

G U R P S[®]

FANTASY

The Magical World of Yrth

SECOND EDITION

BY KIRK TATE AND JANET NAYLOR

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

BEWARE OF THE BANESTORM

Welcome to the world of Yrth, a wondrous place populated by mysterious monsters and magical races – and by people snatched from our Earth by the cataclysmic Banestorm!

Whole villages were transported – from such diverse locales as medieval England, France, Germany and the Far East. Yrth is a world of cultural conflict, where the Crusades aren't ancient history – they're current events!

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GURPS Fantasy provides the GM with a complete world background – history, religion, culture, politics, races and a detailed, full-color map – everything he needs to begin a *GURPS* campaign.

This is a complete revision and expansion of material that appeared in the first edition of *GURPS Fantasy*.

Written by Kirk Tate and Janet Naylor

Based on material by Steve Jackson

Edited by Loyd Blankenship and Creede Lambard

Cover by Kirk Reinert

Illustrated by Guy Burwell

STEVE JACKSON GAMES



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GURPS

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By Kirk Tate and Janet Naylor

Based on Material by Steve Jackson

Edited by Loyd Blankenship, Steve Jackson
and Creede Lambard

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INTRODUCTION

About GURPS

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

Pyramid. Our bimonthly magazine includes new rules and articles for *GURPS*, as well as information on our other lines: *Car Wars*, *Toon*, *Ogre Miniatures* and more. It also covers top releases from other companies — *Traveller*, *Call of Cthulhu*, *Shadowrun*, and many more.

New supplements and adventures. We're always working on new material, and we'll be happy to let you know what's available. A current catalog is available for an SASE.

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us — but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata sheets for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are always available from SJ Games; be sure to include an SASE with your request.

Q&A. We do our best to answer any game question accompanied by an SASE.

Gamer input. We value your comments. We will consider them, not only for new products, but also when we update this book on later printings!

Illuminati Online. For those who have home computers, SJ Games has an online service with discussion areas for many games, including *GURPS*. Here's where we do a lot of our playtesting! It's up 24 hours per day at 512-448-8950, at up to 28.8K baud — or telnet to io.com. Give us a call! We also have conferences on CompuServe, GENie, and America Online.

Page References

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set*, Third Edition. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to the *GURPS Basic Set* — e.g., p. B102 means p. 102 of the *GURPS Basic Set*, Third Edition.



The world you are about to enter will appear both familiar and strange. Yrth (pronounced “eerth”) is a world much like our own. Its sun and solitary moon appear the same, although the stars are totally different. The year is the same length and the seasons come and go just as they do on Earth. The flora and fauna of Yrth are, for the most part, identical to Earth's. Even the human cultures of Yrth have their roots in our own past — the countryside is dotted with great mosques and towering cathedrals. Indeed, there is much here that a modern Earthling would recognize.

Yet Yrth is *different*. It is a magical place, rich in mana. The wilds of Yrth are prowled not only by lions, tigers and bears, but by gryphons, dragons and other magical beasts. Evil spirits rise from ancient crypts to stalk the night. And humans, the most common intelligent race, are not the only people inhabiting this land. They must share Yrth with Elves, Dwarves, Orcs, Goblins and numerous others. In some areas, they coexist peacefully; in other locales, they do not. Yrth's whole history was changed by a tremendous magical backfire, the Banestorm (see p. 6), whose effects spanned not just continents, but dimensions. It was this event that brought humans to Yrth.

Here is a place where our earthly fantasies are reality. To one who is jaded and unimpressed by our own world, Yrth is a land full of wonders. Its deserts are just a little hotter, its winters colder, its forests greater and its mountains taller and more foreboding. Sorcerers weave arcane magics and brave warriors battle creatures out of legend. In Yrth you will find adventure, romance, intrigue and mystery. Those who yearn to perform great deeds may do so — if they have the courage — for this is a world built on a heroic scale, full of awesome challenges, great dangers and even greater rewards.

About This Book

GURPS Fantasy is organized into six major sections. The *History* chapter outlines the major events of the millennium since the Banestorm, and includes a timeline. *Cultures* describes the feudal society of Yrth's humans, Islam, Christianity and the most prominent nonhuman cultures. *Kingdoms* provides detailed descriptions of several important nations, including information on governments, history, important locations, geography and famous personages. *Characters* contains *GURPS* statistics for Elves, Dwarves, Goblins, Halflings, Orcs, Reptile Men and other intelligent races, as well as jobs, skills and character types. *Creatures* describes some of Yrth's unique fauna. *The Fantasy Campaign* discusses how to run a fantasy campaign and build your own fantasy world, and provides suggestions for scenarios and campaigns set in Yrth.

Ytarria

This book concentrates on the continent of Ytarria, located in Yrth's northern hemisphere. A full-color map is included. There are other lands across the eastern and southern oceans, occasionally visited by trading vessels, but these regions will be left to the GM and to further supplements.

Ytarria itself is about the same size as North America — roughly 3,000 miles across. Its climate is basically temperate, but it is sufficiently large to have weather ranging from arctic to sub-tropical. There are six major kingdoms — five human and one dwarven — and a host of smaller principalities and independent settlements. There are also substantial wild lands and unexplored regions. Of the

five human kingdoms, Megalos and Caithness are Christian; al-Haz and al-Wazif are Moslem; and Cardiel is nominally Christian with a significant Moslem and pagan population. Other familiar peoples and cultures, most notably Jews, Chinese, Zoroastrians and Hindus, are represented by close-knit minority groups spread throughout the continent.



Religion

Some of the best roleplaying campaigns have a religious element, yet no subject is more controversial. Fantasy writers (of both books and games) often take the safe way out, providing superficial mumbo-jumbo in place of religion. Frankly, we find this unsatisfying, if not actually obnoxious. Many roleplayers seem to agree; given the chance, they would rather be paladins of a “real” faith than of the Temple of Gobble the Mostly Omnipotent.

Therefore – with the hope that we do not offend greatly – we have presented three of Earth’s major faiths, by name, as some *might have developed* in a world where magic was real. These depictions come largely from history, partially from the favorite stereotypes of fantasy literature, and lastly from the imaginations of the writers! For those interested in more detail, we recommend Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* (for fantasy) and any good text on the crusades (for history). We have found Durant’s *The Age of Faith* especially useful. The imagination, as always, is up to you.

How Religion Works

The true nature of religion in Yrth, or any other game-world, is up to the GM’s conscience, whim, and/or sense of drama. Some possibilities:

Nonintervention. Divine powers do not enter human affairs. Good works and prayer may help you in the afterlife, but no one will ever know; they’ll have to take it on faith.

Occasional intervention. Once in a while, sincere prayer will be good for a die-roll modifier, or a modest little miracle. The players should never be sure whether divine intervention has actually occurred. There should always be a “natural explanation.”

Magical aid. Clerics of certain faiths receive an automatic bonus to learn spells related to their religion. See *Magic*, pp. 84-86, for more information.

Active deities. The prayers of the innocent and holy can literally work miracles, up to and including thunderstorms, partings of oceans, and angels with flaming swords. Such aid is not granted on a die-roll, but is based on the GM’s opinion of the worthiness of the petitioner (“God does not roll dice.”).

If this is the case, then forces of evil such as Satan are also real, and will actively seek to corrupt and destroy – Satan is particularly interested in the souls of mages and of churchmen who don not truly believe in their own faith. Souls occasionally return from the afterlife (either heaven or hell) to warn or threaten those still on Yrth.

One True Way. Any of the above – but the benefits are confined to a single faith. Others are simply false creeds.

About the Authors

Kirk Tate

Kirk was the author of *GURPS Ice Age*. Born in Lubbock, Texas, and raised an Air Force brat, he has been a roleplayer and GM for ten years and a wargamer for more years than he cares to remember. He holds a B.A. in history from the University of Texas, where his interests ranged from ancient Greece to modern Mexico. Along with gaming, his hobbies include rugby, fantasy literature and painting miniatures.

Kirk currently resides in Austin, Texas, where he is attending law school and selling his soul to the devil. He lives with his wife, Deborah, and an incredibly ugly couch named Egbert.

Janet Naylor

Janet Naylor resides in Schenectady, New York, with her husband, Michael, three dogs, three cars, two computers and more books and games than she can find shelves to put them away on. She is an Assistant Sysop on CompuServe’s RPGames Forum (type “GO RPGAMES”), and has been roleplaying and GMing for eight or nine years. She holds an M.S. in Computer Science from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and a B.S. (also in Computer Science) from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Her current hobbies include reading science fiction and fantasy literature, painting dragons, watching Japanese animation, writing, driving up and down the Eastern Seaboard, and playing RPGs of all sorts both on and off the computer.



HISTORY

The Banestorm



Once upon a time, Yrth was home to the elder races – the Elves and their rivals, the Dwarves – and to the nomadic, barbaric Orcs.

The Dwarves either enslaved or ignored the Orcs; most of the Elves simply avoided them. But one group – the Dark Elves – was offended by the Orc's very existence. Their best wizards worked for years on a "final solution." It is perhaps just as well that the details are not known, but the eldritch Elves fashioned what they thought was a great summoning, intended to bring a merciless bane upon the Orcs.

It failed . . . badly.

The Dark Elves' spell backfired. Most of their communities (and those of many others) were destroyed in an instant – blasted by a force that left only charred, mana-dead scars on the land. Others of the elder folk suffered likewise. But the Dark Elves did get their "bane." Several banes, in fact . . . new races, hostile to the Orcs, but just as offensive to others. The Banestorm was the greatest magical backfire in the history of Yrth.

Thus it was, 1000 years ago, that men, Goblins, Reptile Men, Kobolds and other races came to Yrth. Plucked from their home worlds by the capricious power invoked by the Elves, they found themselves in a new land. Yrth would never be the same.



The Spread of Humanity

Men were by far the most numerous of the newcomers. The force that brought them to Yrth manifested itself as a huge, unnatural storm, which Yrth came to know as the Banestorm. Ships “lost at sea,” found safe haven on unfamiliar shores. Entire *villages* – torn from Earth by sorcerous fire or flood – were transplanted intact to Yrth. Individuals caught in a sudden tempest while on a journey never reached their destinations. Most of this occurred between the years 1050 and 1200 A.D. – the time of Earth’s Crusades.

The northern part of Ytarria was settled primarily by men from western Europe. These newcomers found their feudal culture ideally suited to the challenges of their new environment. Strong, charismatic individuals quickly attracted followers and acquired territory. Dozens of tiny “kingdoms” were founded, often only to be gobbled up by more powerful neighbors. All of the former Europeans found unity, however, in their common faith – Christianity.

To the south roamed Moslem tribesmen. Scattered over a wide area, the followers of Islam adopted a nomadic lifestyle – traveling with their herds, raiding their neighbors, and meeting at the few permanent towns to trade. In the towns, however, the rich culture of the Abbasid empire survived. Small groups of scholars and holy men recorded and preserved the science, philosophy and literature of Islam. The libraries and universities they founded are among Yrth’s greatest storehouses of knowledge.

In addition to Christians and Moslems, men and women from dozens of other cultures were transplanted to Yrth. Significant numbers of Jews settled in both Islamic and Christian lands. In the frozen wastes north of the Whitehood mountains, pagan Celts and Scandinavians merged into fierce, nomadic clans.

And in the far northwest, “immigrants” from the Orient – mostly Korea and Japan – founded the realm of Sahud. Here and there were also groups of Chinese, Indians, Africans, Germans and Slavs. Most of these smaller groups were quickly absorbed, but occasionally travelers will still come across an isolated village where almost all of the inhabitants have black skin, worship Krishna and Vishnu, or speak undiluted German.

The Rise of Megalos

The great city of Megalos was founded in the year 1200 A.D., by Simon Menelaus. Menelaus was a charismatic man and a great mage . . . whose goal was to rule all of Yrth. During his lifetime, he built an empire whose capital was the greatest and richest city in Ytarria – a status it still retains. The dynasty which followed extended the empire’s borders, using any means necessary.

Initially, Megalos’ conquests came easily. The Goblin kingdoms resisted for a time, but were eventually forced to swear allegiance to the Emperor and convert to Christianity. The western kingdom of New Jerusalem, governed by the Knights of St. John, gave no ground until 1350, when they were convinced to join the Empire for the common cause of spreading the dominion of Christ. In 1424, Prince Ivan tired of waiting on his indecisive father and launched a personal crusade against the Moslems’ coasts (in what is now al-Wazif and Cardiel). He was eventually beaten back. But Aurelius I followed in his younger brother’s footsteps and called a Grand Crusade against the Moslems of the south in 1440.

This sudden transformation of what had been mere border squabbles into a full-blown invasion galvanized the Islamic tribes. As a result, the three Islamic nations of al-Haz, al-Wazif and al-Kard were born. Al-Kard fell swiftly, conquered within a generation of its founding, converted to Christianity literally overnight, and renamed Cardiel. Al-Haz and al-Wazif proved tougher nuts to crack. Suddenly, Megalos had foes worthy of its steel.

Timeline

1050 – The Banestorm begins to bring humans, Goblins, Kobolds, Halflings and other races to Yrth.

1074 – The Islamic city of al-Siyassi is founded on the banks of Bir Ma’jin.

1160 – The Islamic Holy City of Geb’al-Din is founded.

1175 – Benedictine monks establish Drift Abbey on Ental Island.

1187 – Knights of the Order of the Hospital of St. John are brought to Yrth by the Banestorm. They found New Jerusalem a year later.

1200 – Simon Menelaus founds the city of Megalos. A powerful wizard and brilliant general, he begins to build an empire. The Banestorm begins to subside.

1229 – The Goblin Kingdoms join the growing Megalan Empire.

1270-1290 – Northern border was pushed Nomads back beyond the Whitehood Mountains.

1300 – The first humans, Islamic tribesmen, enter the region which will become Cardiel.

1310 – The Knights Templar first appear in Yrth, on Halloween night.

1350 – Megalan warlord Octavius Magnus convinces the Knights Hospitallers of New Jerusalem to join the Megalan Empire in “spreading the dominion of Christ.”

1365 – Octavius Magnus leads the First Crusade into the city now known as Tredroy.

1403 – With the forcible “help” of Emperor Antonius II, the first Conclave of Christian Archbishops is held in Mehan.

1412 – The Michaelite Order is founded in Megalos.

1425 – Prince Ivor’s Crusade: Megalan Knights led by the Emperor’s third son descend upon the unguarded Moslems of the south.

1440 – Megalos launches the Grand Crusade against the southern Moslems.

1442 – The Islamic country of al-Haz is founded.

1444 – In response to the Megalan invasions, the northern Moslems form the nation of al-Wazif.

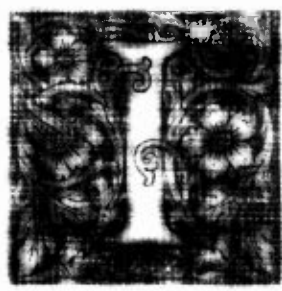
1445 – Al-Kard is founded.

1470 – After years of war, Megalan crusaders conquer most of al-Kard. The region is renamed Cardiel and becomes a province of Megalos.

1473 – The first Imperial Viceroy of Cardiel is named.

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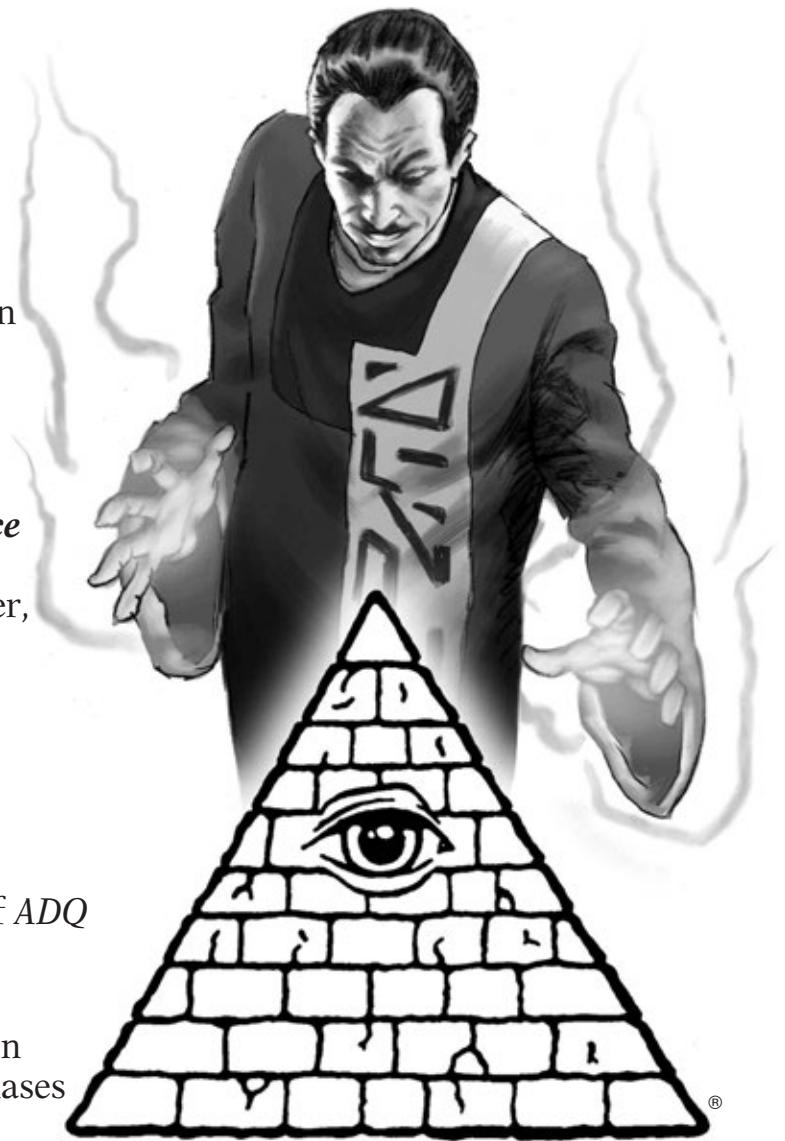
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