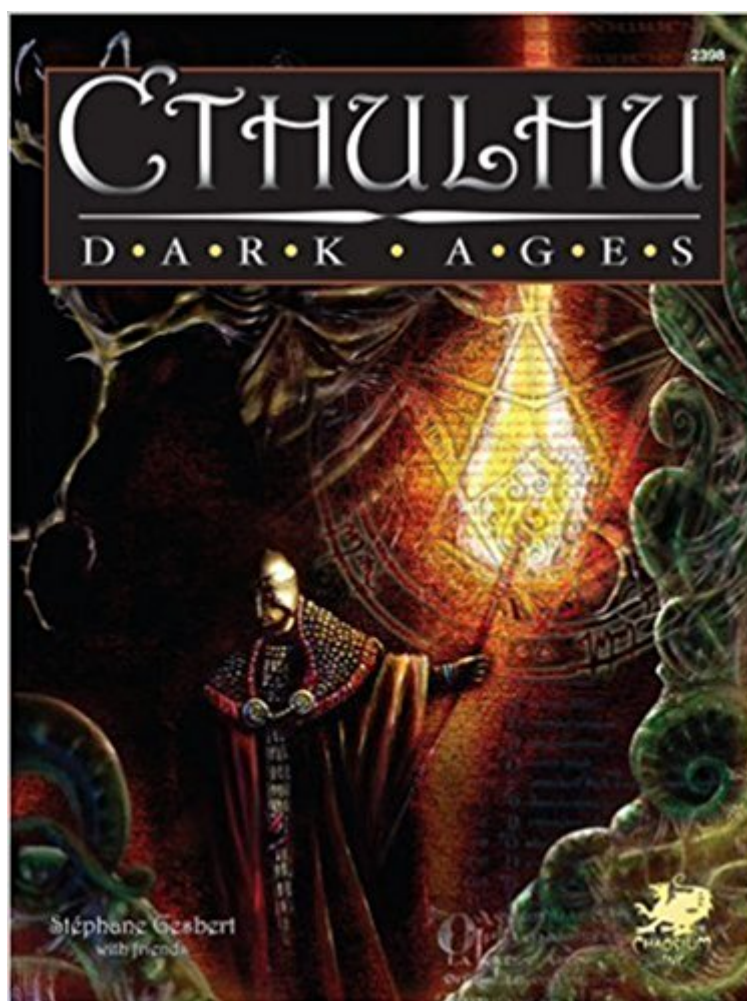


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Cthulhu Dark Ages (Call Of Cthulhu Horror Roleplaying, Chaosium #2398)



Synopsis

[CALL OF CTHULHU ROLEPLAYING] 950 A.D. -- The world is torn apart. Empires and kingdoms have endured two centuries of invasions, and now warlords fight over the remains like wild dogs. The clergy is weak and morally depraved, cities are depopulated, trade is stagnant, and violence reigns everywhere. History is coming into the Sixth Age of humankind, the ultimate age before the end of the world. The Byzantine Theodoras Philetas translated the "Al Azif" into Greek, and renames it the "Necronomicon." It will take a century before that blasphemous tome is finally condemned, and most copies destroyed. "Cthulhu Dark Ages" continues Lovecraft's sinister tradition of men and women struggling against the dark forces of the Cthulhu Mythos, but in a time nearly one thousand years before Lovecraft's birth. "Cthulhu Dark Ages" is a complete roleplaying game using Chaosium's classic "Basic Roleplaying" System.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Though a bit thin on background. Considering, however, that this is a more historical game than some other sword and sorcery style systems, it is easy to get background on the times and people from your local library. The adaptations of the Basic Role Playing System found in the standard Call of Cthulhu rules are interesting and logical. The idea of dark horror in these dark ages is interesting (like the game Vampire: The Dark Ages). The only negative I found was the idea of point expenditure for character creation. Instead of rolling random dice you have a number of points to separate between all attributes. One of the intriguing things about CoC is the range of characters that the random rolling method creates. However, this is a minor point, considering you can always just use

the standard dice method if you prefer. The point method appears to be an attempt to achieve game balance, which is kind of funny considering your average Cthulhu entity can eat your face off even if you are armed with a machine gun.

Cthulhu Mythos in the Dark Ages just plain makes sense. For nittier-grittier sword and sorcery, this system is probably better than any of the d20 systems. This is also a much more streamlined system which allows you to focus on story and role playing rather than mechanics and dice chucking. While I like it, too much of it is given over to rules, not setting, etc. I would have liked to see this more as a supplement to the core Call of Cthulhu game than as a stand alone product. That said, its a good alternative for people who only are PCs, never a keeper. Keepers should have both this and the Call of Cthulhu "big book".

I second most of the other reviews. It's a great stand alone game (you really don't need anything else to get informed and going). I'd add though, that they try to "fantasy" it up a bit, given that it's set in the past. They add some fantasyish magic, and a few other unrelated fantasy creatures that many might consider as taking away from the general theme of the game. It's all usable at the player's/game master's discretion, of course, so it's all good. None of the former would cause me to give it a poor review however, but the historical overview and related tidbits on these erroneously called "dark ages" do. It is so full of factual errors, outright contradictions, and false cliché and bias that it could make someone incensed with anger. Of course, it's not all error, but if one doesn't know anything about the era, well, take it all with a grain of salt. How much of that is done intentionally in order to promote a "dark" and "depressing" setting for the game, who knows? Anyway, the history lesson is only a portion of the book, and information on that abounds elsewhere.

This book was about exactly what I expected, a good idea starter and basic (very basic) historical source primer

Who, having read Clark Ashton Smith's "Averoigne" fiction and having run Call of Cthulhu, would *not* wonder at length about the feasibility of setting Call of Cthulhu games in the early history of the world? Could anyone who has run Call of Cthulhu and then who comes across "The Name of the Rose" and sees the library, either on film or in their mind's eye, *not* yearn to have his or her players standing bemused and terrified in the labyrinth? Of course not. So it was with great expectations that I purchased Cthulhu Dark Ages shortly after it became available. Most of those

expectations were mostly realized. What follows is a list of the reasons for the "most"s in that sentence. First off, the product cannot decide whether it is to be a sourcebook for a new game era or a setting for a one-off Call of Cthulhu scenario, and ends up being a poorer fit for either than if that decision had been made. As a sourcebook it is a tad scanty. Yes, there is a bibliography of suggested reading and "titles to come", but I really feel that there should have been more Dark Ages flesh on the bones (avoiding completely the definition of "Dark Ages", which the author explains unavoidably makes some of the materials anachronistic including the scenario in the book). The Grimoire has a High Fantasy feel to it, specifically having quick wave-o-the-hand boosts to major stats that owe much to the D&D magic system and little allegiance to the Mythos Grimoire of old. There has been some retooling done, and some interesting ideas on how to dress old friends up in new ways that emphasize their "otherness" that are applicable to the game in general, not just this version of it. There's a new villain, and a new place to meet people (Limbo) that offers some interesting possibilities a-la Dreamland-like adventuring. The milieu also comes with some heavy baggage that has to be factored in to play: No medical help capable of dealing with the likely damage to body and mind that characters will undoubtedly suffer, requiring a more High Fantasy style of magic to counter, and the (to me much more problematical) issue of God. In other Call of Cthulhu settings it is possible to side-step people's personal belief systems, but here the presence of The Church is so pervasive the GM is forced into having to decide the nature of God in-game (it *will* come up), and in doing so risks giving non-trivial offense to some. The wise GM will give this some thought before gaming in the Dark Ages. The scenario included with the book is an okay but fairly unspectacular thing that runs very much to the High Fantasy model - not in itself a bad thing, but it doesn't showcase Cthulhu Dark Ages's uniqueness from such High Fantasy games as well as it might have done, and therefore doesn't "show the way" for an interested person to get the best from this particular version of the game. What is needed now is a commission from Chaosium to the author of this piece for a full-sized sourcebook on the lines of the Dreamlands hardback so the era can be properly explored.

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