture circles — shrouded in the fog of mystery and fiction, so the reality revealed straight from the pen of the Prussian socialist marching from the past, straight through the fall, into a new beginning:

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Atlantis — not Plato’s mythical island, nor Conan’s scene of slaughter, but the real scattering of peoples related by a world-historical outlook — comprised the Western parts of Europe and Africa. Atlanteans were obsessed with kicking the bucket and the afterlife. The Egyptians’ pyramidal tombs, mummification rituals and fully equipped journeys into the netherworld provided the backdrop for a folk more concerned with death and what lies beyond than with life and the strong North African sun shining on their bare brown backs in the here and now — for them the present, occupants of linear time. The denizens of Atlantis were literally feeding their dear departed ones, thus confirming their adherence to a genealogical principle where the same blood is passed from one generation to the next — ancestor worship and reverence for bones in the dry dust of the desert at noon.

Kash is the South-East, the area between India and the Red Sea. Kashites were indifferent to entering Hades. The present was what mattered to them. The deceased forgotten and tombs neglected, procreation practiced — descendants mattered but forefathers relegated to nothingness on the blank page of a history that was never written or otherwise recorded. The gods of Kash were the stars, and cosmology was their religion, always an impressive number of lights twinkling in the night sky — to behold and cherish in their mathematical hearts. Graves just mounds below the canvas of the cosmos, arching over towns, with torches illuminating the steps leading towards the holy of holiest: nightmare factories producing the hollow shells of extinguished copies of stars aflame with the raging blazes of annihilation for annihilation’s sake.

Turan is the North, reaching from Central Europe to China and embodying the heroic nature of a mankind emboldened by the cold and deprivation. Strong charioteers came, saw, won. Burning bright, they wielded dexterity and exercised strength, their war hammers crushing skulls and their hands holding the reins of the steeds snorting anger and arrogance. The only skull they could not amputate was the skull attached to the Elephant Man, also known as the greatest philosopher of the ancient age — predicting downfalls when the flood was merely a trickle. His memory had been artificially enhanced by the powers residing in the Kingdom Hall, whence always came forth directives to reset history and bring it in line with epic tales of adventure and deceit, naked maidens and muscled men engaged in unspeakable acts. Debauchery was dutifully chronicled by the bearded bard of the Sunset Isle, before the waves devoured what was left of its cities built over millennia and then left to rot in a stinking soup of decadence.