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Warhammer Armies: Dogs of War Published by Games Workshop Reviewed by Robert Clark

When I first considered writing this review, a few months after *Dogs of War* was confirmed for release, I had visions of doom. I could see myself writing things like, 'has no use for WFRP', and not even bothering to suggest ways that the book could be used, given that so much of the Warhammer world had been changed. Eager to find the truth, I ordered my copy and held my breath. For at least a minute. Two weeks later the book arrived. I was in for a shock.

Just to set the scene, *Dogs of War* is an expansion of the Warhammer Armies books, offering a number of mercenary regiments in order to introduce a new dimension to the game. There are fifteen in all, ranging from the legendary 'Golgfag's Mercenary Regiment of Ogres' (who originally appeared way back in the original Warhammer Fantasy Battle - Now that's continuity) to 'Long Drong Slayer's Pirates', with a lot of Tileans in between. A lot of Tileans. As expected, the book has a Tilean theme, meaning that most of the mercenary regiments and nearly all the background concentrates on Tilea. I'll come to this later, but first the regiments.

Despite their WFB origins, each regiment provides a bite-size piece of Warhammer background that can fit seamlessly with your WFRP campaign. Most of them are (in)famous throughout the Old World, which can be used as a plot device. Perhaps the PCs are trying to hire a band of mercenaries for one reason or another, or even trying to enlist? Each group is distinctive, and most of them are human to boot. Each is a joy to read, and full of GW humour ranging from bad to even worse. The writers have clearly put some effort into design, with each unit having an individual imagery and background. I'm sure an inventive GM could put at least one of these to good use. One surprising aspect of this is that most mercenaries will work for any army, including the forces of Chaos and the Goblinoids. This suggests that the Warhammer world is not so hate-fuelled as was once believed, which can only open the doors for more monster race interaction in WFRP.

Disregarding the rules (of which there are few), we come to the background section, of which there is a good 30-odd pages. Words defy how much of a relief this was when I saw it. This is probably the best piece of writing GW have done in the last five years. Tilea has never been well-defined in either WFB or WFRP, but there was still the possibility of messing it up. Thankfully the authours Messrs Nigel Stillman, Rick Priestley and Toumas Pirinen have pulled this one right out of the top drawer. Tilea owes much to renaissance Italy, as you might expect, but it is done in an appealing rather than obvious way, with the people of Tilea retaining an individual character of their own. It is clear why Tilea was chosen for *Dogs of War*, when you consider all the mercenary antics that take place between the city states and their ruling merchant princes. Indeed Tilea doesn't even bother with an army, instead employing the numerous regiments as and when needed.

Regarding background clashes, there are very, very few, and none of immediate import unless you have a burning desire to introduce your PCs to Hrothyogg the Ogre. (The fact that very few people will know what I am talking about proves my point!) Each of the city

states is added to and enhanced rather than rebuilt from the ground-up. Indeed Nigel Stillman has previously raised the point that the WFRP text waxed lyrical about fishing and not much else. I can see his point, and I have no problems when he clearly does not contradict anything, or rewrites the whole mythos as he did with Bretonnia and the Lizardmen. The new background is very good, and I am glad to report that there are no pretensions to 'Ancient Remas', though hints of Rome do crop up from time to time, they certainly do not cause any harm. The timeline is creative, managing to stick with the IC 1000 'Birth of the Old World nations' line whilst suggesting that the Tileans are a rather civilised people. Unlike Realm of Chaos, the timeline is much more than a list of battles, and I believe it will add to WFRP rather than detract from it.

Throughout the book it is almost as though the last few years of WFB had never happened, that a copy of WFRP (or at least the original background) sits on the desk of the writers, and that GW humour has at long last been rediscovered! This book is chock full of the stuff, one of my favourites being a brilliant story about Golgfag's Ogres which I won't tell to avoid spoiling the punchline. Perhaps those favouring the 'Grim World' aspect of WFRP will balk at much of this flippancy, but it has been around since day one and without it Warhammer just wouldn't be Warhammer. Some of the puns are so bad you just want to show people, especially if you don't pick them up first time around. By far the most promising things are yet to come. Not only is the Winter's Teeth Pass from *Doomstones* given a mention, but so too is the road that links the Old World with Cathay. The world is once more open for business! Also, the Hobgoblin Khan and his minions are back in print once again. The intention is to follow this book with more of the same: more mercenary regiments, more background and lots more GW humour. The onus once again is on the players to write in saying what they want, which is an invitation I'm sure none of you will refuse. I suspect this is how they intend to shape the Warhammer world from now on, testing the water so to speak with new regiments. As with Tilea, WFB seems to have come out of the Dark Ages and into the Renaissance, and hopefully it will stay there. No doubt Hogshead will have a field day with the potential that *Dogs of War* has thrown up, not only for Tilea but for the myriad other realms that it touches upon. Moving away from the all-out battle stance that WFB has been stuck in since WFRP disappeared from GW stores can only be a good thing. After all, less fighting means more chance to role-play and explore the world.

If you have the money, buy this book and be glad. If you haven't the money, go and badger your GM to buy it; I'm sure they will comply.