

GURPS[®] HORSECLANS

Roleplaying in Robert Adams' Barbarian Future



STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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They ride the plains of a post-holocaust America, mind-reading prairiecats by their sides. They're deadly warriors . . . for honor, for loot, or just for the joy of a good fight. They would follow their leader, the undying Milo Morai, straight to Hell. And they'd come back with trophies.

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Now you, too, can ride to glory, and help Milo Morai rebuild civilization . . . with the Horseclans.

Based on the *Horseclans* novels by Robert Adams
Written by Steve Jackson and Jerry Epperson
Cover by Ken Kelley

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GURPS[®]

HORSECLANS

*A Generic Universal RolePlaying System Worldbook
Based on the Science Fiction Series by Robert Adams*

By Steve Jackson and Jerry Epperson

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GURPS Horseclans is deeply indebted to the imagination and creative effort of Robert Adams, without which this worldbook would not exist. Our thanks to Bob for his cooperation through the project, especially in making sure that the maps are at least as good as anything Milo would have!

Thanks also to everyone else who contributed or commented on the manuscript — especially Jeff George, Dana Holm, David Ladyman, John Medway, Ted Peer, and Steve Sifuentes. Special thanks to Dee (for keeping the faith).

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INTRODUCTION

Whether you're already a fan of the *Horseclans* series by Robert Adams, or a *GURPS* GM new to this adventure setting, *GURPS Horseclans* is intended to serve you as both a reference book and an enjoyable guide to Adams' barbaric future.

Here is everything known about the land, people and history of future America — or Mehrikah — all you need to run a campaign based on the *Horseclans* series. Beyond this, SJ Games will periodically publish adventures for *GURPS Horseclans*, updating and/or expanding upon this material. There are no limits to the possibilities for adventure.

This book is divided into eight major sections. *World of the Horseclans* explains the history and current state of the *Horseclans* "known world." *The Lands Of Mehrikah* goes into more detail about the history and peoples of each demesne. *Horseclans Characters* details character creation for the various races described in the novels, including an explanation of special skills; a complete equipment/weapon list; and *GURPS* descriptions for some of the more famous *Horseclans* personalities for use as either player characters or NPCs. *The Encompassing One* describes the deity of the Kindred, in his/her various avatars. *Horseclans Psionics* provides rules for using the mental powers described in the books. *Mass Combat* allows you to resolve battles between armies using just pencil, paper, and dice. *Horseclans Bestiary* covers the unique creatures of 28th-century Mehrikah.

The Horseclans Glossary defines archaic and non-English terms important to the series. The reader new to the *Horseclans* will want to refer to this often, until some of the terminology — especially Greek-inspired words — is familiar.

Included are three maps showing different periods in the history of *Horseclans* Mehrikah—the land which stretches from the Sea of Grass and the Mehikos in the west to Kehnooryos Mahkedohnya, the Sea Isles, and the Witch Kingdom in the east.

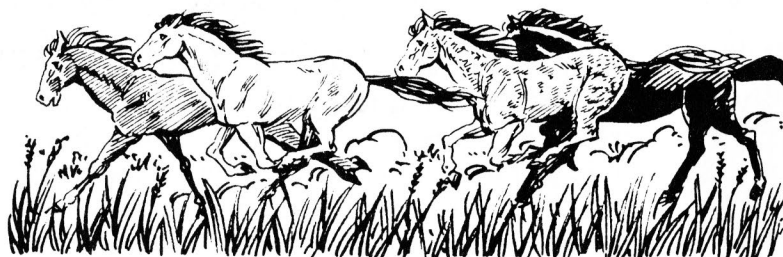
The Horseclans Campaign

This book documents 800 years of future history, and the affairs of a whole continent. That's a lot of action! Any number of campaign themes and settings are possible. But they'll all have certain things in common, flowing naturally from the spirit of the *Horseclans* series.

It's a world of bravery and great deeds. It's no place for the cautious. Far better to die gloriously, fighting against impossible odds, than to dodge adventure and die a sad old man. Live bravely, die well . . . you'll go to Wind in honor, your story told around the campfires. And around the table at the next game session.

If the Dirtmen build fences, tear them down. If a foe offends you, throw your defiance in his teeth and challenge him to a duel. If you witness injustice, gather a few trusted friends and stamp it out. If a tyrant invades, follow the banners to war! This is a world for the bold.

Welcome, Clansman!



Resources and References

About the Horseclans

Three good resources are available for those who want more information about the world of the *Horseclans*. Foremost, of course, is the *Horseclans* series itself, published by Signet Books; see the advertisement on the last page for more information.

There is also a *Horseclans* fan club. For more information, write the National *Horseclans* Society, Box 1770, Apopka, Florida 32704-1770. The Society newsletter is a good source of background information and news of upcoming books.

Finally, SJ Games will definitely be publishing *GURPS Horseclans* adventure supplements. They'll be announced in the gaming press and in *Roleplayer* — see below.

About GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the *GURPS* system. Our address for everything below is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope any time you write us! Resources now available include:

Roleplayer. This bimonthly *GURPS* newsletter includes questions and answers, new races, rules, beasts, information on upcoming releases, and more. As of this writing (September, 1987) it is an 8-page newsletter. We accept subscriptions at \$1 per issue, for up to 10 issues at a time. If you are reading this after September, 1989, please write and inquire about the current price — it may, by now, be larger and cost more.

Errata. Up-to-date errata sheets for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are always available from Steve Jackson Games; be sure to include a stamped, self-addressed envelope with your request.

Q&A. We will do our best to answer any game question if it is accompanied by a stamped self-addressed envelope.

Gamer input — including yours. We truly value your comments. We will take them into consideration, not only for new products, but also when we update this book on second and successive printings!

1

THE WORLD OF THE HORSECLANS

Cross-References

As this book was released (September, 1987), Signet had released 17 novels in the *Horseclans* series, plus one “shared universe” anthology. They are listed below in order of publication.

Whenever it seemed appropriate, these rules have been cross-referenced to the *Horseclans* novels by book and page. For instance, 6/120 refers to page 120 of book number 6.

- 1: *The Coming of the Horseclans*
 - 2: *Swords of the Horseclans*
 - 3: *Revenge of the Horseclans*
 - 4: *A Cat of Silvery Hue*
 - 5: *The Savage Mountains*
 - 6: *The Patrimony*
 - 7: *Horseclans Odyssey*
 - 8: *Death of a Legend*
 - 9: *The Witch Goddess*
 - 10: *Bili the Axe*
 - 11: *Champion of the Last Battle*
 - 12: *A Woman of the Horseclans*
 - 13: *Horses of the North*
 - 14: *A Man Called Milo Morai*
 - 15: *The Memories of Milo Morai*
 - 16: *Trumpets of War*
 - 17: *Madman's Army*
- FH: *Friends of the Horseclans*



The World of the Horseclans

The *Horseclans* series is set on our own Earth . . . many years in the future. This section describes how our civilization perished, and gives general background material and suggestions for the *Horseclans* Game Master.

Chronology

The timeline below lists certain important events chronicled in the *Horseclans* series. Some of the specific references will be Greek to anyone who hasn't read the books; they are included as milestones for those who *have*. The sidebars describe the various historical periods in which the GM may set a campaign.

All dates after 2000 are approximate, based on an estimate of 2015 for World War III. It is suggested that GMs treat this dating as precise until 2015 passes without incident. Remember, when comparing these dates to information given in the books, that bards can be mistaken about long-ago events.

1936: Milo Moray is discovered unconscious in a Chicago alley by a police officer. Due to a severe blow to the head, Milo is unable to remember anything about himself or his past. However, his body and subconscious mind retain many talents. He is a master of horse, sword, rifle, pistol, and many languages.

1944: By recovering from several “mortal” war wounds, Milo confirms his suspicion that he is not like normal men; he is “Undying,” able to survive almost any injury and — as it develops — possessed of an apparently-indefinite lifespan. He keeps this knowledge to himself.

circa 2010: A mind-transfer process is developed by the scientists of the J & R Kennedy Research Center in Florida. Using this process, a person can exchange his old body for a new one.

circa 2015: The Two-Day War (or “War of Fires” as it became known in bardic accounts of this period of ancient history) begins with an act of sheer ignorance. The paranoid dictator of Libya launches a nuclear strike, triggering a general war. Though satellite defenses stop most of the missiles, many major cities are hit. But worse than the nuclear holocaust are the plagues that soon kill 99% of the surviving population. At the height of the Great Dyings, Milo Moray rescues a gaggle of 150 sick, scared, starving children — the Sacred Ancestors of the Horseclansmen (13/67-71).

2035: Paul Krueger and his people join with Milo's fledgling tribe as they travel through the Lake Tahoe area before settling down in an attempt to farm in the Snake River Valley area.

2043: After eight consecutive years of early winters, late springs, and extensive flooding, Milo and the tribal leaders decide to move on to a place less prone to annual disasters, tentatively selecting Colorado and Wyoming.

2045: After two years of scouting and preparation, the tribe reaches the former city of Cheyenne, Wyoming. They are welcomed by a group of settlers led by Doctor Clarence Bookerman, who readily accept them as fellow farmers.

2049: Following four years of harsh weather and near starvation, most of the inhabitants of Cheyenne — including Bookerman and all of Milo's tribesmen — make preparations to leave the town and travel east. By winter, most agree that they should not resume their lives as farmers, but instead become nomads, following their grazing herds across the plains.

Moon Maidens

-10 points

Moon Maiden Names

Moon Maidens have only personal names, finding little need for surnames. Moon Maiden names include Ahbahr, Ahbee, Behkah, Eethah, Kahndoot, Klahra, Meeree, Nahrda, Nohdeva, Ortha, Phryah, Rahksahnah, Rehvkah, Szephepe, Tohla, and Zehlahna. Males will have Ahrmehnee names (see sidebar, p. 42).

Moon Maiden Weapons and Armor

Although Moon Maidens show no less care in forging their weapons and armor than any other civilized race, they use bronze and brass rather than fine, watered steel. For this reason, no Moon Maiden owns a weapon of better than *good* quality (see sidebar, p. B59) unless it was bought outside the Hold.

Due to their slender builds, Moon Maidens prefer one-handed weapons such as sabers, shortswords, dirks, sickle-axes, light battelances or hand darts, rather than weapons requiring two hands. Prior to the destruction of Maiden Valley, a typical Moon Maiden wears a helm or pot-helm of bronze, a cuirass or breastplate, and a target or small round shield. Afterward, the few survivors use almost any type of armor.

It should be noted that after 2721, the Moon Maidens are nearly a dead race, with the survivors having joined the Eastern Confederation.

The Moon Maidens are a race of warrior females (their men are subordinate; their only purpose is to work in the fields and help perpetuate the race). Maiden Valley, their Hold (see p. 28), is deep within the southern Ahrmehnee Mountains. In battle, they are as formidable as any Freefighter or Ahrmehnee, though their weapons and armor are archaic even by the standards of the Confederation.

Advantages and Disadvantages: A Moon Maiden PC gets +1 to DX, -1 to HT (due to her slender build), and is 15 pounds lighter than average for her ST. Prior to 2721 (the destruction of Maiden Valley and the Hold of the Moon Maidens), *all* Moon Maidens have the Intolerance disadvantage against all men (to the point of taking women to be their battle-mates and companions). After this time, the disadvantage is not mandatory, and there is no longer a 10-point bonus to be a Maiden.

Recommendations: With very few exceptions, a Moon Maiden should have the Fanaticism disadvantage for her zealous worship of the Moon Goddess (see p. B25 and p. 74). She will follow all orders of the *brahbehrnuh*, and will not fight or hunt when the moon is in the sky.

Friends and Enemies: Moon Maidens have a -4 reaction to male "lowlanders" (e.g., any man who is not Ahrmehnee or mountaineer) before 2721. After this time, their animosity is not quite as intense and is treated as a -1 reaction. They react to Ahrmehnee at -1. They *hate* Ganiks, never having a reaction better than Poor.

Likes and Dislikes: Moon Maidens admire battle-prowess, bravery, and honor. Unfortunately, they are slow to recognize any of these traits in men, whom they generally view as ignorant, clumsy, and in dire need of constant supervision for even the most menial tasks.



4

THE ENCOMPASSING ONE

The Encompassing One, the true deity of the world of the Horseclans, is known by many peoples in many forms. Though each avatar provides for the needs of its own worshippers, none of them is cruel or fickle. The One is a force for good beyond human understanding. Some of the better-known avatars are:

Sun and Wind. The Horseclans swear by Sacred Sun, the life-giver, and “go to Wind” when they die. Sun and Wind ask for no ceremony — merely an honorable life and a respect for the earth, using nature with love and without waste.

Steel. The Cult of Steel, also called the Sword Cult, is practiced by the men of the Middle and Western Kingdoms. It is described in detail on p. 33. It has ceremonies typical of any fraternal organization, and teaches the joys of honorable life and of death in battle.

The Blue Lady. This is the cult of the women of the Middle Kingdoms. It shows the Encompassing One in her female aspect. The Blue Lady is a force of succor and of healing, and of spiritual (if not physical) peace. Unlike the Sword Cult, whose ceremonies are relatively public, the adepts of the Blue Lady perform their rituals in secrecy. Most burk-lords think only rarely of the Lady, but her worship is as strong a force as their Steel, and heals that which Steel cleaves.

The Silver Lady. Also called the Shining One, this is the form of the One known to the Ahrmehnee and the Moon Maidens. She is a warrior-goddess, teaching bravery and honor, and that war is fought to earn peace.

Ahlah/God. The One God worshipped in different rites by the Islamic and Christian faiths is no more or less true than any other avatar of the One. But the debased Ehleen form of the Ancient Religion had no true power, and no contact with the One!

When the Encompassing One touches devout worshippers, the effects are literally magic. *Anything* is within the deity’s power. Usually the One works through visions, suggestions, and relatively minor or private miracles . . . but even the dead might rise joyfully if the One had need of their services.

Blessed

10 or 20 points

A Blessed individual is especially favored by the Encompassing One. This is an advantage, costing 10 points (20 for *Very Blessed*). The person must behave in a manner appropriate to the avatar he follows, or lose the benefits of this advantage. The main benefit of Blessed status is in divination (below), but GMs may assume the One occasionally aids the Blessed in other ways. Anyone known to be Blessed gets an automatic +1 Reputation.

(Religious) Fanaticism is an appropriate disadvantage for a Blessed character.

Divination

The commonest gift of the Encompassing One is the ability to accurately — though not always clearly — predict the future. Blind Hari has this ability.

To perform a successful divination, a character must be a devout follower of some form of the One. The GM rolls vs. (IQ-10), with the following modifiers: +5 or more if the character has *never* presumed to attempt a divination before, +5 if the

character is Blessed and +10 if he or she is Very Blessed. Bonuses can be allowed for great sincerity . . . and if the GM *wants* a divination to work (or to fail), it will. The rituals required by some cults are only necessary if the worshipper believes they are.

The form of a successful divination varies according to the worshipper’s beliefs. A follower of the Silver Lady may actually see and visit with the goddess, who will answer questions and give comfort and counsel. Worshippers of Ahlah will know themselves briefly transported to Paradise, to return without clear memory yet illuminated. Followers of the Christian God or the Blue Lady will simply know a feeling of peace and the conviction that they have received guidance. Sword Brothers will *know*, with an electric certainty, that Steel has answered them. Followers of Sun and Wind will see prophetic visions.

A divination may also be vouchsafed to any devout character at or near death, if the One (or the GM) sees fit.

Other Magic

True magic, other than the miracles of the Encompassing One, is unknown in the world of the Horseclans. Many primitives believe in a variety of spells (for instance, the Ahrmehnee with their skull-houses) — but none of these spells has any force.

GMs, of course, may choose to vary this. If real magic from *GURPS Fantasy* is introduced to a campaign, it is suggested that the whole world be low-mana, with pockets of no mana. Sophisticated characters should only gradually become aware that some of the primitives’ beliefs are real. (The primitive PCs knew it all along — but their *players* should be surprised.) Care must be taken not to allow magic to overwhelm the basic world background . . . but, used sparingly, it could be interesting.



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