

"I do not recall distinctly when it began, but it was months ago. The general tension was horrible. To a season of political and social upheaval was added a strange and brooding apprehension of hideous physical danger; a danger widespread and all-embracing, such a danger as may be imagined only in the most terrible phantasms of the night. I recall that the people went about with pale and worried faces, and whispered warnings and prophecies which no one dared consciously repeat or acknowledge to himself that he had heard. A sense of monstrous guilt was upon the land ..."

—"Nyarlathotep"





# IV. THE THIRTIES

Suydam's cult invoked Mormo in 1924. Cthulhu briefly awoke in 1925. Yog-Sothoth nearly broke through the barriers twice in 1928. This chapter is about the decade after that, when things got worse.



The “Dirty Thirties,” as the farmers who fled the Dust Bowl called the decade, are still fairly familiar to us. If, as they say, the past is a foreign country, the 1930s are a near neighbor that mostly speaks the same language. Yes, moral codes (at least in public) were vastly different than our looser (or freer) era, and opinion polls record that people then were more optimistic about the future than they are now. They created Mickey Mouse; we created Eric Cartman. They created Superman; we can’t stop trying to kill him.

They listened to the radio, but not in their cars, and went to five times more movies than we do. They smoked like chimneys, drank like longshoremen, and never cursed in front of the ladies. Many more of them danced—as social lubricant and leisure activity—and their dance music (and their dancing) was unmistakably different from ours. Singers sang “standards,” not their own songs, while even middle-class folks bought tailored clothes, not “off the rack.” Food in America and Britain was plain at best; the immigration waves of the post-WWII era had not yet liberated Anglo-Saxon diners from nonstop roast meat and potatoes, with a side of vegetable soup if you were adventurous. (Lovecraft considered himself very daring for

enjoying both spaghetti and chili.) Baseball was the overwhelming American national pastime, and fans attended games in coat and tie. And the Chicago Cubs made it to the World Series three times in the decade.

By and large, Westerners in the 1930s shared our assumptions (or recognizable versions of them) about democracy, science, law, religion, war, and romance. We can read a Lovecraft story, or a Raymond Chandler novel, without the footnotes we need for Shakespeare or even Jane Austen. And most immediately, we can see and hear and immerse ourselves in the Thirties any time we want, by clicking on the Turner Movie Classics network or sorting our Netflix queue by year. We can see Humphrey Bogart, Clark Gable, the Marx Brothers, Marlene Dietrich, Myrna Loy, Jean Harlow, Greta Garbo, William Powell, Errol Flynn, Cary Grant, Carole Lombard, Charles Boyer, and Katharine Hepburn in all their black-and-white glory. The Thirties are right around the corner.

So, that decade full of wars, social turmoil, environmental crisis, poverty, murderous radicals, political deadlock, and cowardice—it turns out that it’s not so far away as it might be. But at least they could dance during it.





# A DESPERATE DECADE

“The time would be easy to know, for then mankind would have become as the Great Old Ones; free and wild and beyond good and evil, with laws and morals thrown aside and all men shouting and killing and revelling in joy. Then the liberated Old Ones would teach them new ways to shout and kill and revel and enjoy themselves, and all the earth would flame with a holocaust of ecstasy and freedom.”

—“The Call of Cthulhu”

This is not one of those historical roleplaying books that tries to compete with Wikipedia. If you need to know the name of the Belgian prime minister in 1931, or who won the Test Match in 1937, the Internet is your friend. There’s way more stuff—interesting stuff—online for any given year in the Thirties than we could cover in a hundred chapters this size. All this section can be, or aims to be, is a filter put over the decade to bring up a backdrop for tales of horror and despair.

## POVERTY

The decade began with the Great Depression, which lasted in all industrialized nations until the coming of full employment with the Second World War. Millions of people went without work, and their families without incomes, for a decade. In the initial 1929 stock collapse, major American industrial firms lost 90% of their value within months. Banks failed, prices plunged, and farmers plowed crops under rather than sell them for less than they cost. U.S. unemployment overtopped 30% by 1930, and remained above 15% for the remainder of the decade, spiking again in 1938 at nearly 20%. Family incomes—those that kept any income at all—plummeted by 40%.

In Britain, unemployment averaged 20%, but was far worse (70%+) in the industrial north. In Germany, the tottering economy did not utterly crash, but the shocks wiped out the last vestige of trust in the Weimar Republic’s competence, and empowered Germany’s political jackals. Everywhere, breadwinners lost their homes,

entrepreneurs lost their businesses, and workers lost their dignity to piecework, make-work, and handouts. Resurgent unions saved some jobs, but slammed the factory gates hard against the jobless. Desperate men turned to crime, to suicide, to radical politics ... to anything that promised a way out.

The crash devastated the wealthy countries of the world, which weren’t all that wealthy by our standards even before the blow hit. In 1929, nearly three-quarters of American families didn’t make “a decent standard of living,” meaning \$2,500 a year (around \$46,000 a year in 2024 dollars). Only about a quarter of Americans owned telephones. At most a fifth of them owned cars. But overall, Americans (and Londoners) had the highest standard of living in the world of the Thirties; Germany, France, and the rest of Britain were about 75% as rich. Italians made only half of what Americans did, and Japanese and Russians about a third of the American income level. In the (often deliberately looted or immiserated) colonies, of course, poverty was as endemic as it ever was in the Dark Ages; India’s per capita wealth was barely a tenth that of America’s.

## FAMINE

And it was in those subject territories that people starved. In the great cities of the West, although there was hunger aplenty, there was no mass starvation. (About 300 people starved to death in New York City in 1931.) Even the horrific “Dust Bowl,” that saw black soot fall like apocalypse snow in New York and Chicago, that uprooted nearly 3 million people from the Great Plains, didn’t result in bodies bulldozed into pits or skeletal figures dying fly-bite by fly-bite.

But in African and Asian colonies, their economies twisted by commodity farming and then smashed by shrunk trade, there were spot famines and miseries aplenty. In Japan, drought struck rice farmers while silk-weavers lost their overseas markets. Africa and India were spared drought, but the wet weather worked its own evil in China, which lost 2 million to drought from 1928–1930. The Yellow River floods of 1931 killed between 1 and 4 million people, and affected a quarter of the country. The Yangtze River flooded in July 1935; with a death toll of

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## HEADLINE NEWS

*This is not intended to be a full-on chronology, but to put a few key dates into line. For fine detail work, look to Google.*

### 1929

U.S. stock-market crash (Oct. 29) precipitates global Depression.

### 1930

Stalin begins forced collectivization of Soviet farms (Jan. 5). Clyde Tombaugh discovers Yuggoth, which he names Pluto (Feb. 18). Mohandas Gandhi begins "salt march" civil disobedience campaign in India (Mar. 12). Judge Crater vanishes (Aug. 6). Ras Tafari crowned Emperor Haile Selassie of Abyssinia (Nov. 2); Rastafarian movement burgeons in Jamaica in response.

### 1931

Jewish terror group Irgun founded in Palestine (Apr. 10). Empire State Building opens (May 1). Yellow River floods, killing 1-2 million in China. Japan invades (Sep. 19) and occupies Manchuria. Lucky Luciano begins building national organized crime syndicate; Al Capone convicted of tax evasion (Oct. 17).

### 1932

In "the Crime of the Century," Charles Lindbergh's baby is kidnapped (Mar. 2). Death of Charles Fort (May 3). President Doumer of France assassinated (May 7). Troops disperse the "Bonus Army" of 17,000 veterans in Washington, D.C. (Jul. 28). Japan begins germ warfare experiments in Manchuria. Stalin begins terror-famine in Ukraine. Babe Ruth hits his "called shot" in Wrigley Field (Oct. 1). Franklin D. Roosevelt elected President of the U.S. in a landslide (Nov. 8).

### 1933

U.S. Marines withdraw from Nicaragua (Jan. 2). Adolf Hitler becomes Chancellor of Germany (Jan. 30). Anarchist attempts to assassinate FDR in Miami (Feb. 15). Scottsboro Boys convicted (Apr. 9). Chicago

World's Fair. Autobahn construction begins. Albert Einstein emigrates to America, begins work at Princeton (Oct. 17). Prohibition repealed in U.S. (Dec. 5).

### 1934

Gold Reserve Act makes private possession of gold illegal in U.S. (Jan. 31). Loch Ness Monster photographed (Apr. 19). "Night of the Long Knives" (Jun. 30) purge of the SA in Germany. FBI guns down John Dillinger (Jul. 22). Nazis assassinate Austrian chancellor Engelbert Dolfuss (Jul. 25). U.S. Marines withdraw from Haiti (Aug. 15). Switzerland enacts bank secrecy laws. King Alexander I of Yugoslavia assassinated (Oct. 9). Mao begins his "Long March" in China (Oct. 16). Stalin rival Sergei Kirov assassinated in Leningrad (Dec. 1).

### 1935

Twenty simultaneous "Black Blizzards" mark the height of the Dust Bowl (Apr. 14). Miskatonic University archaeological expedition to Australian Outback. Social Security enacted in U.S. (Aug. 14). Will Rogers and Wiley Post die in Alaska plane crash (Aug. 16). Louisiana Senator Huey Long assassinated (Sep. 8). Italy invades Abyssinia (Oct. 2).

### 1936

George V dies; Edward VIII becomes King (Jan. 20). Germany remilitarizes the Rhineland (Mar. 7). The Pittsburgh Flood kills 70 and destroys 100,000 buildings (Mar. 17). Franco's mutiny begins Spanish Civil War (Jul. 17). Stalin begins purges and show trials of Politburo and Red Army. Boulder Dam (Hoover Dam now) is completed (Oct. 9). Paul Robeson's version of "Gloomy Sunday" released. FDR re-elected (Nov. 3). King Edward VIII abdicates to marry a divorced commoner; George VI becomes King (Dec. 11).

### 1937

German planes flying for Franco bomb Guernica in Spain (Apr. 26).



Germany establishes rocket program at Peenemünde. Crash of the Hindenburg (May 6). Amelia Earhart vanishes over the Pacific (Jul. 2). Japan begins new war on China (Jul. 7); Rape of Nanking (Dec. 13). Marijuana becomes illegal in U.S. (Aug. 2).

1938

Mexico nationalizes oil fields (Mar. 18). Ruined Maya city of Caracol discovered. Italian physicist Ettore Majorana disappears from a ferry in the Bay of Naples (Mar. 26). Route 66 completely paved. German government confiscates “degenerate art” (Jun. 3). Bluesman Robert Johnson poisoned (Aug. 16). Great New England Hurricane (Sep. 21) hits Providence, R.I. Germany annexes

Austria (Mar. 12); Munich Conference sells out Czechoslovakia to Hitler (Sep. 30). Orson Welles broadcasts modernized War of the Worlds on the radio (Oct. 30). “Kristallnacht” pogrom in Germany (Nov. 9). Living coelacanth discovered off Madagascar (Dec. 22).

1939

Franco’s victory ends the Spanish Civil War (Mar. 28). New York World’s Fair. First nylon stockings hit the market. Semyon Kirlian develops Kirlian “aura photography.” Nazca Lines discovered in Peru. Nazi-Soviet Pact divides Eastern Europe between two empires (Aug. 23). Germany invades Poland (Sep. 1); WWII begins in Europe (Sep. 3).

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145,000, it killed twice as many as the Kansu earthquake, the decade’s deadliest: 70,000 dead on Dec. 25th. Drought then returned to China, sparking the “New Famine” of 1936, with 5 million dead.

Worst of all, in 1932-1933, Stalin’s terror-famine intentionally starved 7 million of his own people to death in the name of socialism and collective farming. Cannibalism ran rampant as farm families (in a blackly ironic final acceptance of collectivism) ate each others’ children. The OGPU blocked the roads, turned back relief trucks, sent troops to loot food from peasant granaries, and piled 5 million corpses into mass graves in Ukraine.

WAR

The world spent the 1920s hoping that the 20 million soldiers and civilians killed in the Great War of 1914-1918 would be the high-water mark of the century’s deaths. It spent the Thirties preparing to drown that mark in blood. As with Famine, War rode hardest across China this decade. The Japanese invasion and conquest of Manchuria (renamed Manchukuo) killed 60,000 people. The Chinese Civil War during that period, by contrast, killed 20 times that number of soldiers alone. Nationalists, Communists, and warlords together extinguished another 2 million lives in reprisals and civilian slaughter, carrying out a squalid, primitive struggle amidst

the alternately flooded and parched fields of what was once the richest country on Earth. When the Japanese resumed their conquest of China in 1937, they opened with the wholesale massacre of everyone they could find in Nanking, the Nationalist capital. The 300,000 dead in the “Rape of Nanking” were a grim installment on the eventual Japanese slaughter of 1.2 million Chinese civilians through 1939, and touched off a further 1.3 million “incidental” deaths from typhus, cholera, and war-related starvation. The Nationalist resistance was no better, killing 1.6 million Chinese for collaboration or political crimes, or simply to deny their labor to the invader. Following the Long March away from the battle front, Mao’s Communists sat this phase of the war out, killing under 100,000 civilians.

By contrast, the “rehearsal war” in Spain was practically civilized, with its ideologically-driven rapine and firing squads. It served as a practice ground for the expansionist totalitarians: Soviet tanks defended—and looted—the Republican government, and faced off against the Italian artillery and German bombers that put iron in the gloves of Franco’s Nationalist troops. Approximately 100,000 soldiers died on each side, including 25,000 foreign fighters from the fascist Condor Legion to the communist International Brigades. Both Franco and the Republicans committed tens of thousands of political executions—the “necessary murder” in Auden’s poem—and another 50,000 Spaniards died of apolitical hunger and germs. In a dark





## THE CRAWLING ORDER: TOTALITARIANISM

"No trials, or even definite charges were reported; nor were any of the captives seen thereafter in the regular gaols of the nation. There were vague statements about disease and concentration camps, and later about dispersal in various naval and military prisons, but nothing positive ever developed.... Complaints from many liberal organizations were met with long confidential discussions, and representatives were taken on trips to certain camps and prisons. As a result, these societies became surprisingly passive and reticent."

### —"The Shadow Over Innsmouth"

Perhaps the most terrifying thing about the 1930s is this: virtually every intellectual and political observer of the time believed at one point or another that the future was going to be written by Hitler or by Stalin, and they chose sides accordingly. Lovecraft began as a fan of Hitler, and converted late in life to supporting a sort of dirigiste collectivist technocracy. (His description of the Yithians' civilization as "a kind of fascistic socialism" is not intended horrifically.) The rise of Cthulhu in the secret places of the world mirrors the rise of totalitarianism, not merely in overseas labor camps from Dachau to Vorkuta, but in the salons and soirees of New York and London. This provides *Trail of Cthulhu* games not merely an endless supply of potential bad guys, but a potentially powerful thematic element as well. But using totalitarianism for either purpose runs a few risks, and implies a few choices.

The first possible direction is the one taken by F. Paul Wilson's novel *The Keep*, in which a rabbi and an SS commandant must ally to battle an inhuman monster. In this approach, the horror of the Mythos is such that it overwhelms all human politics, and one can assume that "right-thinking" agents of the NKVD and the Gestapo would agree. This raises the unsettling possibility that the actual best, most workable solution to the

interpenetration of humanity by Cthulhoid horror is the one followed in "The Shadow Over Innsmouth," and one that anti-Mythos Investigators in Berlin, Moscow, Rome, Tokyo, or Madrid would reflexively follow: concentration camps, secret prisons, and (one presumes) mass graves somewhere desolate. Forcing players to make—or even accede knowingly to—such choices should be done with their buy-in and appropriate safety tools, if at all.

Of course, this knowledge alone—that their governments have decided to use such tactics—may be enough to keep some player groups conveniently reluctant to call in the FBI or the Special Branch. Another method of seeding this dramatically useful distrust is to imply that at least some elements in some human governments are attempting to harness the Mythos for themselves. This can be a sort of "Arkham Project" scenario, in which the bureaucrats don't actually know or care what they unleash, or an implication of spreading, viral cultism as interrogators discover just what kind of powers (and what kind of Powers) their prisoners had access to.

This approach is reinforced if the GM chooses to go the "Indiana Jones" direction, in which evil Nazis (or Commies) are hunting the living idol Chaugnar Faugn or searching for the ruins of Commorion in the Greenland ice sheet, and the bold Investigators must beat them to it and stop them. After all, why would Hitler's goons be looking for the Necronomicon, if not to use its powers to fuel the blitzkrieg? This makes both narrative sense—if the powers of the Mythos exist, surely people as bent as the Nazis would be looking into it—and dramatic sense—Stalin is evil and dangerous, Yog-Sothoth is evil and dangerous, bingo. But it runs the risk of sliding into "Nyarlathotep invented the Nazis," or worse yet "Nyarlathotep magicked the Nazis into being so evil." This trivializes the decade's human history of genocide and oppression, turns real living atrocities into pulp supervillainy, and lets us all off the hook.

It also makes the story boring and predictable—all the anti-fascists must be anti-Cthulhu, too! Keep in mind that in real history, most of the anti-fascists were devoted



servants of an ideology every bit as inhuman and murderous, and even the “good guys” got into bed with Hitler and Stalin when it suited them. If you’re going to mix the Mythos and politics, try to at least occasionally look at the

story from the perspective of cults and gods to whom the entire human race are insects, and to whom Gandhi and Tojo are both indistinguishable mayflies—or potential tools.



foreshadowing of things to come, German bombs killed 10,000 Spanish civilians from the air. Air superiority, Soviet selfishness, and Franco’s considerable strategic skill ended the war with fascism victorious.

Fascism also won in Libya, as Italy defeated Senusi rebels in 1930–1932, and Abyssinia, where 400,000 died to make Mussolini master of the upper Nile. War spread across South America,

too. Beginning in 1932, Western mercenaries honed their craft fighting the Chaco War across the endless sawgrass plains between Bolivia and Paraguay for a fortune in oil. When a 1935 military coup in Bolivia left Paraguay the final winner by default, 100,000 South Americans were dead. There didn’t turn out to be any oil in the Chaco after all.

# THE NIGHTMARE COUNTRIES

“Seekers after horror haunt strange, far places. For them are the catacombs of Ptolemaïs, and the carven mausolea of the nightmare countries.”

—“The Picture in the House”

This section gives brief views of various locations around the world of the Thirties. More mundane details, both historical and geographical, are available online or in other references. We especially recommend period travel guides, such as Baedeker’s or Cook’s, as well as the Federal Writers’ Project guides for the U.S., although even modern-day tourist guidebooks like the Lonely Planet series have astonishing amounts of useful game information.

With that said, we focus primarily on the needs of the Mythos tourist. The Cthulhu Mythos section in the entries indicates both ongoing Cthulhoid activity, and rumors that Investigators with ratings in Cthulhu Mythos might well have come across in one or another moldering tome or nightmarish vision.

## ABYSSINIA

Despite the Italian conquest in 1935-1936, unrest continues in the mountains of the south and the

deserts to the east. Entering Abyssinia after that period requires Italian permission, or a lengthy and dangerous covert overland journey from British East Africa. Edmund Kiss, a novelist and mystic attached to the Ahnenerbe, mounts an expedition to the highlands in search of fragments of the “second moon” and Lemurian ruins in 1936.

The Abyssinian royal family traces its descent from the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon. A church in Axum supposedly holds the Ark of the Covenant, brought here by Solomon’s son Menelik.

**Cthulhu Mythos:** Coptic monasteries here hold records of certain lineages supposedly descended from Irem via the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon. The Book of Enoch is only the best-known work of occult lore to be discovered here.

The necromancer who signed himself “M” corresponded with Joseph Curwen in Amharic, the language of Abyssinia, and may keep a cult or laboratory there.

## ANTARCTICA

U.S. Admiral Richard E. Byrd mounted an aerial survey of Antarctica in 1928–1930 from a base on the Ross Ice Shelf. In 1929, he overflew the

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South Pole. In 1933–1935, he mounts a second expedition, and nearly goes mad after spending five months completely alone at “Advance Base” in 1934.

Two British expeditions (1929–1931 and 1934–1937) explore and claim portions of the continent. Alfred Ritscher heads a German expedition to Queen Maud Land in 1939, renames it “Neuschwabenland” and claims it for Germany with air-dropped swastika markers.

**Cthulhu Mythos:** The Miskatonic University Dyer-Lake Expedition of 1930–1931 discovers a primordial city of the Elder Things and a previously (and since) unknown mountain range they surveyed at 35,000 feet. The mountains’ failure to appear on later surveys implies that Dyer may have unwittingly entered a parallel plane, possibly Dho-Hna, Leng, or Kadath in the Cold Waste.

## BELGIAN CONGO

Less of a ravaged wasteland in the 1930s than during the genocidal “Congo Free State” period of direct Belgian royal control, slavery and the occasional massacre still keep the Congo’s rubber and copper coming. The 25,000 square miles of jungle in the colony remain essentially impassable to whites outside the river valleys.

**Cthulhu Mythos:** The nightmare of Belgian rule sparked a millenarian cult of Nyarlathotep here in the 1880s; though stanchied in 1902, it may yet flourish back beyond the Mbuti country.

The last of the Anziku or Anziques, a mysterious tribe of cannibal magicians with a peculiarly Caucasian appearance, fled into the Belgian Congo from the French Congo in the early 1870s.

Sir Wade Jermyn in the 1730s, and Samuel Seaton in the 1840s, reported the discovery of a grey city of white apes in the Onga and Kaliri country.

## BRAZIL

The populist President Getúlio Vargas, elected in 1930, increasingly models his government on dictatorial lines. Brazil’s openly fascist Integralist “Green Shirt” movement (popular with the 1 million Brazilians of German extraction) battles Communist agitators in the streets until 1938, when Vargas bans all paramilitary bodies, having seized openly fascist control himself by means of a new constitution in 1937.

The psychic channeler and healer Zelio de Moraes founded Umbanda, a blend of Spiritualism and Macumba (the traditional Afro-Brazilian religion similar to Vodou) in 1920; by 1938 it has centered itself in the white and mestizo Rio de Janeiro middle- and upper-class. It involves spirit communication with the caboclos, or “Those Who Come From The Forest,” and the *pretos velhos*, the “Old Slaves.”

Brazil is the site of two Tunguska-style events this decade: the upper Rio Curacá valley in 1930, and the Rupununi region on the border of British Guiana in 1935.

Future Ahnenerbe asset Edmund Kiss explored the Amazon delta in 1928. Obersturmführer-SS Otto Schulz-Kampffhenkel mounts a zoological and botanical expedition to the Jari River between 1935 and 1937 that also films shamanic rituals and searches for El Dorado.

**Cthulhu Mythos:** The explorer Percy Fawcett disappeared into the Brazilian interior in 1925 searching for the lost city of Muribeca with a mysterious basalt idol he identified as Atlantean.

## BURMA

Burma is part of the British-controlled Empire of India. The Galon rebellion, named after the giant serpent-killing Burmese magical bird (similar to India’s Garuda) breaks out after earthquakes rock Pegu and Pyu in October 1930. A tattooed blond fortune-teller named Saya San proclaims himself Bird King of Burma, and channels spirits





to possess his soldiers. He uses astrology, sorcery, and alchemy as weapons of war; the British hang him and his followers in 1932.

**Cthulhu Mythos:** “Lightning from the stars” reputedly destroyed the Tcho-Tcho city of Ai-lao-zhar on the Plateau of Singu in 1906; records surfaced in 1934 casting doubt upon the completeness of that destruction. The Plateau of Singu remains a source of the potent black lotus, which has power over dreams, death, and madness.

This may be connected to the cult of Ghatanothoa in Burma.

## EASTER ISLAND

An island territory governed by the Chilean Navy, Easter Island is most famous for its enigmatic moai statues. They face inland; 887 are known. Between 1770 and 1838, the islanders toppled all the moai from their plinths, usually onto their faces.

In 1932, Hungarian engineer Guillaume de Hevesy proposes a kinship between the undeciphered rongo-rongo script of Easter Island and the undeciphered alphabet of pre-Aryan Mohenjo-Daro in India.

**Cthulhu Mythos:** Easter Island is the closest land to the location indicated (47°9' S by 126°43' W) in the “Johansen Narrative” as the site of Cthulhu’s sunken city R’lyeh.

## EGYPT

Technically independent of British control under its King Fuad I (succeeded by his son Farouk after 1936), Egypt resents continued British control over its military and operation of the Suez Canal. German, Italian, and Soviet agents have their own networks of dissatisfied religious leaders, ambitious junior officers, and smugglers in Cairo, Alexandria, and Port Said. The trade in illicit artifacts, mummies, and papyri thrives despite official condemnation and suppression;

### MORE DEPRESSING READING

If you’re looking for more setting material on the 1930s, here is a short list of non-fiction resources.

*Since Yesterday*, by **Frederick Lewis Allen**, is a popular history of the 1930s in America written in 1941, which makes it even more useful for Thirties storytelling. More conventional, more global, and far more depressing, is *The Dark Valley: A Panorama of the 1930s*, by **Piers Brendon**.

The quad-fecta of depressing are *Berlin Diary* by **William L. Shirer**, *The Great Terror* by **Robert Conquest**, *The Rape of Nanking* by **Iris Chang**, and *Homage to Catalonia* by **George Orwell**, which are respectively: a first-person reminiscence of Hitler’s Germany, historical unveilings of Stalin’s purges and Japanese atrocities, and a savage memoir by the Thirties’ greatest writer of the waste that was the Spanish Civil War.

**Streetwise** will allow Investigators to connect with willing sellers.

Major Egyptologists with excavations and digs in the 1930s include: Pierre Montet at Tanis (1929–1940), John Pendlebury at Akhetaten (1930–1936), Jean-Philippe Lauer at Saqqara (1926–1936), Günther Roeder at Hermopolis (1929–1939), and Fr. Hermann Junker at Giza (1925–1939). (Weird freelance scholars also study various monuments and sites, such as the fascist French mystic René Guénon at Cairo and the Theosophist E.A. Schwaller de Lubicz at Luxor.) Harvard, Miskatonic, the British Museum, and the German Archaeological Institute (DAI) maintain active presences throughout the country. Obtaining dig permission requires academic tenure, affiliation with an approved organization, and at least a 1-point **Bureaucracy** spend.

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**Cthulhu Mythos:** At least two cults of Nyarlathotep worshippers active in Egypt claim descent from Nephren-Ka: the politically active 'Ikhwan al-Firawn al-Aswad in Cairo and the dilettantish Children of the Sphinx in Alexandria. The Kuriô Sthoures Sophia (Church of Stellar Wisdom) in Luxor descends from the Coptic diggers of Hadoth employed by Enoch Bowen in 1844.

Maxlan al-Wahsh, a Bedouin cult, worships the monstrous Thing dwelling under the Pyramids, and one of Ghatanothoa's surviving cults lurks in Upper Egypt.

Egypt also boasts masqut and mummies, a remnant tribe of serpent-folk in the Nile marshes, and an immense ghoulish colony in Cairo's City of the Dead.

Necromancers and other would-be wizards haunt the library of Al-Azhar and the Egyptian Museum. Abdul Alhazred spent time beneath the ruins of ancient Memphis south of Cairo, perhaps seeking the catacombs of Nephren-Ka.

See **Tomb-Hounds of Egypt** (p. XX) for more Egyptian horror, intrigue, and archaeology.

## GERMANY

Once he becomes Chancellor in January 1933, Hitler rapidly consolidates dictatorial power. Jewish Investigators, even those from America or Britain, find conditions here increasingly hostile as the decade progresses. Refugees fleeing Germany are often forced to sell their belongings—including libraries and ancestral artifacts—for a fraction of their value.

The Nazis hold their first devastating book-burning (at which many “decadent” works might be dangerously salvaged) on May 10, 1933. The Nazis ban Freemasonry for Wehrmacht personnel in May 1934, and begin their crack-down on rival secret societies thereafter. By 1935, Crowley's OTO, the Theosophical Society, the Golden Dawn, and the Brotherhood of Saturn (among other magical societies) have all been banned, and their libraries and ritual

paraphernalia seized by the RSHA Amt VII B, a division of the SS.

**Cthulhu Mythos:** A forgotten Great Old One manifests one night a year on a bald hill in the Harz Mountains, surrounded by five or seven monoliths that Dostmann describes as impossibly-eroded owl statues. If the statues are removed, its prison opens and its Name will return to human memory.

German scholars in the 19th century such as von Junzt, Dostmann, and Mülder uncovered vast amounts of Mythos material, which likely rests in university libraries at Cologne, Frankfurt, Vienna, or Berlin.

None of it rests in the University Library of Ingolstadt, which the Elector of Bavaria closed down in 1800 following the exposure of the University's Illuminati group in 1785 and the experiments of Victor Frankenstein in the 1790s. Tracking those records under the nose of the Ahnenerbe proves quite the challenge for academic Investigators.

## GREENLAND

Norway and Denmark dispute jurisdiction over this ice-covered island until a 1933 ruling by the Permanent Court of International Justice awards it to Denmark.

Although the Ahnenerbe has plans to visit the island, which it identifies with the mystical Aryan homeland of Thule, it succeeds only in mounting the Otto Rahn and Bruno Schweizer expeditions to Iceland in 1936 and 1938.

**Cthulhu Mythos:** Professor William Channing Webb, while searching (unsuccessfully) for runic inscriptions, stumbled upon a cult of Cthulhu-worshipping Sarquaq tribespeople in high West Greenland in 1860.

The glaciers of Greenland conceal the lost civilization of Hyperborea, and its successive capitals Commoriom and Uzuldaroum. Fanes of Tsathoggua, remains of the prehuman Voorii, and the fearsome gnoph-keh dot the tundra.





# HAITI

The United States winds down its two-decade occupation of Haiti, withdrawing completely in 1934. The Americans have eliminated banditry and aroused much resentment with their attempts to suppress Vodou, a religion resurging in popularity as times remain hard.

Journalist William Seabrook’s 1929 book on Haiti, *The Magic Island*, spread knowledge of zombies and voodoo in general (which he differentiates from ouanga, or malevolent magic) to the outside world.

**Cthulhu Mythos:** Some Yig-cultists worship their deity as the Crawler of Midnight, considering him an aspect of the Vodou serpent loa Damballah Wedo.

Some cultists worship Cthulhu as Agwe, the underwater Vodou loa. Cult activity in Haiti generally increases at times of increased Cthulhoid dream-sendings or similar activity; a major spike occurred in 1925.

See **GUMSHOE Zooms Voodoo 1—Magic, and Voodoo 2—The Invisibles** for more on Vodou magic, spells, and the mysterious loas.

# LOUISIANA

The populist crusader Huey Long, “the Kingfish,” was elected governor of Louisiana in 1928, and served simultaneously as governor and U.S. senator during 1931–1932. His hand-picked successor, Oscar Kelley Allen, succeeded him as governor, freeing Long to spend all his time in the Senate building a national constituency for radical reform. His opponents, including FDR, called him a fascist; his 1935 assassination curtails his plan to run against Roosevelt in 1936. His brother Earl Long inherits the Kingfish’s machine, and serves as governor from 1937 to 1939.

Among the major Voodoo doctors and queens in New Orleans during this decade are Mother Catherine Seal (of the Manger of True Light), Father James Joseph (of Jerusalem Temple

Baptist Church), Luke Turner (nephew of the great Voodoo queen Marie Laveau), and Laure Hopkins, a.k.a. Madame LaLa.

Beginning in 1935, the archaeologist Clarence H. Webb excavates Native American mounds at Poverty Point in the northern part of the state.

**Cthulhu Mythos:** In 1907, New Orleans police inspector John Raymond LeGrasse led a major raid into the bayou country to break up a cult of Cthulhu worshippers. Among the discoveries left unplumbed were a white polypous avatar of Cthulhu in a bayou lake.

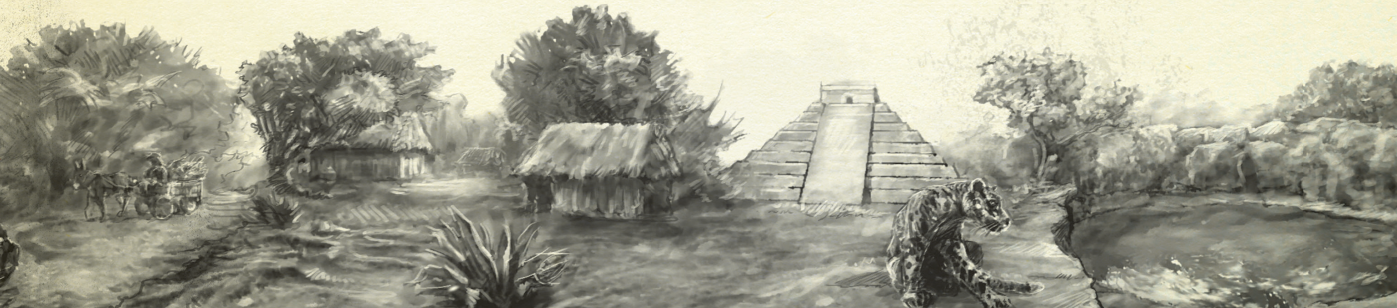
The Creole occultist, mathematician, and student of Asian antiquities Étienne-Laurent de Marigny (the executor of Randolph Carter’s estate) leads a group of magical adepts known as the Casket Crewe in New Orleans. One of his many correspondents, an Indian yogi, sent him his coffin-shaped, four-handed clock, decorated with unknown hieroglyphics.

# MEXICO

Mexico’s Revolution officially ended in 1920, followed by quasi-dictatorial rule by Generals Obregon and Calles, punctuated by Catholic Church-backed “Cristero” rebellions, until 1929. (The Mayan insurgency in eastern Yucatan continues until 1935.) Installed as President in 1934, General Lázaro Cárdenas exiles his patron Calles in 1936 and nationalizes the Mexican petroleum industry in 1938, earning the enmity of American oil companies. Cárdenas crushes a fascist uprising in San Luis Potosí state in 1939, and welcomes political exiles from Franco’s Spain.

American tourists, scholars, and artists travel through nearly every corner of Mexico. In Tijuana, movie stars, gamblers, and gangsters flock to the swanky Agua Caliente resort, closed down and expropriated by Cárdenas in 1937. Former US Office of Naval Intelligence agent Sylvanus Morley excavates Chichen Itza (1924–1940). American Museum of Natural History curator George Vaillant digs in several

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sites including Teotihuacán and Texcoco (1928–1936).

**Cthulhu Mythos:** Residents of the Tlaxcala hill country still worship Xtulotl-Tlaloc, Yog-Sototl-Huitzilopochtli, and Xatocuha-Tlaltecuhltli, meeting in a cave on the side of the Sierra La Malinche volcano. Similarly, the cult of Yig as Kukulcan dominates certain isolated Mayan villages.

## MONGOLIA

Once the center of a vast empire stretching from Burma to Hungary, this Communist country and its neighbor Tannu-Tuva have been Soviet client states since 1921. In that year, the Red Army captured and executed the “Mad Baron” von Ungern-Sternberg, who believed himself to be the “King of the World” prophesied to emerge from Inner Asia in certain arcane Buddhist texts.

Between 1920 and 1930, the paleontologist Roy Chapman Andrews mounted several expeditions into the Gobi Desert searching for dinosaur eggs and skeletons. He may also have been working as an agent for U.S. Naval Intelligence during that time.

The occultist, mystic, and painter Nicholas Roerich explored Mongolia during his 1925–1928 Asian trek, and again in 1934–1935 on a mission (ostensibly to gather drought-resistant plant specimens) from U.S. Secretary of Agriculture (and future Vice-President) Henry Wallace.

**Cthulhu Mythos:** During warmer, wetter ages, Mongolia was the center of a vast primordial empire (known to Theosophists as the “Uighur” or “Naga” Empire) that rivaled Mu. That empire may have vanished from space-time entirely, existing solely on some other vibratory plane.

Other texts hold that Mongolia once held the Lake of Hali and that Carcosa manifested there when Hastur ruled on Earth. Its shadow remains as the ruined city of Khara-Khoto in Inner Mongolia.

The Lemurians built the city of Shamballah 50 million years ago. It still exists behind walls of psychic force, possibly in eastern Mongolia.

The connection between these two legends, and between either vanished city and the Russian legend of Belovodye (“The White Lake”) remains unknown.

The red-robed Tchortchas of the Mongolian-Thibetan border country defend the lamasery of Yian-Ho in Sinkiang with ferocity and the “Song of Thirty Thousand Calamities.”

## PERU

Following a military coup in 1930, Col. Luis Sánchez Cerro serves as president (barring a period in 1931 when leftist revolts by an anti-imperialist group, APRA, forced him from office) until his assassination on April 30, 1933. His successor, Oscar Benavides, bans APRA and the Communists. Benavides battles strikes and leftist mobs, remaining in power (despite losing the 1936 election) until 1939. Undeclared border wars break out with Colombia in 1932 and Ecuador in 1938.

Hiram Bingham’s “discovery” of Machu Picchu in 1911 rekindled interest in Peruvian archaeology and Andean archaeology generally. Among those interested is the mystic Edmund Kiss, who explores Lake Titicaca and Tihuanaco in neighboring Bolivia in 1928–1929. Kiss plans to return to Peru for the Ahnenerbe in 1940.

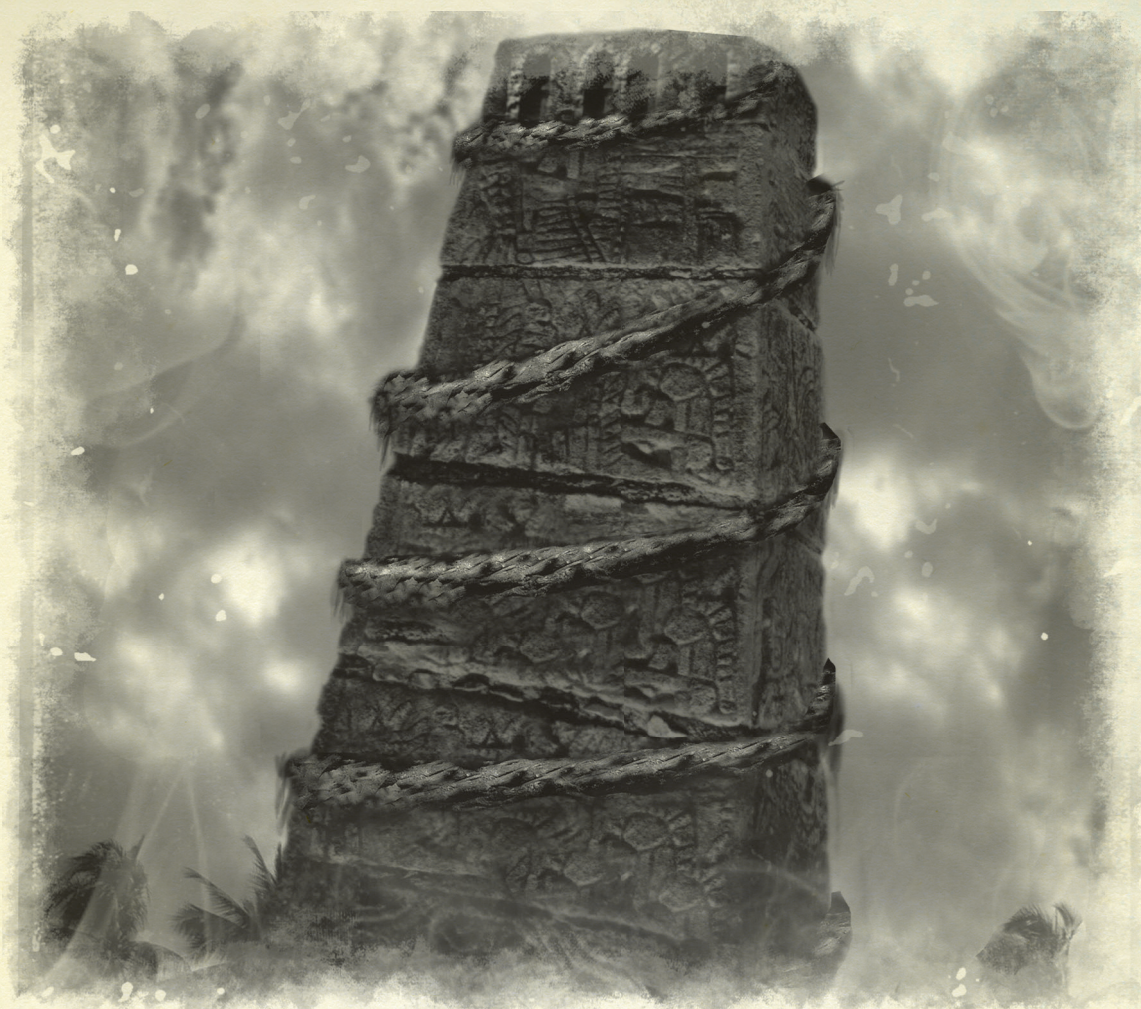
**Cthulhu Mythos:** A major Cthulhu cult flourishes in the mountain gorges northwest of Cuzco, in the Salapunco region near Machu Picchu. The cultists identify Cthulhu with the Incan (and pre-Incan) god Viracocha, the “power of the water,” who destroyed and re-created the world only to withdraw to the Pacific, promising to come again.

A cult of Ghatanothoa exists in Peru, according to von Junzt.

San Marco University in Lima reputedly possesses a Greek copy of the Necronomicon.







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## RUMANIA

Bucharest, the “Paris of the Balkans,” roils with intrigue this decade. Under the increasingly dictatorial rule of King Carol II, Rumania has an active fascist underground, known as the Legion of the Archangel Michael. In November 1938, the government executes the leaders of the Legion and crushes its military arm, the Iron Guard.

After the Great War, Rumania annexed Transylvania, formerly a province of Hungary. Hungarian nationalism remains a vexing problem in that region. Dr. Franz Altheim of the Ahnenerbe spends some time searching for ancient Dacian ruins in Rumania in August 1938.

**Cthulhu Mythos:** In October 1928, a titanic explosion destroyed Castle Ferenczy in Transylvania, long a rumored plague spot of Yog-Sothoth worship and cult activity. Did any artifacts—or Ferenczys—survive?

According to occult legend, the “Scholomance,” the Devil’s School, exists beneath the waters of a lake south of Hermannstadt (Sibiu) in Transylvania. Its rumored pupils include Johann Faust and Count Dracula. It may contain a spawn or avatar of Hastur or Cthulhu.

A black monolith in the Banat province of southwestern Rumania offers visions of a fantastic antediluvian antiquity to sensitive dreamers who sleep beneath it on Midsummer Eve.







A cavern beneath the Carpathians leads to the underground tomb of Nyogtha, That Which Should Not Be. (Other caverns of Nyogtha lie under Syria, Indo-China, Chinese Turkestan, New Zealand, and Salem, Massachusetts.)

## SAUDI ARABIA

Under its founding king, Abdul-Aziz Ibn Saud, Saudi Arabia consolidated its control over the Arabian peninsula in a series of wars between 1924 and 1932. A war with Yemen in 1934 reduces that country to vassal status, leaving only the British colony at Aden (and to a lesser extent, the British protectorates along the Gulf coast) outside Ibn Saud's will. Non-Muslims are forbidden to enter Mecca, and need special permission from the King to travel to the Arabian interior.

Unproductive searches for oil continue until a strike at Dharan in 1938. Thanks to Ibn Saud's traitorous British advisor St. John Philby (whose son Kim is recruited by the OGPU in 1934), that oil concession goes to the American Standard-Texaco combine of Aramco. Philby also explores the Rub al-Khali or "Empty Quarter" in 1932 searching for the lost city of Irem, and spends much of the decade negotiating with Germany and Spain to supply Gulf oil to the German Wehrmacht.

**Cthulhu Mythos:** The site of Irem of the Pillars, in the Crimson Desert, is a pilgrimage location for wizards, necromancers, and members of the Great Race of Yith. In some fashion, it sits on the Border of space and time themselves, with the Hand carved above its gates grasping for the Silver Key. Beneath Irem lie twin shrines to Nug and Yeb.

Irem is also near the "Nameless City," the home of the masqut. According to various sources, the Nameless City is a fane of Hastur, while Irem is the center of the Cthulhu cult.

## SOUTH PACIFIC MANDATE

Comprising the Marshall, Caroline, and Mariana Islands (except the American territory of Guam), the League of Nations turned the "South Pacific Mandate" over to Japan after the Great War. Beginning in 1934, Japan fortifies Truk, the "Gibraltar of the Pacific," as well as Saipan, Tinian, Palau, and Yap. The Japanese government consequently closes the Mandate area to foreigners.

During this period, the Japanese Navy's "Strike South Group" sponsors archaeological expeditions from Taihoku Imperial University that discover giant human bones and hieroglyphically inscribed wooden fragments on Ponape and Kusaie.

**Cthulhu Mythos:** The megalithic masonry of Nan-Matol on Ponape descends from Mu, or perhaps even further back. Nan-Matol was the seat of the sorcerous Chau-te-leur, who ruled the island for centuries. It remains sacred to worshipers of Cthulhu and Dagon, with a major Deep One city beneath the Pacific somewhere in the Caroline Islands.

## SOVIET UNION

Stalin rules the Soviet Union with purges, terror, and famine. The Gulag system of slave-labor camps and colonies, run by the OGPU (which becomes the NKVD in 1934), escalates unchecked during this decade, from 200,000 prisoners in 1931 to 1.1 million in 1935 to 1.65 million in 1939.

The official ideology of the Soviet Union rejects supernatural belief, including belief in the Mythos, which means that any number of shamans, priests, or cultists might be slowly starving to death while digging a canal through the permafrost or mining gold in Siberia. However, the influential "socialist realist" writer Maxim Gorky nurtures a small circle of Gnostic philosophers and artists, and remains a firm believer in telepathy, until his mysterious death in 1936.





“White” Russian exiles in Europe and America, like refugees from Germany, may be compelled to sell their heirlooms to the curious.

The Comintern supports artists, musicians, and writers who toe the Stalinist line, which can be an excellent source of income or contacts for Investigators who do likewise.

**Cthulhu Mythos:** The Tunguska explosion of 1908 is rumored to have been a summoning of Azathoth, perhaps by a cult of nihilists in a Czarist Siberian labor camp.

There is a frozen city above the Arctic Circle inhabited by those whom Itla-shua has carried off over the centuries.

## SPAIN

Spanish museums or private collections may hold reed codices, idols, gold artifacts, or other items taken from the Maya, Aztec, or Inca civilizations (as well as books, art, or objects looted by Spanish armies from Italy in the 16th century or Germany in the 17th). Under wartime pressures and privations, those items could be available for the right price, or bold thieves could grab them under cover of a bombing or attack.

Entering the country during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) requires contacts among German or Italian arms-dealers (to enter Nationalist-held territory, via Seville) or the Comintern (to enter Republican territory, via Barcelona or Cartagena). Either sort of contact exposes Investigators to imprisonment or execution by the other side (or to purges by Soviet agents in either case).

**Cthulhu Mythos:** The former temple of Chaugnar Faugn, in the Pyrenees, may yet hold unsavory lore.

Adolf Schulten’s theory that the Spanish city of Tartessos (now submerged offshore north of Cadiz) was the original Atlantis may actually derive from the Deep One colonies in those waters.

## THIBET

The 13th incarnation of the Dalai Lama dies in 1933, and the new avatar is not born until 1935 and not enthroned until 1940. During the interim, the Reting Rinpoche, a powerful lama, heads the country. James Hilton’s 1933 novel *Lost Horizon* popularizes the myth of Shambhala, or Shangri-La, and associates it with Thibet.

Thibet has no motor vehicles and no airstrips; travel is by foot or on animal back. Entering Thibet through India requires British permission or subterfuge. Entering the country across China requires a great deal of luck or fortitude.

The American naturalist Brooke Dolan heads two expeditions to Thibet in 1931 and 1934-1935. Among his party both times is the ornithologist Ernst Schäfer. In 1939, now-SS Hauptsturmführer Schäfer heads an Ahnenerbe expedition to Thibet with the goal of seeking the primordial Aryans among the lama caste, securing copies of Thibetan holy and magical texts, and biological research.

**Cthulhu Mythos:** Elements of the pre-Buddhist religion of Bön in Thibet bear strong similarities to Mythos teachings and practices. This may be due to its antiquity, or to its geographic (or spiritual) proximity to the blasphemous corpse-eating cult of inaccessible Leng. For example, the Thibetan national epic of King Gesar takes place in the “kingdom of Ling.”

The plateau of Tsang houses Chaugnar Faugn. It also holds a non-human race that worships the sacred powers of plague and pestilence. Tsangka cultists infiltrated the San Francisco medical establishment in 1899, and may have caused the San Francisco black plague outbreak in the following year, along with a number of cases of “black fever” in the prison system.

The mi-go maintain mines and colonies in the Thibetan Himalayas, and their traces have been mistaken for yeti tracks.

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