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EDITOR'S NOTE

With ten issues per year, that means that twice a year, *Digital Hero* skips a month. With Origins (July in Columbus) and GenCon (August in Milwaukee) coming up, we won't be publishing again until September, but on the good side, you can come see us in person at the conventions! Just stop by the Hero Games booth!



The Future History Timeline

by David McKee

Introducing The Future History Concept

The best campaigns, for those who truly enjoy the roleplaying aspects of RPGs, are those in which the players experience freedom in developing their characters and pursuing the goals of those characters. This means more than simply allowing them to choose skills, train in particular weapons, or learn a special group of spells. It means developing a sense that their characters move in a multidimensional world that at all times presents multiple paths of exploration.

One of the great challenges for any GM is the creation of a campaign that is not simply a series of independent and unrelated single-shot adventures the characters are plopped into one after another. All too often, however, the effort to create a cohesive campaign with plots spanning multiple adventures produces a game the players experience as rigidly linear. The sense of being channeled from one related event to the next is almost as bad from a player's perspective as the random series of disconnected adventures. This sort of campaign makes players feel that there can be only one outcome to an adventure and one predetermined narrative to a campaign. They should instead feel that their characters move in a vibrant world, rich with history and possibility.

GMs and players are understandably fixated on the immediate circumstances in which characters find themselves. When designing an adventure, a GM maps locations, develops NPCs, and traces a general plot. It is impossible for a GM to consider every possible event in the entire campaign universe, and the common result is that a GM will focus exclusively on what impacts the characters directly. When the characters are elsewhere, time seems to stand still for kingdoms on the borders of goblin country and spaceports orbiting through pirate infested asteroid fields. The characters go out into the world, adventure for weeks or months, and return to a home city that is largely unchanged.

Often this is as it should be. Continuity is extremely important in any campaign setting. However, if this is always and everywhere the case, problems can arise. Adventures will seem important only in themselves, and have little meaning in the larger campaign (and campaign world), except as means to advance the characters and to accumulate wealth. Another problematic result is a burden on the GM to contrive some plot device to set the characters on each new adventure. If one wishes to establish a

rich, living campaign, it is not always enough to develop a clever "hook" to alert the PCs that an adventure is ready to be had.

This article describes a number of methods for developing a Future History, a kind of timeline that provides for events to occur independent of specific adventures and scenarios. These events can be major, game altering events or relatively minor occurrences that provide a bit of local color to an adventure. Used liberally, the methods of Future History can transform the way a GM runs a campaign. Used sparingly, they can provide a little spice to an evening of otherwise traditional gameplay. In either case, they constitute a broader vision of a campaign; this vision can result in a little more work being required of a GM. However, the rewards easily justify the added effort.

The Future History Premise

The fundamental premise of Future History is that the world is so very much larger than the space inhabited by the PCs. At all times there are many possible adventures for the PCs to consider tackling. Political, social and religious events move apace near and far, utterly without regard to the experience, desires, and actions of the PCs. Natural and supernatural occurrences ranging from the most mundane (intense weather) to the highly unusual (meteor striking a city) are to be expected in varying frequency.

All of these things are important for the effect they have on the world the PCs inhabit. Weather conditions and social conditions both, when dealt with in a measured and consistent fashion, add depth and a sense of reality to a campaign.

Applying Future History To Your Game

CREATING YOUR CAMPAIGN

The first thing you, as GM, need to do is to begin piecing together your campaign setting.

Create a rough map of your world. Think carefully about the sorts of adventures you would enjoy running. What kinds of characters, monsters, aliens, or other NPCs interest you? What terrains and environments can excite your imagination? What technologies and social structures appeal to your creative sense? Put *only* these in the game. The PCs will be limited in their explorations only by technological or magical barriers and the relative dangers present in various areas. In theory at least, the PCs can go anywhere and attempt to do anything, therefore you must be prepared to present the world to them as they set out to explore it.

Elizabethan Hero Characters

by Lisa Hartjes

As mentioned before, the Elizabethan era was one of the greatest times in English history, and there is something going on that appeals to almost everyone. If your players love to explore, there's the New World just waiting for them, or they could attempt to circumnavigate the globe, just as Sir Francis Drake did in 1580. Should your players enjoy politics and intrigue, Elizabeth's court would be just the place. But what if they want to have daring adventures on the high seas? No problem! Queen Elizabeth signed many letters of marque for privateers to plunder the ships of England's enemies, especially the Spanish and the Dutch.

The information presented below is for a game that is purely historical. It would be a rather easy matter to include psionics or magic into the game. These things could, of course, alter the history of your campaign world. For example, what if the Spanish Armada had a wizard who could have manipulated the weather, allowing the Armada to return home to Spain without losing any ships?

Adventuring in Elizabethan Hero

The most obvious location to run adventures in an Elizabethan Hero game would be in England. For the peers and the gentry, London would be the place to be. It was the center of Elizabeth's court when she wasn't traveling.

For a map of Elizabethan London, please visit the author's Elizabethan Hero web site, at <http://www.egms.org/elizhero>

POLITICAL INTRIGUE AND ESPIONAGE

Elizabeth's court was rife with intrigue. Peers jockeying for position, trying to earn the Queen's favor. Gossip was one of the court's favorite pastimes, and a word whispered in the right ear could make or break a promising career.

Campaigns of this type will be centered around the Court and wherever it is currently located, especially London.

EXPLORATION

The Elizabethan era, especially after the defeat of the Spanish Armada, was a time of expansion and exploration. The English East India Company was granted a monopoly to trade in Africa, Asia, and America by the government in 1600. This company, along with others such as the Muscovy Company, was chartered to find new and growing markets for English goods. Much of the motivation behind world exploration, by such explorers as Sir Francis Drake, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, and Sir Walter Raleigh, was based on a desire to expand overseas markets.

SHIPBOARD ADVENTURES

If sailing the seven seas are more to your character's liking, the era was one that saw the rise of England as a naval power. There are many different opportunities for shipboard adventures as part of the Royal Navy, as merchants competing to get their goods from Africa to England before anyone else to ensure the best price, as explorers following Drake's example, or as Barbary pirates.

Creating Your Character

Exactly who your character is will largely depend upon the type of game you will be playing in. In a game set at court, your character is likely to be a nobleman, as only he or she would be able to come and go as they please, and hobnob with the Queen. If playing a seafaring adventure, of exploration of the world, it is possible to be from any social class.

An Elizabethan Hero game is set at the Heroic level: 75 base points, with a maximum of 75 points in disadvantages, with a maximum of 25 points coming from any one disadvantage category. As in a Heroic level game, normal equipment costs no character points.

NAMES

Children in Elizabethan England weren't named until a few days after birth when they were baptized. It was the godparents' duty to present the child to the church and the parish. All children usually had three godparents: two female and one male, if the child was a girl; two male and one female if the child was a boy. It was common practice for parents to try and get godparents who were higher in social status than themselves, such as local nobles or prominent people in town. Alternately, many asked other relatives, such as grandparents, aunts, or uncles to serve as godparents.

A very important reason why the choice of godparents was important is that a child would most likely be named after one of them. In fact, most children were given the name of a godparent. The person the child was named after and the child were then referred to as namesakes.

Your first name, also called your "Christian" name, was yours for your entire life. People rarely changed their names, though they might be more generally known by a nickname (i.e. Jack for James). Middle names, which are really nothing more than a second given name, were extremely rare in Elizabethan England. While the practice was gaining popularity on the continent, middle names didn't become commonly used until much later. During the Elizabethan era,