

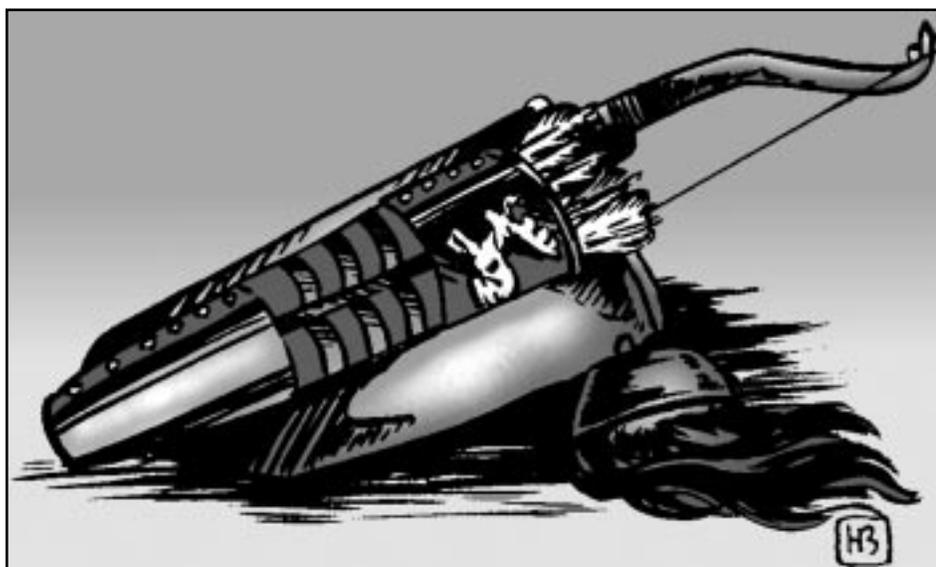
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# ИТЯ❖ДИЦИИ

## 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 *In Nomine*, *Illuminati: New World Order*, *Car Wars*, *Toon*, *Ogre Miniatures* and more. It also covers top releases from other companies – *Castle Falkenstein*, *Traveller*, *Call of Cthulhu*, *Shadowrun* and more.

*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](http://www.sjgames.com) for an online catalog, errata and hundreds of pages of information. *Illuminati Online* supports SJ Games with discussion areas for many games, including **GURPS**. Here's where we do a lot of our playtesting! Dial 512-485-7440 at up to 33.6K baud – or telnet to [io.com](http://io.com). We also have conferences on Compuserve and America Online. **GURPS** has its own Usenet group, too: [rec.games.frp.gurps](mailto:rec.games.frp.gurps).

*GURPSnet*. Much online discussion of **GURPS** happens on this e-mail list. To join, send mail to [majordomo@io.com](mailto:majordomo@io.com) with "subscribe GURPSnet-L" in the body, or point your World Wide Web browser to [www.io.com/~ftp/GURPSnet/www/](http://www.io.com/~ftp/GURPSnet/www/).

## Page References

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the **GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition** Revised. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to the **Basic Set** – e.g., p. B23 means p. 23 of the **Basic Set**. An M refers to **GURPS Magic, Second Edition** and CI refers to **GURPS Compendium I: Character Creation**.

**GURPS Russia** presents the Russian world from its beginnings in the 10th century to its *new* beginnings in the early 18th. It unfolds the history, folklore and daily life, not of the Imperial Age or of the Soviet Union, but of *medieval* Russia – a culture all but forgotten in the 20th century. To most Westerners, the word "Russia" is synonymous with Communism, nuclear war, competing space programs and World War I-era farm machinery tending the fields of The People.

To those readers, I bid a welcome to a world that just might surprise you with its depth of character. Russia isn't a *nice* place, not now and not then, but Russians themselves can be very kind. The lowliest peasant will offer you bread and salt when you come through his door. If you're polite, he'll give you a seat on top of the stove and maybe get you drunk! He probably won't *trust* you, but if you had been raised on stories of constant invasions and hatred by Mongols from the east, Poles from the west and Turks from the south, you'd be leery of foreigners, too.

**GURPS Russia** provides sufficient information to play anything from a pagan sorcerer in the days of early Christianity to a Cossack pirate in the days of Peter the Great. If you favor politics and espionage, you'll enjoy the machinations of the Shuiskys and Romanovs in the dreaded Time of Troubles. If you're fond of the dark side of humanity, you'll discover the black riders of the *oprichnina* – the Russian Inquisition of Ivan the Terrible. And if you like magic, you have a whole Otherworld to explore, beyond the Thrice-Nine Lands, where thunder heralds the *zmei's* flaming wings and the grim laughter of Baba Yaga demands your respect.

— S. John Ross

## АВ❖ЦТ THE АЦТ❖Я

Born in 1971 to a military family, S. John has lived in both the United States and Japan. He has yet to set foot on Russian soil, but is determined to stand in Kitai Gorod in this lifetime. He's held a bizarre collection of unskilled-labor jobs, including a stint as Associate Editor in charge of war games at *Interactive Entertainment*, the world's first monthly magazine on CD-ROM.

He cooks, sings, plays the harmonica and does an uncanny David Pulver impression. The parts of his leisure time that aren't dedicated to books and films are spent attending science-fiction conventions. He's been an adventure gamer since Spring 1986, when he discovered *Car Wars*, *AD&D* and *Nuclear War* in the same weekend. His fascination with folklore and history grew out of the same period.

His professional credits include articles and adventures in *Roleplayer* and *White Wolf*, an adventure module for *Tales From The Floating Vagabond*, cartoon art in *Dragon Magazine* and co-authorship of **GURPS Grimoire** and **GURPS Black Ops**. He wears his T-shirts backwards.

## THE STRAIGHT LINE

**GURPS Russia** is an experiment. The subject appeals mostly to hardcore roleplayers and history fans – not a large market. But we really *like* this book . . . so we're printing 2,000 copies, and they will only be available directly from SJ Games. You can reach our Web catalog at [www.sjgames.com](http://www.sjgames.com). If this goes well, maybe we'll publish other "straight-to-you" titles . . . books that won't work in standard distribution but are too good to ignore. We'll see.

## The Mongols at War

The 13th-century Mongols were, debatably, the most devastating body of warriors that Europe or Asia had ever seen, proving their superiority against all manner of foes. They were ferocious, swift and cunning, using a combination of light and heavy cavalry formations combined with Chinese war machines. Their skill at mounted archery was unmatched, and they possessed a dedicated corps of scouts and spies.

The Mongols divided their forces (including their administration and taxation units) into groups of 10 (*arbans*), 100 (*jaguns*), 1,000 (*minghans*) and the 10,000-man *tumen*, two or three of which formed an army. The system created an efficient chain of command, as no officer had to give orders to more than 10 subordinates. The Mongols were ruthless in enforcing this structure; transfer between units was not allowed, and if part of an *arban* was captured in battle, the survivors were executed for their failures. This increased the ferocity of Mongol attacks; if a single man in an *arban* was slain, the rest had no fate better than to die on the battlefield, taking as many foes as possible with them!

From the Russian standpoint, the most remarkable feature of Mongol armies was their ability to campaign at the height of winter, attacking when Russians were huddled on their stoves awaiting the spring thaw.

### Mongol Tolerance

In nearly every way, the Mongols permitted the subject Russians to run their own culture. Especially surprising to Russians was Mongol religious tolerance. Even after the Mongols adopted Islam, the Russian Orthodox Church was not only tolerated, but exempt from taxation on its extensive landholdings. Russian clergy were exempt from conscription, as Batu Khan believed that the prayers of all holy men, regardless of faith, were of value. A Tatar charter of 1308 reveals that they would execute any man guilty of insulting the Russian Church and any Russian leader attempting to tax clergy or their families. In return for Mongol generosity, the clergy prayed regularly for their Mongol conquerors, and a diocese was established for the Golden Horde.

## Social Achievements

Ivan was concerned about more than new territories and freedom from the Tatars; he wanted foreign respect for his empire. In 1472, he wed Sophia Paleologus, a niece of Constantine XI, the last Byzantine emperor. Constantine XI had perished on the walls of Constantinople in the final, successful, Turkish assault, and the wedding was sponsored by the Roman Church in the hope that Russia could be brought under the wing of Catholicism and the political might of its pope.

Ivan, on the other hand, saw himself as the rightful (now *legally* so) heir to Constantine's position as protector of the Orthodox people. Philotheus, a Russian monk of later years, wrote that, "the first Rome collapsed owing to its heresies, the second Rome fell victim to the Turks, but a new and third Rome has sprung up in the north, illuminating the universe like a sun," and many others recorded their agreement with this sentiment.

Ivan's perspective had a price. By taking such a view of the western Church, and refusing to establish links with Rome, he cut Russia's final ties with the West.

Nevertheless, he still envied other Europeans, and felt insecure and barbarous when considering the glories of their cities and ceremonies. Seeking to imitate them, Russia became a land of stifling pomp and ritual. Foreign ambassadors, accustomed to the "mere" absurdities of Western courtly behavior, found the Russian system tedious, vain and humiliating.

Ivan brought in craftsmen and artists from distant lands, and ordered the construction of a new palace for himself and three new cathedrals which still stand in the Moscow Kremlin. He adopted the Byzantine double-headed eagle as the symbol of Russia, adding it to his own family's crest. And to emphasize his new position, he created a new title for himself: tsar, or "Caesar."

## THE МУСКОВИТЕ СЯ

### (1505-1682)

When medieval Russia is mentioned, it is the Muscovite Era which usually comes to mind. With the seeds planted in Kiev, and allowed to grow under the rulership of the Tatars, a real nation, truly Russian in thought and practice, arrived after the reign of Ivan the Great. This period saw the growth of the Russian Church, attempts (and failures) at cultural ties to the West, and a cast of notable heroes and villains.

Vasili III, Ivan the Great's son, continued gathering the last of the resistant towns of the west (and fighting repeated skirmishes with Poland) and developing diplomatic ties with the leaders of distant lands, including the sultan of Turkey, Suleiman the Magnificent, and Babar (a descendant of Tamerlane), founder of the Mogul Empire in India.

Under his rule, many foreigners came to permanently dwell in Russia and the "German Quarter" appeared in Moscow (the Russian word for "German" meant simply "one who cannot talk," and was used to refer to all Westerners who weren't "Latins," such as English "Germans"). But Vasili's role in history was overshadowed by the reign of his son, the madman Ivan IV.

*Koschei's Death:* Koschei The Undying (see p. 99) was immortal because his soul (he called it "his death") was hidden in an egg which itself was hidden far from Russians, somewhere within the Thrice-Tenth Kingdom. The location (which varied) was one of extreme danger and surpassing strangeness.

*The Crystal Mountain:* Much of the Otherworld was taken up by a huge Crystal Mountain, in which the largest *zmei* lived. The mountain seemed, in some tales, to be *growing*, absorbing all of the Thrice-Tenth Kingdom over a period of many years. This may have been the "glass mountain" upon which sat the land of the dead. To destroy the mountain, the hero had to slay the 12-headed *zmei* and cut open its body. In its left side was a coffer, in the coffer was a hare, in the hare was a duck, in the duck was an egg, and in the egg was a seed. If the seed was set afire and brought near the mountain, the mountain would melt.

*The Sea:* The Otherworld had a vast sea that took weeks to cross, and in it were various islands. In one story, Koschei's death was found on one of these islands, under an oak tree, in a coffer, in a hare, etc.

*Otherworld Peasants:* The Otherworld had forests and fields just like those of Russia, and many peasants and ordinary folk lived there. The forest had no *towns*, only isolated huts. The inhabitants could be anything from intelligent animals to lone hunters, or even groups of friendly maidens guarding magic treasure.

## ROLEPLAYING FOLKLORE

Russian folklore, like that of most cultures, is difficult to game in its purest form. While a story of three brothers, two strong and wise and the third foolish, going hunting, quarrelling over a barrel of salt, and fighting dragons in the meantime might be entertaining at fireside (especially if there is *vodka* to be had), it doesn't translate well into adventures. For one thing, most fairy tales involve only a single hero, or multiple characters who don't cooperate. Most *GURPS* campaigns focus on a small group of people who are, if not necessarily friends, at least working toward a common goal.

However, there are many *themes* of Russian fantasy that can be adapted to play, and doing so imparts the feeling of a fable without the limitations. Three examples follow:

### Generosity

Russians valued hospitable and generous behavior, and this was impressed upon children in folk-tales. For example, Ivan needed a magical horse and he knew that Baba Yaga had a stable of them. He set off into the forest, hoping he could get one of her magical steeds and that he wouldn't get eaten.

The journey took much longer than it should have, and the hero's provisions ran out. Soon he was weak with starvation. He spied an eagle nesting over her chicks and resolved to kill and eat it. As he aimed his bow at the bird, it cried, "Don't kill me, Ivan! Don't leave my children as orphans!" Ivan was nearly unconscious, but he overcame his need for food and spared the eagle. Within the hour, he arrived at the hut of Baba Yaga and gained entry.

Baba Yaga welcomed him and listened to his request. She fed him and said, "Tend my horses for three days. If you can keep them from running away, you are worthy to own one. If not, your flesh will feed my daughters and your skull will light my yard."

