

Warhammer: The Dark Ages

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Trading & Communications In The Dark Times

One major difference in a Dark Ages campaign is the differing levels of trade and commerce, due to both the volatile state of the Empire and a lower level of technology. Below are details on how things might differ in the Dark Ages.

Inflation, Inflation, Inflation

While it seems straightforward to state that prices increase over time, it must be noted that the overall effect of such economic changes is to maintain the status quo. A book today might cost twice what it did fifteen years ago, but money is also worth effectively less. As prices increase, so do wages. Since it is extremely unlikely that any campaign would carry on for so long as to make these economic factors a concern, there is no need to change prices as they will remain relative.

The one place where monetary change might be appropriate is in exchange rates. While in the present day, the Kislevite Mark is near worthless, during the Dark Ages it would be a valid currency. Also, the Imperial Crown would be of lesser value outside the Empire, given its slowly decaying state as a nation.

Further, we must consider the increasingly fractured state of the Empire. As Tim Eccles noted in a recent Warpstone, coins from different regions may be less readily accepted in other areas. This would be more relevant in a time of civil war. With up to three different Emperors on three separate thrones, money decreases in value beyond the domain of the ruler whose face appears on the coin.

Trading Woes

The shattered state of the Empire during the Dark Ages makes trading much more difficult. With the breakdown of law and order, banditry is rife and raids by Goblins and Beastmen have increased. Trade is, however, vital to a developed nation, if only because the cities need food. Whatever remains of social order would no doubt engineer a situation whereby trading in these vital commodities would become more profitable, perhaps raising the taxes on luxury goods. Arms and equipment for armies would also be in great demand, and less taxed. In practicality, anything other than basic food and clothing should be increased in rarity by some amount, dependant on where the PCs go. Arms and armour, while still just as commonly produced, are in high demand by the governments of the time and would tend to be a little more scarce. Luxury items would become increasingly rare as their practicality decreases.

Technological Decline

Certain higher technology items would, of course, be missing in the Dark Ages. The printing press would be completely absent. Gunpowder technology exists, though it is much less common. Dwarven weaponry of this kind will be of equivalent ability to modern human weapons. Human-produced firearms would be even less stable than those of the present day. Since gunpowder technology would be in demand by the military, all weapons become increasingly rare.

The Human Element

Communication routes would be less stable in the Dark Ages. Few have a want or need to travel far in such dangerous times. In all likelihood, only the most important routes would be maintained, for food trade and military movement. Coach services would become more costly, and the paperwork required to travel would be extensive, to prove one is not a spy for instance.

Religious intolerance would be higher than today, and only brave or foolhardy travellers would openly declare their faith in unfamiliar places. These are fearful times...

