

G U R P S[®]

ALTERNATE EARTHS



By Kenneth Hite, Craig Neumeier
and Michael S. Schiffer

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

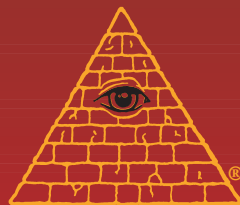
AGAIN, INFINITE WORLDS!

Serve the August Emperor as an Eye of Heaven – or plot the downfall of the world-girdling Ming. Take to the skies to defend democracy in Bourbon Europe. Raid the glittering pyramids of Mexico with your Vinlander kinsmen. Dodge British helicopter gunships as you fight for America 200 years after Washington's execution. Raise your eyes to the stars of the Rightly Guided Stellar Caliphate. Or move to seize them all, as agents of the implacable Centrum.

GURPS Alternate Earths 2 provides six more worlds usable in a ***GURPS Time Travel*** "Infinite Worlds" campaign, or independently with many other ***GURPS*** worldbooks. It includes:

- 🌍 Complete histories, including timelines, for each alternate Earth.
- 🌍 World maps for five parallels.
- 🌍 The first ever complete writeup of Centrum from ***GURPS Time Travel***.
- 🌍 A handy guide to conquering your own parallel Earth.
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Why settle for only one world?
An infinity of Earths is waiting for you!



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GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition Revised and ***Compendium I: Character Creation*** are required to use this supplement in a ***GURPS*** campaign. ***GURPS Time Travel*** is *highly recommended*. However, the parallel worlds will be useful to *anyone* running a time-travel or dimension-hopping campaign.

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ALTERNATE EARTHS 2

Further Explorations into Infinite Worlds

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NORTHCOTT '99

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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 (www.sjgames.com/pyramid). Our online magazine includes new rules and articles for *GURPS*. It also covers the hobby's top games – *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*, *Traveller*, *World of Darkness*, *Call of Cthulhu*, *Shadowrun*, and many more – and other Steve Jackson Games releases like *In Nomine*, *INWO*, *Car Wars*, *Toon*, *Ogre Miniatures*, and more. And *Pyramid* subscribers also have access to playtest files online, to see (and comment on) new books before they're released.

New supplements and adventures. *GURPS* continues to grow, and we'll be happy to let you know what's new. A current catalog is available for an SASE. Or check out our Web site (below).

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. Or download them from the Web – see below.

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!

Internet. Visit us on the World Wide Web at www.sjgames.com for an online catalog, errata, updates, and hundreds of pages of information. We also have conferences on CompuServe and AOL. *GURPS* has its own Usenet group, too: rec.games.frp.gurps.

GURPSnet. Much of the online discussion of *GURPS* happens on this e-mail list. To join, send mail to majordomo@io.com with "subscribe GURPSnet-L" in the body, or point your World Wide Web browser to <http://gurpsnet.sjgames.com/>.

The *GURPS Alternate Earths 2* web page has updates, resources, and links at www.sjgames.com/gurps/books/altearth2.

Page References

Any page reference that begins with a B refers to *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition Revised*; e.g., p. B144 refers to page 144 of *Basic Set*. CI refers to *Compendium I*, CII to *Compendium II*, GT to *GURPS Traveller*, T:BC to *Traveller: Behind the Claw*, S to *Space*, and so on. See *GURPS Compendium I*, p. 181, for a full list of abbreviations for *GURPS* titles. Or visit www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html for an up-to-date list.

To me, all the past is alive with alternatives, and nobody can show, nobody has really attempted to show, that they were not real alternatives.

– G.K. Chesterton

When we realize that the actual outcome did not have to be, that any alteration in any step along the way would have unleashed a cascade down a different channel, we grasp the causal power of individual events. . . . Contingency is the affirmation of control by immediate events over destiny, the kingdom lost for want of a horseshoe nail.

– Stephen Jay Gould

History is the sum total of things that might have been avoided.

– Konrad Adenauer

Alternate Earths are worlds that might have been – the results of decisions that were not made, or random events that happened differently. Even a small change in the past can snowball until “today” is entirely different, a world which has never known the United States of America, or has already reached the stars. Whether resulting from alterations made by time travelers, or existing in parallel dimensions of reality, such alternate histories are a staple of science fiction.

GURPS Time Travel gives guidelines for role-playing a campaign across many eras and/or timelines, and presents the “Infinite Worlds” campaign, a frame for crossworld gaming. The first *GURPS Alternate Earths* presented six parallel worlds which demonstrated the many possibilities of alternate-history settings. Demonstrated, without exhausting – six of an infinity.

This sourcebook is a sequel in theme and style, but not in content: the worlds of this volume have no connection with those of its predecessor. *GURPS Alternate Earths 2* presents six more timelines for use as a few among the Infinite Worlds, or as independent settings. Each chapter also includes notes on designing characters and campaigns specific to the individual timelines.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Kenneth Hite has an M.A. in International Relations from the University of Chicago, and it looks very nice in its leatherette folder. He has been writing games since 1981, and writing them professionally since 1995. He is currently the Line Developer for the *Star Trek Roleplaying Game* from Last Unicorn Games, and his weekly “Suppressed Transmission” column in *Pyramid* lets him write off the oddest books on his taxes. His wife, Sheila, has no cause for alarm.

Craig Neumeier got a history degree and game writing collaborators at the University of Chicago, and has not regretted either (yet). A roleplayer since 1980, he steadfastly maintains the [soc.history.what-if](http://soc.history.what-if.org) FAQ against all enemies, foreign and domestic. He has a Master's degree in history from the University of Minnesota, specializing narrowly in a single timeline.

Michael S. Schiffer has been roleplaying since 1979. He, Ken, and Craig began collaborating on alternate histories at the University of Chicago, where he earned a B.A. in history. With degrees in both law and library science, Mike works in Chicago as a reference librarian, which comes in amazingly handy. His wife Linda is very tolerant.



3 Ming-3



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Jeng Ho (Cheng Ho)

In 1381, the Ming prince Ju Di (Chu Ti) took Yunnan from its Mongol rulers. Among the casualties was the Muslim Ma Hajji, whose younger son, Ho, was taken prisoner. Ma Ho was made a eunuch and the prince's servant at the age of 13. He advanced quickly, commanding troops when Ju Di challenged his nephew, Ming Chyen Wen, for the throne. In 1402, when Ju Di took Nanking and began his reign as Ming Yung Lo, he honored Ma Ho by giving him the family name Jeng.

Soon afterward, Ming Yung Lo ordered the creation of a fleet of over 300 ships and 28,000 men. Some believed he intended to pursue his predecessor, rumored to have fled south disguised as a Buddhist monk. Others believed it to be a mercantile venture. The ships ranged from 120 to over 400 feet in length, and included merchantmen, warships, and support vessels (such as 20 tankers to carry drinking water for a month at sea). Eunuchs commanded the fleet, and Jeng Ho was commander-in-chief. In the autumn of 1405, Jeng Ho's fleet set sail for Calicut, on the west coast of India.

During its many voyages, the fleet sailed as far east as the Phillipines and as far west as southeastern Africa. It brought gifts from the Emperor (silk, cotton, horses, porcelain, tea, and much else) and received tribute in return, but also engaged in more straightforward trade. The sailors navigated by compass heading and by the constellations, weathered those storms they could not avoid, and battled pirates (using gunpowder weapons, including grenades filled with metal pellets and tubes which could set fire to sails). When they returned home, they brought elephants and giraffes, Arab drugs and magnifying lenses, and even, on occasion, foreign rulers.

In Ming-3, Ming Yung Lo's grandson and successor was deprived by plague of the advice of his mother, who had been opposed to foreign adventures. He instead followed the example of his grandfather, and Jeng Ho commanded the fleet for the rest of his days. In 1431, the fleet rounded the Cape of Heavenly Attention (Good Hope), but concluded that there was little of interest on Africa's west coast. On his return, he left the fleet at Arabia to perform the *Hajj*, and died in the holy city of Mecca. He left behind a family to venerate him (descended from his adopted sons) which remains powerful in the Middle Kingdom, and a legacy of Chinese naval power that continues in Ming-3 to the present day.

You are all too anxious to awake us and to start us on a new road . . . but you will all regret it, for, once awaked and started we shall go fast and far – farther than you think – much farther than you want!

– Wen Syang

In the early 15th century, ships from China began to travel the Indian Ocean. The great ships, vastly larger than European vessels, brought gifts to local rulers in lands from Indochina to East Africa and returned with curiosities, tales, and envoys to the Son of Heaven's court. In our own world, the voyages ended by Imperial edict and the ships were scrapped. In Ming-3, the Middle Kingdom continued its outward probes, making contact with the rest of the world while it remained superior in technology and organization.

Four centuries later, the world revolves around Nanking (Nanking), which rules an empire of unprecedented extent and majesty. Nevertheless, all is not well under Heaven. The Empire faces ten thousand minor crises, none threatening in itself but taking a wearying toll when combined. Rumor carries the news of natural disasters, military setbacks, and dearths. Though few dare speak of it, all know the signs. Has the Ming dynasty lost the Mandate of Heaven, its divine authority to rule? And if so, what will come next?

The more dedicated of the dynasty's servants labor, perhaps in vain, to forestall the curse of interesting times, while their colleagues grow ever more corrupt. Increasing numbers of soldiers and scholars, peasants and merchants, criminals and princes begin to prepare for the unmentionable future. Conspiracies and shifting alliances abound, and flashpoints may appear anywhere, any time. What more could an intrepid band of adventurers wish for?

HISTORY

CHINA'S AGE OF DISCOVERY

The voyages of Jeng Ho brought Chinese ships to every corner of the Indian Ocean (see sidebar). Although the treasure fleet's voyages brought no net profit, they created an instant legend in every port. At home, the rarities brought back sparked a succession of fads and fashions. That trade might have been ignored had the capital not been moved back to Nanking from Beijing (Peking). Nanking's shipwrights had built the treasure ships, and were not prepared to lose that business if their influence at court could keep it going. In addition, the latest offensive in the reconquest of Annan province (Vietnam) called for men and supplies to be brought in by ships. The development of supply lines and amphibious tactics was largely an ad hoc affair, with practice racing ahead of military theory, but all could see that shipping would have to vastly increase.

Magnates and generals conferred with officials, officials conferred with the Emperor, and Imperial edicts supported a growing shipbuilding industry. To protect the merchants (and the seaborne supply lines to Annan), China built up its navy. The Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean, initially small but backed by the occasional 400-foot-long ship bristling with cannon and flanked by smaller craft, overawed most potential pirates in that region.

After 1450, China discovered that local troubles along the trade routes from Africa and India could be simplified by using the techniques for transporting armed men across the sea developed in the Annamese War.



5 CALIPH



Other Muslim Worlds

Infinity knows of 17 parallel worlds with divergences centered on the Muslim powers. Caliph is the only one more advanced than Homeline, although **Jihad-2**, in which Constantinople fell in 676 and Europe followed, is well into an industrial revolution in their year 1429. In **Jihad-1**, where the Arabs defeated the Franks at Tours in 732, Muslim Europe is still stagnating with the rest of the world at TL4 in the year 1881.

In **Ottoman-1**, the Turks took Vienna in 1529 and marched into Germany: the future of the Anglo-Spanish alliance, leading all that's left of Christian Europe, looks increasingly bleak. **Ottoman-2's** Empire extends over a huge part of Asia, following their 1407 conquest of southern Russia in cooperation with Tamerlane, but the European kingdoms they have long ignored are pulling ahead of them. Curiously, both timelines are in local year 1766.

Other Muslim timelines include **Andalus**, in which the Muslims of Spain defeated attempts at reconquest and went on to discover America in 1484, **Isma'il**, in which the Safavids defeated the Ottomans in 1512 and built a millenarian Shi'ite empire stretching from India to North Africa, and **Khedive**, in which Mehmet Ali and his successors built Egypt into a modern state during the 19th century.

The Abbasids

The second dynasty of caliphs presided over the classic period of Islamic civilization. Yet they spent the years 750-1258 as powerless puppets, and even the early caliphs such as Haroun al-Rashid worried about the legitimacy of their rule. Haroun's heirs allowed Shi'ite sectarians to grow in power by seeking the favor of the family of 'Ali (the Prophet's nephew and son-in-law), and failed to impose Sunni interpretations on the Ulama.

In Caliph, however, their role as "Patrons of the Holy Koran" gave the Abbasids a new form of religious authority, a basis for agreement with the Ulama, and the self-confidence to chastise the sectarians and reform the military. After destroying Byzantium, the great enemy of the Faith, their prestige was unassailable.

Oh Mankind, surely you are the ones who have need of God; He is the All-Sufficient . . . if He but wills it, He can do away with you and make a new creation: surely that is no great matter for God.

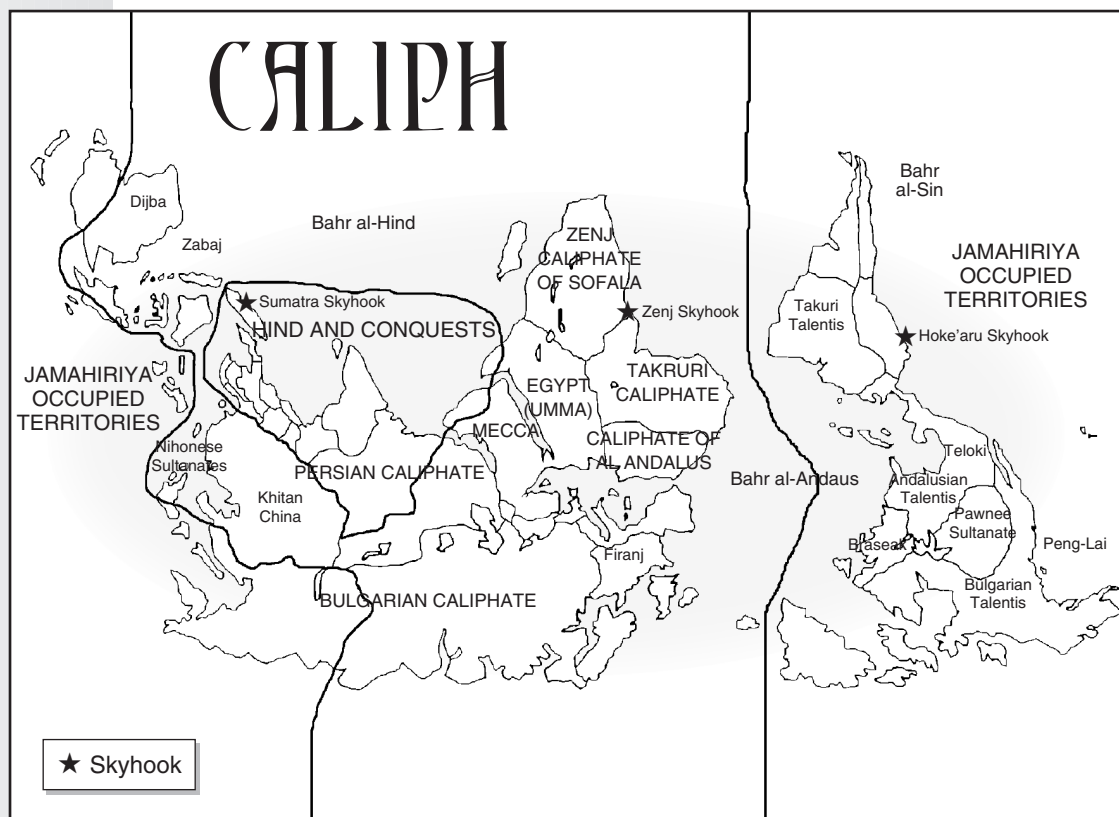
– The Koran, 35:15-17.

This timeline has only reached 1683, but visitors could be forgiven for thinking it centuries in the future. Diverging with a scientific revolution under the Abbasid caliphs of the 9th and 10th centuries, it has advanced far beyond 20th-century Earth, with universal prosperity and interstellar colonies. At present, a global war threatens its achievements.



The rise of Islam is one of the most astonishing facts of history. Within a century, this new religion had transformed the Arabs from a minor people on the margins of the civilized world to the masters of the most widespread empire yet known. The Caliphate was the central feature of the world – literally, as the Islamic empire was the first in regular contact with all of the main centers of the Old World. In Homeline history, the meteoric rise of Islamic civilization faltered, and while it remained perhaps the most advanced and certainly the most widespread society on Earth until the 15th or 16th century, it stayed on a cultural plateau while Europe burst forth in the Renaissance.

In Caliph, however, the invention of the printing press in 9th-century Baghdad sparked an Islamic Renaissance when the first flush of expansion had hardly faded. The Abbasid caliphs supported the resulting burst of innovation, and were richly rewarded by the gunpowder weapons they used to overwhelm Byzantium and Rome.





7 CENTRUM



Centrum Dark, Centrum Light

Centrans as presented here and in *GURPS Time Travel* are not nice people. They are faintly paranoid, often narrow-minded, and definitely ruthless. (Or, in their eyes: concerned with defense, impatient with archaic or senseless practices, and pragmatic in their determination to accomplish their goals.) It is very easy to make them yet more villainous: all they need is a suitably vicious ideology.

GMs who want a nicer Centrum, perhaps as a home base for PCs, can transform it without too much trouble: credit its people with genuine good intentions towards other timelines, and give them more regard for individuals in place of their end-justifies-the-means mentality. Play up their opposition to racial and religious intolerance, and their devotion to equality of opportunity. Centrum Light could even have a democratically-elected Parliament in place of the Forum, but it might be more interesting to keep it strictly meritocratic. (See also *The Federation*, sidebar, p. 121.) Homeline can be replaced with a more villainous adversary, or removed from the setting altogether. Or kept the same, with both sides coming to see past the nasty stereotypes each has of the other.



The White Ship

King Henry I, ablest son of William the Conqueror, suffered his greatest reverse when the “White Ship” sank, sending his heir William the Ætheling to the bottom of the ocean. Although he tried to get the crown passed to his daughter and her second husband, on Henry’s death England endured a civil war and two decades of anarchy.

In Centrum, the White Ship arrived safely in port. Henry I was followed peacefully by his son William III, who proved an acceptable if not inspired king. William’s son Robert “the Crusader” spent literally all of his brief reign outside England, but his Queen gave the realm stable, effective government for more than half a century.

If this is the best of all possible worlds, what are the others like?
– Voltaire

The origin and focus of a paratemporal empire, Centrum has spent the last century sending explorers, spies, businessmen, and occasionally soldiers to dozens of parallel timelines. Having rebuilt and reunified its home planet after a cataclysmic war, Centrum was poised for major changes even before the recent discovery of another world of parachronic travelers. Today, in 2015, the conflict with Secundus (which calls itself “Homeline”) is a primary concern.

CENTRAN SOCIETY

Although their society encompasses settlements on many timelines, the vast majority of Centrans still live on their home line, also called Centrum. World and government are seldom distinguished, and there is no distinction between government and society. The contemporary world-state is actually fairly recent, not much more than a century old, but its roots go deep into history.

HISTORY

Centrum perceives itself as a radical break with its past, and really cares about history only because of parachronics – for which purpose the histories of other timelines matter at least as much as its own. A typical Centran knows rather less about his own history than a typical 20th-century American.



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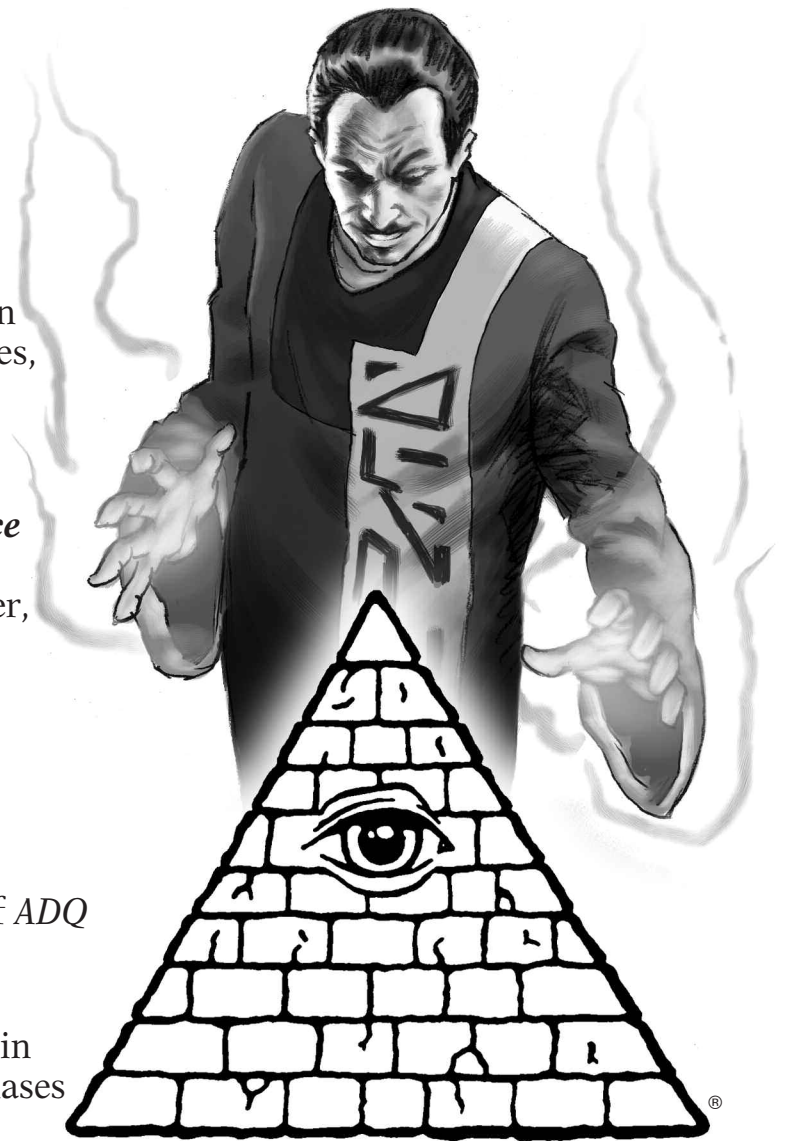
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