

# Turakian Age

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## The Review:

*Reviewed By Gordon Feiner*

The Upside:

The Turakian Age is Hero Games' High Fantasy setting. The sourcebook covers an eight-thousand year period, sticking the default campaign setting five-thousand years into it, focusing on that era in the book. The ever present Great Evil, present in almost every incarnation of this genre, comes in the form of Kal-Turak The Ravager Of Men.

*Chapter One - A History Of The Turakian Age.* Chapter one covers, in brief, the first five thousand years of Ambrethel. Ambrethel is the region of the planet that Turakian Age depicts, a single massive continent plus two small sub-continental islands, all told encompassing perhaps a third of the globe. It does contain lands from the arctic region down to around the equator. The history covers early mankind, their encounters with the Drakine (a dragon-born race) and their spreading throughout the land. We get major points in this long history, the rise of mighty empires, and their fall, and some people that have left their mark (one way or another) on the history of the land. The history is divided into First Epoch (FE) and Second Epoch (SE), though the Year Number Count does not restart, it's simply a divisor used by historians in the realm to mark the death of The Lord Of the Graven Spear, who was the first to conquer almost all the land presented. This part of the history is handy if you want to set a campaign in the past compared to the default start date, and of course to give an idea of what came before.

*Chapter Two - The Peoples Of Ambrethel.* This short chapter goes into the Major and Minor Races that are most likely to be Characters. The major races of Ambrethel are Men, Dwarves, Drakine, Elves, and Orcs. Men are given a bit more space as it goes into the various subraces of men across the world. Dwarves are very close to your classic Fantasy Dwarf. Drakine are a race of dragon-men, descendants of true dragons if you believe them. Elves are also very close to the classic Fantasy Elf, though the biggest difference here is that they don't always live in trees, though forests are still a staple. Half-elves are also given some space. Orcs are also given space, again a classic Fantasy Orc archetype is presented, though they do mention a nation of Civilized Orcs that hold their lands much as men do, and Half-Orcs are presented.

The Lesser Races are minor forces in Ambrethel, but no less available to Players. They're just much rarer as races go. The Erqigdlit are a race of Dog-men, which isn't often seen in a fantasy setting. Gnomes in Ambrethel are a race of Half-Dwarf and Half-Halfling that bred true. Goblins are another classic Fantasy Race, vicious and evil for the most part. Halflings are also as you'd expect them to be in a standard fantasy setting. Leomachi is another unique and interesting race, they're Liontaurs (lower bodies of lions, upper bodies of men). Pakasa are cat-people, and like men have several

subraces. Seshurma are the Ambrethel lizard-men, and are what you'd expect, though they are not friendly with the Drakine. Trolls are the last race presented, and while many trolls are barbaric by standards of men, they are not simply monsters in Ambrethel and there are a few troll nations around, Half-Trolls are also known.

The races cover all the basic Fantasy races you'd expect from a standard High Fantasy setting, plus a few interesting ones that make it stand out a bit. All the Package Deals presented are good at representing what each race is capable of, though the Troll Package may be out of range for a standard fantasy game point range.

*Chapter Three - The Realms Of Ambrethel.* The world presented has one major continent, one minor continent and one large island nation, along with several minor islands. The land is divided into Seven Realms, four on the main continent, two on the small continent and the last is the island nation. Each Realm is then divided into various kingdoms, empires, and city-states. The chapter details each Realm, going nation by nation. Every entry contains the following information; Statistics (government type, current ruler, capitol, population percentages, languages, coinage, resources, religion, military strength in percentage of forces, and the arms/symbol), the statistics are presented as percentages where numbers are concerned so a GM can tailor exact numbers to his campaign desires. A History going back to the nations inception which can be thousands of years, or only decades, with major events that have formed that nations ideals. The Nation in 5000 SE, which is the default starting year for the campaign. The Land detailing major features, major towns or cities and other important aspects. Society which covers the prevailing attitude, how the rulers and people interact and their feelings on certain hot-topics in that nation. All told seventy-three nations are presented in detail covering almost the entire land in the seven main Realms. The kind of detail presented gives the picture of a living, moving world that has not only history but once the game starts you can set it in motion and the Players can feel like they're in a world that isn't just waiting for them to arrive. At the same time, given the size of it all, there are a lot of details left out for a campaign to jump into and start adding to, allowing the Players to feel a part of the world.

The main body of the chapter covers all that's above, and is where the majority of campaigns will take place in. Three other Realms are also given some space. First is the Far North, which has an additional two peoples, a completely open wilderness should you want to explore an unsettled land and the stronghold of Kal-Turak, the settings main embodiment of Evil. The Other Planes, which gives some information on worlds outside Ambrethel. And the Sunless Realms, a collection of Realms underneath Ambrethel and some of the nations and peoples living there who may or may not come to the surface to cause trouble (or Players can go down doing the same).

Given this kind of breadth it can be hard to choose just exactly where to start a campaign. But that's a bonus rather than a negative. Also, in the side bars of many pages there are many NPCs written in short form for use in various nations and realms throughout Ambrethel, as well as the occasional bit of history.

*Chapter Four - Life In 5000 SE.* As stated the default starting year for a campaign is Five Thousand, during the Second Epoch. This chapter details how much of society works (and differs in some regions) in that year. First is a bit on Adventurers and Adventuring and the prevailing attitude towards them. The Calendar is next, or rather the major Calendar's used by each Realm, giving even more detail to each part of the world, and doing more to make it less homogeneous. Included are the Zodiac (and how different races and realms perceive them) and major holidays. Family Life covers the mundane but important topics of burial practices (how else do Adventurers get crypts to explore) and Marriage Customs. Social Life covers how major governments interact, magics place in society, military life, slavery, technology, and trade. Each of these is given enough detail to allow a GM to set

a game up, and then fill in any needed details as needed. The overall feel of the Peoples is set in this chapter and it does a good job of creating enough differences that one Realm simply isn't a copy of another only on a different spot on the map.

*Chapter Five - Turakian Character Creation.* This chapters goes into creating a character for the setting, focusing on that characters profession. Turakian Age characters use a lot of the basic Professional Package Deals presented in the Fantasy Hero sourcebook, so it's a good idea to have that on hand as well (such as a basic warrior and bard). However, there are still a large number of Professional Package Deals unique to the game setting and those are all detailed here. Priests in Ambrethel use their own Package Deal and given the importance of Religion and the Gods in the setting is an important one. Though the Package is expensive compared to most. Several special orders of Priests also have Package Deals, nine orders are presented to even further specialize a character. Those wanting to play a Priest should read Chapter Six in detail. The Rogue Package Deals are all specializations of the generic Package Deals presented in Fantasy Hero, they include a Guild Thief, Mountebank, Tomb Raider and two orders of Assassins. Likewise the Warrior Package Deals are specialized for the setting, the Barbarians provide changes to the Package Deal in Fantasy Hero, a Gladiator Package is present as well as Orders Of Knights (the capabilities are the same as the Package in Fantasy Hero). Paladins are given a little more space, providing several special Paladin Abilities (similar to Divine Spells, but not the same) as well as which orders of Paladin have which abilities. The Wizard Packages are for a Guild Mage and a Warrior-Mage.

The rest of the chapter is for System Rules. High Society is broken down by region and race, and can be an important part of a political campaign. A Language Table is provided. For Perks a Lordship Rank and Religious Rank table are provided. And Disadvantages covers the Age Disadvantage for the long lived races. Equipment covers the costs and abilities of various goods in Ambrethel that don't appear on the tables in Fantasy Hero.

*Chapter Six - The Gods Of Ambrethel.* Ambrethel, like many Fantasy Settings, has many Gods. And the major ones are detailed in this chapter. Not only are the Gods detailed but the Religions as well. Most of Ambrethel follows the High Church, which is a single Religion to all the Gods, unlike many settings a Priest worships all the Gods, even if they show an affinity to one specifically they do not worship that God exclusively.

Like any place with many widely varied cultures and races there are different Pantheons and different Religions. While much of the world is a variation on the High Church (with a table that shows what nations call any given God) there are a few distinct differences. The Drakine have their own Gods for instance, and Religion. There are seven major Pantheons, and the four major religions are given a good bit of detail, the others are detailed in the same place as their Pantheon.

The religious diversity is another aspect of creating a realm that doesn't feel the same wherever you go.

*Chapter Seven - Turakian Magic.* This chapter details how Magic works in the Setting. Both as society perceives it and the Game Mechanics behind it. Magic in Ambrethel is divided into Arcana, or roughly different schools of magic. The Fantasy Hero Grimoire I and II detail a huge number of spells, but there are some included in this book as well. Twenty-Six spells for Theurgy Arcana. Seventeen Ulronai Warrior-Mage spells. Twelve spells that are regional. Twenty-nine spells for the High Church, and eleven spells unique to other religions. Enchanted Items are also included in this chapter, thirty six are included in this book.

*Chapter Eight - Game mastering The Turakian Age.* This chapter contains four parts. First is a sort of Future History of Ambrethel, detailing how things happen in the default universe from the year Five-

Thousand to Eight-Thousand when the world, effectively, ends. This is the Official Champions Universe History of Ambrethel, telling of the rise, downfall, rebirth and destruction of Kal-Turak. This is given not as a strait jacket for campaigns but to give a GM some ideas of when and how things change in case a campaign further along than the default setting (where Kal-Turak is just rising to power) is desired.

Part Two is Campaigning in the Turakian Age. It provides six full Campaign ideas, each with three major story plot seeds to further it along. Part Three is the GM's vault where the secrets and rumors from the previous chapters are revealed. The last part is twenty-eight Plot Seeds that can be used in any campaign.

*Chapter Nine - The Renowned Of Ambrethel.* This is the NPC chapter. Five enemies and Five allies are provided for encounters in the game. And two monsters unique to the setting, a Turakian Demon and an Undead Drakine called an Unburned.

The Downside:

I would have placed Chapter 5 after Chapters 6 and 7, giving players all the information on the setting and how it works before going into making a character. An aesthetic complaint at best.

The settings main attraction is also it's main problem, it is under the surface a fairly generic High Fantasy Setting familiar to just about any gamer out there. While there's nothing wrong with this (after all it's completely familiar because people like it) but it doesn't quite capture the imagination as much as it could.

The Otherside:

If you're looking for a good, detailed and intricate High Fantasy setting that Turakian Age is an excellent resource. The majority of the setting is presented without System Mechanics making it easy to transition to your system of choice.

Overall, I liked Turakian Age, it's a good High Fantasy setting, immediately familiar to almost any gamer out there (and anyone who is a fan of fantasy literature), with enough unique aspects and details to help it stand out against all the other Fantasy Settings in RPGs. It's a big thick book, with lots of information in it. If you want a High Fantasy setting to go slaying dragons, dungeon delving and fighting in kings armies in you could do a lot worse than Turakian Age.

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