

G U R P S<sup>®</sup>

# Castle Falkenstein<sup>™</sup>

— THE —  
OTTOMAN  
EMPIRE

By PHIL MASTERS

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

# LAND OF DERVISHES AND DJINN!

There are many empires in the fantasy-Victorian world of *Castle Falkenstein*, but few quite like the Ottoman Empire. Once it was the terrifying behemoth of the Middle East, but nowadays it's written off as the "Sick Man of New Europa." But it's still a land with plenty of dangers – and not a few treasures.

***GURPS Castle Falkenstein: The Ottoman Empire*** shows you ancient magicks, mad Sultans, deadly Djinn, and mazes of mysteries and plots. With game details for both the original *Castle Falkenstein* game and the ***GURPS*** adaptation, this volume features everything you'll need to play out adventures in the Lands of the Sublime Porte:

- ✦ A guide to the history and geography of the region.
- ✦ Notes on character creation – from street brats to mercenaries, spies to sorcerers.
- ✦ Middle Eastern magick, featuring unnerving new lorebooks and magickal Orders from the militant Senusi Dervishes to the enigmatic Brotherhood of Purity.
- ✦ The Djinn, so powerful that they can grant a human's every wish, yet bound by the simplest of ancient symbols.
- ✦ Secrets and mysteries, from the political schemes of predatory New European powers to the creation of magic carpets.

## The Ottoman Empire awaits. Prepare to be amazed!

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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 Castle Falkenstein: The Ottoman Empire*** also includes game statistics for the original *Castle Falkenstein* game, and can be used as a sourcebook for any roleplaying system.

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G U R P S<sup>®</sup>

# Castle Falkenstein<sup>™</sup> The Ottoman Empire

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## ABOUT GURPS

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The *GURPS Castle Falkenstein: The Ottoman Empire* web page can be found at [www.sjgames.com/gurps/books/ottoman/](http://www.sjgames.com/gurps/books/ottoman/).

### 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*. Page references that begin with CI indicate *GURPS Compendium I*. Other references are AN for *GURPS Arabian Nights*, AT for *GURPS Atlantis*, CF for *GURPS Castle Falkenstein*, PM for *GURPS Places of Mystery*, and M for *GURPS Magic*. The abbreviation for *this* book is OT. For a full list of abbreviations, see p. CI181 or the updated web list at [www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html](http://www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html).

# Introduction



This is a supplement for *Castle Falkenstein*, in both its original and its *GURPS* versions. It has the same form as previous *Castle Falkenstein* supplements – a message received from that world through the Faerie Veil, with an account of events and locations and additional game details.

The subject is the Ottoman Empire of the *Falkenstein* world – the great power which rules the Middle East, taking in modern Turkey, most of Arabia, and much of North Africa. Whereas “New Europa” – the West, especially Europe and North America – is a region where faerie powers, ritual magick, and “steampunk” technology vie for dominance, the Ottoman lands seem partly stuck in a fantastical medieval past. This Empire has changed relatively little – certainly less than it *should* have – since its glory days, which coincided with the European Renaissance.

However, things are just a little more complicated than that. New ideas do cross the border sometimes, albeit with difficulty, and the powers of steam and modern military technology are making their presence felt. On the other hand, desert raiders, flying carpets, and whimsical Djinn remain an occasional feature of this region, too. Like other parts of the *Falkenstein* world, the Ottoman Empire displays a weird mixture of Victorian super-science and traditional fantasy wonders; it’s just that here, they have a strong *Arabian Nights* flavor, a background of imperial

decline, and a fair amount of developing world patch-and-mend.

This setting’s recent history probably comes closer to that of our world than any other part of the *Falkenstein* setting. There’s magick and Djinn, admittedly, but “our” Ottoman Empire was as dramatic, chaotic, and strange as any fantasy gamer could wish. See some of the books in the Bibliography for details.

But for now, it’s time to meet our guides for the trip.

## *About the Author*

*“It is my belief, Watson . . . that the lowest and vilest alleys in London do not present a more dreadful record of sin than does the smiling and beautiful countryside.”*

– Sherlock Holmes, in “*The Copper Beeches*,”  
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Phil Masters, it may be recalled, was the author of *GURPS Arabian Nights* (among others) and the co-author of *GURPS Castle Falkenstein*, which history he believes renders him qualified for this present employment. His first paid scribbles were published in the year 1980, which renders him, he fears, somewhat of an archaic period fantasy himself. He does business with his publishers from his residence in a small town amid the smiling and beautiful countryside of rural England.

was doubtless part of their scheme. They are now openly discussing with the Turks the creation of more lines, beyond the Bosphorus.

One scheme would proceed through Asia Minor, alongside the Euphrates River, to Baghdad (and doubtless through there to the Persian Gulf), strengthening communications between the Ottoman capital and the ancient capital of the Caliphate, at the eastern end of their domains. (This would also enable the Turks – or their allies – to send military forces rapidly to the borders of Persia; the Prussians may even have designs on India.) Another idea is to construct a rail line along the Levantine coast, through Syria to Jerusalem. A third, boldest of all – perhaps too bold for Turkish tastes – would involve the creation of a railway network to carry Muslim *Hajj* pilgrims from Syria to the Holy City of Mecca. This, however, would be seen by Muslims as intruding deep in sacred territory; doubtless, this system would have to be financed and constructed purely by members of that faith, with Prussian involvement remaining well hidden. Nonetheless, it would place Ottoman credibility at the mercy of Prussian expertise.

All of these schemes require watching. Nor can we trust the other European Powers to restrain Prussia, at least without complex considerations of their own advantage.

For example, Britain is divided on the Ottoman Question. Mr Disraeli, for the Tory Party, seems to have a certain liking for the Turks, and takes a cool, “realistic” view of events in the East. His rival, Mr Gladstone of the Liberals, clearly feels a furious distaste toward the Muslim religion, taking every opportunity to denigrate the Ottomans. As he can produce countless reports of massacres and tyranny in their lands, he has much ammunition. But he will not work to help the cause of Reform – he seeks only the *destruction* of the Sultanate. He will hardly be supported in this by the Steam Lords, who care nothing for massacres or tyranny, but seek only a feeble, compliant East wherein to sell their manufactures. So Mr Disraeli and the Steam Lords are in alliance on this issue. In truth, however, the main concern for all British factions is to ensure that the new Suez Canal, their best and swiftest route to India, is kept open and unthreatened, and they may be prepared to permit the Prussians some advantage in the internal affairs of the region in exchange for this.

The British concern for the Canal is shared by the French, its chief builders, who otherwise seem mostly concerned that the vast Ottoman debt to French banks should be safe. They are unlikely to make any move that would threaten Ottoman stability, or cause the Sultan to cancel payments. The Russians have an ancient and persistent enmity with Turkey, although for now they seem to accept the lesson of the Crimea; that they cannot bring down the Ottomans without all Europe opposing them. They might fear schemes that strengthen the Ottoman Empire overmuch – but it may well

## Ottomans Elsewhere

Although this book deals specifically with the Ottoman Empire in the universe of *Castle Falkenstein*, circa 1872, it could also be useful in other games. Apart from the supernatural elements – the Djinn and Magick – much of the information is drawn direct from our own world’s history. Hence, much that follows would be applicable in other steampunk games (see *GURPS Steampunk*), or indeed in realistic Victorian-era games. In fact, the majority of the characters detailed in this book really existed, although their depiction here is cinematic and melodramatic.

For that matter, much of the treatment of the supernatural draws on real-world myths and stories. The *Arabian Nights* shows Djinn much as depicted here, and more than one of the “Magickal” volumes mentioned are based on real books. Games based on *GURPS Goblins*, *GURPS Cabal*, or *GURPS Warehouse 23* could all involve the strange secrets or dark legacies of the Ottoman Empire.

### *Printing the Legend*

However, there’s one drawback to depicting the Victorian-era Ottoman Empire from a Western point of view. Westerners of the period, brought up on the *Arabian Nights* and stories of the Crusades, had a monumentally romanticized view of the whole subject. Many of those who visited the region were excellent reporters, but even they tended to see things through a mental filter. That’s what irritated modern scholars call “Orientalism.”

Still, it’s plain fact that the Ottoman Empire had mad sultans, scheming viziers, desert tribes, and wild-eyed dervishes. In brutal reality, most of that probably made it a much less pleasant place to live. On the other hand, *Castle Falkenstein* is about high melodrama; when in doubt, we print the legend. Still, even in the *Falkenstein* universe, there are ordinary people living in this Empire.

be fear of Russia that the Prussians are using to persuade the Turks of the need for their aid. Our best allies in this matter are the Austro-Hungarian Empire, who have their own old worries about both Turkey and Prussia – but *they* suffer from a persistent urge to meddle in the Balkans.

In short, we feel that it may be necessary to build our own system of reliable informers and friends in the Ottoman Empire, and we must regretfully request further funds for this project. Our first concern is to improve our present, somewhat limited, set of contacts, which project is now in hand.

### *Tom Olam Again:*

*I finished skimming this, and looked up. Morrolan looked at me. “Is there anything you would add to that, from your, ah, unique viewpoint?” he asked.*

*“Not much,” I said. “Mind you, that **Drang nach Osten** idea is likely to bring New Europa a lot of grief in the future, and I think our people may be right to guess that Bismarck is making moves in that direction a few years ahead of schedule. In my world, Turkey did rather fall under Prussian influence – they sided with Germany in the Great War at the start of the 20th century. That cost them their empire, but they managed to reorganize as a fairly modern nation. The Middle East was still a bit of a mess at the end of the century, though.”*

# LADY EXPLORERS

*Tom Olam Comments:* One striking – even startling – feature of New European contact with the Middle East is that, despite all the stuff about Muslim women being locked away in harems, and the belief that visiting New European women would be treated with contempt, a large number of very remarkable ladies have not only made the journey, but have thrived. For some reason, a lot of them seem to have been British aristocrats – but all would-be adventuresses of New Europa may take inspiration!

## *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*

Although she died a century ago, in 1762, Lady Mary remains, in the 1870s, one of our major sources of information on Ottoman life, especially on women in the harem – something that even Eberhardt didn't see much of. She's mainly remembered as a brilliant letter-writer, but her husband Edward was British ambassador to Turkey from 1716 to 1718, and she made many friends among the local upper classes. It's her letters home that tell us so much. Among other things, she describes conversations with high-ranking Ottomans of both sexes, visits to the women's baths, and the detailed advantages and disadvantages of female dress in either culture.

Oh, and Lady Mary was also a reasonable poet and an early feminist, engaged in spirited literary disputes with some of the great writers of her day, and introduced smallpox inoculation to England from Turkey.

## *Lady Hester Stanhope*

Herr Starkmann tells some of Lady Hester's tale. She was the daughter of an Earl, and niece of William Pitt, the Prime Minister of England. She managed Pitt's household for several years, and gained a name as a political and society hostess – then found herself thrown out of that position when her uncle died in 1806. So she left England, apparently in a titanic huff, and wandered off round the Middle East with a servant, a doctor, and a young lover, eventually meeting Mehmet Ali, the overlord of Egypt. Legend has it that he told her the story of Zenobia, which may have been a mistake. He was no doubt planning his assault on the Ottoman Empire by then, but Lady Hester shot off up the coast ahead of him, found the ruined convent at Djoun in 1814, and settled her household there.

She was the kind of born-and-raised aristocrat who so expects people to obey her that they often do, and she did indeed become quite a power in the region for a few years. Mehmet Ali carefully steered round her little kingdom when he launched his campaign. Later on, she hit money troubles, and started claiming that she was some kind of prophetess. Given her history, connections, and charisma, she gained quite a reputation in Europe as a living legend (and maybe just a little bit as a joke). She died in 1839. Eberhardt probably read about her in

something written by one of the curious Europeans who visited her.

Incidentally, Morrolan suspects that there may be a secret Magickal angle to all this. Lady Hester really believed that she was the reincarnation of Zenobia, or something like, and her father had a reputation as an eccentric but talented scientist-inventor. (He came up with calculating machines, a microscope lens, a steam carriage, and a new variety of cement, among other things.) All of this implies that the family may have been enthusiasts for Temple of Ra beliefs in mixing sorcery and super-science.

On the other hand, Lady Hester's father was also a political radical – a revolutionary, even. And her uncle and patron *was* Prime Minister (but no great radical). And she effectively ruled a portion of the Middle East for years. Well, the Illuminati are the political string-pullers, whereas the Freemasons have the social connections and Sufi Order tie-ups. Was Hester a renegade from one Order, working for another? If Morrolan knows any more, he's not saying – but even he can be cagey about Magick. (I wish we knew how old the Temple of Ra *really* is – could Lady Hester have been a founder-member, bringing them Masonic or Illuminati secrets to kick-start their research?)

Perhaps we ought to organize a team to go investigate all this. They'd probably have to start in England, looking into the Stanhope and Pitt families, then move on to Syria and see what they could find round the ruins at Djoun. Of course, they'd have to include scholars, sorcerers, and guards. Hmm . . . sounds like a job for an adventuring party, doesn't it?

## *Lady Anne Blunt*

Now, in the 1870s, we're hearing about Lady Anne Blunt, and her husband Wilfred, an ex-diplomat turned poet, who are apparently planning an expedition into the depths of the desert. They already live in the Levant, and have both learned Arabic; those who know them say that she's a better linguist than he, and enough of a writer that they're looking forward to her account of any expedition.

Come to think of it, I wouldn't be surprised if any adventurers heading that way in the next few years ran into the Blunts; look out for a couple of pleasant English aristocrats riding round the desert with a small group of guides and the best Arab horses you'll see for a long way round. Although I've heard her called a quiet, meek-looking woman, Lady Anne has evidently inherited her family's intelligence and determination; I'm looking forward to her book myself.

*(An Editor Remarks: In our universe, Lady Anne Blunt's book is called **A Pilgrimage to Nejd**. See the Bibliography.)*



## The Dervishes

The religious mystics and wanderers who we of Europe refer to as “Dervishes” or “Fakirs” are, in fact, adherents of the ancient Muslim theology of *Sufism*. Not all Dervishes are magicians; many, being devout folk, actually despise Magick as a worldly snare and a delusion. Travellers in the East should not casually enquire as to a Dervish’s arcane powers, lest offence be taken.

However, many of the Sufi orders retain vast quantities of ancient lore, and many of the mightiest Arabian wizards, if not actually Dervishes themselves, have studied in Dervish *Madrassahs*. Furthermore, many of these Orders, sorcerous and religious alike, have great political influence; the diplomat should be as wary of them as should the mage.

(Incidentally, one must also not confuse Dervish magickal skills with those perfectly explicable displays of sleight-of-hand which are known in Europe as “Fakir

Shows.” No doubt there are some Fakirs who use legerdemain to emulate true Magick, and they may indeed be the origin of this appellation – but there are also “Fakirs” whose Magick is very real.)

---

We of The Art in Europe  
are prone to finding ourselves  
called Erratic, and even Mad –  
but compared to our Eastern  
counterparts, we are paragons  
of stability and calm.

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So far as may be determined, the Sufis appeared in the centuries following the time of the Prophet Muhammad, when they somewhat resembled either the mendicant friars of Europe or the Buddhist holy men of Asia – mystical and eccentric wanderers, revered for wisdom by some, dismissed as frauds or heretics by others. However, with time, teachers emerged among them, and found themselves surrounded by pupils. Thus, some found it convenient to settle, and *Madrassahs* developed in forms much like the Christian world’s

monasteries. Over the centuries, again like monasteries, some Orders acquired wealth and respect, and hence power; today, they exert influence in the highest levels of Ottoman government.

## Dervishes in GURPS

In *GURPS* terms, many members of the Dervish Orders have Disciplines of Faith (p. CI89), usually Mysticism, occasionally Asceticism or even Monasticism among those who withdraw permanently into *Madrassahs*. (Note that the region has many devout Muslims, so Mysticism in itself only earns a reaction penalty from a minority of people encountered – although a mystic who is also seen as a heretic or a rebel may have other problems.) However, dervishes do not conduct public religious ceremonies, so they do *not* qualify for Clerical Investment.

Some dervishes have a Duty or Sense of Duty to their Order, especially if they have learned Magick from it, but others are only loosely allied. The Orders themselves are too loose and informal to act as Patrons, but individual teachers and fellow-students may well represent Patrons or Allies.

Most dervishes have some level of Theology skill (often specializing in Islamic Mysticism), and the more respected among them have at least a point or so in Poetry. Fanaticism towards Islam is common among the Bektashi, and occasionally found among the Senusis. As more or less ascetic mystics, most dervishes are Struggling or Poor, and even a settled teacher will not have better than average Wealth unless it is accompanied by a good explanation, an Unusual Background, and probably a negative Reputation.

Any Bektashi who are open about their affiliation gain a -1 Reputation, among *loyal* Ottoman citizens, as political troublemakers (-2 points). Quite a few Ottomans have opinions about the Mehlevis, both good and bad, represented by +1 and -1 Reputations among all inhabitants of the region, both on 7 or less (worth +2 and -2 points respectively, and hence canceling out). Kalandari also have mixed Reputations: +2 for holiness with all Muslims on 7 or less (+3 points), and -1 as spongers throughout the Middle East on 10 or less (-2 points). Senusis are seen as wise and effective social figures by some of the Ottoman and Egyptian upper classes, a +2 Reputation among a large group on 10 or less (+2 points), but as tricky political independents among Ottoman government officials, a -1 Reputation among a small group on 10 or less (-1 point). Note that these values are all calculated for characters living and working within the Ottoman Empire; for a dervish character based elsewhere in the world, recalculate them with appropriately changed group sizes.

Kalandari who have learned Magick may have studied previously with either the Bektashi or the Mehlevis, and gained skill with one of those groups’ Lorebooks. Alternatively, they may have studied *The Suns of the Lights* (and nothing else). Knowledge of any Lorebooks beyond this requires GM permission and the usual 5-point Unusual Background per book (p. CF93).

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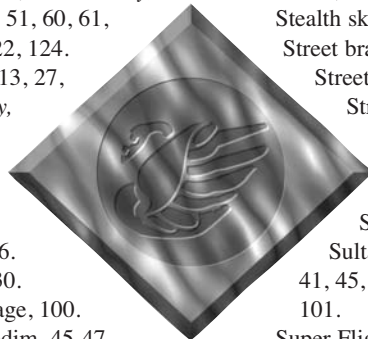
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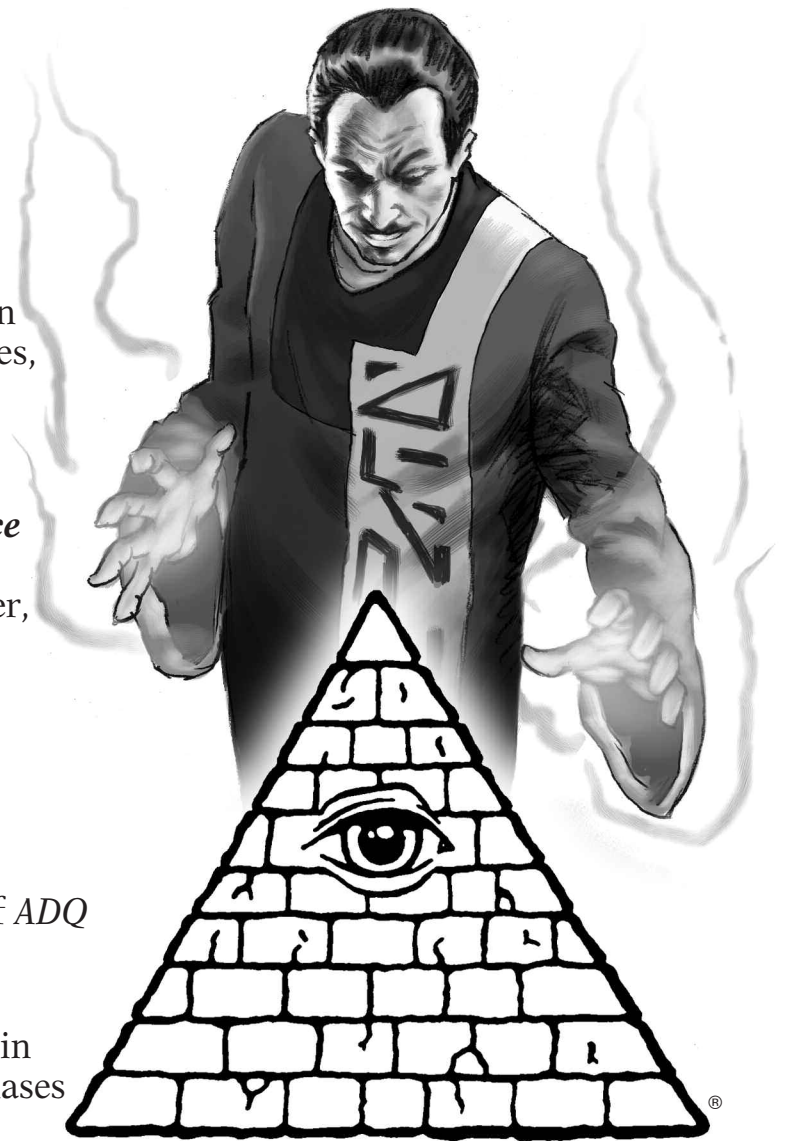


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