

The Cthulhu Campaigns

By Mark Latham

Osprey Adventures series (2016)

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Review by Jonathan Aird

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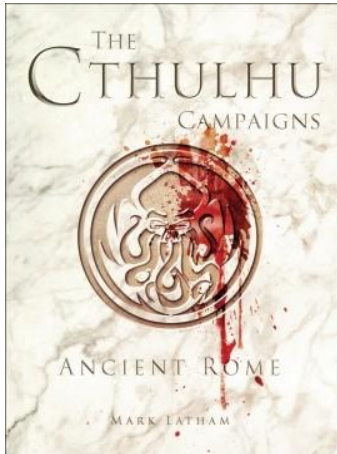
Aegyptus

Mythos Timeline

The fall of the Roman Empire

Comments:

This is not, let's be clear, an historical Osprey ó this entry in the Osprey Adventures series is an alternative history of the Roman Empire which posits that the whole of the history we think we know was in fact an intricate plot by Cthulhu cultists. Starting from the founding of Rome by



brothers who were spawn of Cthulhu, the prime idea of the book is that there was a secret elite priesthood who were covertly running the development of Rome in order to establish the conditions that would enable the awakening of Cthulhu from his long slumber in Rlyeh. In order to do this, they needed to secure ancient scrolls and artefacts jealously guarded by rival religions, which were also fronts for others of the pantheon of Elder Gods. Some of these different sects seem more believable than others ó the strange gods of Egypt fit right in with this ötheory,ö but the British druids and fairies seem a little less of a natural fit to the narrative ó although arguably these draw on Arthur Machen's stories which certainly Lovecraft also admired and in part emulated. Other suggestions such as Hannibal's use of demonic elephants in his

wars with Rome don't, for me anyway, work at all. To be honest, they just seem silly ó but of course what to allow in such a game and what to leave out is always going to be a matter of taste.

The author, Mark Latham, has some background in the worlds of gaming and at one point was the editor of White Dwarf. The book that he has written reflects this and reads very much like a game supplement ó a mix of Role Playing Game scenarios and adventure hooks. The involvement of the Mythos in the Roman disaster at the Teutoburg forest seems very credible. However, the descriptions of the various groups competing against each other for ultimate power, or to just prevent the end of the world, reads very much like a rulebook section on öavailable factions.ö Again some may like this approach ó viewing the book purely as a gaming supplement ó but it weakened the önarrativeö of the alternate history for me.

Where the book really wins is the illustrations by aRu-Mor (it's a pen name!). Simple scenes really fire the imagination ó Roman soldiers in an Egyptian temple with weirdly Cthulhu derived hieroglyphics, or a small party of legionaries on a beach where they have just slain a Deep One. Really atmospheric! There are many colour plates ó mostly of different types of

priest or strange creatures, but the black-and-white illustrations are to my mind the most effective at bringing the subject to eldritch life.

This is a book that does expect the reader to have a fair knowledge of H.P. Lovecraft's mythos and is clearly of no interest to someone who doesn't already enjoy those stories, or at least have an appetite for a Cthulhu adventure in a different setting. However if either of these are of interest then this book is an entertaining and potentially useful read. Or just look at the pictures if but not too deeply!