

The Ancient Wastes of Zenea

A Campaign Setting Primer for Players

A Brief History of Zenea:

The known history of Zenea is currently broken into three epochs: the Old World, the Age of Men, and the Age of Clarity.

The Old World

Not much is known of the Old World, other than the fact that arcane magic was allowed to coexist as an equal to divine magic, and the world was saturated with arcane magic's unholy influence. During this time Ancient Zenean is thought to have been the primary language.

The Age of Men

A group of people infatuated with arcane magic and the power it granted sought to gain more power than anyone ever had before them. This group came to be known as the "Unrighteous." The Unrighteous became so powerful and corrupted that they decided to wage a war on the Gods of Men that presided over the Old World. The war raged on for decades until finally the Unrighteous won, killing most of the Gods of Men and sending the rest into hiding. The age of men is agreed to have continued for a short time after the war with the world recovering from the massive destruction that the war had caused.

The Age of Clarity

The dragons, who had disappeared at the beginning of the war, returned one day. They were led by their god, the Dragon, along with its two allies, the Caracal and the Hawk. The Dragon took the Unrighteous by storm. The Unrighteous were weakened from their war with the Gods of Men, and the Three defeated them, but not before many dragons were killed. This great battle took place over what is now the Ancient Wastes, destroying most of the civilization that remained there and reforming the landscape. The Dragon, the Caracal, and the Hawk then ascended to their plane, Alnaeyim, taking all the dragons with them. They rule from there, granting holy powers to their servants and watching over all devout souls that travel there in the afterlife. It has been a little over a millennium since the Three reclaimed their rightful position ruling over the planes.

Laws of the Land:

In towns and cities in the Ancient wastes, at the entrance and/or in a heavily trafficked place like a market, there is typically a stone obelisk engraved with the laws of the Ancient Wastes. These laws were decreed by and are upheld by the Sultan, his Viziers, and his Zayims.

1. The attack or murder of an unarmed person is prohibited.
2. Unauthorized martial contests are prohibited.
3. The theft of the Sultan's property, or the property of any of his subjects and or guests, is prohibited.
4. The worship of any false gods, including the use of magic in their name, is prohibited.
5. The practice of arcane magic by any unauthorized persons is prohibited.
6. Treason against the Sultan or any of his Zayims is prohibited.
7. The practice of slavery is prohibited.
8. Any intimate fraternization between the chosen races and common races is prohibited.
9. Any persons who are suspected perpetrators of these, or any other acts deemed unlawful by the governance of Redmoon, will be arrested. They will then be tried, and, if found guilty, punished summarily by the Sultan or one of his Zayims.

The Temple of the Three:

Religion is the cornerstone of society within the Wastes. While people are not legally required to worship the Three, a person who eschews religion garners no respect from his peers, and will certainly not find himself in a place of favor in the public eye. Most people will assume you worship the Three.

The way worshipping the Three works is that all who serve worship all three. The more devoted servants typically choose the one whose values align best with their own and classify themselves a servant of that

particular god. This means that they primarily worship their selected god of the Three and attempt to inhabit their specific values, but are devoted to all Three.

The Gods

The Dragon: The Dragon is the most widely worshipped of the Three as he is their leader and is endowed with the most raw power.

Values: The Dragon values strength, both physical and strength of will, fighting prowess, courage, honor in victory and defeat, kindness to the less fortunate, and material wealth.

The Caracal: The Caracal is known the least worshipped god, but perhaps the worshipers are just the most subtle in their worship.

Values: The Caracal values secrets, subtlety, the ability and initiative to strike first against one's enemies with confidence, the collection of valuable things and knowledge, and above all, survival.

The Hawk: The Hawk is the most peaceful of the three, not encouraging combat unless absolutely necessary. Whereas the Dragon inspires many to become paladins, the Hawk motivates many to take up the cleric's vestments.

Values: The Hawk values knowledge above all else, and states that all problems may be solved if the right knowledge is procured. The Hawk also values education of the general public.

"Knowledge is a tool, to strike at one's enemies without a plan is akin to striking a nail with one's hand instead of a hammer."

~A saying heavily debated for whether it originated from the Caracal or the Hawk

Inhabitants of the Wastes:

Race plays an extremely prominent role in the society of the Ancient Wastes because of the worship of the Three. Three specific races, titled “Chosen Races.” These three species are the chosen people of the gods, and as such are to be treated with immense respect. Anything they do is an extension of the will of the Three, and because of this they are infallible in character and deed. The rest of the races, much more abundant in number, are referred to as “Common Races.” **(The chosen races are not playable by PCs)**

The Chosen Races

Dragonborn: Considering themselves the most favored of the chosen races, these scaled warriors demand the utmost respect from the common races and even their fellow chosen races. Dragonborn are the only race that believe themselves children of their god, the Dragon. This fact often inspires Dragonborn to reach for positions of leadership, either in government or in organizations. By far the largest of the races, Dragonborns typically stand between 6 ½ and 8 feet tall, and most of them are relatively large in build, weighing between 250 and 500 pounds.

Tabaxi: The Tabaxi may be the fewest numbering of the chosen races, or perhaps they are just noticed less, which is exactly what they prefer. For the most part Tabaxi do not inhabit positions of utmost leadership, but rather advise those in charge, typically a Dragonborn. Tabaxi usually measure 6 to 7 feet in height. They also feature tufts of dark hair sprouting from the tips of their ears, a trait specific to the Tabaxi in the Ancient Wastes.

Aarakocra: From the air, you can see more, and the Aarakocra value knowledge above all else. Unlike the other two chosen races, Aarakocra have little to no interest in politics. Most are scholars or holy men. They devote their time to gaining as much knowledge as they can, and are often sought out as sources of vast wisdom and knowledge. The Aarakocra are the slightest in physical stature, typically standing only about 5 feet tall and weighing less than 100 pounds in order to allow for the capability of flight. There are of course a few exceptions to the rule, but most Aarakocra resemble hawks or eagles in coloring and facial structure.

When in the presence of one of the chosen races, it is an expected practice to either remove any facial covering, or to place one’s hand to one’s face and lower it as if removing a mask. This is a sign of respect and is symbolic of revealing one’s true identity, signifying that any conversation will be completely honest, as one cannot lie to the gods or their chosen.

The Common Races

Elves: Usually considered the most beautiful of the common races, elves have a natural grace about them, which also applies to their aging process. Elves, once mature, do not really show signs of aging until they reach their mid-100s. The average life expectancy of an elf is about 250 years, with the most venerable reaching close to 300 years. Elven culture encourages appreciation of the finer things in life, and some the finest craftsmen are elvish, as they have longer than humans to perfect their trade. Elves are often naturally gifted when it comes to the arcane magics, which can obviously create problems.

Gnomes: The only thing that can rival elven craftsmanship is gnomish craftsmanship. Gnomes have a slightly shorter life expectancy than elves, at about 160 years. Gnomish society makes up for this by being primarily based around developing marketable trade skills, training their people for a specific trade from a very young age. The products differ in that elven craftsmanship tends to focus on encompassing the natural beauty of the world in their work, whereas gnomish design focuses entirely on practicality and functionality. Most of the “complex technology” found in the Wastes is gnome developed, and more often than not, gnome built. Gnome adventurers are often craftsmen or merchants attempting to sell their wares throughout the world, or seek out training to improve their craft.

Half-Elves: There are a large number of half-elves within the Ancient Wastes, as humans and elves intermingle often. They are welcome to partake both in human and elven culture, but often find it hard to fit in in primarily elven communities as they age at the rate of a normal human, and thus grow old as their friends stay young. This of course is a problem that anyone with an elf friend faces, meaning that people deal with it all the time. With this slight sense of being an outsider, half-elves often find themselves working as adventurers.

Halflings: Halflings are often considered the “heart” of any given community in the Wastes. They are typically kindhearted, hard-working, and simple folk. Halfling adventurers are rare, but the ones that do exist typically had a touch of heart to any party they may join.

Orcs: Considered the toughest of the common races, but not necessarily the smartest, orcs usually find jobs involving hard labor or work that includes potential violence, such as mercenaries or guards. Orcs in the Ancient Wastes have skin tones that range from brown to gray to green, and are characterized by their heavy brows and strong jaws. Most orcs also have tusks that jut upward from their bottom jaw. Adventuring is a common way for an orc to make a living.

Humans: Humans make up the bulk of the population in the Ancient Wastes. Humans in general have no specific area of specialty, they pursue every manner of vocation. Humans in the Wastes often have muted features of the other common races due to all the interracial breeding. It is not uncommon to see a human with slightly pointed ears, slightly larger incisors on their bottom teeth, strangely hued skin, or even stone colored freckles.

Tieflings: If you had to classify one specific race as the “outcasts,” it would be the tieflings. Their blood is tainted with devils’ darkness, and while that wasn’t something they can control, many don’t care and treat them with disdain or even hatred. Tieflings are few and far between, perhaps the sparsest of the common races, at least within the Ancient Wastes.

People Groups in the Ancient Wastes:

All throughout the Ancient Wastes there are vastly varying people groups. **(As a player you may want to join any one of these groups or even invent your own, if so, let me know and I will give you more information or ask you for ideas in relation to what you want to do.)**

Nomadic Sand-Sailor Tribes: There are at least four separate tribes of nomads that use vehicles that skim across the surface of the dunes as transportation.

(Suggested Backgrounds: Hermit, Outlander, Sailor)

The Redmoon Thieves Guild: Based in the largest city in the Wastes, this organization is the farthest reaching and most powerful organized crime group in the region.

(Suggested Backgrounds: Charlatan, Criminal, Urchin)

Caravan Guards: The safest and most common form of travel between settlements in the Wastes is by caravan. Many merchants make their living this way, moving from town to town, buying and selling wares. However, the Wastes are not especially forgiving, so all who can afford it hire caravan guards to ensure their safe arrival. Even with protection, it is not uncommon for a caravan to suffer losses, or even not arrive at its destination at all. Being a caravan guard is a dangerous job, but it pays well.

(Suggested Background: Outlander)

Disciples of the Three: Most worship the three, but only some devote their entire life to serving the gods. Holy men and women are greatly respected, and can be found traveling and even leading small communities all throughout the Wastes.

(Suggested Background: Acolyte)

The College of Redmoon: The College is the largest and most respected conglomeration of knowledge in all of the Wastes. Many seek acceptance as a pupil, especially servants of the Hawk, but only a small amount are accepted each year. Of the students accepted, a few stay at the college for many years, branching their study into many different fields. Most of the students, however, finish the initial three year program, receiving their certificate that allows them to legally practice arcane magic, and decide to go out and gain more knowledge through experience. The College does not teach or sanction spells in the schools of Necromancy, Enchantment, or Illusion, as they “do not tolerate curses or the alteration of another’s mind.”

(Suggested Background: Sage)