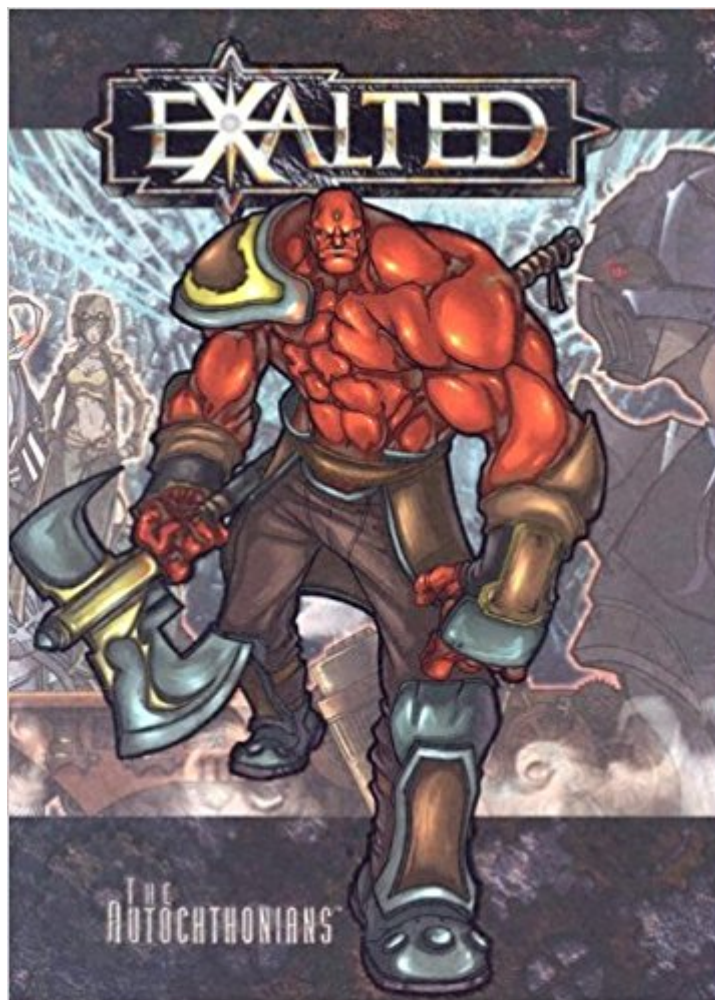


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Exalted The Autochthonians



Synopsis

Children of the Machine God Outside Creation, the great Primordial forge-god Autochthon is dying. But, millions of worshippers live within his metal body, and they will not allow their god to perish. Wrest open the gates of Creation, and traverse the endless distances of Elsewhere to reach the resources and souls that your iron deity needs to survive. A Core Expansion for Exalted Details the industrial god-world of Autochthonia, from its strange wildlife to the society of the mighty Alchemical Exalted. Provides complete information on and character-creation rules for the Alchemical Exalted, including a complete array of their unique Charms and artifacts. Includes three complete scenarios about Autochthonian invasion of Creation, for Storytellers who wish to use the arrival of the machinegod's exiles for an Exalted series.

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Customer Reviews

Exalted: The Autochthonians deals with the people that live within the Primordial, Autochthon - their lives, philosophy, and their heroes, the artificially-created Alchemical Exalted. Originally introduced in the supplement Time of Tumult (WW8821), the servants of the Machine God are fully detailed in this well-presented treatise. A (Very) Brief History of Autochthon After the Primordial War, Autochthon swept up several thousands of human volunteers and refugees and departed for the Void, knowing full well that his presence as the last Primordial was going to aggravate the gods and their Exalted lackeys. These people founded nations within the Great Maker's body, and lived by his bounty in the form of Essence conduits, nutrient paste, and power taps. In time, the god's mysterious mechanical body processes caused these nations to drift apart, and alliances between them were

made and broken as the continent-organs moved away from vital resources. Autochthonian society is rigidly stratified into a ruling clique, known as the Tripartite; a massive workforce, the Populat; and a scrim of exiles, slaves, and criminals called the Lumpen. As there are no fields or herds within the Great Maker's mechanical self, the Populat labors at the engines of industry, mining or building at the Tripartite's command, while the Lumpen eke what living they may in the dark and echoing reaches between nations. To lead his people, Autochthon brought forth the ancient, prototypical Exalted: artificial humans, composed of clay and Essence and instilled with a human soul. With millennia to refine and redesign them, these alchemically-synthesized heroes were optimized for leadership, combat, management, intrigue, and engineering, using a familiar caste system based on the five Magical Materials - orichalcum, moonsilver, jade, soulsteel, and starmetal. Yet something has gone wrong during Autochthon's self-imposed exile; over the millennia, his store of human souls has grown dilute, with the result that many children are being born soulless (which is to say, dead). The nations within him drift farther every year from vital resources of water, power, and Magical Materials. In desperation, the technomystical seal that keeps Autochthon isolated in the Void is breached, and a small force enters Creation in hopes of salvation.

The Crunchy Stuff Alchemical Exalted have some interesting game-mechanics differences that separate them from their Celestial and Terrestrial cousins. Firstly, an Alchemical's caste defines his primary Attributes: for example, an Orichalcum-caste Exalt has Strength, Charisma, and Intelligence as her caste Attributes. These Attributes get 9 dots to split between them. Then three other Attributes are chosen to receive six dots, and the remaining Attributes get four. As one may guess, this breaks the neat organization of Physical-Social-Mental, and it seems like a system open to a bit of player abuse. Not difficult, but not the most intuitive arrangement either. Alchemical Charms, then, are all Attribute-based, leading to a situation similar to Lunars. Unlike their fleshly counterparts, Alchemical Exalted are modular and can actually swap Charms out with relative ease. This is because each Charm is actually a piece of Autochthonian technology, with an obvious physical component. Perception Charms might replace a character's eyes with Essence-charged optics, and extra Health Levels may be betrayed by armor plating. This modular design allows Alchemicals to have Charms standing by to be installed, bought with the Artifact or Vats backgrounds. Each Charm has a commitment cost that is paid out of a character's Personal Essence pool, limiting the number of Charms a character can wield at once. Charms are kept in slots, of which a starting character has eight: four General and four Dedicated. Dedicated slots must be filled with Charms based on Caste or Favored Attributes, while General slots are open to any Charm. Alchemicals can learn Celestial-level martial arts through the implantation of a special Charm, and Autochthon's peculiar metaphysics allows his

Exalts to use a specialized version of sorcery. Alchemical Exalts have animas, as one might expect. Their anima effects are reflexive and range from dice adders to soak boosts. As they spend Peripheral Essence, they begin to shed ephemeral traces of their Caste magical material in increasing quantities, until in full iconic splendor they display phantom images of machinery or billowing clouds of smoke and steam. Rather than Limit, Alchemical Exalted suffer from Clarity, which works with a mechanic similar to an Abyssal's Resonance. Clarity measures the degree to which an Alchemical is attuned to the metaconscious hum of the Great Maker's mind: high Clarity means a character takes on a cold, ruthlessly efficient aspect, becoming in effect a free-willed extension of the Machine God.

The Book, Itself

Interestingly enough, the book opens with a statement to the effect that the entire following material is experimental in nature, and outside the "core" rulebooks of the game. So rather than a core book, what we have here is essentially a hardbound "fatsplat," with background material and Storyteller resources, rather than a canon addition to the game. The first two-thirds of the book is dedicated to the Machine God and its minions. The last third is split between three adventure scenarios. The first is a recap of Time of Tumult's "Locust Crusade" updated to reflect the fuller understanding of the Alchemicals, called "The Locust War." This is a sprawling, high-powered campaign that ranges from the southern deserts to the shores of the Blessed Isle, with more gods, Deathlords, Exalts, mass combats, and First Age devices than you can shake a daiklaive at. The second adventure, "The Quest for the Great Source," is more oriented towards Alchemical Exalted characters, and deals with the diminishing number of souls within the Great Maker. He is dying, and either using up or losing the souls - if more are not found, Autochthon will pass on into the Underworld and become a new Malfean. The third adventure, "Engines of Extinction," examines the impact of Creation on life inside Autochthon, specifically that of the Great Contagion. As hundreds of thousands of human Autochthonians die, exposed for the first time to this terrible disease, shadowlands open within Autochthon, and a mighty Deathlord invades with dire consequences for all Creation.

The art is by and large well-done and relevant. The binding is moderately good, though after a week mine is making suspicious creaky noises. The prose and fiction is of quality (especially considering some of the editorial abominations White Wolf has released upon the gaming community in the past), and for the most part editing and proofing was spot-on. Overall, I'd recommend this book to the Exalted completist. Nothing in it is vital to a chronicle that features Alchemicals as foes: in a way, this book destroys the mystique of the Alchemical Exalted in the same way that the Abyssals and Fair Folk books revealed, perhaps, too much about things better left to the Storyteller's and players' imaginations. Nevertheless, the setting is a rich one and any number of (steampunk?

Essencepunk?) gritty, Orwellian games could be set within the Great Maker's world.

This book is the most ambitious expansion yet on the Exalted Core setting. Though at first the idea of robot-Exalted living inside a planet-sized machine god (and who regularly use lightsabers, no less) seems more than a little hokey, once you actually sit down and read a few chapters, it all makes a lot of sense and is quite elegant. I was most impressed that this book came up with a believable and enjoyable system for building machine Exalted using the standard charm mechanics that are featured in every other book (excepting the mess that is Fair Folk), while simultaneously making them exotic and unique. Most importantly, you can pick up this book and bring it directly into a normal Exalted game (using the Alchemicals as party members, antagonists, or just shadowy background types) if you're so inclined - though perfectly capable of being a stand-alone, it can also be meshed without much work into an on-going game, even without using the massive Locust War scenarios presented in this book and Time of Tumult.

It is simply magnificent!! I hope that a second edition revision is made. This HAS to be included in the second edition

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