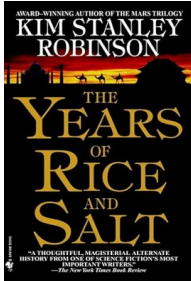




Lambda Sci-Fi

DC Area Gaylaxians



The Years of Rice and Salt
By Kim Stanley Robinson
Discussed April 2013

The jati

The jati:

Original names	Baram	Kenpo	Iwana	Sidpa	Zasep	Puntsok
Awake to Emptiness	Bold Bardash	Kyu	I-li	Shen	Zheng He	Psin
The Haj in the Heart	Bihari/Bistami	Kokila/Kya/Katima	Insef/Ibn Ezra	Shastri/Said Darya	Zaneeta/Zeya	Prithvi
Ocean Continents	Butterfly	Kheim	I-Chen			Peng
The Alchemist	Bahram	Khalid	Iwang	Sayyed Abdul Aziz Khan	Zahhar	Paxtakor
Warp and Weft	Busho	Keeper of the Wampum	Iagogeh	Straight Arrow	Zigzag	Pounds the Rock
Widow Kang	Bao Ssu	Kang Tongbi	Ibrahim ibn Hasam	Shih	Zunli	Pao
The Age of Great Progress	Bhakta	Kerala/Kiyooki	Ismail ibn Mani al-Dir	Selim		Pyidaungsu

War of the Asuras	Bai	Kuo	Iwa	Shen		
Nsara	Budur	Kirana Fawwaz	Idelba	Sururi	Zainab Shah	Piali
The First Years	Bao Xinhua	Kung Jianguo/ Kali	Zhu Isao (?)	Shi Fanfi		Pan Xichun

Discussion Questions

1. Did you finish the book?
2. Did you like the book? Why or why not?
3. Which section(s) did you like most? Which section(s) did you like least? Were there any you would have left out entirely?
4. Which of the three main characters—B, K, or I—did you find most sympathetic? Did it vary from section to section? How did you feel about the conceit of maintaining similar character names across reincarnations?
5. Do you feel the characters ultimately grew and progressed across their reincarnations?
6. How plausible did you find Robinson’s alternate history? Were there any developments you found particularly clever or unlikely? Are there other parts or eras of Robinson’s alternate world that you wish the book had spent time exploring?
7. How did you feel about Robinson’s treatment of religion (Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, etc.)? Do you think he represented them fairly and accurately? How did you feel about the treatment of the Tibetan reincarnation system as the true metaphysical underpinning for the universe? Did you enjoy the sections set in the bardo?
8. K in particular frequently lobbies aggressively for the rights of women (as Katima, Kang, and Kirana). How did you feel about the book’s treatment of feminism and its efforts to integrate it with a Muslim or Buddhism perspective?
9. In “Nsara,” Budur and Kirana have a brief fling. How did you feel about this presentation of an LGBT relationship? How did you feel about the lack of LGBT material overall?
10. In “The First Years,” Zhu Isao discusses whether “‘great men’ or ‘mass movements’ were the principal force for change [in history].” Do you feel *The Years of Rice and Salt* ultimately supports one or the other position? In “Nsara,” characters debate whether the “clash of civilizations” is inevitable. What side does Robinson seem to fall on? Are there any other general questions of history or historiography that the book seems to be addressing?
11. If you also read Robinson’s *Galileo’s Dream* with the book club a couple years back, do you see any thematic similarities between the two books?