

CRIMSON EMPIRE WEBSITE CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION:

NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR:

Welcome to all who visit this site and I hope you enjoy your stay and above all, get a chance to enjoy the Crimson Empire role-playing game.

Where do I start? Well, the beginning is probably the best place! Quite a few years ago now I started-off with D&D, then AD&D, MERP etc. I probably followed a similar path to a whole crowd of you out there. Also like most of you, I started to develop a new type of game, using some elements from other games and adding my own. The game then moved on in its own right, with a completely new set of rules. A whole load of my pals had the chance to test the game over a 10-year period. The general feedback was extremely positive, as well as the 6 or so game fairs I attended, where I had a series of people going for their chequebook, but no games to sell! I spent 4 years typing the rules out and getting pals to assist with artwork, playtesting etc. on a more structured basis. Then things went quiet for several years as I had studies to attend to and above all, no time or money to get the game edited and printed.

Here is the site (my first!) and it will be developed over the next couple of months (possibly using Dreamweaver to jazz things up a bit, I know it is needed!! I've seen some great sites out there!!). Please bear with me as I'm getting the game printed, getting organised to participate in a series of fairs and launching the site all at the same time. Feel free to contact me with feedback and comments, I'll even handle positive criticism!

I'll try and give you a feel for the game:

Imagine a mist swirling about your feet, a dark sky streaked with red shards of light and a ruined city all around you, the ruined city of Metbetoch. You can still make out the imperial army as it makes its way over the crest of the hill to the north of where you are standing. Your knees are prepared to give way under the weight of your armour, the weight of your heart. This is your city that has been raised to the ground, here where the most prestigious academy of magic once stood. You swear revenge, which keeps you from faltering. You do away with your black-scale armour, what use is it to you now? You will never wear it again. Your world will be that of shadows, infiltration and subterfuge. You swear an oath to the dark priests of Morg, an oath to hunt down knights of the Empire, for the glory of your faction.

Why did they come? Their crimson and white banners snapping in the wind, the glint of their bronze spear shafts dancing in the early morning light. Metbetoch did not bend its knee to the imperial council, this city of limitless talent, this rebellious son gathering the rejects and the marginalised of the Empire. This would seal its doom.

Crimson Empire is all about atmosphere, it is dark and exciting and has a realistic feel to it. The scenarios are usually very twisted and have subplots intertwined with subplots, all linked to the main storyline.

It is extremely hard to convey the uniqueness of this game from the confines of a website, not without giving too much away, in any case. Please get in contact if you wish to clarify things.

I think that players and MT's will enjoy the game for the following reasons:

The rules are simple, flexible and fun and should in no way get in the way of the gaming experience. This game has not been developed with a different system for the sake of it, I find too many new games are marketed with a strong emphasis on the games system. Crimson Empire's strength is based upon its atmosphere, not the weight or the complexity of the rules.

The world of Thargos is a dangerous, hostile place of many extremes. Indeed the Knight and Darkun factions that are at war with each other can be diametrically opposite with regards to their ideologies, or in fact a lot closer than it seems on the surface. The MT and players alike will have great fun in interacting with the geopolitics of these complex entities, and designing their own ones. There are very complex levels of cohabitation and interaction between supposed allies, each with their own agendas. Darkuns are religious zealots that are great fun to play and are deadly opponents as they have access to magic, poison and a host of deadly weapons, as well as having no fear or respect for life. Their life expectancy rarely goes beyond their mid twenties (for a human), but are great fun to play, especially if they infiltrate a group of players.

Magic is really fun here as the players and MT alike can create a host of symbols and spells, and trade, sell, steal etc. them. Flexible but adaptable rules are provided with main guidelines for the MT to handle such activities, with a logical framework. I'm summarising a lot here in one paragraph, as there is a lot more to read in the book, but this gives the main flavour of the magic system. I was about to forget, in some societies, sorcerers and mages are hunted down, as they are considered to be heretics (see chapter 9 for an explanation of this). Each MT will have a chance to personalise the game to their own style by making the use of spells more or less acceptable to suit their campaign. This can lead to some really fun situations as I'll let you imagine.

Combat is both graphic and fun, and enables players to adapt their own fighting styles. Certain weapons are banned in the Empire (to simplify: the nice guys!), and their ownership or even worse, their use is punishable by death. Players also get a chance to mix and match armour types and cobble together hybrid armour, compromising protection with encumbrance. The feedback from players has been that certain fights have an epic, almost cinematic feel to them. For those of you who have seen (all of you I guess!) the fight between Aragorn and Lurtz in the first LOTR film, you'll understand what I'm saying: great action, changing of weapons, long enough fight then sudden end with someone's head being lobbed off! Combat in Crimson Empire is fun because it is dangerous and a lot of strange things can happen: every creature or individual can be brought down, every character is capable of heroics. Do you remember a hobbit striking an almighty evil being and contributing to its downfall? Or the 300 Spartans last stand against the Persian tide of invasion? Then you know exactly what I'm talking about.

Creatures on Thargos are exciting and quite unique. Let's consider for example the Thargians (Oldest civilisation of Thargos), who ride their manta-like Targs over the desert and rule by fear. They were once a proud, evolved race, they are no reduced to primitive tribe-like survival. Or how about the howling Melok, who haunts graveyards hunting for a new body to live in, and can easily be confused with a ghost, but is so deadly in comparison. Finally, we could consider the Trogre, a horrendous cross-breed between the Troll and the Ogre, with the combined strength of both: deadly! Don't forget that there are nearly 90 of such creatures in the game, of which 30+ are completely new, and they all have detailed Creature Character Sheets (CCS) and loads of illustrations.

The Context of the game is abundant with over 130 pages of it in the book. There are maps, descriptions, loads of background information, even some interesting B&W photos!! Whatsmore, existing players and myself will keep the flow of material coming. You are also welcome to participate.

Women are also present in abundance in the game, not the Pamela Andersen lookalikes (there are a few nevertheless!), but strong female characters like the Darkun on the front cover of the gamebook. This is very much a game for all and I'm hoping you may also have some charm present at your gaming table, as female players are attracted to the new types of characters on offer. It is about time that role-playing games opened-up to more female players!

As a conclusion, a lot of effort has gone into the development of the game and I'm hoping to share the fun of the adventures in the world of Thargos, with as many people as possible. This game is the culmination of years of gaming, watching hundreds of movies and reading some of the best fantasy and historical literature I've found. Please bear in mind that you will have the chance to speak to me directly about your ideas and comments and hopefully influence the future developments of the game.

Chris Loizou
Author of Crimson Empire

HONOUR IN BATTLE

Resting on the pommel of his two-handed battle blade wedged into the ground, Kaledorn, son of Lord Bragardorm, was trying to fill his gasping lungs with air. The reek air that burnt his throat, the cursed air of the South. Just over a stone throw from him, the Champion from the Kadrur Orc clan readied his bloodstained axe and picked-up a large war shield from one of his kind who had fallen, cleaved of his grotesquely oversized grinning head.

Kaledorn knew that this day would remain engraved in the annals of his home country, he who had managed to carry the family banner away from danger, he who had cut his way through fifteen of the Kadrur brutes in heavy battle armour, and armed to the teeth with hooked scimitars. He was one of the so-called Noble Elves, descendants of the Condorians and Elves. The members of his family had rallied to the support of the crumbling Empire, by joining the Crimson Guard, the personal guard and champions of the Emperor himself.

He was now far from his land in a cold, barren place north of Morg; The only surviving member of his battalion. He feared neither death nor dishonour, as he had been trained from a young age for such a situation. He knew that if he challenged the Kadrur Champion and was victorious, the other clan members would let him go.

Even though he was surrounded by mutilated bodies of his brothers, the Champion was showing no sign of weakness, as he too was ready for the confrontation. All his life he had been taught the way of the sword and how to kill his enemies. The Kadrur were harsh creatures, with no respect for life, even in some cases their own kind. They were a hateful race, despising all other creatures, and above all their enemies from the Empire. This enemy's head would make a good trophy.

Kaledorn smiled briefly, aware that this was probably the last time that he would cheat death. He had never felt so alive, each of his muscles was banded, his heart pounding beneath a layer of leather and steel, heated by the pending action, then came the cry...

It was customary for the Kadrur to taunt their foes before commencing battle, and insult them with a barrage of curses and mockery, especially targeted at the family of their foe. The Kadrur enjoyed their sport, especially if the latter was heated and provoked to the extreme...

But Kaledorn did not wish to show his anger immediately, this would be perceived as a weakness and boost the Champions' confidence. The next few seconds, Kaledorn had flashbacks of his childhood, his past, his homeland and his people, he suddenly felt very alone and isolated so far from home, and thought of the horror of rotting somewhere in a swamp, or even worse...

The Kadrur Champion started suddenly and charged Kaledorn, who was firmly anchored to his position and stood steadfast ready for impact. The crashing of metal, flesh, muscle and bone could be heard by all those who beared witness to this battle. The impact was phenomenal, and would have easily killed an average individual. The Champion's axe cut into the Crimson Knights' shield, almost knocking him off balance.

Kaledorn had to jump back, keeping his footing on this difficult bogland, he managed to avoid being immediately followed back by holding his aggressor at bay with the tip of his sword. The Kadrur spit in Kaledorn's direction hurling yet more abuse. However, the Kadrur had somewhat lowered his guard, more concerned about showing his fangs and gaping mouth...

With a quick driving lunge, Kaledorn went for the Champion's head, cutting his pointed ear straight off, causing dark blood to spurt out. The Kadrur bellowed with anger and pain, at the same time slamming down his axe blade onto Kaledorn's crimson armour-covered thigh. The armour absorbed the blow, but dented inwards causing great pain and crushing Kaledorn's quadriceps. His reflex was to hold his thigh with his lowered shield arm, he had no time to consider the pain inflicted, the Champion dived towards him knocking him down with his large battle-shield. Kaledorn barely had the time to avoid a vertical spear-shaft that was pointing upwards from another fallen foe. The Kadrur immediately positioned himself above Kaledorn ready to deliver the final blow...

Thoughts were running through the young Elf's mind, knowing that death was hovering above him. He instinctively rolled over, just as the axe came to wedge itself with great force where he had been lying for a second.

Kaledorn got to his feet, feeling a wet, warm sensation running down his wounded leg. He overcame his pain and focused once again on the weak spot on the less protected left hand side of his foe. The powerful Kadrur leaped towards the Elf, trying once again to use his speed and weight to knock him down, this time the Crimson Guard was ready. Kaledorn dodged the attack, leaping aside and slashing the air simultaneously. The sound of shattered bone and the yell of the Kadrur as his shoulder-blade was hacked in two, gave Kaledorn the confidence to follow through and knock the Kadrur down. The Champion grovelled in the dirt to reclaim his axe, but in doing so, snapped the leather straps of his shield. Kaledorn positioned himself above the Kadrur ready to pin him to the ground with his mighty sword. The Champion, seeing his predicament rolled on his back and threw a dagger at the Elf in a last desperate attempt to stop his assailant. Kaledorn could see the pommel of the dagger jutting out of his

breastplate, crowned with blood which then mingled with sweat and dirt, his senses became blurred...

The Champion seized these brief seconds of hesitation to collect his axe which he now wielded with two hands. Kaledorn's vision became hazy and he knew that death was beckoning him...

It was hard to say what happened next, as a flash of pale yellow light came from his gauntlet and struck the Kadrur in the chest, sending him reeling into the dirt. He was now at the Elf's mercy.

The Kadrur clan had been watching the duel with great interest, and were now screaming for the blood of their Champion, who glared at the Elf with his red eyes full of hatred, he knew his death would be brutal. Even if Kaledorn was not fully aware of Kadrur customs, he knew he had to claim his victory, he slammed his sword through the Champion's chest, wedging it deeply through his flesh, bone, armour, the shield he lay upon and into the ground.

Kaledorn was now free to leave these lands, and the Kadrur approached to claim their fallen brother, whilst collecting the Crimson Guard family banner. They made it clear to him that he had outlived his stay on their land and that he should leave immediately. He knew that he couldn't possibly leave this symbol behind...

Kaledorn then remembered his father's words: "know my son that if you are one day to join this prestigious order, that you will have to live by its rules: loyalty and justice you will have to bring to the land, whatever the cost, even if you have to give your body back to the land. Your life will not have been in vain, as nothing is worse for a man than to be forgotten, great deeds are what make great men and this remains in the hearts of all free men until the end of time."

Kaledorn readied his sword and shield for the last time, then charged the Clan of over sixty Kadrur warriors whilst shouting his battle-cry, he would die far away from his land, from his people, from the Empire: he had never felt so alive, had never felt closer to them...

...For my part, I survived this campaign miraculously, hidden under a heap of corpses, unable to move but there to see what had happened and tell the tale.

Dabal-Kred, shield-bearer, Crimson Guard.

THE GAME:

BACK TO BASICS (skip if you know your stuff!):

A role playing game is an activity based upon players' imagination, without necessarily using a game board laid out in front of the players. Each player has to incarnate his or her character in an imaginary universe, a setting prepared by the Master of Tales (MT). It's a game of dialogue between players and interaction with the MT. The players have to combine their efforts to succeed in a certain number of quests, and make sure they can survive the ordeals laid in front of them. This is part of the difficulty of this game because of the dangerous nature of the gaming universe, they will endlessly be confronted with obstacles more and more dangerous as their perilous journeys go on.

The rules allow the simulation of most actions in the game, notably the intrusion of random effects caused by the environment on the players. This is where the dice come into play. The dice allow the Master of Tales to measure the effects of certain actions. Chance and random effects do play a relatively important role, but in no way exclude the intellectual side of the game, indeed the intellectual capacity contributes greatly to the overall outcome of any quest. The latter develops the characters sense of deduction, analysis, communication and the speed at which they can make a decision.

WHAT MAKES CRIMSON EMPIRE SO UNIQUE?

Well it is hard to describe the gaming atmosphere from the confines of the PC monitor, especially when the game just wants to break-out and capture your imagination, but I'll try my best:

The atmosphere is unique in the sense that it combines a host of European cultures and history, as well as myth and legend going back over 2,000 years. This does not mean that the latter have just been thrown together, but have inspired the credibility and the depth of the background information. I have travelled around numerous European countries over the last 15 years, visiting historic sites, collecting photos (some of which appear in the book), and castle layouts etc. The game is a real melting-pot of rich civilisations, with some very strong themes that are developed throughout the gaming experience. There is a place for heroics here, worthy of any of Homers tales. If you consider the heroism of Leonidas and his 300 Spartans facing certain death, or the preponderant role of women in such a society, then you are starting to get a feel for the game.

Although none of the real civilisations that have inspired the creation of the game are clearly present or named, there are undertones throughout the book. The mythical aspect of legends and traditional storytelling can be found throughout the game, bolstered by the role of creatures and the fear they strike. I have found in the past that many games have lost their appeal because characters started to throw their weight around a little too much, I should know, I used to play such games! Here creatures of myth are back where they are supposed to be: terrifying, deadly, fearsome and worthy of a tale or two. Players change their benchmarks here, fearing that encounter between a 16-year old Condorian Squire and a well trained War Dog once more. I'll let you imagine what emotions are rushing through the players head when they bump into something a lot bigger...

Thargos is a place of many extremes, and you will get to know your way around. There is enough contextual information to help the MT (Master of Tales) develop the world further, and really make sure that the fantasy universe of Thargos has a "lived-in" feel to it, adding credibility to the whole experience. The ambiance should be very gritty indeed.

The complexity of geopolitics in this game really adds a new dimension to the gaming experience. Knight order codes, Darkun/Priest order codes and a host of other factions, subfactions and orders, all contribute to weaving a superb tapestry of intertwined relationships, a magnificently complex backdrop to any campaign.

I can only hope that you will have a chance to savour this yourselves. Don't take my word for it, ask others or experience this first hand amongst yourselves, or at one of my demonstrations.

Chris Loizou

THE GAMING UNIVERSE:

The world in which the players are going to evolve can be compared mainly to Europe in the Middle-Ages. Its' social system is founded on the Feudal system, where hierarchy and land ownership plays a key role. Each member of society has rights but also obligations towards his or her superiors, based on the same model as the relationship between Vassal – Lord of the Land.

The world of Thargos has a rich history, which is not detailed here but can be found in Section 9.4 of this book. Here however, is a brief outline to give readers a feel for the kind of world they will be evolving in:

Many centuries ago the world of Thargos was mainly made up of a vast empire (known as "The Empire"). Trade was flourishing, and the inhabitants enjoyed a relatively good standard of living. In spite of limited incursions of certain evil hoards and a relatively high crime rate, the Empire was going through its golden age. It was a time of great discoveries and expeditions to new lands. Numerous Pantheons of different gods exercised their influence on the people. There was a god for everything and everyone had a god.

No-one could have predicted what was going to happen, no-one ever knew why the elements brought so much destruction. Indeed, people had experienced great storms, earthquakes and other manifestations of the power of nature, but this time it was the apocalypse. The seas rose so high they devoured the earth, which in turn started to shake so strongly that whole mountain ranges disappeared into the heart of the world. The centre of the earth choked its devastating lava flows, and a dark cloud of putrefaction came to cover the land suffocating and killing most of those who had survived the earlier horrors.

The Empire was broken and toppled and its leader was poisoned by one of his generals. The ancient beliefs were no more, only remained the elements who had manifested their anger and their power. This is how the cults of each element appeared, each one divided into rival factions. Numerous wars followed the fall of the Empire. Now the known world is divided between the North and the South, the North remains loyal to the restoration of the Empire and the days of prosperity and the South hungers for power and great riches.

It is in this context that the players are going to evolve, in a world torn by war on the verge of destruction, where religious factions and knight orders are at each others throats for supremacy.

CHARACTER CREATION:

BACK TO BASICS (skip if you know your stuff!)

Character creation is one of the main phases of the role playing game.

It is the moment for each player to distinguish his or herself by adding numerous personal touches to complete their character. This section presents everything that the player needs to know to incarnate their alter-ego. Once you have reached the end of the section you will have a coherent and detailed imaginary character ready for any adventure.

Determining the characteristics that define the strengths and weaknesses of the character is carried out using various dice and in some cases referring to reference tables detailed below. The characteristics are the backbone of the character, the choice of race and class (occupation) enable the player to combine advantages. The alignment and psychological traits clearly define the line of conduct that the player has to respect. They are also used by the M.T in order to define the quality of interpretation of the player, commonly known as "role-playing" skills.

Other elements come into play to complete the character possibly offering a head start in life with for example the possibility of an inheritance, or skills taught by a characters' parents etc.

CHARACTER CREATION IN CRIMSON EMPIRE:

To summarise, here are some of the unique features of the game: Psychological traits – Elemental powers and comprehensive aptitude list – Inheritance tables, childhood skills and birthplace tables – Complete set of races and character classes, including the dreaded Darkun and Evil-Druid classes – Unique Druid and Tracker/Hunter/Ranger regional aptitude tables - Ancient Pantheon Envoy Powers - Regional availability of weapons and legal limitations of their use, etc.

CHARACTER RACES:



RLISHA Noble

The world of Thargos is inhabited by numerous races and species, but there are dominant groups, those who have managed to impose their number and their civilisation upon other groups. As a player the races that can be chosen are the most evolved, those that have reached a degree of civilisation comparable to that of the Middle Ages of our history.

Please bear in mind however that certain aspects of the game universe are very different from this era, and are heavily influenced by fantasy and mythology.

The available races to play in the 1st edition of the Rulebook are: HUMANS (Condorians, Mandorians and Uldanians), DERGS (Nirkar and Faldor), ELVES (Noble-Elves, Wood-

Elves and Valley-Elves) and Dwarves (Northern-Dwarves and Darvanne). In the near future it will also be possible to play Centaurs, Thargians, Rlishae, Drayn etc.

Each race has its own culture and past. All the races present have varying levels of interaction and it is highly recommended to players to take this into consideration when playing this game.

The geographic distribution of races is particularly complex if one takes into consideration the numerous wars and invasions that have taken place in this world.

Certain regions are dominated by the Condorians, like most of the large cities of the North for example. Other races have their own areas of influence in different regions.

In order to simplify the general grouping of races the following can be noted:-

Elves dominate woodland areas; Dwarves control most of the mountain ranges; Humans dominate plains and coastal areas, and Dergs can be found in the highest mountain ranges.



CREATURES IN THE WORLD OF THARGOS:

A host of creatures and animals inhabit the world of Thargos, and this helps to turn each and every encounter into a possible challenge. A variety of domesticated

livestock can be found, in similar numbers to those of Central Europe around the 10th Century. Wild animals are abundant in woodland and mountainous areas, having in most cases been driven-out by demographic expansion. Evil creatures thrive towards the South of the Continent, where a great deal of experiments are carried-out to create new crossbreeds, or mutated beings.

Encountering such creatures can present some of the greatest challenge that characters will face, as in most cases they are lethal and difficult to overcome. Players should never underestimate the creatures they encounter, especially large creatures such as Dragons, Giants, Trolls, Trogres etc. or the ultra-evil Undead, such as Zombies, Skeleton Warriors or the dreaded Vampyr etc. Please note the following list of new creatures in the game: Cyclops of Slavit, Darkwolf, Darvanne, Derg, Dragon (Swamp, Stone etc.), Drayn, Guardian, Haroad, Horses (Sea Battle, Steppes Charger etc.), Kadrur, Kandar, Mardor, Melok, Minok, Nashgor, Nirvalt, Nokden, Ourak, Radex, Scorpions, Snakes (Varda, North Sea etc.), Spiders (Nomad, Spinner etc.), Targ, Thargian, Trogre etc. Each creature will have their own set of powers or special attacks explained in this chapter.

The term "creature" is a generic term for basically any being that the characters encounter.

COMBAT AND MOVEMENT:



After having completed the creation of your character, it is a good idea to familiarise yourself with the game rules relation to combat and movement, in order to permit your character to survive in the hostile world of Thargos. Combat is one of the main phases of the game. Indeed, it is one of the more exciting parts of the adventure, where action and nerves come into play.

If at the first glance these rules appear relatively complicated, they will very quickly become easy to use and extremely realistic. They are the result of 7 years of play testing and offer some really challenging moments in the game.

Please note that any form of combat in the world of Thargos can potentially seal the fate of any character however strong they are, and fighting should never be taken lightly.

The following sections are going to present all the phases that build up Combat Actions. Please note that a Combat Turn lasts 10 seconds. During this lapse of time, a character can perform a certain number of actions but will only have a limited number of chances of success.

Example - An Elf Imperial Archer fires numerous arrows in 10 seconds, but will only have 3 realistic chances of hitting and wounding his or her targets if using a short bow.

Combat Phases

1. Choice of Target.
2. Initiative throws (for all parties).
3. Attack throws (with the possibility to select a specific body section).
4. Parry/Dodge throws.
5. Armour throws (if the previous throw fails).
6. Damage throws (deducted from armour etc.).
7. Pain Endurance throws.
8. Return to Phase 3: Change of sides.

A great deal of extra detail is provided in Chapter 3 of the book.

Example combat:

1. Vardek of Karg is a Darkun from the Pure subfaction of the Fire Cult. He is armed with a buckler and a Bardack and wears no armour.

Dreiss, Imperial Warrior-Priest from the Earth Cult is armed with a Two-Handed Warhammer, and has a Heavy Chainmail shirt covering his arms and torso.

2. Initiative throw: Id10: +6 for Vardeck (Reflex adjustment based on I6, none for the Bardack), +3 for Dreiss (Reflex adjustment based on I4, +1 for the Warhammer and -2 for the Heavy Chainmail).

Vardek obtains an 8+6: I4, he automatically has the initiative.

The MT can of course decide if one of the characters was surprised, they automatically lose the initiative.

3. Vardek has 63% (31%, 21%) in the Mastered Weapon aptitude for the Bardack. The player decides to make a random shot, and obtains a 47.

4. Dreiss has a Parry/Dodge aptitude at 52% and misses with a 56. Id20 is used to locate the blow, and a 7 is obtained: Left Leg.

5+6. There is no armour here so the blow goes through: 2d4 +5 (15 in Strength): 8 is obtained.

7. The Left Leg only had 6 EP (Energy Points), so drops to -2: on Id20 an Endurance throw is required in order to check Dreiss's pain threshold: a score of 6 means that he does not falter. If the damage inflicted goes beyond the opposite EP's i.e. -7 and onwards then a critical situation has occurred: an Endurance throw on Id100 is required. Please note that a critical situation to the head results in death and can also result to this in other loactions (the Critical Damage Table has to be used).

8. Dreiss's player is aware that his character is in danger and decides to go for a headshot (i.e Mastered Weapon aptitude/3 rounded down): with a score of 56% for the 2-Handed Warhammer, this would be: 18%. He obtains a I6 and Vardek misses the Parry/Dodge with

an 87. As there is no form of protection worn on the head, the warhammer hits the target: $1d8+2 +4(14 \text{ in Strength})$: 11, the Darkun is killed on the spot as per the Critical Damage Table (23 on 1d100: "cracked skull, shattered bone penetrates the brain, you die within seconds").

As you can see from this example, combat is realistic and deadly and should not be taken lightly. It allows however, for real suspense and action, as well as tactical decision making.

Players will respect the deadly nature of the system which has a dual purpose: promote roleplaying and negotiation skills to avoid rushing into battle, and feeling the thrill and visualising the action when diplomacy breaks down for example.

Welcome to the "Real World" of fantasy combat combined with roleplaying!



WEAPONS:

Here are a few examples of the 50 or so weapons of CRIMSON EMPIRE: The Spiked-Mask is usually used for head-butting and head-ramming a foe. Flesh-Hooks are swung around at great speed, then used to rip armour/clothes and eventually skin and muscle. They are dangerous to handle as they can get caught-up in their users clothing etc. The longer the chain, the better the range, but the higher the risk of self-inflicted injury.

The Shazrack is composed of separate swivelling sections that contribute to maximising damage and wrapping around weapons, shields etc. they are also hard to master.

The Silvermoon comprises a stabbing-handle and a long chain that is swung around to build-up speed and impact/slashing damage (can be used as any of both categories of weapon depending on the foes protection/armour).

Hand-to-hand combat techniques are widespread in the temples amongst Warrior-Priests and Darkuns, and an experienced master can easily detect regional/factional techniques. The MT and players can design their own techniques in order to enrich the game

THARGOS MAGIC:



Magic in the world of Thargos plays a preponderant role in creating the mystical and fantasy gaming atmosphere. Certain creature types and civilizations fear its use, others however have built their lives and societies around it. Magic is fundamentally a philosophy, a particular way

of perceiving life and a will to shape the outcome of situations and bend the latter to the will of the spell-caster.

Mages and Sorcerers are taught to think beyond the physical outer-shell of the environment that surrounds them. Their perception is tuned to focus on the energy that animates every creature, object, rock, tree etc. Everything has a place in the universe that is maintained or changed depending on energy or Essence interaction.

The power of any spell-caster resides in their ability to channel their own energy in order to upset or redress the balances of energy around them. Using Essence to influence the laws of gravity for example will have an impact on the speed of fall of a stone. Accessing both the earth's attraction and the mass of the stone will have multiplied effects. The stronger the spell-caster, the more they will be able to focus their energy on multiple targets simultaneously. Each energy pattern is locked or "stable", without which the object considered could not exist. The latter would take almost random form, with volatile effects.

The Spell-caster (Mage or Sorcerer) has to study ways of unlocking the energy within a contained environment, thus maintaining control over the object or creature considered, but being in a position to shift the physical attributes of the latter. The "keys" that are used to do this are composed of a series of symbols or runes, that represent the primary forces of nature. Every rune has a specific meaning and also calls upon a certain level of power or Essence. By preparing different combinations of runes, different keys can be generated with completely different effects in the physical world.

One has to note that the art of magic is complex and dangerous if used by unprepared or novice individuals. A great deal of research is required by the characters in order to devise new spells, however the following chapter covers a series of "well proven" spells, or known spells.

The following rule applies, and any spell rune combination should adhere to the following logic:

The first series of runes should be linked to thought or the idea behind the spell: this prepares the ground for casting the spell by preparing the "controlled environment" necessary to unlock energy.

The second series of runes should be linked to the target object(s) and/or creature(s), thus clearly designating the areas of focus for the spell-caster.

The third series of runes should designate the effects of the spell or desired results/intent of the spell-caster. This series activates the complex energy interactions.

If this Magic grammar is not respected when preparing or casting a spell, anything could happen, and possibly put the spell-caster in a very volatile situation, even endangering his or her life and that of those around them.

In gaming terms, this approach offers a great deal of flexibility to the players and the M.T. Spell creation and research is an exciting challenge but has to be treated with great prudence as it is a fine art. The scope for players is boundless and offers hours of fun and creativity to all involved. At the end of the day, the M.T. has the final say on the reliability/feasibility of any spell created, but there has to be scope to progress this development as it is a major part of the

role-playing game to be able to personalize ones' character as much as possible and surprise others with amazing new magic.

The basic rules that have to apply are the following:

No new spell created can be more powerful or as powerful for less magic points than an existing spell. This is because even if on paper a spell appears to be feasible for less MP's, the known spell has been tested time and time again, and is reliable for the required effects.

Using the spell Reading of Magic, a spell-caster can transmit the knowledge of a new spell another Mage/Sorcerer.

Although Druids and Priests can use magic, players of these characters cannot create their own spells. Their magic is of a slightly different nature, although derived from Mage/Sorcerer spells. A basic selection of available spells is provided in this chapter. The M.T can create spells for these classes using the same method as for the main spell-caster classes. This means that their cost in MP's will be similar to that of the Mage/Sorcerer spells, but that the use of spells by Druids and Priests is more limited, ensuring that these characters are on a level playing field, as the latter have developed more fighting skills.

Druids and Priests project their Essence by the use of physical gestures, based upon meditation, concentration and emotion. Each hand movement and facial expression has similar effects to the rune combinations. These are taught from one generation to the other or in monasteries (Priests). In fact the characters are not aware of the similarities with Mage/Sorcerer magic, but the fact is that their kind have found a different way of channelling their energy that has been mastered over a number of generations. Some hand-to-hand or martial art skills combine physical fighting and spell casting, with spectacular effects.

The use of magic is often associated with heresy, especially when Dark Magic is used (Necromancy, evil mind control spells etc.). In some regions, this type of spell-casting carries the death penalty making its' use exciting but risky. Magic is more present in large cities, even if most spells are carried-out behind closed doors. However, out in the countryside and most villages or hamlets, it is not as easily tolerated as superstition runs riot in these areas, and most inhabitants are less educated and aware. Druid or Priest magic is more common in such regions.

The Magic Circle of Metbetoch: this institution was once the largest academy of magic in the Empire. Its' founders wished to regroup the most powerful and skilled spell-casters from all regions in order to share their knowledge and talents, and elaborate a spell-caster Charter of good practice, in order to minimize or in some cases ban the use of Dark Magic, control spell creation and monitor spell-casters ethics in their research.

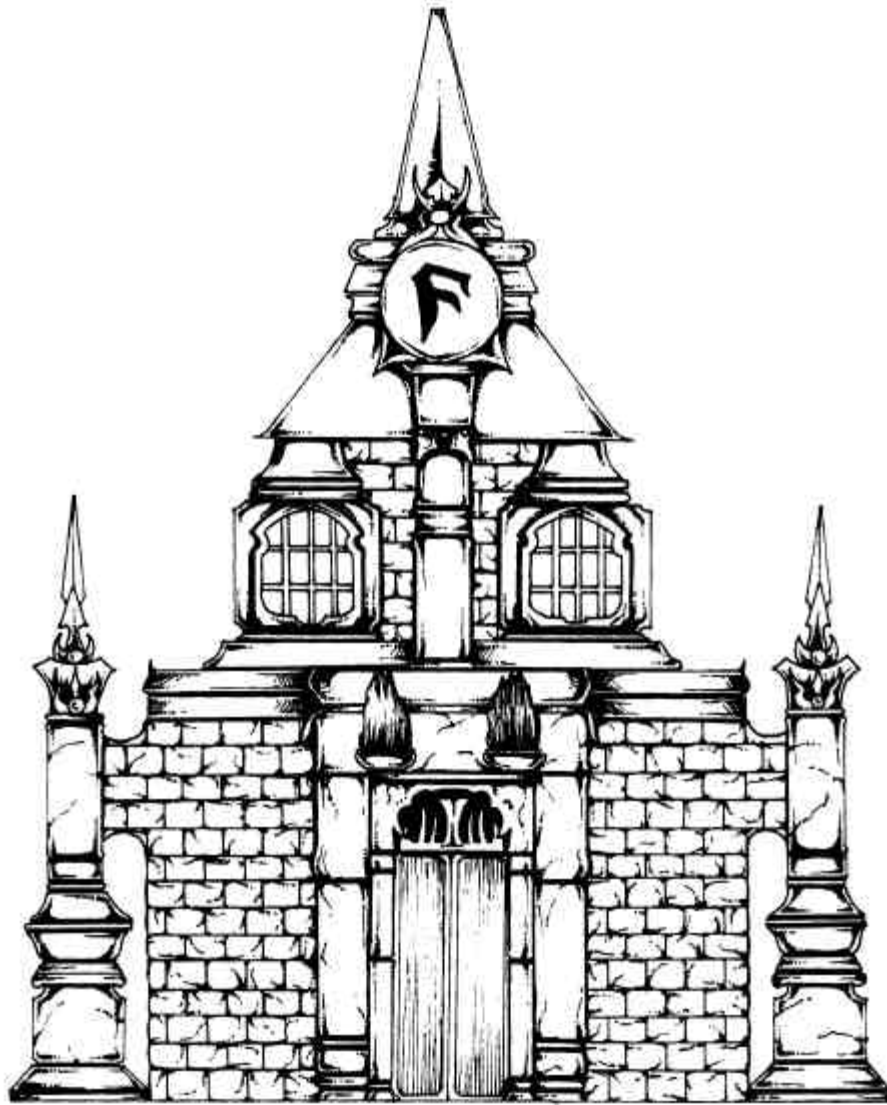
The highest standards of entry were enforced to create an elite, and to some extent exclude mediocre involvement. However, this created a feeling of great bitterness and contempt for numerous other spell-casters, that they decided to setup schools and academies, some with far less scrupulous intentions than the Circle.

With the coming of the Great Cataclysm, the Circle suffered such heavy losses, that it was shaken at its' very foundations and lost both members and prestige. When the Empire cracked

and crumbled, a select few of Circle members decided to setup their own Dark Magic research, having lost all faith in the old ways.

Nowadays, the Council of the Ten (one representative for each large Imperial city), sit in Condar where they govern the use of what is now called Imperial Magic. Metbetoch has now fallen to the forces of the South and has re-established itself as the Academy of the True Art or Dark Magic. Very powerful Necromancers (Death Sorcerers) and Mages reside here, and govern the lands around them through fear. The Council of the Ten are aware of the power that resides in Metbetoch, but to take this Institution on, they will need to raise more than just an army...

This is how the South regions have gained so much power in such a relatively short span of time, fuelled by the old hatred of the former elitist nature of the Circle.



CULTS AND FACTIONS:

Since the Great Cataclysm, the Ancient Pantheons have been almost totally abandoned, only a handful of primitive tribes and renegade groups believe in these gods. Now only the four elements dominate the religious beliefs:

Air / Fire / Water / Earth

Each Cult comprises two rival Factions, whose main aim is the destruction of their opposite.

To the north of the Continent, the four Cults are relatively evenly spread and there is no real animosity or conflict between Faction members from different Cults. Mutual respect and potential alliances endure in order to uphold what remains of the Empire. However in the South, the Fire Cult appears to dominate the other three, and there are varying levels of hatred and conflict between Cults.

In certain circumstances, fragile alliances exist, usually when confronted with a common enemy. Each Faction has at least a Great Priest and a multitude of Templedots.

The latter are resident priests who are tasked to instruct the young followers, and who also constitute the personal bodyguard of the Great Priest. A great number of Knight orders are also affiliated with these temples, as well as Warrior-Priests or "Pilgrims" as they are known. For the Evil Factions, Darkuns also boost the fighting ranks, causing fear and destruction in their path, for the glory of their Faction.

MASTERING THE TALE:

Once character creation, combat rules and magic have been mastered, it is highly recommended that the MT refers to Chapter 9 in order to familiarise oneself with the gaming universe. This will provide the reader with useful background information and give a better understanding of what the Continent looks and feels like. Chapter 9 offers a series of maps, diagrams and pertinent information that is essential for "fleshing-out" the scenarios and campaigns. A distinction can be made here between the two:

Scenario: usually covers a subplot or mini-quest, like locating an artefact and its' retrieval for example. Whereas a Campaign comprises numerous scenarios that are all linked, interact with each other and have effects on the final outcome or climax of the adventurers' quest. Campaigns are played over months, whereas scenarios can be finished in a couple of gaming sessions. The fun thing about a Campaign is that the players will encounter the same characters over and over again, benefit from their knowledge of the scenarios they have completed successfully, and really get the impression that their own character has lived and experienced countless dangers and challenges. Campaigns also contribute to developing team spirit as the surviving characters share a lot in common. They are also ideal for reintroducing sworn enemies, long-lost friends etc.

In Chapter 8 the MT's role is clearly defined and gives a whole load of tips in creating fun scenarios and challenging quests. A couple of starter scenarios are included, as well as a host of ideas on how to create your own. Players must feel that their characters' actions may have effects on the world of Thargos, and this all adds to the credibility of the role playing experience.

Also included are a series of additional rules that should help any MT enrich the gaming experience. These are to be used as guidelines and in no way should detract from the fact that the MT always has the final word, the last thing that any player wants is people quoting from the rules! The art of becoming a good MT is to have enough rules as a framework to ensure credibility, but not too many as to slow down the pace of the game. For example some combat situations between two NPCh's (Non Player Characters), should be resolved very fast by the MT, if the fight goes on and on. However, there may be a time when the MT wishes to maintain the level of chance and excitement during a fight between two powerful NPCh's, and detail the whole fight, especially by getting an appointed player to throw the dice for the NPCh they have rallied to. This does two things: gets all players involved with the fight and gives them a taste of what it would be like to have their own character of the same strength.

MENTAL
HEALTH:



Mental Health is expressed in terms of Sanity Points (S.P's), and is determined when creating a character.

Sanity Points represent the characters' cool, or calm when confronted with difficult or traumatic situations. Every time that a character is confronted with such situations, either due to the sheer horror of what is happening in front of their very eyes, or due to past experiences of terror and trauma, the player will have to try to obtain a successful SP throw. If the throw is failed, then a certain number of SP's are deducted from the current score. The exact amount can be determined by referring to section 6.2. The more the character is subjected to such events, the more they will fall victim to phobias, traumas and mental problems (see Table 6.1.2).

One must note how difficult it is to recuperate SP's, and this must be made clear by the M.T to all players. These rules contribute to ensuring that players fear the loss of SP's when involved in encounters, thus reinforcing the excitement of such situations. Bumping into a Trogre will never feel the same again!

THE M.T

The MT is the person who sets the scene, prepares the scenarios and generally handles the outcome of the situations the players encounter. A great deal of time and effort goes into preparing a scenario. This can involve historical research into such things as ancient naval battles, armour manufacture, castle siege techniques, costumes through the ages etc. The MT always has the final say: they should be firm but just: firm as to ensure that players are aware of the dangers of the scenario for their character, but just as to make sure that players are not put off by the gaming experience, by having their character put to the death every 5 minutes!

The MT plays the biggest role of all, having to act out the role of every NPCh that the players encounter, support the scenario with props, figurines and maps, and finally make all decisions relating to the application of rules.

The MT must avoid anachronisms at all costs as they ruin the whole atmosphere of the game. The ambience of Thargos can be compared to that of Europe in the Dark-Ages, although a lot of items that make up this gaming universe are also taken from as far back as an era comparable to our prehistory (Haroads and Thargians for example), and from the mythology of Ancient Greece (Medusa, Pegasus and Hydra for example). Magic exists but is not commonplace, and must be treated accordingly.

Here is where we find the unique atmosphere of Crimson Empire: Dark-Age in contradiction with the culture and illumination of the Golden Age of Ancient Greece, mythical creatures from our childhood, combined with a very adult theme of power, violence, politics and intrigue. A unique combination of experiencing the fall of the Roman and Hellenic Empires first hand (Crimson Empire), the advent of the Industrial Revolution (Magic), and the challenge and fear of discovering the New World (Thargos) all in one imaginary lifetime. This is not a host of historical analogies just thrown together, this is the best way to express the upheaval that the World of Thargos is going through, and define the complexity in recreating these

unique atmospheres for the players, in a coherent manner. Chapter 9 will develop these ideas further.

After having prepared the scenario, the MT will have to "drip-feed" information to the players to help them along with their progress, but they will also have to help themselves. This is where another key role assigned to the MT comes into play: the attribution of EXP (Experience Points). Contrary to earlier role-playing games, these points are not only awarded for destroying foes. In fact, the term "vanquishing foes" does not necessarily mean that they have been obliterated, there are more subtle ways of gaining experience. In some cases, a foe can be one over through dialogue, or brought into submission by proving to them who is boss.

THE WORLD OF THARGOS:



This chapter will provide enough background information to the MT in order to set the scene for the players. A brief outline of the main historical events will be provided as well as extensive geographical information, including descriptions of the main towns and cities, as well as neighbouring regions. Finally, the most notorious Non Player Characters (NPCh's) will also be provided.

(...)Thargos is in many ways similar to our planet, in that approximately 3/4 of its surface is covered in water, and the climates are comparable to that of the Middle-Ages around the 10th Century. Most of the evolved races and creatures inhabit what is known as The Continent (MAP), and this is where the Players will get to experience most of their first adventures. It is possible to expand the gaming experience by setting-out into the unknown oceans, but this should not happen for a long time, not until the PCh's have gained enough experience to do so.

Argurian the Philosopher wrote: "The crown of the godly kings could be seen floating over the night, shimmering in its splendour over the veil of clouds, carried by their might. After the Great Cataclysm, the crown was broken, cleaved from their troubled brow, lost forever into the depths of the darkest sea below, a hundred fathoms deep, the Gods are no more".

This will be explained in more detail in section 9.4. (...)

(...)Thargos was previously dominated by the Thargians, a warriorlike race of mentally and physically powerful beings. Elves, Dwarves and Men were in many cases their slaves and perceived as the inferior races. Wars raged for centuries, and most races fled The Continent to the outer islands and continents of Thargos, only small colonies and pockets of resistance remained. The Thargians ruled for centuries, with all other beings under their bronze boot. This was their Golden Age, where they controlled all other beings and developed their technology and knowledge well beyond that of the other primitive races.(...)

(...)The seas are considered by most individuals as being impassable, which now means that the mainland is cut off from the old continents, and the allies of old. Now the known world is split between north and south, the north being loyal to the Old Empire and its values, and the south (Karnarcos), power hungry and ruthless.

This is the context that players are in, their characters are in a hostile world, totally torn apart by war, hatred and superstitious beliefs.(...)

REVIEWS:

USERS:

GM Review: "Inside the Crimson Empire book you will find a simple but effective dice mechanic, versatile character generation, an absolutely lethal combat system, a magic system to die for and enough setting to occupy years of play.

I will have to admit now that the first thing I saw, and fell in love with, when I opened the book was the magic system. The magic using classes create spells by combining certain runes according to the rules of spell grammar. With the 63 runes provided and suggestions for creating your own the number of spells you can create is near-infinite, certainly enough that no player or MT (Master of Tales) will be able to exhaust the ideas.

As well as the mages and sorcerers who use the runic system, there are the dual-classes, warrior-priests, Darkuns and druids who use a slightly more traditional method of spell-casting, and while unable to create their own spells (at least with the same ease) they have a much greater combat potential.

Finally there are the fighter classes, the warrior, knights and ranger/tracker/hunters. The warrior and ranger are incredibly versatile classes, allowing the player to create just about anything they can imagine. The knights are the elite of the fighter classes,

many of them coming from noble families and taking up arms to defend their Order.

Character generation is simple, roll dice for stats, and then choose everything else around your character concept. Originally I thought that the dice rolling would lead to some extreme characters, and I'm sure there will be or are some around, but after working through the process too many times to admit to it is obvious that it will never generate unplayable characters.

The dice mechanic is simple, in and out of combat use similar rolls, although in combat certain other factors come into play to adjust the roll. The system is essentially percentile for most skills, with some statistics checks being rolled on a twenty-sider.

Each time you succeed at a skill check you gain a chance to improve that skill by a small amount when you reach your next level. There are also perfect successes, which give you more chance of larger increases in the skills. This allows for a realistic increase in abilities, rather than the usual incredible jumps in power scale each time the party levels.

Finally the setting, if you just flick through the book the thought and detail put in becomes apparent. The main setting provided is The Continent, an area large enough to provide lifetimes of role-playing on its own. The Continent itself is then split down into smaller areas, which could easily be used seperately to allow for a different theme of game on each one, or combined for a global feel. The history and geography of the world is exquisitely detailed, and the illustrations really put across the feel of the game.

In essence this is a game well worth buying and running, and Chris Loizou should be proud of producing such a masterwork."

Jimmy B, Guilford (UK)

Player Review: "The rulebook is well written, user friendly and packed with material for GM's and players alike. I'm looking forward to getting to grips with this"

James Clark, Southampton (UK)

GM Review: "The background information, especially in chapters 7, 8 and 9 is extremely useful. I look forward to seeing the supplements that will be released if they are as accessible as the main rulebook"

Henri Devallois, Quebec (Canada)

GM Review: "I have just tried the 1st starter scenario with my gaming group and caught them off-guard. Just putting together my own scenario using the material in chapter 9. Players now think twice before drawing weapons due to their 1st experience with the combat system. Just starting to get to grips with the magic system which should be fun..."

Jacques Depre, Clermond Ferrand (France)

Player Review: "Great fun to watch other players faces when I showed my true colours: Darkun from the Cult of The Pures, even if they demolished the character!!"

Steve Smith, Bristol (UK)

Player Review: "Chris, Thanks for a great game during the weekend, and thanks to all other people round the table. A great experience of roleplay from a dark fantasy games system that's full of political intrigue, user friendly and fun (even if the combat is absolutely lethal!!) And as stated, I am really looking forward getting into the system with the full intent of Gming.

Better be at TowerCon we're spreading the word and there's alot of people raising interest. Anyways, chat to you soon on that. Ciao' Croney xx"

Sarah-Jane, Southampton (UK)

Player Review: "Hope your Conception was as successful as it looked. Your game was definately among the high-points of the weekend for me. Well done."

Stacey Collett, London (UK)

Player Review: "Crimson Empire offers a seemingly ordered world where nothing is truly as it seems... As characters progress deeper into the game world, truth becomes a matter of interpretation... Trust a casualty of fear... Oh and the game combat mechanics are to die for..."

In my opinion, one of the freshest and most original British games on the market. A great game!"

- James Roth - I of the founders of Knights of the Solent based in Portsmouth (www.roleplaysoc.com) OK! Here is a Self-Review of the 1st edition of the CRIMSON EMPIRE game:

First, I will endeavor to present the game as objectively as possible, taking into consideration comments and observations that have been made to me over the years of playtesting. I hope that this will give you more of a chance to formulate your own opinion on this game.

Crimson Empire initially started life as a game called Cult Master (12 years ago), then was known as F.A.T.E (Feu, Air, Terre & Eau, being the four elements of course in French), then was renamed for its English version under Crimson Empire. The French version never saw a commercial release due to financial and "personal logistic" reasons. This will hopefully change with the much revised English version, with a French release now on the cards.

The game had over that period of time a great deal of exposure from around 3 games clubs, who adopted it as their main Medieval FRPG and in fact replacing altogether other games of the same genre within those environments. The game was also presented 3 times at the Paris Games Convention, 2 times at the Toulon Fantasy Games Convention and around 3 other times during smaller games fairs and local gatherings. The feedback from players was that, for those in tune with medieval RPG, it was a refreshingly new type of game (see below), and for those who had given-up on this genre, many of them came back to it and got stuck into some great campaigns. Whatsmore, and this idea is close to my heart, it brought new players into clubs and introduced them to the gaming hobby.

The most frustrating thing at the time though, was that there were only a few master copies and nothing to sell. I kick myself to think that I have now lost the sheets of paper I had filled-in with peoples details who wanted to buy a copy... We even had Pierre Rosenthal, a prominent figure on the French gaming scene (co-editor of the Casus Belli gaming magazine at the time, I recall), who played a 6-hour slot and had a great time, offering to do a two-page spread in the magazine and give us exposure. My co-club members and I also contributed to an independent games magazine, which had great content, but sadly didn't get past the "2-year break even point".

PHYSICAL PRESENTATION: the 1st edition of the book comprises just over 310 pages. There are over 100 illustrations of which around 85 are from the same illustrator, so there is a common theme throughout the book, which captures the whole essence of the gaming universe. If you briefly flick through the book, you will get a feel for the game quite quickly. The print is on 100gsm quality paper, with a nice crisp black print. The book itself is of the highest quality perfect bind, and has a thick laminated card cover in black. The illustration on the home page of this site does not do justice to the result that has come off the press. The front cover character is based upon the dreaded Darkun characters that can be played and/or encountered in the game. She is the result of a few brainstorming sessions with the artist (Rob Larson, [RL-Publications-Ltd](#))

WHAT IS THE GAME ABOUT? Crimson Empire is a Dark-Age FRPG that is set in the world of Thargos. By "Dark-Age", I'm not referring precisely to that historical period, but some characteristics of the game do relate to this. It is more used to qualify the troubled times that the gaming universe is going through. I will simplify the background information to get the main themes across, but do not wish to give too much away and ruin the fun.

The main gaming area is known as "The Continent", you may think that this is terribly original, but actually works very well with players and fits-in well with the history of Thargos. Once again, as stated previously I'm simplifying the geopolitics here so please bear with me. The Continent is split into two main entities: The Empire which is in fact the crumbling remains of the Old Empire and Karnarcos, comprising a host of fiefs, cities and regions that for the most part sway towards absolute domination and a hatred of the Empire.

The Empire was crippled by the Great Cataclysm (known as year 0 on the Imperial Calendar), which caused nature to unleash incredible power and indiscriminate destruction. The reasons for this are detailed in Chapter 9 of the book and will not be divulged here as to preserve some of the context information. This event caused the following:

- Thargos had its trajectory changed affecting climatic conditions considerably.

- The Gods of the Ancient Pantheons lost their influence as their plane of existence was "sealed". However, each God had the chance to send one Envoy to Thargos, whose main aim was to reestablish the link between the two worlds, but also hunt down those responsible (players can potentially be one of these, but they don't know it at first).

- Mages became known in some areas as Heretics, as they were made responsible for the catastrophe: this limits the use of magic at the MT's (Master Of Tales) discretion.

- The only manifestation of any real power was that of the elements, hence the emergence of the Elemental Cults, and the destruction of temples, religious sites and artifacts. This is why Great Priests or High Priests as they are also known are omnipotent.

When this all occurred, the opportunity was grasped to have access to immediate power, by plotting the assassination of Mit-Sulek IV (the Emperor), and taking command of a large part of the Imperial Army. Kelmat of Nardam was the General who took this risk, and by doing so plunged the whole region into civil war, a war that has endured over 150 years.

This is where the world of Thargos finds itself at the moment, a world devoid of any divine intervention, bar that of the Envoys. The power of nature, reacting to having had its harmony destroyed, is now used and exploited by the Great Priests in order to control the masses, through their influence and through fear of the Elemental Factions. Hatred fuels the forces of Karnarcos, who scheme and plot the downfall of the remnants of the once glorious Empire, but there is still hope...

Thargos is now a dangerous place to be, with religious factions waging war against knight orders, barbarian clans and tribes swaying from one side to another, as well as a new threat growing in the east...

Magic does exist but is not widely accepted, and some societies shun its use or even consider this as heresy, punishable by torture and death. The irony here is that High Priests, who are the instigators of such brutal practices, use their own form of magic, and even have Mages and Sorcerers by their side. This allows for some interesting roleplaying as you can imagine.

To summarise, Crimson Empire is an exciting environment to develop complex character interaction, and really get to play some interesting and unique individuals. The realism and credibility of the "backdrop" adds to the dark atmosphere, which is at times disturbing and extremely unpredictable.

Please also note that there is enough background information for this game to be used with other systems, and that the rules themselves are flexible and adaptable.

CHARACTER CREATION: there are 9 core classes of character that can be played. The initial reaction from some players was "what? Is that it?". Well in fact, there are so many variants of sub-classes that it would be impossible to detail them here. Basically core classes have a set of attributes and aptitudes. The MT can then provide at their discretion, an "aptitude pack™", which enables each player to enhance certain key areas they wish their character to have developed when they set-out. There will be some extra game aids on this site relating to aptitude packs and other users of the game are welcome to contribute ideas to the site. This basically means that each Warrior, Darkun etc. will be unique as one will be far more proficient in archery, the other will be an expert acrobat etc. Under the core class, the player will in effect be able to create their own type of class (e.g. Druid-Horse Whisperer, Warrior-Metallurgist, Thief-Master of Disguise etc.), in accordance with the MT.

There are 3 types of Humans of which some have a proportion of Elven blood (Condorians, Uldanians and Mandorians), 3 types of Elves (Noble-Elves, Wood-Elves and Valley Elves), 2 types of Dwarves (Northern and Darvane) and 2 types of Dergs (Faldor and Nirkar). Shortly there will be also be Thargians, Drayns, Centaurs and a host of other character races.

Characteristics and Aptitudes: the 9 basic characteristics range from a score of 2-22, and Aptitudes are % based (more than 60 of them are in the game). All aptitude throws are made using Id100.

Character creation comprises but is not limited to the following elements:

-Characteristic throws

- Choice of Race
 - Determine literacy levels
 - Choice of Class
 - Aptitude determination combining both race and class and using a potential Aptitude Pack.
 - Aptitude modifiers based upon childhood-adolescence skills and regional awareness/exposure
 - Inheritance throws: determines for example if a potential Knight character starts off as a Knight or a Squire, the latter must find a mentor, i.e. another Knight to teach them the code. Only a Knight can grant knighthood once the Squire is deemed to be ready.
 - Choice of Order of affiliation (if any)
 - Psychological traits: used to play the character and develop the facets of their personality. These are also used by the MT to assign experience in relation to the quality of the players roleplaying.
 - Birthplace tables
 - Elemental Powers (if any)
 - Special Powers (if any)
 - Envoy status determination (if any)
 - Mental Health determination
- etc.

MAGIC: although there are 170 known spells in the book, there is tremendous scope for "Mage" players to create an unlimited amount of spells, restricted only by their imagination and a couple of rule constraints. Generally speaking, as long as the "grammar" provided and effects tables are followed, then almost anything goes. This really has been one of the unique items of the game that has made it so much fun for those who have played it. Imagine the faces of other players, when your spell caster releases their own spell and has effects that no one has ever seen before. Or how about haggling between Mages and swapping their creations, this really does open up a whole new area for roleplaying and negotiation.

As described before, it is up to the MT to regulate this and inject their own interpretation of magic use into the campaign. I usually prefer to restrict magic, just adding to the excitement of experiencing its effects every now and then.

COMBAT: players get to choose their tactics and evaluate their opponents weaknesses. As you would imagine, armour protects to varying levels, but comes at a cost for movement and speed, nothing new there. There are however a host of new rules regarding armour damage, pain thresholds, illicit weapons, special attacks and so on. Combat is graphic, vivid and action packed. The pace can also be regulated by the MT, if he or she chooses to do so, by eliminating certain additional rules. All the players that have experienced the game, have come to the same conclusion: combats are action-packed, exciting and dramatic, and have a very gritty feel to them. You can just picture Heavy Plate Armour being ripped off a leg by a Bear-Claw weapon, then damage being inflicted and the victim having to make a pain endurance throw, or face possible loss of consciousness...

There is so much more to be said about combat, but I recommend you flick through a copy of the book in a shop, check the game at a convention or e-mail us with precise questions.

CONTEXT: this is really the other area where Crimson Empire comes into its own: there are over 130 pages of context here with stacks of info on creatures, cities, regions, climate, Knight Orders, Darkun Orders, Personalities of Renown, maps, plants, poisons etc. There are also nearly 90 creatures, each one having 60+ Aptitudes (like the Player Characters), with loads of illustrations, habitat and behaviour information and their general descriptions.

Here are a few examples:

Cities:

Telvar (Great Capital of)

Population: 50,000

Regional population: 346,000+

Resources: cloth, spices, gold, iron, platinum, silver, gemstones, freshwater fishing and agriculture.

Telvar is the most powerful imperial city, and is the capital of the territory of Telos. It has some of the most impressive Fire and Earth Temples of the Empire. Knight Orders in Telos are numerous and renowned for their dedication to the cause and their great deeds. Indeed, one can find the Guard of Telvar, the Watchers of Telos and the mighty Judge-Knights of Telos here (see section 9.5.I).

Telos is rich, powerful and has huge resources and reserves, ready for any invasion from Karnarcos. Telvar is governed by imperial descendants and abides by strict imperial laws. Darkuns are slain on sight, and it is the Judge-Knights duty to intercept, flush-out, unmask, interrogate, read the imperial rites and exterminate any Darkun or associated agents. Roads and communication tracks are excellent in the whole of Telos, which favours trade, travelling and military deployment.



Telvar Main Keep (looking west towards the sea)

Creatures:

Ghoul: these creatures are vicious, voracious and evil. They will attack on sight any living being, whatever the odds. They are obsessed by flesh and devour their prey on the spot. They are also known to attack in packs. They usually roam graveyards, battlefields and some city catacombs. They also carry disease and stink of rotting flesh. They are usually humanoid with long grey or black hair, fingernails, long teeth and red or yellow eyes. They try to bite their prey's throat and bleed them, which drives the Ghouls into a frenzy: +20% in attack, but -10% in Parry/Dodge as they are less concerned for their own safety. This occurs as soon as a target is wounded in their presence (40 meter range).

Habitat: can be found near swamps, graveyards, battlefields and catacombs.
Frequency: uncommon.



Ghoul

There is just so much more to present here, but it would be faster to upload the book onto the site! Please get in contact if you have any further information requirements. I hope that this has given more of an insight into the game and has increased your interest and understanding of what Crimson Empire is all about.

Happy gaming for 2003-2004!

Chris

Author of Crimson Empire