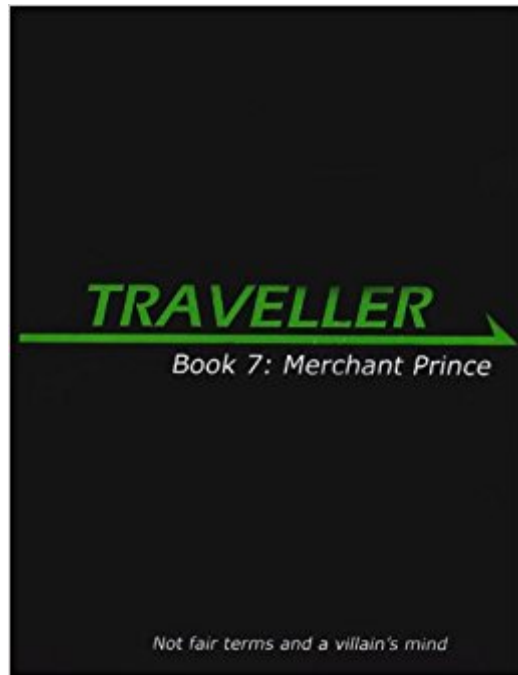




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Traveller Book 7: Merchant Prince (Traveller Sci-Fi Roleplaying)



Synopsis

Long-awaited by Traveller fans, Merchant Prince is for every character who engages in trading while roaming the stars. Starting off with some extra tips and options for the speculative trading every Traveller player is familiar with, Merchant Prince adds a whole new trading option for those wealthy enough to attempt it, allowing them to build a huge trading empire that spans the stars. With new career options, cargoes and ships, Merchant Prince is an invaluable companion to all Traveller players.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The supplement is broken down into 7 chapters. The first is the various careers (like with all other green supplements) and the last is equipment, which includes space faring ships. The middle five are: Commerical success in ten steps (A guide to making a corporation), The Merchant Lines (An array of megacorporations for use in campaign), Trade in the Galactic Market (Detailed rules on trading(Also the biggest chapter)), Privateers (Legal piracy), and Trade Goods (Expanded from the original.)I'm not going to detail each chapter. What I will do is say the only parts of the book I have used are the character creation chapters, galactic trade, and trade goods. I didn't come looking for the other stuff when it was bought, so there hasn't been a need. So if you're looking for expanded tables on merchants, supplemental trade rules and further detail on trade goods, this book is excellent for you. With some slight caveats.I'll get to those caveats last. First thing that is noticed when looking at the book is the improved art. Drastically improved from, say, Scoundrel. The layout is also better, there aren't too many white spaces here. Finally, the ship plans are great. Simply fantastic. The trade rules are good too, and it adds two new elements : Junk trading and slaving.

The banks don't care how the Travellers pay their mortgage...Both chapters are good, though I doubt they will be used personally. Time for the caveats. Like with most of the other green supplements, they add extra characteristics to creation. Like influence and the buyer/seller dynamic. I ignore these, and so did my players. There's also the matter of a license fee for the careers in the book. How is it paid? Why? To whom? No idea. Book doesn't tell me either. I assume it's a flat fee required to do the job, but I would like to know more details. Or a simple explanation. My final complaint is blandness. The Traveller universe is big and broad, and the books have to be generic. So I can see how it all kind of ends up like a gruel. It fills you and gives you sustenance, but you're not exactly fond of it either. A good book. Get it if you have any interest in mercantile campaigns. Every Traveller needs credits.

Overall, the book was a disappointment for me. I was looking for more solid campaign-level material, and strong character types to bolster the Merchant careers in the the *great* Traveller Core Rulebook. The character classes in Merchant Prince are a waste of paper. They add nothing significant to what's in the core book's Merchant class. The new traits, stuff about being a merchant, the whole lot. Forget the first 30 pages of the book. And Brian Steele needs to keep a dictionary on hand to look up terms like "Merchant Marine." The Merchant Marine class here is just another military career, and not a well designed one, either. The next section, on "commercial entities", has some useful stuff in it. I can hardly see sitting and wishing such rules were codified, though. The presentation scheme (a sort of "How to Succeed" primer) is over-strained. The information density is low. I can hardly imagine Process of Management stuff as being fun, even for obsessive players. If the character classes score a zero, I'd give this a one or two out of ten. Next comes "The Merchant Lines", which expands on the information given in the Spinward Marches book about the megacorps. If you're using the 3rd Imperium as the basis for your campaign, this is useful info. If you're not using the Official Traveller Universe, it's less useful. It could still be used in a non-31 milieu if you want plug and play megacorps, or use them as models for your own. Trade in the Galactic Market is the meat of the book. It has a somewhat corrected version of the trade section of the Core Book, with a few minor additions. It also adds FedEx trade, mail delivery, a Passenger transport section somewhat expanded and revised from TMB, salvage trade, and a bloated section on slave trade that mostly seems to be written to justify the slaver character classes. There's also a simple mechanic for increasing cargo value by assuming extra risks, which is pretty artificial and not campaign-friendly. It's just a paper mechanic, with the player saying "I'll take more risk, how much of a plus will I get on my cargo value roll?" Yeah, the ref will roll for the risk affecting the trip, but then

again, what if there's no more risk to be taken between two worlds a single jump apart with clear space lanes? Yeah, the ref should intervene, but then since we've already got law levels, why create a new mechanic? The new types of trade are welcome additions, aside from excess of fantasy-style slavery nonsense. The next section is on Privateering. It's not bad. The information density here is pretty good overall. Then there's a section on trade goods. It gives more background on what the different goods are with some charts that can be used to roll up specific items if desired. The charts are too brief for general use, but not a bad starting point for a new campaign. The descriptions are also pretty basic stuff, again most useful to someone just getting started. Not a bad section, but not all that useful to someone with an established campaign and a bit of imagination. The last section is hardware. There are a few good items, the rest isn't all that compelling. Among the things missing are a connection between the large trade lines and the small-time trader. I would like to have seen rules for mapping established trade lines, and rules for the effect of those lines on speculative trade. For example, if you've got a couple of complementary worlds set a short jump from each other, it stands to reason that there'd be established trade lines between them in the goods each one produces for the ones the other produces. That means there'd be fewer opportunities for a small trader to haul those goods, and probably less profit as well. Rules that allow the small merchant to pick up odd contract jobs from the megacorps would have been welcome. Competition rules would have been useful as well as part of the general trade rules, particularly where there are obvious places on the sector map for competition to exist. This could be tied to trade line rules. Use world characteristics to determine where trade lines exist and in what products. Then determine a competition level for that trade line. Perhaps saturation levels, as well. This sort of strategic campaign-level element is something that seems to be missing from most Mongoose Traveller material. A set of guidelines for possible trade effects on worlds would have been interesting, too. After all, if enough machine tools are delivered to a world, at some point they're going to have their level of industrialization changed, right? Especially if they've got the raw materials to use it on. To be honest, I don't think I'd buy the book again at this price. It's OK, but not what I was hoping for. At the price of Beltstrike I'd consider buying it. I was looking for more than a few new types of trade. Like so much of MGT, it ignores larger elements of the game for low level elements operating in a vacuum. Even the rules for creating corporate entities aren't really tied to a campaign, they're a set of rules wrapped around an individual pursuit. They allow for abstraction of employees, pay, and so on, and they're useful enough in their way but the company is still just a sort of player's equipment, like a ship. Why buy the book? If you want to add the new forms of trade, it may be worth it to you, or if your players want to run a corporation. The section on privateers is

useful if that's part of your game, but by itself it's not enough to justify getting the book. If you're determined to have slaving detailed in your game, you may want to get this book for the rules and classes associated with that. If you're running the OTU MGT-style, the section on the OTU megacorps along with what else is in the book may have enough value for you. For me, it falls just short.

This is a solid book. If your gaming group is focused on the trading, and merchanting aspect of Traveller, this is going to enhance that fun. If your gaming group is bent on creating their own company and making their mark on known space, then this book is a must have. If corporations play a large role in your adventures, and you want to breathe additional life into their goings on, this is a great book. If none of those statements are true, this book won't offer any benefit to you. Of particular interest, it provides rules (really a mini-game) whereby players can create a company, make corporate decisions and see their company grow as time goes on. Companies effectively get character sheets, tracking resources, their abilities to perform, and what actions they take on a quarter by quarter basis. Actions can include activities like producing goods, transporting goods, engaging in corporate espionage, hiring employees, etc. This mini-game looks to integrate well into role playing, with key corporate events playing out in game using the player characters as the main movers and shakers. Another way to use this book, is to establish company character sheets for important corporate entities in your game. Many good examples are provided, and you will more than likely be able to use or customize one of these. It isn't hard for a game master to "play" these entities, and decide courses of actions for them. Then use these decisions as the basis of adventures where the player characters effect the outcomes and interactions of these corporations. Alternatively, the outcomes can be decided without the player character's interventions and the results become a well fleshed out realistic backdrop of the player's adventures.

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