

EARTHDOWN THIRD EDITION

# CATHAY

## THE FIVE KINGDOMS

GAMEMASTER'S GUIDE

AN EARTHDOWN CAMPAIGN SETTING  
BY HANK WOON, CASSY PETRICH, AND CRAIG GUARISCO







• T H I R D   E D I T I O N   •

**CATHAY**  
**THE FIVE KINGDOMS**  
**GAMEMASTER'S GUIDE**



# CREDITS

**Writing:** Hank Woon, Cassy Petrich, Craig Guarisco

**Additional Material:** Eike-Christian Bertram, Steven J. Black, Lars Heitmann, Jason U. Wallace

**Editing and Development:** Carsten Damm, Steven J. Black, Eike-Christian Bertram, Lars Heitmann, Jason U. Wallace, Donovan Winch, Hank Woon

**Layout:** Carsten Damm, Kathy Schad

**Art Direction:** Kathy Schad

**Cover Artwork:** Paul Tobin

**Interior Artwork:** Jeff Laubenstein, Kathy Schad, Peter Tikos & Richard Vass, David M. Wright, Micha Vogt

**Line Developer:** Carsten Damm

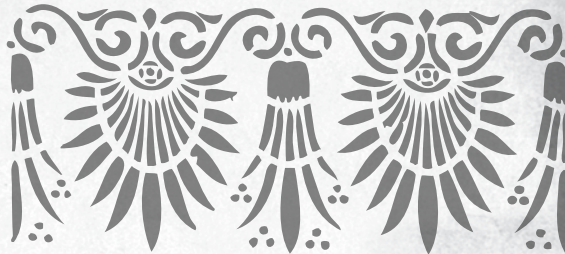
**Managing Director:** James D. Sutton

• EARTHDAWN THIRD EDITION •

# CATHAY

## THE FIVE KINGDOMS

### GAMEMASTER'S GUIDE



Earthdawn® is a Registered Trademark of FASA Corporation. Barsaive™ is a Trademark of FASA Corporation. Copyright © 1993–2010 FASA Corporation. Cathay: The Five Kingdoms™ is a Trademark of FASA Corporation. Earthdawn® and all associated Trademarks used under license from FASA Corporation. Cover artwork copyright © 2010 Paul Tobin. Cover artwork and interior illustrations used under license from Kathy Schad, David Wright, Jeff Laubenstein, and Micha Vogt. All Rights Reserved. Published by RedBrick LLC.

No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publishers.

**Internet:** <http://www.earthdawn.com>

**Contact:** [info@earthdawn.com](mailto:info@earthdawn.com)

NOVEMBER 2010 — FIRST PRINTING

**RedBrick**

**FASA**  
CORPORATION

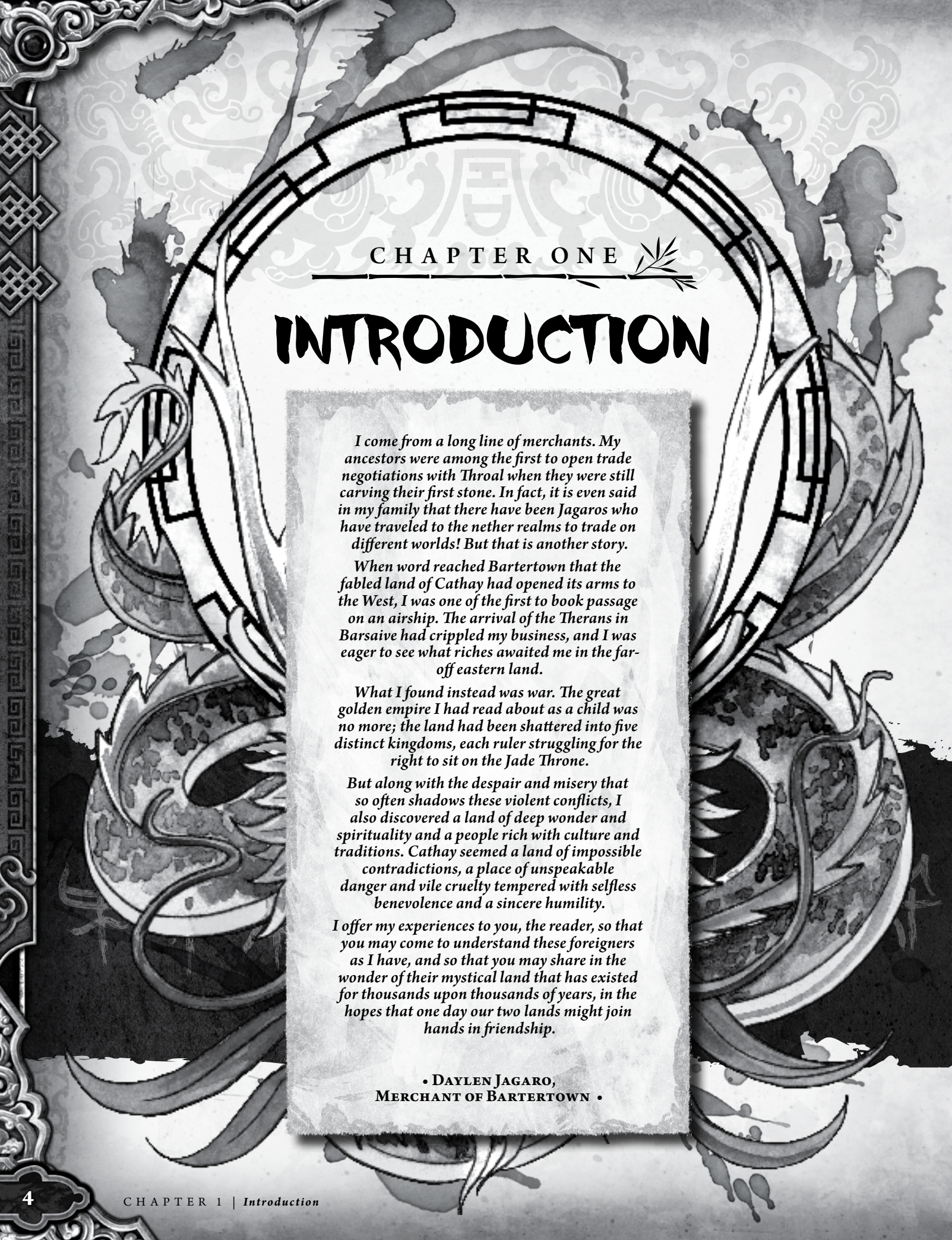
**FLAMING COBRA**



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                             |    |                                       |     |
|---------------------------------------------|----|---------------------------------------|-----|
| INTRODUCTION .....                          | 4  | The Emerald Sea .....                 | 75  |
| Overview of Cathay.....                     | 5  | The Imperial Capital .....            | 76  |
| HISTORY OF CATHAY .....                     | 10 | SECRET SOCIETIES OF CATHAY .....      | 78  |
| On the Creation.....                        | 11 | Assassins of the Tower .....          | 79  |
| ON CATHAYAN CULTURE .....                   | 21 | Brotherhood of the Jade Liferock..... | 79  |
| The Cathayan Calendar.....                  | 22 | The Shadowed.....                     | 80  |
| On the Importance of Rituals .....          | 22 | Traditionalists .....                 | 81  |
| On the Rites of Marriage .....              | 22 | CREATURES OF CATHAY .....             | 83  |
| On Polygamy .....                           | 22 | New Creature Powers .....             | 84  |
| On Birth and Naming .....                   | 23 | Creature Descriptions .....           | 85  |
| On Death and Burial.....                    | 23 | Spirits .....                         | 101 |
| On the Duality of Life .....                | 23 | DRAGONS OF CATHAY.....                | 102 |
| On the Importance of Honor.....             | 24 | Cathay Dragons.....                   | 103 |
| On the War Chariot.....                     | 24 | Great Dragons of Cathay .....         | 106 |
| On the Importance of Ancestor Worship ..... | 24 | The Five Guardians .....              | 109 |
| On the Importance of Dragons .....          | 25 | HORRORS OF CATHAY .....               | 111 |
| On the Cathayan Language .....              | 25 | Horror Descriptions .....             | 112 |
| Magic in Cathay.....                        | 26 | MAGICAL TREASURES.....                | 121 |
| Festivals of Cathay .....                   | 26 | General Treasures.....                | 122 |
| THE LANDS OF CATHAY .....                   | 28 | Unique Treasures.....                 | 128 |
| Introduction to the Five Kingdoms .....     | 29 | The Five Imperial Symbols .....       | 136 |
| On Tiet Dei, the Land of Metal.....         | 29 | SHIPS OF CATHAY .....                 | 138 |
| On Shan Dei, the Land of Earth .....        | 34 | Ship Descriptions .....               | 139 |
| On For Dei, the Land of Fire.....           | 38 | ADVENTURES IN CATHAY .....            | 142 |
| On Feng Dei, the Land of Wind.....          | 42 | Campaign Themes.....                  | 143 |
| On Shui Dei, the Land of Water.....         | 47 | Campaign Ideas .....                  | 143 |
| The Land of the Gar .....                   | 51 | Adventure Frameworks .....            | 145 |
| PLACES OF LEGEND AND PERIL .....            | 55 | Running the Adventure .....           | 148 |
| The Tower of Secrets.....                   | 56 | BLOOD IN THE SANDS.....               | 148 |
| The Golden Desert.....                      | 61 | Plot Synopsis .....                   | 149 |
| The Desert of Swallowed Tears .....         | 65 | The Ruins of Jo'he .....              | 149 |
| The Jungle of Endless Wandering.....        | 69 | A Time for Murder .....               | 151 |
| Pillars of Heaven.....                      | 72 | A Missing Prisoner.....               | 152 |
| The Jade Liferock.....                      | 72 | A Misfortune of Greed .....           | 153 |
| Demon Gate Mountains.....                   | 72 | The Shrine .....                      | 154 |
| Phoenix Throne Mountains.....               | 73 | Aftermath .....                       | 154 |
| The Realm of Twilight.....                  | 73 | Cast of Characters.....               | 155 |
| The Veiled Pagoda .....                     | 74 |                                       |     |
| The Wandering Mountains of Cathay .....     | 74 |                                       |     |
| Dragon Spine Mountains.....                 | 74 |                                       |     |
| The Gar Mountains.....                      | 75 |                                       |     |
| Jih'Po .....                                | 75 |                                       |     |





## CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION

*I come from a long line of merchants. My ancestors were among the first to open trade negotiations with Throal when they were still carving their first stone. In fact, it is even said in my family that there have been Jagaros who have traveled to the nether realms to trade on different worlds! But that is another story.*

*When word reached Bartertown that the fabled land of Cathay had opened its arms to the West, I was one of the first to book passage on an airship. The arrival of the Therans in Barsaive had crippled my business, and I was eager to see what riches awaited me in the far-off eastern land.*

*What I found instead was war. The great golden empire I had read about as a child was no more; the land had been shattered into five distinct kingdoms, each ruler struggling for the right to sit on the Jade Throne.*

*But along with the despair and misery that so often shadows these violent conflicts, I also discovered a land of deep wonder and spirituality and a people rich with culture and traditions. Cathay seemed a land of impossible contradictions, a place of unspeakable danger and vile cruelty tempered with selfless benevolence and a sincere humility.*

*I offer my experiences to you, the reader, so that you may come to understand these foreigners as I have, and so that you may share in the wonder of their mystical land that has existed for thousands upon thousands of years, in the hopes that one day our two lands might join hands in friendship.*

• DAYLEN JAGARO,  
MERCHANT OF BARTERTOWN •



**T**he age of **Earthdawn** is an era of magic that existed thousands of years ago in our world's dim past. Magic touched every aspect of the lives of men and women of the Namegiver races: humans, elves, dwarfs, orks, trolls, windlings, t'skrang, and obsidimen. However, as the levels of magic rose, so did the dangers in the world. The rise of magic brought the Horrors to Earth, creatures from the depths of astral space that devoured all life in their path.

For centuries, the people of Cathay were sheltered by the dragons from the cleansing of the world by the Horrors. Now, the people of Cathay have emerged and reclaimed the devastated land but have lost their emperor. All across the land there is conflict, as each of the Five Kingdoms of Cathay fight to regain the Jade Throne. The peasants are caught in the middle, while schemers in the shadows grow in strength. There is hope, however, as throughout the land heroes step up to champion their land, arming themselves for their daunting task with powerful magical abilities and ancient relics.

Through honor, skill, and magic, Cathay's heroes strive to reunite their land while keeping it safe from those who would usurp it, and in doing so become part of the legends of tomorrow.

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

**Cathay: The Five Kingdoms** is a sourcebook for **Earthdawn** players and gamemasters. This book details the history, customs, legends, and political situations of Cathay, as well as offering a wide variety of new creatures, Horrors, Disciplines, talents, and spells. Together with the **Player's** and **Gamemaster's Guide** and **Companion**, the information provided contains enough detail for a gamemaster to create an entire campaign set completely within Cathay, whether by transferring characters from Barsaive or creating new ones native to the realm. Several adventure frameworks and ideas are provided, as well as tips and suggestions about running campaigns set in this mystical land.

This chapter contains a brief overview of the land, its geography, and a glimpse into the daily life of most Cathayans. It is followed by **History of Cathay**, a chapter providing comprehensive detail of the land's history, beginning with the Cathayans' creation myth and continuing up to the present time. **The Lands of Cathay** delves into the five kingdoms of Cathay and the Land of the Gar, each including descriptions of its rulers, politics, histories, and major gamemaster characters.

After that, **Places of Legend and Peril** describes some areas of interest in more detail, offering gamemasters everything they need to know to include these locations in their campaigns. **On Cathayan Culture** describes the culture of Cathay, detailing festivals, customs, rituals, and a calendar. **Secret Societies of Cathay** provides information about the most prominent secret societies for use in your campaigns.

The second half of the sourcebook contains descriptions of the Namegiver races dwelling in Cathay and rules for **Creating Cathayan Characters**, new **Disciplines** and **Talents**, **Spells** for magicians including the new Sorcerer Discipline, a new **Goods and Services** chapter, new **Magical Treasures** (both general and unique), **Ships of Cathay** (seafaring, sand-faring, and airships), new **Creatures**, **Dragons**, and **Horrors**.

The book continues with providing the gamemaster with ideas for creating **Adventures in Cathay**, from describing major villains and antagonists over Cathay's many wondrous themes, to a number of Adventure Frameworks and the introductory adventure **Blood in the Sands**.

## OVERVIEW OF CATHAY

Where cranes and passions and wonders are soaring;  
the nightingale sings to the glory of our land; where  
heroes dance upon the bones of ages past; and legends  
are born in the dew of the morning."

—From "The Whisperings of Willows,"  
by renowned Cathayan Poet, Lange Kun Wun

**T**he following overview of Cathay portrays the land's geography and people. It gives a brief description of Cathay's trade and resources, current political situations, and daily life within the five kingdoms.





## GEOGRAPHY

Cathay is the largest country in the world; its kingdoms cover more land than even that of the combined Theran provinces. Although the Scourge blighted most of the realm, Cathayan Elementalists, with the aid of the dragons, restored much of her former beauty.

Cathay's boundless countryside sweeps along verdant golden fields and sparkling rivers to the great heights of steep, snowcapped mountains and down to the burning sands of inhospitable deserts. Vast expanses of wild, unexplored regions border most sides of this once mighty empire, with Indrisa to the South and the Emerald Sea to the East. To the North hovers the land of the Gar, a harsh steppe wilderness that breeds an even harsher people.

Eastern Cathay's coast is dominated by broad plains and plateaus. Countless islands dot the rocky, windswept coastline. The largest of which is Jih' Po, an isolated kingdom separated from Cathayan culture. Central Cathay is comprised mostly of thick forests sitting upon seemingly endless waves of rolling hills while Cathay's southern landscape houses vast tracts of bamboo forests and rice paddies. Western Cathay is the location of the wild Golden Desert, which is home to desert scrubs, herbs, and a nomadic people called the Kur.

Cathay's forests mostly comprise maple, larch, oak, and birch, but in the South bamboo, laurel, magnolia, and ginkgo are also common. The South also has the Jungle of Endless Wandering. Home to the mysterious Ki Mao and reclusive Po Na, this jungle is comprised primarily of evergreens and palms. Southern Cathay has more vegetation than any other region, including alpine grasses and mountain flowers in the hills and mountains, and the dense foliage of the jungles.

A large portion of Cathay is covered in rivers. Nearly all of them flow from west to east, fertilizing the earth before dumping into the Emerald Sea. Countless villages and farmlands follow these rivers throughout the Five Kingdoms, while small riverboats traffic merchandise along their slow-moving waters.

### Climate

Although the temperature is mild throughout central and southern Cathay, northern Cathay suffers extreme climate changes between summer and winter. Temperatures have been known to rise to near lethal heights during the warmest months, while the harsh winds and snows of winter have been the end to many a stray traveler.

The rainy season is between the months of Fai and Hui Ying (for more information regarding the Cathayan calendar see **On Cathayan Culture** on p. 22). Northern Cathay receives an average of only 30 inches of rain per year, while southern Cathay tends to receive a considerable amount more (up to 80 inches per year).

### Population

The Namegiver races of Cathay are spread out across the Five Kingdoms. Most live in mixed settings such as towns and cities, though there are many who prefer isolation rather than civilization. The table below gives the approximate distribution of the races throughout Cathay. This table does not include lands such as Jih' Po or the Land of the Gar.

Though these races can be found throughout Cathay, two of them—the Po Na and the Ki Mao—can mostly only be found within the dense foliage of the Jungle of Endless Wandering (see **Places of Legends and Peril**, p. 69). The remaining races are evenly distributed, except for the t'skrang, who often prefer to live along the banks of the rivers or the shores of the Emerald Sea.

There are no windling populations in Cathay, nor is there evidence of there ever having been windlings in Cathay. Most

### RACIAL COMPOSITION OF CATHAY

| Race        | Percent of Population |
|-------------|-----------------------|
| Human       | 46                    |
| Elf         | 18                    |
| Dwarf       | 12                    |
| T'skrang    | 10                    |
| Ork         | 6                     |
| Troll       | 6                     |
| Obsidiman   | 1                     |
| Ki Mao      | Less than 1           |
| Po Na       | Less than 1           |
| Storm Child | Less than 1           |

Cathayans view windlings as a curiosity, while some regard their natural ability to fly as a divine gift from the Passions, since it brings them one step closer in similarity to the dragons, the greatest of all Namegivers.

## TRADE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Through the fighting over the last century the Cathayans have managed to strip their resources of True Elements nearly bare, leaving only a few reliable sources. As a result, the kingdoms have opened their borders to Western merchants in an effort to supply the war. Wagons, airships, and sea vessels continuously go in and out of Cathay, and both Eastern and Western merchants grow fat from profit.

A typical merchant caravan or ship from Cathay might contain the following cargo: jars of spices; casks of ink; bolts of silk; jade carvings; scrolls of paper made from rice, bamboo, or tanned leather; rare black pearls wrapped in velvet; tiger skins; scroll paintings; fine dinnerware made from polished ivory and inlaid with sparkling diamonds; glazed porcelain painted with brightly colored scenes of mountains, rivers, lakes, dragons, bears, and eagles; and books and tomes scribed at the Tower of Secrets (see p. 56).

The war has made traveling with such cargo very dangerous. Gangs of bandits plague the roads and anyone traveling too near—or unfortunate enough to travel through—the Golden Desert must worry about the nomads there, who only become more aggressive as the war drags on. Many merchants hire mercenaries to guard their cargo, but their prices have risen dramatically over the past few years.

Western merchants are especially preyed upon. Many in the Cathayan lower classes view outsiders with suspicion and a bit of xenophobia. While there are great business opportunities to be found in Cathay, a Western merchant better know the risks first.

Despite being at war, the Five Kings have agreed to allow their people to trade amongst one another. This agreement is based more on a mutual need rather than on trust or benevolence, and pillaging armies seldom distinguish a merchant caravan from an enemy village.

## ON THE CATHAYAN LANGUAGE

All Cathayans, regardless of race, are united under one common language, though there are many dialects dictated by region. These dialects, however, are not so different as to impede communication. These dialects are similar enough to be understood by foreigners by learning only one language (Cathayan).

With the exception of merchants and some of the nobility, Cathayans do not bother learning foreign languages. This is partly



due to the fact that most Cathayans never see a foreigner, but also that even if they had the opportunity, most Cathayans would not desire to do so.

## ON CATHAY'S STRUGGLES

The death of Emperor Lan Juan shortly after the end of the Scourge left five kingdoms vying for dominance: **Shan Dei** (the Land of Earth), **For Dei** (the Land of Fire), **Tiet Dei** (the Land of Metal), **Feng Dei** (the Land of Wind), and **Shui Dei** (the Land of Water). This struggle, which has lasted for nearly 100 years, has left untold thousands dead and transformed this once serene land into a dark playground for misery and despair. All five kingdoms are short on resources and soldiers, yet the war rages bitterly on. Boundaries constantly shift back and forth as battles are won and lost, but no side seems to gain an advantage. Border skirmishes and raids are common, and it is rare for even a full week to go by without a clash of forces somewhere in Cathay. The shared goal of attaining all five symbols of Imperial Power has made alliances impossible, not that any king would be the first to propose such a cowardly idea.

Mercenary groups headed by warlords have sprouted up throughout Cathay and the kings seem to have few ethical restraints about using such dishonorable creatures for their own ends. Meanwhile, reports flow in of the Gar mobilizing steadily in the North.

The opening with the West has seen many merchants become very wealthy; so wealthy that some even surpass nobles in both riches and power. This has led to a new war of politics and intrigue that goes on behind the curtain as the two classes struggle for dominance.

### On the Warlords

Most of Cathay's warlords and their bands are either soldiers who have deserted their posts or dispossessed peasants. Some of these warlords own small plots of land that are only under their control due to the warlords' militaries rather than through noble birth. Some of these warlords are allowed to hold onto their ill-gotten lands, as long as they pay the proper taxes to the kings. Most warlords, however, are the heads of roving bands of mercenaries who sell their swords as they see fit. Because of this, a king may send a warlord out to battle his enemy one week, only to find him return as his enemy the next!

## DAILY LIFE IN CATHAY

Countless cities dot the many lands of Cathay, but only about 20 percent of the population lives within them. Most make their homes in the wilds or in villages, and most who live in the villages are peasants.

The peasants farm small tracts of land for the nobles, giving them a percentage of what they grow. What is left over is for the peasant families to eat, trade for supplies, or sell.

The average peasant lives in a one- or two-story house with a thatched roof, dirt floor, and very little (if any) furniture. The peasants have suffered the most from the war. Raiding armies leave many dead and the survivors with no food or supplies. The armies of one's own kingdom are not much better. Peasants are expected to give up their crops to feed soldiers. If they do not have enough food left over for taxes then they may face punishment, including severe fines and banishment.

Many peasants are forced to join the military in order to survive. Since women are not allowed to join, many must move to the cities. City life can be brutal to those without a trade or education, and many of these young women find themselves serving in the numerous brothels.

Some peasants who are doing well are often forced to join the military anyway. Each family is expected to have at least one male

family member join for no less than five years of service, although this term continually rises as the war goes on and the eligibility of soldiers dwindles.

*The village had seen better days. The war had taken its toll; children ran half naked in the dirt roads amongst gaunt cattle and dispirited adults, who dragged their weary feet while staring at the ground ahead of them with malnourished eyes. I passed a chicken scratching at the dirt in a vain search for something to eat, but it seemed that even that poor beast was doomed to starve.*

*No sooner had I taken all of this in than a patrol of heavily armored soldiers rode into the small community, perhaps one hundred strong. Their leader, a brutish ork, demanded food and water for his men. The villagers watched powerlessly as the soldiers helped themselves to their last meager stores of supplies.*

*It seems that in Cathay, every person is expected to do his duty for his kingdom. Just as a soldier is expected to fight and die for the king, the peasants are expected to go hungry and die for the soldier.*

*After the soldiers had gone, I handed out a few handfuls of silver to the grateful villagers. It wouldn't be enough to get them through the coming winter, but it might be enough to save some of them. But even as I handed them out I realized that there were countless more villages just like this one all across this once mighty empire...*

—From the Journal of Daylen Jagaro,  
Merchant of Bartertown

### Life in the Cities

Cathayan cities are the embodiment of precise planning and construction. Buildings are neatly laid out into blocks along main roads and alleys. The cities are the centers of power and trade and are home to government officials, nobles, merchants, and craftsmen. High walls assembled from either wood or stone surrounds most cities.

The war has caused a large rift to appear between classes, and most cities can be easily classified into two divisions: the rich and the poor.

The poor live in homes tightly packed into sections closer to the city's surrounding wall. Though safe for the most part from an invading army, the destitute must contend with daily hunger and the threat of being thrown out if they cannot pay their taxes. Many of the larger cities have problems with alley gangs full of thieves and muggers. Some of these gangs even pay off corrupt officials in order to operate within the city walls.

The rich live in stark contrast to the poor, in large, elaborate houses surrounded by ponds and gardens and containing many rooms. Their homes are often filled with ostentatious decorations, such as cashmere carpets, silk drapes, bronze mirrors, porcelain vases, and exquisitely carved furniture. Because these prizes are ripe targets for thieves, many of the rich hire magicians to safeguard their homes with spells.

A bazaar can be found in the center of nearly every city. Lively places, the bazaars are full of craftsmen and merchants selling their wares; acrobats, jugglers, and musicians plying their trade; and pick pockets preying upon the unwary. Peasants from local villages often come to sell their meager crops or to buy supplies while adventurers and mercenaries browse the many stalls.



Most governors charge a hefty tax to those seeking a permanent stall in the bazaar. Since many cannot afford these taxes they are forced to join the local merchants' guild, which pays the taxes but takes a hefty percentage of their profits. The nobles continuously battle the growing power of the merchant class, but many are finding themselves in debt to the guilds. Recently, some cities have found themselves under rule of the merchants who have every government official, from the governor to the constable, in their pockets.

## On the Cathayan Diet

The Land of Cathay boasts some of the best cuisine in the world. Along with being varied and flavorful it is also some of the healthiest and purest food to be found anywhere. Each Kingdom has its own unique style of preparation and a signature taste to each dish.

In the Land of Earth, characters will find the food to be very hearty and rich. Thick sauces strongly flavored with onion and garlic characterize these dishes. Rice is a staple almost everywhere in Cathay but in Sh. Dei wheat is mostly used instead which is made into noodles, dumplings, and steamed buns. Lamb is a very important ingredient in almost all meat dishes. Vegetables include bok choy, onions, and a variety of other hardy plants. Popular fruits include grapes, peaches, and small berries, which are consumed either in their natural form or as a wine.

In the Land of Fire, spicy dishes are served frequently. Hot peppers, garlic, ginger, and sesame seed paste are typical base ingredients for any dish. Rice is a staple here and is served either steamed with no flavoring or spiced with herbs and oils. Pork is the main meat served and can be cooked any number of ways, including fried, roasted, dried, or pickled. Vegetables include onions, ginger, mushrooms, leeks, and root vegetables. Many exotic fruits are found in For Dei, such as horned berries, Cathayan pears and peaches, and prickly currents. Those who can afford it have wine served with every meal, and foreigners to the land will find that it is exceptionally mild compared to the spices that are used generously in their meals.

In the Land of Water, seafood dominates most meals. Shrimp, various fish, clams, and crab are all very important foods to the people of this kingdom. Little parcels of fish and meat are served in steamed dumplings with a light citrus dipping sauce. Lemons and other soured fruits often accompany these dishes. Vegetables include onions, garlic, ginger, and the leafy parts of plants. Besides being flavored with citrus fruits, the food of Shui Dei is valued for its natural light flavors and is often accompanied with a gentle wine.

In the Land of Wind, the diet consists mainly of fruits, vegetables, and grains. Some meat is eaten among the people who live along the coastline, but being mainly a mountainous region, beans, grains, and other plant foods are easier to come by. Soya and black beans,

wild rice, seeds, nuts, and seaweed are popular here. Vegetables include broccoli, onions, garlic, ginger, sweet potatoes, corn, and numerous squashes. Fruits include wild berries found along the mountainsides; Cathayan apples; and citrus fruits such as lemons, oranges, and grapefruits. Feng Dei is known for having the best rice wine in the land.

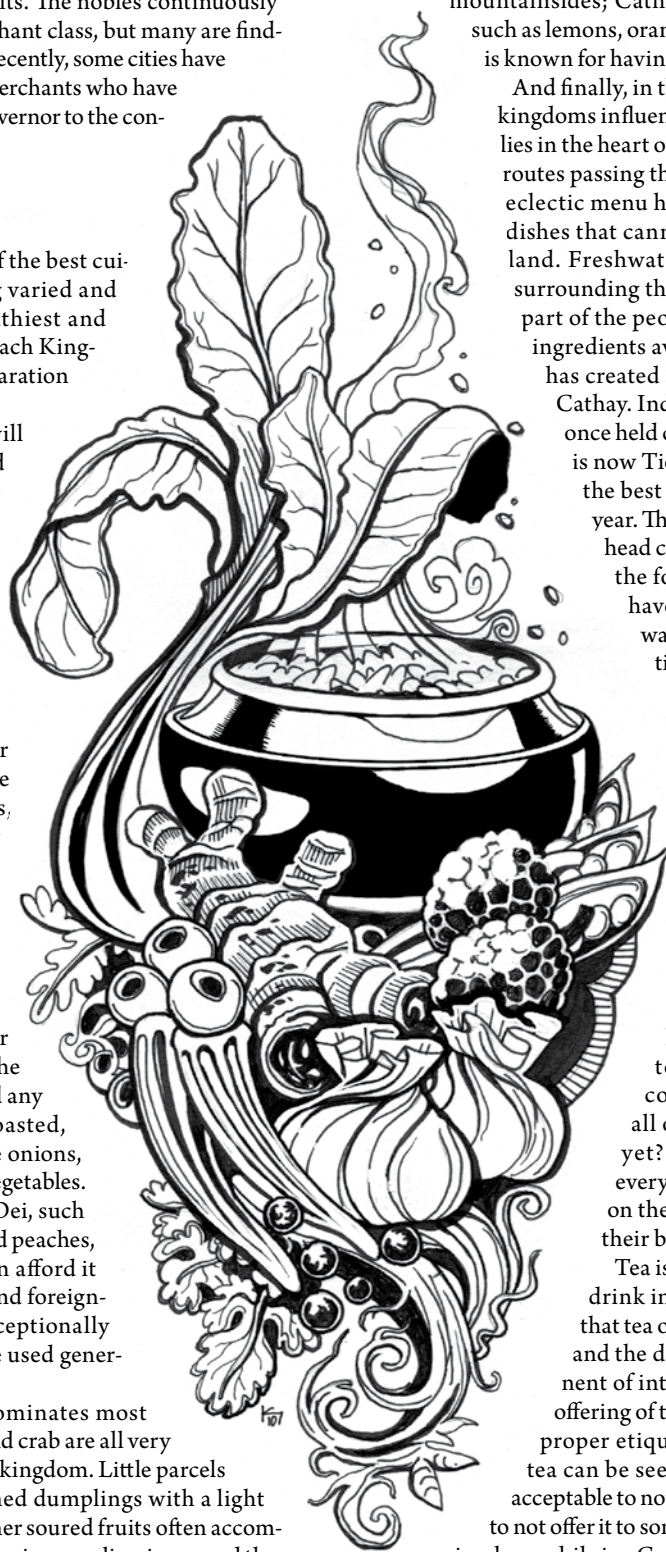
And finally, in the Land of Metal, all the other kingdoms influence the diet. The Land of Metal lies in the heart of Cathay with many busy trade routes passing through her. Because of this, an eclectic menu has formed with many unique dishes that cannot be found elsewhere in the land. Freshwater fish from the many rivers surrounding the kingdom form an important part of the people's diet. The vast amount of ingredients available to those who live here has created some of the best food in all of Cathay. Indeed, the emperors of long ago once held competitions in the region that is now Tiet Dei to see who could create the best and most unique dish for that year. The winner would be awarded the head cook position in the palace until the following year, when he would have to defend his title. This title

was a great honor and the competition would draw hopefuls from all across Cathay. Families would vie heatedly, though good-naturedly, each year in the fall when the crops had been harvested and food was plentiful. The festival is still held, although in these trying times it does not draw nearly as many competitors as it once did.

In each kingdom, the people have adopted the following mantra: eat today for tomorrow we may starve. A common greeting throughout all of Cathay is, "Have you eaten yet?" Children are told that for every grain of rice they do not finish on their plate, a maggot will grow in their belly.

Tea is considered more than a mere drink in Cathay. It is widely believed that tea offers strong medicinal benefits, and the drink is also an integral component of interpersonal relationships. The offering of tea to one's guests is considered proper etiquette, and to not offer a guest tea can be seen as an affront. It is, however, acceptable to not offer tea to a regular guest, but to not offer it to someone whom has not been seen in a long while is a Cathayan's way of saying that the person is not welcome. In taverns and inns throughout the Five Kingdoms, when being served tea it is considered polite manners to lightly rap the middle knuckles of one's index and middle fingers on the tabletop. This represents a person kneeling, symbolically showing one's respect for the tea server.

Legend tells that tea was introduced to the Tai Dynasty by the Passion Goh.





## ON THE DRAGONS

Dragons, to the Cathayan, are the living embodiment of wisdom and divinity. Like Westerners, Cathayans view dragons with terror and awe, but unlike those in the West, they also regard them with a deep reverence that borders on worship. Traditionally, five great dragons have served as the emperor's council and as the guardians of his land. Since the empire fragmented into five kingdoms, the five guardians have each assigned themselves as guardians over one of the kingdoms, serving as the ruler's private advisor. This loyalty is predicated upon the ruler controlling one of the Symbols of Imperial Power: the Imperial Phoenix Robe, the Jade Pendant, the Imperial Ivory Sword, the Golden Crown, or the Imperial Dragon Seal. Each Symbol provides the owner access to a specific guardian, who is bound by an ancient oath to provide assistance in the form of counsel.

## REGARDING THE SCOURGE

The dragons saved the Cathayans from the Scourge by providing them with the means to save themselves, constructing dragon lairs which, in every significant way, are identical to Western kaers. While the Scourge was as devastating in Cathay as it was in the rest of the world, Cathayans view the cataclysm as divine retribution against an imperfect and immoral world, brought on primarily by Westerners' transgressions.

## ON THE HORRORS

Although the Horrors frighten and terrify the Cathayans just as they do other Namegivers across the world, many view them simply as another necessary aspect of life. They do not inspire the fear and paranoia that they do in most Western cultures. Instead, most Cathayans believe that the Horrors are a necessary tool to purge the world of evil and wrongdoers, that if the Passions were not to allow their occasional release then eventually the world would return to the time of the Yen'hi'ji, when one great evil ruled the land. As such, there is not as much effort put into the investigation of the nature of the Horrors as there is in lands such as Barsaive, nor will foreigners find many who passionately devote themselves to the complete eradication of them. Although Horrors are destroyed whenever discovered, Cathayans are confident that when the time is right the Horrors will once again fall back into their slumber in astral space, and until then they are merely serving the will of the Passions.

## ON THE PASSIONS

The Cathayans are a deeply spiritual people, believing that their destinies are decided in the Heavens. While Cathayans have twelve Passions they worship, they believe that each year only one rules supreme. They further believe that, depending on which Passion is ruling the year in which a person is born, he will have certain attributes and characteristics.

As in the West, there are those in Cathay who dedicate their lives to the ideals of the Passions. These questors can be found throughout all of the Five Kingdoms, worshipping either *Tswoo*, Passion of death and judgment; *Neeoh*, Passion of moats, walls, and hard work; *Whoo*, Passion of love, marriage, and family; *Twoo*, Passion of wealth and prosperity; *Lohng*, Passion of the skies; *Shurr*, Passion of wisdom, knowledge, and lore; *Maah*, Passion of freedom; *Yaang*, Passion of poetry, art, and love; *Hoh*, Passion of cleverness, cunning, and humor; *Jee*, Passion of health and well being; *Goh*, Passion of nature; or *Joo*, Passion of war and battle.







CHAPTER TWO

# HISTORY OF CATHAY

*Our history is a window into our  
future as well as our past.*

• CATHAYAN PROVERB •



**F**or centuries the West has been enticed with tales about the mystical land of Cathay. Far to the East, this mysterious land has always been a symbol of intrigue and wonder. Now the door to the East has been opened, and from the lightning-born race of the Storm Children to the renowned martial abilities of the Xan monks, Cathay's secrets can finally be explored by those brave enough to venture into this troubled, war-torn realm.

*The Cathayans' history is one wrapped tightly in mythology. This tradition of blending fact and legend implies a strong value in the art of storytelling over actual history; however, trying to get a Cathayan to admit that these are mere fanciful tales is even more difficult than trying to find out what is true about them.*

—Early Journal Entry of Daylen Jagaro,  
Merchant of Bartertown

## ON THE CREATION

**I**n the dark, silent emptiness of the Void swirled the formless, misty clouds of Chaos. Within Chaos were the Five Sacred Elements: earth, fire, wind, water, and metal.

*It's important to point out that True wood exists in Cathay too – like in Barsaive – but it's not seen as Sacred. That doesn't hinder its use in daily life, however; Cathayan wooden airships are a true wonder!*

—Daylen Jagaro, Merchant of Bartertown

Existing yet not existing, they swirled without shape and without intention until finally Chaos formed purpose, and the Five Elements gathered together into the shape of a great egg. Within the egg two lives gradually formed: *Yen* and *Yeng*, the first great dragons.

Awareness slowly crept into being as the two great dragons finally awoke. They thrashed and fought wildly against their prison until the egg at first cracked, and then shattered, scattering the Five Elements across the great Void, creating the stars. Many of the stars themselves then hatched, and bursting forth were more dragons who danced among the remaining stars, trying to encourage them to hatch as well. Their graceful, rhythmic motions stirred the air as they swam through the heavens. This great dance created the winds and the clouds, but no matter how hard the dragons tried, the other stars did not hatch, and remained forever sealed.

Both *Yen* and *Yeng*, exhausted from their cosmic birth, wished to rest, but could find nothing to lay their weary heads upon. Each gathered the Five Elements from which to build a bed. The form upon which *Yen* lay became *Heaven* and *Yeng* lay down upon the *Earth*.

As they slept they dreamt, and as they dreamt astral space was born from their combined subconscious. When they awoke the two dragons snapped and clawed at one another. Once they were one but now a great emptiness filled each of them. One sibling attacked

the other, trying to consume its essence to again become whole. As fang and claw tore into flesh, their blood and bodies were sundered, falling from the cosmos. Twelve drops of blood landed in Heaven, which became the Twelve Passions. The rest of their bodies fell past Heaven onto Earth, creating the mountains, rivers, lakes, streams, and all life, including the lesser Namegivers. They fought, thrashed, and tore until finally all that was left were the great dragons' hearts; *Yen's* became the sun, and *Yeng's* became the moon, and to this day they still chase each other across the sky.

The remaining dragons looked down upon what had become of the Earth and were delighted. They flew from the stars to make their home there. Some made their homes in the clouds while others found comfort upon the Earth, in the tall proud mountain peaks or even in the cold, dark depths of the ocean. Together they began to guide the lesser Namegivers, who were like children to them. At first these people fled in fear at the sight of such beautiful and terrible creatures. But after gentle assurances, they soon greeted their benefactors with joy, and the dragons took their rightful place as gods.

## ON THE SEASONS

The Passions looked down upon the Earth and saw that chaos ruled. The gentle dew of a warm spring morning would suddenly freeze as the harshness of winter swept in, only to melt once again a moment later from the warm breath of summer. Lacking consciousness, the seasons warred amongst themselves for dominance, and soon life began to fade from the Earth.

The Passions reached down from Heaven and took great handfuls of clay from the banks of the rivers. From it they forged four guardians to manage the four seasons, commanding them to share the Earth. They fashioned a great yellow dragon for spring Named the Gentle Mother, a giant white tiger for autumn Named the Cunning Hunter, a wise and powerful red phoenix for summer Named the Wise Elder, and finally a large black tortoise with a serpent's head for winter, whom they Named the Dark Warrior.

Each guardian did his duty, managing the seasons across the Earth, bidding order to remain while holding chaos at bay. But over time the Dark Warrior became bitter and angry when none of the Namegivers would leave offerings for him. None would praise his arrival and all would shrink away from his icy caress. All races, that is, save one...

## ON THE YENHIJI, THE CHILDREN OF SHADOW

The children of *Yen* and *Yeng*, the Namegiver races, prospered and multiplied until they dwelt across the breadth of the Earth. The dragons, who had taught the Namegivers all that they knew, were revered by them. The children honored the dragons' protection and supreme wisdom regularly with both festival and song.

But there was one race that had nothing but hate in their hearts; it was a race that loathed the touch of the sun and delighted in the anguish and subjugation of others. It was this race, the *yen'hi'ji*, who first learned the arts of war—a gift from the *Dark Warrior*. With this awful knowledge they brought death and destruction to the world. Even with the dragons leading the struggle against them, the *yen'hi'ji* and the *Dark Warrior* eventually conquered most of the Earth, bringing about a time of great misery and despair.

The Passions looked down disapprovingly from Heaven. Chaos once again ruled, and everywhere there was pain, anger, and misery. The *yen'hi'ji* mocked the Passions' pleas for peace, and their wickedness began sowing itself in the hearts of the other races. The Passions realized that if they were to do nothing, the Earth would be lost to evil.



After much debate, they finally decided that the only way to save the world would be to cleanse it and begin anew. With heavy hearts they reached into the darkest depths of Astral Space and pulled forth twelve great and powerful demons—the *Sha'Yi'Ga'Gui*—the *Twelve Terrors*, and unleashed them upon the world to lead a dark army of astral beings. This great and terrible reckoning spared none. The *yen'hi'ji*, along with the other Namegiver races, perished by the thousands, and the world was devastated. For hundreds upon hundreds of years the *Sha'Yi'Ga'Gui* and their demonic children afflicted the Earth until finally, seeing that the deed was done, the Passions sent them screaming back into astral space.

As the last cry of sorrow faded, the Passions realized that only the demonic children of the *Sha'Yi'Ga'Gui* had returned to astral space. The *Sha'Yi'Ga'Gui* still roamed the land, their powers too great for the Passions to dismiss so easily. Unable to send them back, the Passions decided instead to banish them into deep, eternal slumbers, setting them to rest in the dark places of the Earth. One at a time they were captured and exiled until at last only one remained. The most powerful of the Terrors, **Sik Lung**, the *Dragon Eater*, escaped the eternal slumber and fled to the West. Some believe that to this day he continues to hunt dragons, which are his favorite prey.

For his crimes, the Passions sealed the Dark Warrior under a great mountain for all time. Which mountain the Dark Warrior is sealed under is not known, although it is believed by many to be Mount Tihan, which always roars and throws forth lava, which some say is caused as he thrashes against his eternal prison. Others believe that the Dark Warrior is allowed to leave his prison during his season, winter, at which time he exacts his vengeance upon the world by commanding flora to die, fauna to be scarce, and plagues to thrive.

At the end of this dark time, the *yen'hi'ji* were reduced to only a few in number. They retreated to the shadows where they remain to this day, plotting their vengeance upon the world.

The surviving Namegivers slowly returned from hiding and began to rebuild their world from the ashes.

## ON THE EARLY PEOPLE OF CATHAY

Once again the children of Yen and Yeng flourished and multiplied. But now, having the knowledge of war and destruction, they fought each other for land, wealth, and power. This was a time of great pain and suffering. Plague, famine, and war ruled the lands, and most turned a deaf ear to the Passions' pleas for peace. Blood soaked the Earth, which the Passions gazed down upon with despair. Although the *yen'hi'ji* were all but extinct, the damage they had caused to the hearts and minds of the Namegivers ran deep. The Passions feared that their efforts had been in vain, and another evil had simply replaced that of the *yen'hi'ji*.

Only the dragons would listen to the words of the Passions. Because of this, some of the Passions began to suggest that the world should be cleansed once again, this time leaving alive only the dragons, who alone had the wisdom to listen to their counsel. Others argued against this course of action. The fate of the lesser Namegivers danced upon the edge of a precipice as the Passions disputed their fate.

It was at this darkest time when the wisest of the Passions, Shurr, proposed that the Earth was simply too big for the twelve of them to govern properly. The Namegivers were scattered too far and too wide, he said, and many could no longer hear the Passions' whispers floating upon the winds. So he suggested that they create a land where peace and wisdom would rule supreme, and where the holiest of people could live under their guidance. The Passions all agreed that this was indeed a sound plan, so they called upon Cong Chen, the greatest of all dragons, to visit them in Heaven. Cong Chen, who had led the fight against the





yen'hi'ji, swam through the clouds to the Passions' realm and listened quietly to their plan. Cong Chen was greatly honored. After hearing what they proposed, he flew back down to Earth where he gathered to him the wisest and strongest of Yen and Yeng's children, and began to lead them to a land at the center of the world.

## ON THE GREAT JOURNEY

The journey to the center of the world took many years. The people followed Cong Chen unquestioningly, although at times they were led through inhospitable lands where food and water were scarce. The times were trying, and the long winding trail of immigrants marked their way with shallow graves.

There was one man among them, a young human blacksmith, who encouraged his people to continue despite all obstacles. Cong Chen watched as the man, Named Yun Tai Xi, offered words of comfort to the despairing, gently spoon-fed broth to the ill, and carried children too weak to walk even though his own feet were cracked and bleeding. Tai Xi held the people together, leading them in song when the relentless tedium of marching threatened to break their spirits. Cong Chen flew along, high above them in the sky, observing with a smile.

❁ ❁ ❁  
*I see similarities to the legend of Hrak Gron and,  
to a lesser degree, Krathis Gron, too.*

—Gifrad, Ork Liberator



## HOW TAI XI TAMED THE STORM

In a blighted land of sharp rock and dry earth, the immigrants came upon the realm of the great giant Xing Tian whose home was held high in the clouds. This great giant, who was covered in the scales of a serpent and had the wings of a bird, raged at their trespass. He commanded the winds to howl and the sky to tear, releasing a great downpour of rain. The storm threatened to kill them all. The frightened people turned to Cong Chen for protection, but Cong Chen instead turned his mighty head toward Tai Xi, and spoke in a voice like thunder, "It is you, young one, who is destined to tame this storm." Frightened, Tai Xi exclaimed, "But I am just a man! I do not have the power to stop such a thing!"

"Son of man," said Cong Chen, "The power of the body is limited, but the mind is infinite. You will find a way." And so Tai Xi reluctantly set out to confront the giant.

After a time, Tai Xi came upon a mighty tree that stood proudly against the shrieking winds and rain. The tree, which stood alone in the vast emptiness of the barren landscape, greeted the young human.

"Great tree," said Tai Xi, "would you kindly rise to the clouds so I might reach the home of the giant?"

"The giant has killed all of my kind," replied the tree in a voice filled with sorrow, "and I have been alone for many years." The words dampened Tai Xi's soul in a way that even the heavy rains could not do.

"If you would but sing to me," Continued the tree, "to banish my sorrow, again my branches might soar."

And so Tai Xi began to sing. The winds tore his voice from his throat, so he sang louder, and louder, until his voice rose to the reaches of Heaven. And as his voice raised so too did the great tree. Its branches soared out in all directions, its trunk twisted and climbed, growing and reaching into the sky. At last the highest branches met the dark clouds above, and Tai Xi began his long climb.

Tai Xi climbed the great tree for two days and two nights, all the while his voice keeping song. The wind tugged at him and the rains lashed his skin, but Tai Xi pushed onward. At last Tai Xi reached the clouds where he found the giant.

"What is this?" laughed Xing Tian as he stared down at the puny human, "You are no match for the mighty Xing Tian!"

"I have come to ask you to stop the storm," said Tai Xi politely. The giant's laughter was a deafening rumble.

"I will not stop until all of the trespassers are dead! Starting with you!" bellowed Xing Tian as he lunged at Tai Xi.

The two engaged in battle and it was soon obvious that Tai Xi was no match for this terrible foe. Searching for a weapon but finding none, Tai Xi stretched his hands out into the fires of the sun and from its radiance forged a great sword. He turned and plunged the scorching blade into the giant's heart, tempering its fiery steel with the titan's blood. Xing Tian howled in pain and rage as he plunged down to the Earth. The impact shook the world and shattered his body into thousands of tiny pieces. Where these pieces scattered, trees took root and began to grow, once again transforming the desolate wasteland into a lush, vibrant landscape.

The storm faded and then grew silent. Tai Xi returned to the Earth and marched back to his people, triumphant.

## THE LAND AT THE CENTER OF THE WORLD

After many years filled with tribulations, the chosen of Cong Chen finally reached the Promised Land at the center of the world. The vast stretches of earth were filled with soaring mountains, lush forests, and endless waves of rolling hills. The people rejoiced, and there was much celebration.

But the celebration did not last long. Although the land was green and fruitful the crops they planted refused to grow. Even the great magic of Cong Chen could not encourage the land to yield the crops necessary to sustain the large population. Although they could hunt the beasts of the land and gather nuts and berries from the forests, they realized that once the Dark Warrior was released to rule winter they would all starve.

## TAI XI AND THE FISH

As winter grew closer, food became scarce. Gripped with a terrible hunger, Tai Xi marched to the shores of the great green sea and cast in his fishing line. An accomplished fisherman, Tai Xi soon caught a large blue fish. As he took hold of it, the fish suddenly said, "Dear fisherman, please don't eat me! Surely a man of your wisdom could find a different source of food? You and your people have already eaten so many of my kind since you arrived!"

Surprised, Tai Xi studied the fish a moment before replying, "I am sorry my little friend, but my people are starving. We cannot get food to grow from the land."

"And this gives you the right to eat my people?" inquired the fish.

"Well..." considered Tai Xi, "I suppose the need gives us the right. We must eat to live."

"How ironic!" laughed the fish, "You must *not* eat for *me* to live! I ask you then, which of us has more of the right to live—you, or I?"

Tai Xi was puzzled. He had never been asked a philosophical question from a fish before, and he did not quite know how to respond.

"I..." Tai Xi hesitated and then went on, "I would have to say that if you were a normal fish, I would have the right. But then again, if you were a normal fish you could not ask this question."

"But I am no normal fish!" said the fish, "So what is your answer?"

"I suppose we both have the same right to life. I could not deny such a wondrous being such as you life just so I could fill my belly."





And with that Tai Xi released the fish back into the sea.

Just then, erupting from the sea with a great spray, a dragon appeared before Tai Xi. Sunlight danced along its shimmering blue scales as it regarded the human with eyes large with wisdom.

"Your benevolence does your people justice," said the dragon, "Because of your selfless act I will reveal what you must do in order to save your people." And with that, the dragon forged a small seal from elemental water and fashioned it into the shape of a dragon. He handed it to Tai Xi and taught him how he might save his people.

## HOW TAI XI TAMED THE LAND

Deep into the jungles of the land Tai Xi traveled. Winter was approaching quickly, and Tai Xi knew that if he were to save his people he must reach his destination before the Dark Warrior arrived.

At last the young human found himself in a clearing inhabited by a swirling vortex of dust, branches, moss, and wet earth, shaped in the likeness of a humanoid.

"Why have you entered this sacred place?!" it demanded. Tai Xi boldly stepped forward.

"I know why you will not allow the crops to grow, Spirit of the Land. I know of your anger," he said.

The Spirit of the Land raged, "You know nothing, human!"

"I know that your loneliness has driven you to a bitter anger. I know that you have felt un-honored in all the millennia in which you have existed. I know that you believe we have come only to use you, and it is this belief that drives you to hate us."

The Spirit of the Land paused and studied the young man.

"You are like parasites," it said, "You do not respect the land. You will treat me like your slave and then disregard me. I will not have it! Crops will not grow for you! In the spring, I will not even allow the plants to return. I will see my beautiful land turned to dust before it becomes yours!"

"You are wrong to judge us so," Tai Xi took another step forward. "We have come to honor you. We will set aside one week a year in your celebration. My people and I will never take more than we give, nor ask for more than we offer. Mighty spirit, we are but humble insects begging your favor. How could the likes of we ever make you our slave?"

Tai Xi's humble words gave the Spirit of the Land pause. Finally he asked, "How am I to believe you? What good is the word of a human?"

"I will put my seal to the bargain." Tai Xi pulled out the seal that was the gift from the dragon. The Spirit of the Land saw the seal and seemed almost to smile.

"Very good," it said, nodding slowly, "Very good human. I accept."

When the deal was made, the Spirit of the Land let go of his rage and bitterness. For one moment the joyous feeling nearly overwhelmed him, and he cried. Tears of jade fell from his eyes. One of the pieces landed at Tai Xi's feet, and he scooped it up.

The Spirit of the Land quickly produced abundant crops for the people, enough to get them through the trying times of winter. Tai Xi sat and spoke with the spirit, sharing stories and legends, before returning home to tell his people the good news.

## THE FIRST CITY

When spring came, Cong Chen ordered the first stones to be set to form the foundation of what was to become a great and magnificent city. The city was to be Named *Huan Wang*, or the *Heart of the Realm*.

Buildings slowly rose like trees, forming into a vast forest of wood, mud, stone, brick, and bamboo. As the cobbles were being laid down to serve as the streets, Cong Chen ordered the people to construct a stone wall that would surround the infant metropolis. He instructed that it needed to be 30 feet high, 65 feet thick, and just over 4 miles long, with large towers erected all along its immense length.

Stones were carted down from the nearby Dragon Spine Mountains for the project. The sea of green land that surrounded the rising city saw the birth of more and more farms and villages as the people gently nurtured the land, honoring Tai Xi's promise to the Great Spirit.

Two years after construction began, *Huan Wang*—the *Heart of the Realm*—was complete.

## ON THE RULINE OF THE PASSIONS

The Passions looked down upon the city and were pleased. But although they were pleased, they soon began to quarrel with each other over how best to guide the people of the new civilization. Their fighting caused heavy rains, great storms, and earthquakes to rock the peaceful land. The people of *Huan Wang* suffered but it went unnoticed by the Passions who squabbled pettily in Heaven. Cong Chen flew to them and begged their attention. He managed to convince them to stop long enough to listen. Cong Chen proposed that each Passion rule for approximately a year and a day, and during that time the other eleven would defer to the ruling Passion's will in matters of dispute. At the end of the year and a day, the next Passion would rule, and so on until the cycle began anew.

The Passions saw the wisdom in this proposal, but soon fell back into squabbling over the order in which they would rule. Eventu-



ally they came to the agreement that they would rule in the order of their creations: *Tswoo, Neeoh, Whoo, Twoo, Lohng, Shurr, Maah, Yaang, Hoh, Jee, Goh*, and finally *Joo*.

Peace and harmony returned to the land and to this day each Passion rules for a year and a day before he reluctantly relinquishes control to his brother and impatiently awaits his next turn.

## TAI XI MEETS YIN LI

Years passed and the population of Huan Wang grew. Many people branched out to create more towns and cities throughout the vast land, all under the gentle guidance of Cong Chen.

Tai Xi remained in Huan Wang. His great deeds were already legendary, and many a family wished to marry their daughter to him. Although greatly flattered, none of these maidens suited Tai Xi, and he soon began to fear that he would never find a woman that would please him.

One warm summer day a *k'i-lin* visited the city. A magnificent creature thought to be a good omen, the people ran from the city to catch a closer glimpse of it. Men tried to playfully catch the *k'i-lin* while it danced around them, tossing its head back in accepted challenge while its single golden horn caught and threw the sun in all directions.

Soon the object of catching the *k'i-lin* became a contest among the people of Huan Wang, and for hours men and boys alike tried in vain to even touch the beast.

As the sun began to fall below the distant green hills, a woman suddenly appeared. Her stunning beauty caused men to forget about the *k'i-lin* as she walked calmly past them to the creature. When she approached, the *k'i-lin* watched her and then stopped, lowering its head in submission. She reached out with one slender hand to gently stroke the beast's muzzle while onlookers gaped. The people of the city stood in awe, but none more than Tai Xi, whose heart began to burn as fiery as the reddening sky.

The next day, while talk of the woman and the *k'i-lin* was on the lips of every man, woman, and child, Tai Xi was trying to learn who she was. It seemed that no one knew of her. Tai Xi had to search for seven days and seven nights before finally finding the mysterious woman. Named Yin Li, she was the daughter of a humble bread maker. Confident her father would agree to a marriage proposal, Tai Xi was surprised when the man told him that it would be her decision whether or not she married. Still confident that he would have Yin Li, Tai Xi strolled boldly into the back of the bread shop to find her standing impatiently, covered in flour. She stood with her hands on her hips and a frown on her face while he expressed his undying love for her.

"Ah, Tai Xi! Your words are as bold as your deeds, and your deeds as large as your ego! If you are truly such a marvelous man, surely you could build me a throne where I might sit and touch the sun, as you once did? Do this, and you will win my heart."

Stunned, Tai Xi left the bread shop. He looked up to the sky where Yen, the sun, burned fiercely. He had touched the sun once before—he could do it again!

Tai Xi traveled far from Huan Wang to a distant range of mountains. There he began stacking stones upon stones to build Yin Li's throne.

For a year and a day Tai Xi stacked the stones until a mountain stood before him, the tallest in all the land. He Named it Spirit Mountain and returned triumphantly to Yin Li who was hard at work at the back of her father's store.

"I have built you your throne!" he said with a large smile, "Now you will be my wife!"

Yin Li shook her head. "No," she said, "I no longer want a throne. If you truly value love, then surely you can cause Yen and Yeng to meet in the Heavens above so they might know each other again for at least a moment? Do this, and I will marry you!"



Tai Xi was bewildered, but again he left the shop to find a way to win his love's heart. Climbing to the top of Spirit Mountain, Tai Xi said to the sun, "Great Yen! Stop for but a moment to hear my riddle!" Intrigued, the mighty sun stopped in the sky to listen.

"What does man have caged yet seeks to control, and that he often speaks of killing and yet is often killed by?" Yen stopped and pondered. Yen pondered for so long that Yeng eventually caught up with her, and for a moment the two were once again as one. And as the sky grew dark and long shadows spread across the land, Tai Xi laughed and said, "It is time!" And he returned triumphantly to the bread shop where he confronted Yin Li a third time.

"Yen and Yeng have met in the Heavens above! They will know each other once again for at least a short while before their eternal chase again resumes! I have done as you have asked; now you will be my wife!" He said.

But Yin Li only shook her head, saying, "I no longer care about Yen and Yeng. I want you to switch Heaven and Earth for me. If you truly love me, you will do this!"

Tai Xi shook his head sadly. "I am sorry," he said, "but I am not worthy of you. I cannot switch Heaven and Earth. I wished you to be my bride, but you seek a god, and I am but a man."

At last Yin Li smiled. She took Tai Xi's hands in hers and said, "The mighty Tai Xi is a humble man! I will marry you."



## TAI XI AND THE PHOENIX

Many years later, Tai Xi went out to explore the land with his young son, Fu Zhen. They came upon a great valley where at the far end, atop the peak of a mighty mountain, a phoenix hurled itself to its death on a jagged precipice hundreds of feet below. Upon its death the phoenix would burst into a brilliant flame and be reborn, only to fly to the top to do it all over again. Tai Xi told his son to remain behind and he began to climb the rock face. Over and over again the phoenix hurled itself to its doom while Tai Xi climbed. Finally he reached the mystical bird and asked, "Phoenix, why do you continually kill yourself? Is your life so bad that you would seek to end it?"

The phoenix wept bitter tears and said, "My mate has been stolen from me. A giant deep in the mountains is holding her. I cannot live without her!"

Tai Xi's heart went out to the suffering creature and he said, "Then phoenix, I will retrieve your mate so that the two of you might once again be together!" Telling his son that he would return soon, Tai Xi traveled deep into the mountains to the giant's lair.

The giant's home was high in the mountains where rock became ice and the ground became snow. The giant was deep in a frozen cave where he held the phoenix in a large iron cage. To Tai Xi's astonishment, the giant had no clothes!

"Leave human!" the giant roared.

"I have come to ask you to free the phoenix," said Tai Xi.

"Hah!" barked the giant, "I need the fire bird to keep me warm! If I give her up, I will freeze!"

Tai Xi considered the situation a moment before saying, "Very well, I shall return."

Tai Xi left the mountains and hunted the great Ki-ru tiger—a tiger so large that five men could easily ride atop its broad back. For several days and nights he hunted the great beast before finally tracking it down. After slaying it in a mighty duel, Tai Xi returned to the giant's lair where he presented him with a large cloak made from the beast's fur.

"Here, giant!" said Tai Xi, "This will keep you warm!" The giant, delighted with his gift, said, "I have no further use for the fire bird! You may have it!"

Tai Xi returned the phoenix to her mate. The two were so happy that they crafted a robe for Tai Xi made from the winds and the clouds, which Tai Xi humbly accepted.

Tai Xi and his son then returned to Huan Wang.

## ON THE CREATION OF AN EMPIRE

The people who had journeyed to the center of the world were spread out across the land in countless villages, towns, and cities. The largest of these cities, Huan Wang, stood as a testimony to their greatness.

But a terrible tragedy struck; a great plague swept through the communities, killing thousands of men, women, and children. Among the dead was Yin Li, Tai Xi's wife. Struck with an overwhelming sense of loss, Tai Xi screamed into the sky. Reaching, he pulled forth the sword he had forged from the sun and plunged it deep into the Earth. A golden liquid poured forth from the wound to pool at Tai Xi's feet. As he sank to his knees, staring at the strange golden pool through the tears that stung his eyes, Cong Chen appeared before him.

"Tai Xi," said the greatest of all the dragons, "Now is not the time to mourn. Your people need you."

"My people?!" Tai Xi screamed, his loss so painful that he did not care that he was so impertinent, "You are our leader, Cong Chen! Why did you not stop the plague?"

Cong Chen sighed patiently and said, "You cannot stop death, Tai Xi. But you can learn how to live. Rise from your misery and lead your people to greatness."

Tai Xi could only stare stupidly as the great dragon pointed one of his large claws toward the pool of liquid gold. Before his eyes, the strange liquid began to swirl and take shape, finally solidifying into the shape of a glimmering golden crown.

"You know what it is to love. And you know what it is to mourn. Your courage and wisdom is tempered with a great empathy and compassion, Son of Man. It is you that has been chosen to lead this great land." Just then, five dragons flew from the sky to land behind Cong Chen. They were the fiery red dragon *For*, the Lord of Fire; the emerald green dragon *Shan*, the Lord of Earth; the azure blue dragon *Shui*, the Lord of Water; the icy white dragon *Feng*, the Lord of Wind; and the radiant golden dragon *Tiet*, the Lord of Metal.

"You," continued Cong Chen, "have the symbols which govern the five sacred elements, Tai Xi."

Cong Chen lifted the sword from the Earth and placed it before Tai Xi, saying, "The Imperial Ivory Sword." As he did, *For*, the Lord of Fire, bowed.

He next sat down the elemental water seal and said, "The Imperial Dragon Seal." As he did, *Shui*, the Lord of Water, bowed.

Next he placed Tai Xi's wedding gift to Yin Li before him—the piece of jade he had taken from the Spirit of the Land and had made into a pendant.

"The Jade Pendant," he said. As he did, *Shan*, the Lord of Earth, bowed.

Then Cong Chen set down the robe the phoenixes had given Tai Xi and said, "The Imperial Phoenix Robe." And as he did, *Feng*, the Lord of Wind, bowed.

Cong Chen then motioned toward the crown, which still sat before Tai Xi. Tai Xi reached out with trembling hands, picked up the crown, and placed it atop his head, and as he did *Tiet*, the Lord of Metal, bowed.

"Rise, Son of Man," said Cong Chen. Tai Xi stood and as he did, the five dragons rose as well.

"These five will be your guardians, Emperor Xi," said Cong Chen, "Now you will take over as ruler of this land, for I must leave." And without another word Cong Chen lifted into the sky and flew to the West, never to be seen again.

Emperor Xi then looked at the Five Guardians and said, "From this day forth this land will be known as *Cathay*."

## ON THE GROWTH OF AN EMPIRE

And so Cathay was born. Time swept through centuries and then through millennia as the population of Cathay soared. After the death of the First Emperor, Tai Xi, his son, Yun Fu Zhen, ascended to the Imperial Jade Throne. After the death of Fu Zhen, the five symbols of Imperial Power passed to his eldest son, Yun Sun Ye, and so on throughout the years. Each emperor took his people to even greater heights of glory and achievement. The borders of the Empire stretched further and further. There were great advances in technology, magic, and philosophical thought as great schools of magical and academic studies rose throughout the Empire. Countless communities dotted the vast expanse of land with a great network of roads interweaving them all together to support economics and trade. From the Imperial Capital of Huan Wang the emperors and the Five Guardians stood watch over Cathay and for countless ages she knew only peace and prosperity.



## ON THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE WESTERN WORLD

Cathay benefited from the isolation it had from the rest of the world. The comforts gained from such a great civilization afforded the people time for philosophical and artistic pursuits. Unhindered by outside influence, a great culture saturated with strong traditions gradually formed. This pacifistic lifestyle came to an end just over 600 years ago when a powerful force from the West arrived to conquer Cathay's neighbor, Indrisa. It was not long after, when the first diplomats from this new empire—that called itself *Thera*—arrived at the imperial capital. The strange pale Westerners spoke of an impending doom that they called the Scourge, and offered to supply a means of salvation—if the Emperor would bend his knee to their First Governor. The Emperor, not wishing to anger the Passions by executing his guests, decided instead to strip them naked and send them on their way.

The Therans' message did not go unheard, however. Its impact sent ripples throughout the Empire. One group, a race of elves known as the Gar, felt its impact most fervently. While the Emperor was busy assuring Cathayans that the dragons would protect them, just as they always had, the Gar secretly met with Thera diplomats. The diplomats filled the heads of the Gar, who were a race of scholars and musicians, with doubt and fear. The Gar allowed this fear to overwhelm their logic and reason. Led to believe that the only way to salvation was through the Westerners, the Gar began smuggling Therans into the port city of Su-Sha, located southeast from the fabled Tower of Secrets along the shores of the Emerald Sea. The Therans soon took control of Su-Sha, and prevented anyone who entered the city from leaving. After hearing strange reports from the region, the Emperor finally dispatched a group of soldiers to investigate the matter, but by then it was too late.

Two entire legions of Thera troops had been slowly smuggled into the city over a period of several months, and had already heavily fortified the area. Only one soldier from the group sent by the Emperor survived the encounter. Injured, he raced back to the imperial capital with the Thera legions marching slowly behind him.



*The typical Thera looks very different from the average Cathayan. It's hard to believe that the Emperor's spy network didn't take notice of it earlier. Maybe the Empire wasn't as stable as is said in legends and stories?*

—Gillian, Human Thief

*The Therans prevented anyone from leaving the city, thus buying them time. However, the Cathayans were clearly not prepared for the might of the Thera Empire.*

—Shetezara Glendare, T'skrang Swordmaster

As the Westerners' army marched northwest they used the Gar as diplomats at every settlement they encountered. Those cities that would not surrender supplies were attacked, and the inhabitants shipped back to Thera as slaves. The Gar, horrified by what they had caused, were by then powerless to stop the invaders.

And so it also seemed with the Cathayan Empire. Never having experienced war in all their history, the Cathayans were completely unprepared for the might of the Western world. The Emperor had no standing military, merely a skeleton force of soldiers tasked to main-

tain law and order. And those few soldiers that Cathay had were busy overseeing the flood of refugees who were entering the Imperial City in flight from the advancing army. The Emperor dispatched messengers to the Five Guardians just as word reached him that there were sightings of strange, flying stone ships in the skies above the Empire.

The Thera army finally reached the immense walls of the Imperial City. These high stone walls, which were ordered constructed by the great Cong Chen during the founding of the city, were always valued for their artistic beauty rather than application. It was only when the legions began setting up camp on the other side of these great fortifications that the foresight and wisdom of Cong Chen was finally understood.

As the frightened peasants within the city were praying to the Passions and the Five Guardians for salvation, the Therans attacked. Their great fire cannons tore into the foundations, but the walls held. Hoping for a quick victory, the impatient Thera general ordered an assault. For six days and nights the defenders fought desperately. On the morning of the seventh day, just as the Therans were about to overwhelm the defenders, a low, slow-moving cloud of dust appeared on the horizon. The attackers and defenders alike watched as a long column of ragged Namegivers marched slowly toward the city. Their long wooden staffs and brightly colored robes, now soiled with weeks of trail dust, marked them as the Xan monks. Numbering only 400, the Xan monks had been marching for several weeks with only sandals on their feet and robes on their backs. Fighting weariness, hunger, and dehydration, the monks met the legions on the field just outside the walls of the capital. The Thera general, seeing what he believed



to be a great opportunity to crush what remained of the defenders' morale, ordered his troops to meet the new foe. Greatly outnumbered, the monks marched solemnly forward.

The soldiers of the legions, most of whom were low Circle or non-adepts, were found to be no match for the amazing martial prowess of the Xan monks. What began as a confident attack soon turned into a desperate defense and quickly became a rout. As the Theran legions scattered like leaves in a strong wind, a cheer rose from the defenders who watched from the high walls of Huan Wang.

But long shadows cast by five airships that suddenly arrived above the battlefield choked off the cheers and quieted the defenders. As they began raining fire down onto the city, five more great shapes added themselves to the sky. The Guardians swept down from the clouds, their mouths roaring great gouts of flames onto the attackers. It was not long before the five proud airships of the Theran navy were nothing more than smoldering mounds of rubble on the ground far below.

The Guardians then addressed the Emperor, telling him that they had watched the struggle from a distance. After having seen many acts of heroism, self-sacrifice, and bravery, they judged the children of Cathay worthy of salvation. It was now their duty to teach them the art of war and to create a grand army to watch over the Empire. For the Westerners, they warned, were not yet defeated...

## THE IMPERIAL WARRIORS

Out of the 400 monks who came to the aid of the besieged capital only 101 survived. For their bravery, the Guardians bestowed upon them the honor of becoming the capital's defenders. One of the heroes, a young human by the Name of Su Lee, was given the honor to return alone to their monastery in the Xan Mountains to train a new generation of monks.

A greater fate awaited the monks who remained. That night, while bathed in the ghostly light of the moon, the Guardians cast a powerful ritual spell over the remaining 100, forever changing and redefining their True Patterns, creating the first Imperial Warriors.

## ON THE BANISHMENT OF THE GAR

The Emperor then turned his attention to the treacherous Gar. Although the elves begged for forgiveness, the Emperor could not find it within himself to give them pardon. But neither could he find it within himself to commit genocide, so he instead banished them to the North, beyond the borders of the Empire, to a harsh land of steppes and plains. The Gar were no longer considered Cathayan citizens, and any of them ever again caught within the borders were to be executed on sight.

As the long trail of mournful exiles began their long march north, the Five Guardians began the training of a grand imperial army.

## THE WAR WITH THE WEST

For a year the Guardians trained an army for the Empire. While they were doing so, the Therans were also drafting a new army for a second invasion into Cathay. Complimented with seasoned veterans from the provinces, this new army gathered at the staging point in Indrisa. Once they were ready, the Therans launched a three-pronged attack into Cathay, punching into the modern-day kingdoms of Shan Dei, For Dei, and Shui Dei. The Therans hoped to draw the Cathayans into a war on multiple fronts. They believed that if they could get the Cathayans to spread out their forces their supply lines would be vulnerable, while their own legions could be re-supplied by airship. Although this was tactically sound, the Cathayans had been counseled by the dragons and were waiting, expecting such an attack.

The Therans, who were expecting an army of green troops, were unprepared for the fully disciplined, professional Cathayan army of over 200,000 men, horses, and chariots that awaited them. The legions that invaded the North were the first to fall.

*I've seen many wonders in my life, but I can't imagine what a sight an army of 200,000 Namegivers would make. The Theran soldiers must have surely felt overwhelmed by it.*

—Rowan Daggertree, retired Adventurer

Instead of spreading his forces out, the Emperor decided to meet the Theran forces one at a time. The northern legions were caught in the open and quickly surrounded on the battlefield. All were killed save one—a human lieutenant who was allowed to live so he could carry the message of what had happened to the legions waiting further to the south.

The messenger reached the troll general Pal Tor, who had the lieutenant executed for cowardice after he delivered his message. As the Cathayans swept south to engage him, Pal Tor made a fatal error. Rather than fleeing further south to combine his troops with the third army, Pal Tor decided to call in air support from the awaiting navy. A compliment of over 20 airships arrived to provide assistance. Pal Tor, blinded by the overconfidence that can only come from a privileged Theran upbringing, chose to set up his troops in a long narrow valley, hoping that its narrow confines would limit the usefulness of the enemy's superior numbers and make the chariots all but useless.

A few days later, Theran scouts informed Pal Tor that the Cathayans were camped half a day's ride from the mouth of the valley. Thrilled by the thought of what he was certain would be a total victory, Pal Tor sent the airships to attack. He hoped to catch the camping Cathayans unaware. With no air support and out in the open, the Cathayans would be an easy slaughter.

Three days later the ships had still not returned. Instead, what did arrive at the valley was the Cathayan army, looking none the worse for wear.

The Emperor had learned about Pal Tor's attempt to hold the valley, so he had sent half of his army around to the other side. He waited until they were in position before signaling the attack. War horns split the still morning air and the Cathayans charged. Rather than the valley being an ideal defensive position for the Therans it instead became their tomb. Caught between a hammer and anvil and with nowhere to go, the Therans could not flee. Pressed on both sides, many Therans in the middle of the giant mass of soldiers were smothered or trampled to death. Many soldiers tried to find safety by climbing the steep walls of the valley, or even onto the heads of their comrades. Instead of safety they found only death as Cathayan snipers found them to be easy targets.

It was at this moment that the twenty airships Pal Tor had sent out three days before arrived at the scene. Upon seeing them, Pal Tor raised his great troll sword into the sky and screamed his famous last words, which have since become a popular ironic Cathayan saying for any situation that seems hopeless: "Now is the time for glory!"

Thunderous roars echoed off the walls of the valley as the twenty airships released their deadly volleys of cannon fire... directly into the tightly packed ranks of the Therans. The ships, which were captured three days before by the Five Guardians, were now under the control of Cathayan soldiers. Within moments the Theran army was reduced to a twisted, smoldering heap. The heat from the fire cannons fused many corpses together, creating what seemed to many as some sort of grotesque monument of death and destruction. The Emperor,





having lost less than 1% of his army after two encounters with Theran forces, then ordered his troops south to engage the remaining invaders.

Upon hearing of the disastrous defeat of the first two armies, the general of the third Theran army decided to retreat back to Indrisa, but the Therans had penetrated too deep into Cathayan territory and the Emperor was able to cut them off. Employing the tactic that the Therans had hoped the Cathayan leader would do at the beginning of the war, the Emperor ordered his 200,000 troops to divide into hundreds of smaller armies and spread out in a horseshoe shape covering many square miles, encircling the Therans. This formation, now known as “Sheng’s Bow,” advanced slowly toward the Theran’s position. After half a dozen skirmishes, the Theran numbers were cut in half and they were forced to slowly retreat in the direction Sheng’s Bow dictated. Soon they realized they were being led to their original destination—the Imperial City.

When the Therans reached the city there were less than one thousand fighting men remaining. With the great walls of Huan Wang to their backs and the Imperial Army to their front, the Therans had no choice but to surrender. The Emperor rode up in his splendid jade chariot, casually dismounted, and approached the general, a young human woman by the Name of Aloria Jarrys, who watched him with weary eyes. He inclined his head politely and invited her into his city for tea.

A few months after the invasion was launched, the Overgovernor of Indrisa received a convoy of hundreds of wagons being pulled by General Aloria and her remaining troops. Each wagon was filled with several barrels. Each barrel was filled with the pickled heads of all the other men and women who had invaded Cathay.

The message was clear.

When word of the disastrous campaign reached the First Governor, all military and expansion plans for the area ceased and a peace treaty was soon issued. The war with Cathay was over.

Back in Cathay, the Emperor decreed that all contact with the West was forbidden. Cathay, undoubtedly one of the greatest civilizations of all time, sealed herself off from the rest of the world.

There was no further contact attempted by the West.

✻ ✻ ✻

*Not by a Theran army, but merchants, adventurers, and scholars from across the Theran Empire traveled to the land and had contact with Cathayans despite the Emperor’s decree.*

—Fada the Traveler

✻ ✻ ✻

## ON THE SCOURGE

As the years passed, the Five Guardians and several other great dragons of Cathay began building dragon lairs across the Empire. They told the Emperor that it was for the safety of his people. They warned that soon a time would come when the Passions would release the children of the Twelve Terrors upon the world once again in order to cleanse the Earth of the Westerners.

A century passed before the first signs of what the Therans had called the Scourge appeared. It started when swarms of giant locusts with the heads of babies flew from the deserts to attack isolated villages. Soon reports of demonic creatures began surfacing throughout Cathay.

The dragons began leading people to the hundreds of dragon lairs they had been creating over the past one hundred years. Each lair had a dragon as a guardian, who, once the lair was full, used powerful magic to seal it for hundreds of years.

In the far North, the Gar had no dragon benefactors. They sent messengers to the Emperor of Cathay, asking for salvation. The few messengers the Emperor allowed to live reported his refusal. As their people perished by the hundreds, one among them had a vision from the Passion *Maah*. He led his people further north, to salvation (for more information about the Gar, refer to the **Lands of Cathay**, p. 51).

Just over four hundred years passed with the people of Cathay living in the dragon lairs before the dragons told them that it was safe



to return to the surface. When the Cathayans opened the tombs that had been their homes for nearly half a millennium they were shocked to see the devastation that the Twelve Terrors and their children had wrought on the land. A great mourning rippled through the survivors at the sight of the wasteland that was once an endless, fertile, green sea.

The Emperor at this time, who had only known of his capital city through story, insisted on visiting its site so he could begin to rebuild. What they found is still echoed in Cathayan song and legend: the city of Huan Wang, which was founded thousands of years before, still stood—untouched.

When word of this miracle spread it re-united the Cathayans and gave them hope. They immediately set forth to reclaim their land. Elementalists wove magic back into the soil so crops might again grow, questors of *Neeoh* began rebuilding cities and roads, and again Huan Wang housed the Imperial Family.

Within a decade Cathay had regained much of her former glory. The children of the Twelve Terrors still stalked the dark places of the land, but they were fought whenever found. Cathayans once again devoted their time to the pursuit of art, philosophy, and magic as the land turned green.

But this peace was not to last.

## THE DEATH OF AN EMPEROR

It was twelve years after the opening of the dragon lairs when the forces of chaos descended upon the land. It was then that Emperor Yun Lan Juan died suddenly from a mysterious illness. He left no heir to the Jade Throne, ending a dynasty that had ruled over the Empire since its inception. The people of Cathay were lost; the title of Emperor had always been passed down from father to son. Without tradition to guide them, the Cathayans did not know what to do next.

But the Five Guardians did. Cong Chen had known this day might happen, and had left specific instructions with them. Bound by their orders, the Five Guardians took the five Symbols of Imperial Power: the Imperial Phoenix Robe, the Jade Pendant, the Imperial Ivory Sword, the Golden Crown, and the Imperial Dragon Seal, and spread out through Cathay. Each dragon chose a Cathayan hero, one whom they believed held the best qualities of a Namegiver, and gave to him one of the Imperial Symbols,

thus creating five distinct kingdoms in the land. Each dragon, acting as a benefactor, told his hero that “one must rule.”

The five new kings each quickly raised an army to conquer the other four and claim all five symbols so that he might be able to proclaim himself emperor. Thus began the Great Trial.

*The Great Trial has caused so much suffering. So much blood spilled. So many lives wasted. So many cities destroyed. And all because the dragons were unwilling (or unable?) to take the lead and choose a new Emperor!*

—Jel Lang, Human Scout

## ON THE GREAT TRIAL THAT IS THE WAR OF WU XING

That was nearly 100 years ago. The Great Trial, now known as the War of Five Elements, or the *War of Wu Xing*, has raged on since, each champion vying for the throne. Although three of the original five have died, they passed on this noble quest to their heirs. Countless soldiers and civilians have perished in this seemingly endless conflict, without any of the five kings gaining even one of the other Symbols of Imperial Power. To the dragons this horrible war is simply a ritual; a tradition mimicking those of their kind to ensure that the strongest and wisest will rule Cathay. To the lesser Namegiver races this is a brutal holy war, where only their leader is the true son of heaven.

The dragons, forbidden to take part in the war, can act only as advisors to their chosen heroes, with each hero only able to seek an audience if he has one of the symbols. If he gains another symbol, he gains access to another dragon (whichever dragon presides over said symbol). Once a hero has all five of the Symbols of Imperial Power, the five great Cathay dragons will proclaim him the new Emperor and a new dynasty will arise.

Meanwhile, the land is torn apart by chaos. Constant border skirmishes and raiding parties leave villages and towns in ruins while bandits take advantage of the war to attack the unwary traveler. Pirate attacks plague the Emerald Sea while increasing Gar incursion threatens the northern kingdoms. The Twelve Terrors and their children still stalk the shadows, growing fat off the pain and suffering of the people. But the worst threat of all is the West.

A century of war has stretched Cathay's resources to their limits. Hoping to gain some sort of advantage, the kings have opened Cathay's borders to the West. New trade routes have been established as Cathayans trade off jade jewelry, bolts of silk, strings of pearls, and other precious treasures for items that will help fuel their war.

The most interested in a new relationship with the East are the Therans, who have finally returned after all these years...



## CHAPTER THREE

# ON CATHAYAN CULTURE

*One cannot hope to understand the Cathayan  
without understanding his traditions.*

• DAYLEN JAGARO,  
MERCHANT OF BARTERTOWN •



Although Cathay is home to many different races of Namegivers the people of the various kingdoms act and live as one community, sharing the same beliefs and customs that have been handed down throughout the centuries. Cathayans embody the magical, spiritual, and disciplined values that were imposed upon them thousands of years ago by Cong Chen.

Many beliefs are constant throughout Cathayan society, despite contemporary political borders. For example, all Cathayans worship the same Passions, honor their ancestor spirits, and revere the dragons. They follow the same calendar, speak the same language, prepare their food using similar methods and ingredients, celebrate common festivals, and function in the same family structures.

Observing these traditions is just as important to a Cathayan as eating or sleeping. Recognizing where they come from shows Cathayans where they are going. And this helps all Cathayans maintain their identity as a people, which, to them, validates their existence.

## THE CATHAYAN CALENDAR

**T**he Cathayan calendar that is used today is actually the second calendar in Cathay's history. Before the second calendar was created, Cathayans marked the years according to the current emperor. For example historical notes were marked with headings such as "In the Fifth Year of the Rule of Emperor Shi-Fe..."

Since the death of the last emperor it was believed to be more appropriate to create a new calendar. This new calendar, created by scholars at the Tower of Secrets, begins near the end of the Scourge, when the last emperor died and the War of Wu Xing began.

The Cathayan calendar has 365 days divided into 12 months. Each of these months has from 29 to 32 days. The Cathayan calendar starts in spring with the months *Fai* (30), *Fang* (30), and *Juan* (31). Next come *Hui Ying* (29), *Lok* (31), and *Kong* (30), for summer; *Ming Ue* (31), *Jin* (31), and *Lei* (30), for autumn; and finally *Shun* (32), *Chang* (29), and *Shing* (31), for winter.

Every fourth year one day is added to the month of Hui Ying to celebrate Yen and Yeng's cosmic birth.

In the Cathayan calendar, the twelve Passions take turns ruling over an entire year each (see **On the Ruling of the Passions**, p. 14). Refer to the Rule of the Passions table for an overview of the next years in the Cathayan calendar. The current year in the Cathayan calendar is 88 CA (Cathay), ruled by *Shurr*.

## ON THE IMPORTANCE OF RITUALS

**C**athayan culture is vast and complex. There are many rituals performed to validate Cathayans' past, present, and future, as well as to appease the dragons and the Passions. These rituals also help to solidify the abstracts of Cathayan spiritual beliefs. Some of these rituals involve nothing more complex than lighting lanterns and burning incense, although some can be considerably more engaging.

## RULE OF THE PASSIONS

The following chart shows the years that each Passion rules over for the next twelve years, beginning with the current:

88 CA= *Shurr*  
89 CA= *Maah*  
90 CA= *Yaang*  
91 CA= *Hoh*  
92 CA= *Jee*  
93 CA= *Goh*  
94 CA= *Joo*  
95 CA= *Tswoo*  
96 CA= *Neeoh*  
97 CA= *Whoo*  
98 CA= *Twoo*  
99 CA= *Lohng*

Even the official greetings of the realms' various kings and queens has a very ritualistic fashion to it, with the recipients chanting, "Wan sui, wan sui, wan, wan sui!" This means, essentially, "May the king or queen live 10,000 years!" Greeting a monarch in an official capacity and failing to comply with this tradition is, to some, tantamount to treason, as to the Cathayan it is equivalent to wishing for their deaths.

—Daylen Jagaro,  
Merchant of Bartertown

## ON THE RITES OF MARRIAGE

**O**ne such ritual is marriage. Although common themes are recognizable in all the regions of Cathay, marriages have varying practices from kingdom to kingdom.

Arranged marriage is the most practiced form of union in Cathay, although peasants have been known to allow their children to choose their own spouses. This may be due to the fact that since peasants cannot own land the use of marriage as a political instrument is unavailable. In any case, the head of the household, usually the father, has the final say over the bride's right to marry.

When a marriage is arranged, both families begin making plans on how the ritual will be conducted. Details of marriages vary greatly and are dependent upon many factors. For example, it is common for the families to honor both of the Passions under which the groom and bride were born. This is in hopes of achieving the Passions' blessings for a long and fruitful union.

In some communities, the elemental dragon that governs the region is also honored, although this is a new tradition born since the segmentation of the land.

Marriage ceremonies can last up to three days, depending upon the wealth and status of the families involved. Peasant marriages usually consist of only a ritual bonding and a small meal afterwards. Affluent marriages take considerably longer and consist of long, drawn-out rituals of bonding with a new feast every evening.

After the marriage the woman goes to live with her husband and his family. For a wealthy husband, this would be the time for he and his new bride to purchase their own home and begin a new life together. Peasants often depend on inheriting their parents' home, so it is common for the new couple to share the home of the husband's family.

## ON POLYGAMY

**T**he Cathayan custom of polygamy (having more than one spouse) is rare except among the wealthy. Because Cathay is traditionally a patriarchal society, polygyny (a man having more than one wife) is far more common than polyandry (a woman having more than one husband), though in some remote regions (where men are far outnumbered by women or



where there are limited resources and each man cannot provide for his own family) polyandry does exist. However, in most cities, towns, and villages across the once great empire, polygyny is the most common form.

It is expensive to have more than one bride, so Cathayans view polygyny as a form of social status. In villages, there are usually only a handful of men at most who can afford more than one bride. In the cities, wealthy merchants typically parade many wives and the same goes for many of the noble lords.

Royalty never has more than one bride. Like the Emperor before him, a member of royalty chooses one spouse and then may, at his discretion, have many concubines. A child born from a concubine is considered a bastard and not eligible to inherit his royal parent's titles or assets. This tradition was a decree set down by the Five Guardians long ago to help avoid wars caused by disputes over succession, as well as to lower the amount of cases of siblings murdering one another. Some lords follow this tradition as well, though it is somewhat of an affectation, as they believe it makes them more like the royalty they strive to emulate.

## ON BIRTH AND NAMING

**O**n the thirteenth day after a child's birth, after twelve days devoted to the honor of the Passions, the child's father, grandfathers, and older brothers (if any), along with a questor of Whoo (if available) meet for the child's Naming ritual. Before the father says the child's Name, he must first honor the child's paternal ancestors. In families with especially long lineages, this can go on for quite some time. After Naming the child, the father carries the babe into a room where his mother and her relatives are waiting, and introduces him by Name for the first time.

In Cathayan culture, the family Name comes before the individual's Name. This signifies the importance of family over the individual, which carries over into all aspects of a Cathayan's life. Middle Names are common, though not every family carries this tradition. When a child is given a middle Name, it is during his Naming ceremony, and thus becomes part of his True Pattern. In the kingdom of Shui Dei, remote villages have begun a practice where all males in the family have the same middle Name, and all females of a family have the same middle Name. This practice is believed to strengthen the family's True Pattern, much like a Group Pattern, though there has not been much study by magicians to verify this.

## ON DEATH AND BURIAL

**W**hen Emperor Tai Xi, Cathay's first emperor, died all those centuries ago, the great and mighty dragon, Cong Chen, breathed fire upon his corpse. As the smoke drifted towards the heavens, Cong Chen told the assembled masses that Tai Xi's spirit was ascending to the stars, where all dragons come from, and from there he would look down upon his great empire and his subjects for all time. Early Cathayans followed this tradition by cremating their loved ones' remains. The current tradition of inhumation began several centuries before the Scourge (though archeological evidence suggests that on occasion, some affluent members of society were buried before this time). The cost of fuel for the fires was on the rise, as were complaints of the stench in the more heavily populated cities. Eventually Emperor Nu Shi passed an Imperial Decree stating that burial would be sufficient as long as incense was burned so the deceased's spirit could ride the smoke to the heavens. Since then, inhumation has been the most widely practiced form of honoring the dead in Cathay, though in some remote regions cremation is still the preferred method.

Wealthier Cathayans have large tombs built for themselves, sometimes out of marble or jade. Loved ones often come to a tomb to leave gifts for a spirit, such as bowls of rice or a few copper pieces. Incense is burned at the site on special occasions, such as the deceased's birthday. Poorer Cathayans usually have nothing more than a modest tombstone, made from wood or sometimes stone. Cemeteries are often on hills, or barring that, outside of a city's walls. Unlike Western cultures, the Cathayans' burial places are seen as havens of peace and physical ties with one's ancestors.

A Cathayan may bequeath his belongings to loved ones before death, though the final decision of inheritance falls to the male head of the family, most often the husband or father. Being a strict patriarchal society, this tradition is validated by the law of primogeniture throughout all five kingdoms.

## ON THE DUALITY OF LIFE

**L**ife to the Cathayans is not merely a long series of trials and tribulations to be overcome, but a turbulent path designed to lead one to spiritual enlightenment. Therefore, to a Cathayan, every action in one's life serves a dual purpose.

Food, which provides sustenance for the body, also feeds the spirit. The preparation and combination of food is very important to a Cathayan. It is believed that the improper balance of ingredients in a meal, such as too much meat, leads to a spiritual imbalance, which in turn affects the body, causing sickness. Likewise, if a meal is cooked for too short or too long a time it may also cause illness. Traditionally, the art of cooking is handed down from mother to daughter, although it is important for all Cathayans to master its delicate intricacies.





Spiced food, like the traditional cuisine of Cara Fahd, is likely to throw the inner balance of a Namegiver out of balance, then. If you believe this theory, that is. The average ork will say that you're simply too weak.

—Wartar, Cook of “Windhammer”

Seeking perfection through an art form is another important facet of Cathayan life. Music, calligraphy, painting, and all other art forms are believed to have been taught to the Cathayans long ago by the great Cong Chen. As such, when a Cathayan attempts to perfect his art he is also trying to bring himself closer to the spirituality of the dragons, thus perfecting himself.

## ON THE IMPORTANCE OF HONOR

**U**nlike most other cultures, Cathayans value the group's welfare above that of the individual, and their customs and traditions reflect this.

Nothing is as important to a Cathayan as his honor. His actions reflect upon himself and his family, so to behave shamefully would not only look badly upon him, but also his children, and in some cases even his children's children. A Cathayan who would harm or act against his own family is seen as the greatest villain.

Honor can be obtained by strictly observing the codes of conduct found in Cathayan society as in one's own family. Loyalty to family is traditionally more important than loyalty to one's country, but that theme has slowly been changing since the war began.

The greatest theme, and considered to be the most important honor, is the act of self-sacrifice. Many Cathayan tales are made up of heroes who sacrifice themselves for the sake of a loved one or their community. The various militaries find this belief useful for inspiring their soldiers, and encourage the spread of such tales.

## ON THE WAR CHARIOT

**T**hough Cathayans of all five kingdoms have much in common, nothing is more common than their skill in the arts of war. One devastating weapon employed across the plains of Cathay by all five kingdoms is the war chariot. The chariot is more than just a machine of war; to the Cathayan, it is the symbol of both power and prestige on the battlefield. Indeed, no vassal may command more war chariots than his liege.

The typical war chariot has two wheels, is pulled by two horses and is manned by the charioteer, an archer, and sometimes a third man holding a handful of throwing spears, plus a sword or battle-axe. The typical war chariot is constructed from wood, leather, and sometimes bronze.

Elite war chariots—those ridden by famed warriors, nobles, and royal bodyguards—come in a variety of distinct forms. Though essentially the same as the typical war chariot, the elite war chariot is somewhat larger, pulled by four—and sometimes up to six—war horses, and is often constructed from elemental wood, gold, ivory, jade, and other precious minerals and elements.

## ADVENTURE HOOK

The characters are hired by a wealthy merchant to track down his son's abducted fiancée. He explains to them that bandits were attacking his town at the time she was kidnapped. The characters track down the outlaws but soon discover that they had no part in her disappearance. After further investigation, the characters eventually find the girl, who they discover used the raid on her town as an opportunity to run away. She tells them that her family arranged the marriage with the merchant's son despite her objections. The characters must now decide to either help the girl or take her unwillingly back to the town so they can collect their reward.

## ON THE IMPORTANCE OF ANCESTOR WORSHIP

**W**hen a family member dies it is believed that he takes his honored place among the spirits of his ancestors. Unlike other cultures, the afterlife is not a place of eternal rest, but rather a place for one's ancestors to agonize over the fate of their family. It is believed that the spirits of all a Cathayan's ancestors watch over and help guide the family. Doing anything that would bring dishonor upon the family might invoke the wrath of these restless spirits, and many Cathayan rituals are designed to help appease any unruly spirit who might cause trouble.

*It is very possible in theory that spirits can return from the netherworlds and lay their eyes upon the world at will. But almost all of the spirits we know in Barsaive or the Theran Empire simply do not show any interest in the realms of the mortals. What prompts the Cathayan ancestors to do so? Is it the magic of the place, or just that they were told they would come back to watch before they died?*

—Gorug, Nethermancer of the Sixth Spire

*Bah! It's all rubbish, I say. Nothing more than a superstition designed to elicit respect for one's elders. If you ask me, these easterners could use some good ol'-fashioned Theran discipline. We command respect from our young; we don't need fairy tales to do our work for us.*

—Davar the Ugly, Theran Strategos of the Third Legion

It is this strong belief of the ancestor spirits watching his every action that encourages a Cathayan to act honorably. To be shamed in life would mean an eternity of shame after death. Because of this belief, committing a crime against one's family is viewed as one of the most disgraceful acts a Cathayan can perform. Known perpetrators are seen as social pariahs, and in some extreme cases have been exiled from the community, or even executed.



## ON THE IMPORTANCE OF DRAGONS

**B**elieved to be emissaries of the Passions, the dragons are held as sacred by the Cathayans. Pagodas have been erected all around Cathay for people to come and burn incense as offerings. Many believe that the dragons can grant good fortune to those who honor them. Others believe that the dragons are responsible for bringing the rains to feed the crops, and a drought or a flood is sometimes interpreted as an indication that the dragons are angry. In these times peasants have been known to sacrifice livestock in an attempt to appease them.

## ON THE CATHAYAN LANGUAGE

**T**he Cathayan language is ancient and has been well preserved both through the ages and across the entire Empire. Cathayans claim they can distinguish what region you are from by your speech, but such distinctions exist primarily among the peasants, while the upper classes and traders are difficult to place. In addition, many Cathayans never encounter any other languages, with Theran being a recent exception in a few of the kingdoms. Even among scholars and sages, languages besides Cathayan are uncommon, as it has remained relatively unchanged throughout their recorded history. Their isolationism has also contributed strongly to this trend.

Westerners often find the language at once familiar and foreign. The basics of the spoken language can quickly be grasped, but the fine sounds and tones often elude the ear of even a practiced foreigner for a lifetime; only through adept magic is this barrier easily overcome. The written language, however, is much more complex and nuanced. Throalic dwarfs can find some similarity in its symbols and appearance, but the meanings within meanings and precise stroke orders render it more difficult.

“He said he was a calligrapher. He was writing a letter for an old human woman who was apparently illiterate. She wished for him to send the missive to her only son who was currently serving in King Sen Ma’s army. His shop was open to a busy street where bystanders could observe his work. I stopped and watched as he made broad, sweeping strokes with his brush onto the bamboo paper, conjuring strangely beautiful characters that looked quite similar to the Throalic script, upon a casual inspection. Only the Cathayan characters had a certain graceful elegance that the blocky, dwarf language has always lacked.

When he was finished I asked the man why he wrote from up to down and right to left, which, at the time, seemed somehow wrong to my Western eyes. He gave me a perplexed look, and I suddenly became aware that I was playing the role of the ignorant foreigner. Before I could gracefully retract the question he said to me, “Why would we not? The universe begins with Heaven above, ending with the Earth below. And the sun, the moon, and the stars in the sky begin in the East each day, while ending in the West. It is the natural order of things—to do otherwise might offend the Passions!”

Cathayans’ unquestioning devotion to their culture and spirituality always amazed me. I asked him then why Cathayans have their family Names before their own Names. He laughed, saying that, in their culture, the family was more important than the individual. When he asked me if we Westerners felt the same way, I kindly thanked him for his wisdom and went on my way, deciding it was best not to answer.”

—From the Journal of Daylen Jagaro,  
Human Merchant of Bartertown



## MAGIC IN CATHAY

**M**ost Cathayans associate a deep spiritual significance with most aspects of their everyday lives, and magic is no different. Adepts can find trainers in nearly every city, while villages tend to hold very few, if any. Magicians are especially sought after for military service, and all five kingdoms have schools of magic for the training of war magicians.

Dragons are seen as the supreme authority over magic, which is to be expected from the ambassadors of the Passions. In times past, the Five Guardians would choose 100 Cathayans a year for special training in the ways of spellcasting, but this practice has ended since the start of the Great Trial.

During and after the Scourge, magicians learned from the dragons to make matrix items in order to cast spells. Spell matrices were supposedly introduced to those Cathayan magicians selected for special training. However, some claim that the Therans brought the knowledge of spell matrices when the door to the West was opened. Regardless of the truth, matrix items have fallen into disuse, although there are some traditionalists who still hold to the old ways, not trusting the possible connection to the Therans or wanting to go against the more certain directions of the dragons. Thus, while spell matrices are quite common, one will find more magicians depending solely on matrix items in Cathay than anywhere in Barsaive.

## FESTIVALS OF CATHAY

**T**he war has done little to affect the Cathayans' insistence on observing their long-held holidays and festivals. To a Cathayan, festivals and holidays are not an excuse to celebrate, but strictly adhered-to rituals designed to ensure prosperity and good fortune. Below are the most common festivals throughout the Five Kingdoms.

### CATHAYAN NEW YEAR, FAI 1ST

The Cathayan New Year is the most celebrated day in the Cathayan calendar. All Namegivers, peasants and royalty alike, set aside their daily tasks to celebrate this occasion. Unlike some holidays that are celebrated differently from region to region, the Cathayan New Year is observed the same throughout every kingdom.

The morning air of this day is filled with the smells of cooking food, while homes come alive with paper lanterns and other colorful decorations. The people of all five kingdoms cease warring on this day in strict observance of this holiday.

Cities are filled with parades, musicians, acrobats, and merchants selling various goods. This event goes well into the evening until the main feast begins. Every family within a community contributes to this feast by saving part of its crops all year just for this occasion. The feast symbolizes the honoring of the departing Passion while welcoming the next. A large platter is left untouched where people may come and place food upon it as an offering to the Passion who will rule for the next year and a day.

To be born on this day is considered very lucky.

### FESTIVAL OF XAN, JUAN 3RD

Each year there is a large festival held at the Imperial Capital to commemorate the anniversary of when the 400 monks came down from Mount Xan to save the city from the Theran invaders. To honor this day, the monks march from their home in the moun-

## ADVENTURE HOOK

The characters are at the Imperial City, eagerly awaiting the arrival of the monks to begin this year's celebration. However, when the monks do not arrive, the characters are sent to investigate their strange disappearance. On the road, a short way off, they come upon a token force of young monks sent to the festival that had been waylaid by a mysterious group of mounted warriors, secretly Samurai adepts. Upon rescuing them from their captors, the monks beg the characters to continue on to Mount Xan to tell their brothers, while they go and fulfill their obligation at the Imperial City. On their approach up the harsh paths to the peak of Mount Xan, they find themselves embroiled in a full-out battle between more of these mounted warriors and more experienced monks. While these monks will be inclined to fight even the characters at first, once the characters demonstrate their intentions they may be acknowledged as temporary allies. A force of rogue Samurai and other Jih'Pen adepts are storming Mount Xan in a rivalry between great dragons. After the battle, Luung himself, in the guise of an elder monk, may commission the adventurers to track down some of the attackers or otherwise aid his cause in fighting off the troops of his rival.

tains all the way to the Imperial Capital, where citizens dressed in a mockery of Theran military uniforms meet them. The "Therans," while performing elaborate acrobatic stunts, throw insults at them while the monks continue to march unwaveringly forward. When the two forces meet they launch into a great choreographed dance symbolizing the original battle, while onlookers cheer. After the fighting is done the monks walk victoriously to the city gates and announce that the feasting may begin, for Cathay has been saved. Feasting, dancing, and song go on into the night as the Cathayans watch the monks perform various displays of martial prowess.

### THE ELEMENTAL DRAGON FESTIVALS, HUI YING 15TH

Once a year all Cathayans honor the Five Guardians with festivals. Each region honors its own element according to its location.

The Cathayans of For Dei honor the great dragon, For, by building large statues of wood, which are painstakingly carved and decorated before being burned. The intricacies of the statues depend greatly on the wealth of the communities. A large community feast is commonly observed on this day, the dishes consisting mainly of spicy food.

The Namegivers in Shui Dei honor the great dragon, Shui, by traveling to the nearest river (or in some cases, stream) to throw in small pieces of paper, each of which are folded in the likeness of a boat. These boats are crafted by every man, woman, and child old enough to build one and each contains one copper inside as an offering.

The people of Feng Dei honor the great dragon, Feng, by playing music on wind instruments, singing, and flying kites. They also hold marches with long paper dragons streaming in the wind, with many of the young men leading the way with various acrobatic feats. The young judged to the best in the community are often granted the honor of leading songs later in the day.



The communities in Shan Dei honor the great dragon, Shan, by traveling into the nearest forest to plant a willow tree. They also leave small offerings from their stores of rice, grain, and the fruit of the land at the site of this planting and request the dragon's blessings on their crops for the rest of the year. Dumplings are commonly shared at the time of the evening meals.

The Namegivers of Tiet Dei honor the great dragon, Tiet, by holding competitions between Weaponsmiths to see who can craft the best and most inventive weapons. There are three categories a Weaponsmith may join: blade, hammer, and spear. The weapons are judged on craftsmanship, decoration, and uniqueness. When the judging is complete, the best weapon of each category is laid on a very ornate altar as offerings to the dragon, Tiet. For a Weaponsmith to be one of the winners in this competition is a great honor. Winners of this festival can usually charge any price for their products from then on. While this competition is the focus of the festival, commoners participate in games of martial prowess, while soldiers from the province put on mock combats to entertain them as well.

## **FESTIVAL OF CONG CHEN, KONG 23RD**

The great dragon, Cong Chen, who founded Cathay, is one of the most revered beings next to the Passions. The day that he left Cathay was a sad day for many Cathayans, but is remembered through song, art, food, and laughter. This is a day to celebrate all the great leader had done for the Empire, and to also pray for his eventual return.

## **EARTH FESTIVAL, JIN 1ST-8TH**

Giving thanks to the Earth Spirit for a bountiful harvest is a very important tradition in Cathay. At one time, before the Earth Spirit could be appeased, the land was unable to produce crops for the Namegivers to sustain themselves. Honoring the promise of Tai Xi, Cathayans show their appreciation and give the Spirit of the Land time to rest by harvesting their crops and leaving offerings for seven days. This, they believe, will allow the Spirit of the Land to rest from his duties while they show their appreciation by offering him some of their harvest back each night. When the seven days are over they ask for permission to once again plant their crops in the next season.

## **FESTIVAL OF THE DARK WARRIOR, SHUN 1ST**

The Festival of the Dark Warrior is celebrated in the beginning of winter. Fearing his wrath, the festival is a time to ask that he be merciful to the land and its people during his time of rule. Incense is burned and lanterns are hung in his honor, and handcrafted ornamentation is brought as offerings. At night a large fire is lit for people to dance around while singing songs that honor him.

In addition, Cathayans eat a special meal during this festival called *lung foo fong*, or *dragon tiger phoenix*. This spicy soup has three main ingredients: a snake (dragon), a cat (tiger), and a chicken (phoenix). The three animals are stewed together for an hour, and then the broth is drank, typically from a small soup bowl. It is believed that after consumption the essences of these three important animals are contained within the imbiber throughout the coming winter, protecting him from cold and illness.



## **THE REMEMBRANCE, CHANG 1ST**

The Remembrance is a time to honor the dead. It is believed that on this day the spirits of those who have passed return to visit with family. Food is specially made to be offered to the dead in elaborately decorated bowls placed by the fire pit. Seating is arranged as if the spirits were present.

It is believed that dead family members look badly on those who have misbehaved or dishonored the family in some way. Children are told horror stories of those who have dishonored their family and how the dead returned to punish them. These stories are told to not only teach the children about the importance of family honor but also serve to remind all Cathayans, adults included, of the importance of family.





CHAPTER FOUR

# THE LANDS OF CATHAY

*The land may be sundered into many,  
but we are all of us still Cathayan.*

• SIK HO, MERCHANT •



This chapter details the five kingdoms of Cathay: the Land of Metal, a kingdom of brutal punitive measures and strict military discipline; the Land of Earth, a kingdom of splendid beauty and opulence—possible only by Theran collusion; the Land of Fire, a kingdom of wisdom and benevolence, but wracked with poverty and the threat of rebellion; the Land of Wind, a kingdom of intrigue and political strife; the Land of Water, a kingdom whose capital is a vast city that floats far above the waves of the Emerald Sea; and the Land of the Gar, a harsh land, home to a brutal race of warrior elves.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE FIVE KINGDOMS

**T**he main trade routes to Cathay pass through the Kingdom of Shan Dei, except for those from the Theran province of Indrisa's eastern border. One of the latter is the route I took after arriving in Indrisa by way of airship. I had left my province from Travar, my cargo consisting of several crates of Barsaivian rugs. The trip took several weeks with many stops along the way. When we finally arrived at Calcutana, the ship—Travar's Pride—docked at the city's tallest spire in the Merchant Quarter. The gleaming buildings of the Indrisan capital were brilliant in the afternoon sun. Built over the ruins of the old capital and designed in the Theran style, the entire city was a testimony to Theran greatness and mastery over nature—an implicit statement of their mastery over the natives.

While the various passengers disembarked for the city, I stood on the quay, waiting for my cargo to come down the loading ramp. I had a buyer set up: a Theran dwarf by the Name of Ralus, who insisted Barsaivian rugs were a novelty with the locals. I inquired about his whereabouts and soon discovered he had sent a small contingent of slaves as an escort (slaves indeed; many were dressed as well as me). Mostly natives, the only one of them who spoke was an eloquent t'skrang Named Damador, who must have thought that silence was a grave offense to the Passions, since he spoke the entire way to the warehouses. When we arrived, my cargo was catalogued, filed, and stamped before finally being stored (a process which only took two hours—I must say, the Theran clerks of Calcutana are rather expedient compared to their peers in the other provinces) and I received my payment.

Damador told me that his master was expecting me to arrive for an elaborate dinner he was having prepared for me. Apparently he was eager for me to try the local cuisine. Finding myself without a proper excuse to not attend, I had no choice but to graciously accept. Besides, it's always good to maintain close relations with your clients, and I hoped Ralus might have some information about Cathay.

I was led through the crowded streets to Ralus' estate, where the old dwarf greeted me with a smile. It had been many years since I had seen him in person. I was surprised by how tan he had become and even more surprised by his long, dark beard, which was twisted into peculiar braids of the Indrisan style.

While waiting for the dishes, I began asking my host about Cathay, to which he did not have much to say other than the opening of trade routes with the five kingdoms was good for business. He graciously offered me a list of his contacts and told me that he had never visited—nor did he plan on visiting—Cathay in person.

"Dangerous, that place. Murderers, rapists, and thieves plague the roads. The nobility isn't much better; they haven't known peace in decades. I'd sooner live in Marac. At least there would be a Theran government and not some barbarian running things."

I couldn't blame him for his views; Ralus led a cushioned life. In addition to his lucrative trade network, he had invested in a few silver mines in the nearby mountains that have since earned him a fortune. Don't get me wrong—I'm proud to be a free Barsaivian. I've never participated

in the slave trade, nor have I ever considered seeking Theran citizenship. But still, having connections to the Theran noble houses would open a lot of doors to riches that simply are out of reach to a non-Theran. That's why I chose to go to Cathay, despite the dangers. I would find my riches, and I wouldn't have to bow to the Theran throne to do it.

Over the sumptuous dinner, we discussed the latest Indrisan gossip: a Theran praetor had recently arrived to investigate charges of Theran nobles colluding with Indrisan bandits that plagued the country's interior jungles (if I know Therans, this charge was no doubt a contrived political machination); a local Theran merchant was scandalizing his peers by choosing to divorce his wife to marry a native; General Ramilah, commander of the Theran 9th legion, was opposing the request for an additional legion in the province.

The last one intrigued me, so I inquired further. Why was another legion coming to Indrisa, a one-legion province? Ralus confessed that he did not know if another legion was coming or not and that it was mere rumor. However, if he were correct, what could possibly be the reason? With the exception of the bandits in the jungles, Indrisa was thoroughly pacified. If any of the provinces needed a new legion, it would be Marac, where rebellion gripped the countryside.

Was what I was hearing the beginning of a military build up? Were the Therans already preparing for a possible expansion into Cathay? Ralus didn't have the answers.

I left the following morning for the coastal city of Kanitherium, which was my final stop before entering Cathay. As the caravan left the great walls of Kanitherium behind, I stared at the distant Mayana Mountains (which I would later learn were called the Phoenix Throne Mountains by the Cathayans), beyond which laid the mysterious eastern realm. We would be bypassing them, hugging the coast, and in a little over a week I would be one of the first Barsaivians ever to visit the ancient empire.

—Daylen Jagaro, Merchant of Bartertown

## ON TIET DEI, THE LAND OF METAL

**T**he great dragon guardian, Tiet, had taken the Golden Crown and began his search for a hero. He decided to hold a great contest to see who could build the greatest sword. The winner would receive the Golden Crown and become king of Tiet Dei.

For months Weaponsmiths from across the land brought swords to Tiet and placed them before him. They were all magnificent blades encrusted with jewels and precious stones, marked with ornate carvings and runes. Tiet examined each blade carefully, answering always with a shake of his head.

One day a simple peasant, an ork, arrived, placing a plain, nondescript sword before the dragon. Tiet studied it carefully before asking, "Why do you not encrust your blade in jewels and fine stones? Why place such an ugly weapon before me?"

The ork stared at the dragon a moment before answering, "My blade is strong. The others put too much effort into making theirs pretty. My blade will not dull. It is a sword meant for killing, not a piece of jewelry meant for wearing."

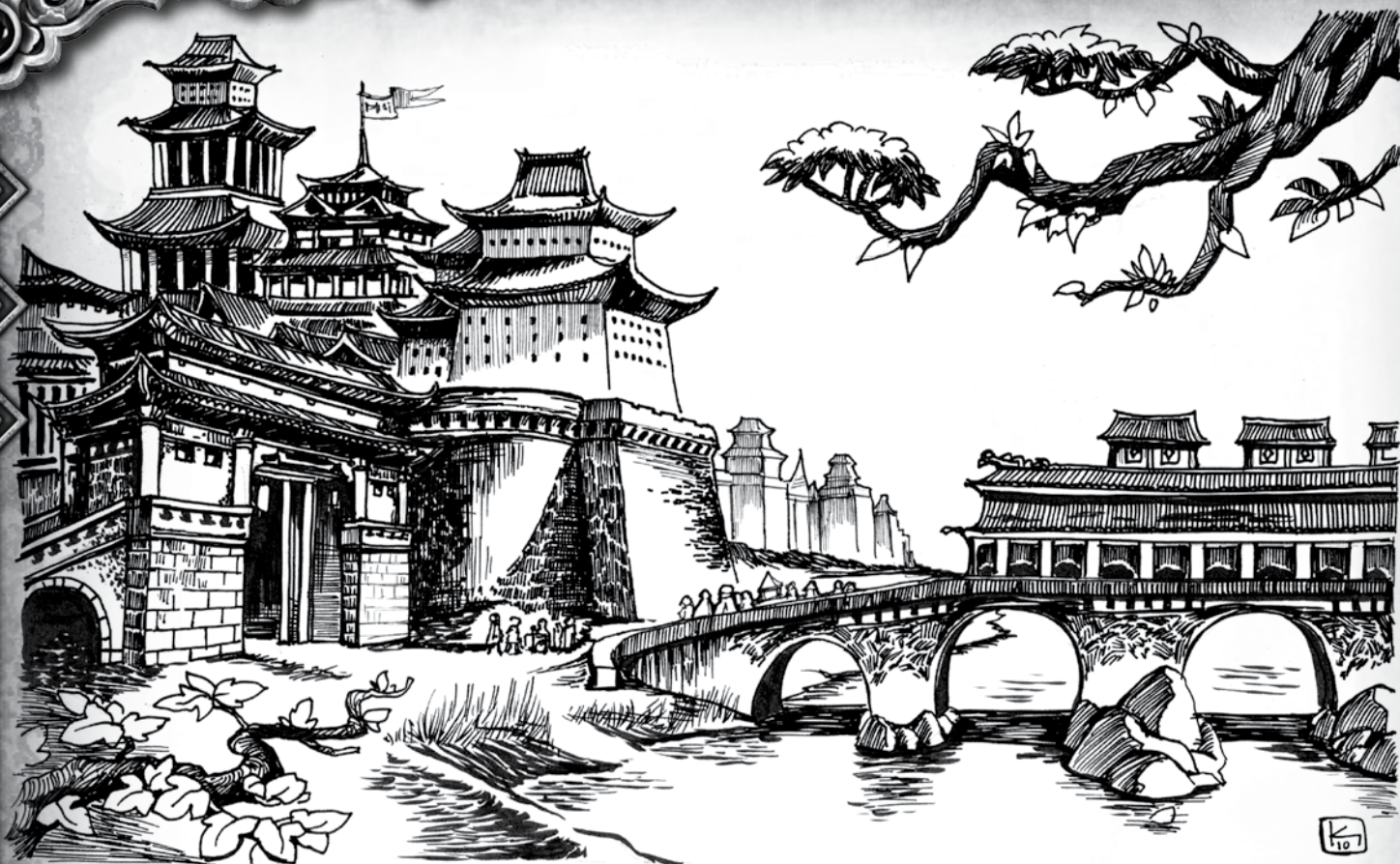
Tiet laughed.

"Then I have found you," he said.

## ON TIET DEI TODAY

Lee Chang He is the current king of Tiet Dei, grandson of Lee Kui He, the Weaponsmith who impressed Tiet nearly a century ago. His capital, Heng Na, rests on both sides of the Peony River. A





sprawling bridge nearly 60 feet wide straddles the river, connecting both sides of the city. The bridge serves as the city's bazaar. Market stalls line both sides of the bridge, allowing merchants to unload merchandise from the river at its base. Criminals are hanged from the underside of this bridge, their feet dangling mere feet above the tops of vessels passing beneath.

The wall around Heng Na rises 20 feet and is manned by over 200 soldiers, mostly archers, at any one time. Visitors to Heng Na must pass beneath the Pearl Gate, where a dozen soldiers who perform random inspections meet them.

The streets of Heng Na are packed during the day. Because of the cramped conditions of the city, visitors are charged 1 gold to bring in a mount or pack animal.

Even though the merchant classes have gained power in most of Cathay, in Tiet Dei they remain second to the nobles. Chang charges merchants strict taxes on all goods brought into the city and even more for operating a stall or shop in this or any of his other cities. Any merchant growing too fat from profit soon finds that he has new taxes imposed upon him. Therefore, it does not pay for merchants to flaunt their wealth and power in Tiet Dei. Although most merchants grumble about the harsh taxes they have only to look at the unfortunate souls swinging from the bridge in Heng Na to be reminded of how their king treats those who disrupt the peace.

More than one merchant has struck interesting deals with nobles to avoid the stiff taxes. Call it smuggling, call it crime, or call it creative business—in the end it comes down to making more and more money without suffering from new tariffs.

—Kan Diem, Dwarf Troubadour

Even though most merchants keep their mouths shut and pay the ever increasing and newer taxes, a small group is quite discontent. Led by the dwarf Zaobu Den, they meet regularly to plan strategies on how best to avoid paying taxes. They see themselves as patriots and are willing to pay a certain amount to fund Chang He's coffers, but they're also merchants who want to see an end to the ever-increasing taxes forced upon them. Zaobu Den knows that they are in danger of getting persecuted as traitors if ever caught, but he is willing to take that risk. So far they have yet to implement any of their strategies, though it is only a matter of time before their words turn into action.

The laws of Tiet Dei are harsh, but that does not keep enterprising Namegivers from choosing the path of criminals. The most notorious of these criminals is Qiao Modei, a human Thief who specializes in burglary. He preys upon nobles and rich merchants, and always leaves behind a small, rose-shaped crystal as his signature. No one knows what Qiao looks like, though Chang He has placed an enormous bounty on the Thief's head.

Qiao's main rival is the elf Thief, Huolian Qa, Qiao's former mentor. They worked together for many years until Qiao decided that he could not learn anything new from Huolian and so began working alone. Huolian never forgave Qiao for his disrespect and now does his best to show everyone that he is still the better of the two Thieves. He knows that the greatest deed a Thief in Tiet Dei can perform is breaking into the captain's room of the *Iron Cloud*, but so far he has not dared to try. But if Qiao continues to perform stunning burglary after burglary, Huolian might feel pressured to take the risk to prove his superior talent.

The most stunning sight greeting visitors of Heng Na is the king's private airship, the *Iron Cloud*, which is docked at his palace. Construction of the *Iron Cloud* began during the reign of Kui He, Chang's grandfather. It is a massive steel airship designed to resemble the mighty dragon, Tiet. The jaws of the ship are hinged and can drop open to reveal a massive fire cannon capable of destroying even the largest ships in one shot.



*The weakness of the Iron Cloud is its lack of speed and maneuverability. Attack it with many smaller airships and try to board it and you'll give it a stiff fight.*

—Ding La, Human Air Sailor

Due to its location, people from all over Cathay visit Heng Na. Visitors can find menus featuring food from their home kingdoms, or they can try out the cuisine of another kingdom. This has led to a decline of places where traditional Heng Na cuisine is served, since the foreign dishes often outsell the indigenous dishes.

## ON THE MINES OF TIET DEI

Though Cathay is poor in most resources, the hills at the base of the Dragon Spine Mountains are rich in iron ore deposits. Countless mines dot the mountain range that pass through Tiet Dei, along with the countless forts and watchtowers that guard them.

Local lords who own the land run most of the mines. Chang He is stingy with his offers for the iron ore, and the nobles have little choice but to sell it to him. Because of this, some lords have taken to having the iron smuggled out of Tiet Dei to neighboring kingdoms, where the prices are a bit more attractive. The lords that choose this practice run an awful risk, however, as Chang He is not known for possessing a kind, forgiving nature.

## ON THE LOST CITIES OF TIET DEI

Recently, miners in the Dragon Spine Mountains discovered the entrance to an ancient city deep in the Earth. Filled with archaic writings and antique treasures, it spoke of a long-lost civilization whose origins and identity have yet to be discovered.

Discoveries of similar cities have been rumored across Cathay, and Scholars are hard at work trying to decipher their source. Some have postulated that they are the ancient cities of the Yen'hi'ji, though most Scholars refute that as mere fanciful speculation.

## ON THE SWORD DANCER SCHOOLS OF TIET DEI

Tiet Dei boasts some of the best Sword Dancing schools in all of Cathay. The king funds nearly every school, so most students inevitably join the military.

Acceptance into these schools, called *kwoons*, is considered a great honor. New students are accepted only once a year. During the month of Fai, each school holds enrollment tests. These tests are designed to gauge an applicant's overall aptitude, regarding a wide range of abilities from self-discipline and courage to agility and strength. Though hundreds of hopefuls from across all five kingdoms rush to these *kwoons* each year for the tests, only mere handfuls gain acceptance.

Every year during the month of Jin, students from all of the *kwoons* in Tiet Dei meet at the Temple of the Four Winds, located in the Dragon Spine Mountains, for an annual competition. A highly anticipated event, even the king makes time to attend at least one of the six days of the tourney. Although friendly in nature, the competition can become fierce. Despite the rules stating that the fight is over at first blood, there are often several fatalities.

In recent years, the Xan monks have taken to attending the competitions. Entry is restricted to Sword Dancers of the *kwoons*, but

## ADVENTURE HOOK

A dishonored student of the Iron Lotus school steals the Jade Saber the day before the tournament. Because all of the students are busy competing at the Temple of the Four Winds, it falls to the player characters to retrieve the item. They have six days to complete their task or the Iron Lotus school suffers a terrible dishonor.

## ADVENTURE HOOK

A second lost city has recently been discovered in the Dragon Spine Mountains by a local lord, who has been using it as a base for black market smuggling, allowing Gan Tzi, the dreaded warlord of the Black Dragon tribe, and his men to stay there in exchange for their services. The player characters are contacted by one of Chang He's officials and tasked to gather intelligence on Gan Tzi and the noble by finding the lost city and observing its day-to-day business, and giving a comprehensive report of operations in the city. The player characters have to find the city, sneak into it, and stay there unnoticed for several days. Luckily, the city is quite large and empty, but it is a dangerous place of falling debris, and possibly traps and dangerous creatures.

they take the opportunity to perform exhibitions between fights in an effort to recruit new students. They also spend time sharing techniques with Masters from the various schools.

The Iron Lotus school, under Grandmaster Po Zhou, holds the current championship trophy—the highly coveted Jade Saber—which they have successfully defended for the past three years.

## ON THE WARLORDS AND BANDITS OF TIET DEI

Even though the merchants of Tiet Dei have to pay outlandish taxes, they make up for it with the sheer quantity of goods available to them. Tiet Dei sits on the crossroads of Cathay, with merchants from all four corners passing through.

Due to this, Tiet Dei also has the most warlords and bandits stalking the countryside. Because Chang He has four borders to guard, he does not have the manpower to assign even more troops to hunt them down, and so they are able to operate almost freely in many parts of the kingdom.

Some warlords are welcome in Tiet Dei as Chang He regularly hires them as mercenaries for border skirmishes and raids into neighboring kingdoms. Those warlords who will not work for his price, however, have a most undesirable fate in store for them should they ever be captured.

*The distinction between mercenary, adventurer, warlord, and murderer sometimes is difficult to make.*

—Jel Lang, Human Scout





## THE BATTLE OF PUBEI

Through the battles of the past lies  
the road to the victories of the future.

—General Wu Chou

Many believe that one reason Chang He is so strict with his nobles is because of the Battle of Pubei, which occurred early in the reign of his grandfather in 2 CA. Since the betrayal of the nobles at that time, the Lee Dynasty has been very harsh to its lords.

When the Five Guardians chose their heroes among Cathay's lower classes, the nobles were at first inclined to refuse their support. Gentle coaxing from the mighty dragons soon saw most of them changing their minds.

In Tiet Dei, a lord by the Name of Kong Jin decided not to follow the rule of Kui He, whom he saw as a mere peasant, instead calling to him soldiers from other nobles who shared his view. When Kui He asked the mighty Tiet for advice, the great dragon said simply, "This is your first test as a ruler." The new king hurried to form an army of his own.

The two armies met on the golden field of Pubei in central Tiet Dei. Lord Kong Jin had amassed the support of several other nobles, enabling him to bring an army of 50,000 to the field.

King Kui He had a force of only 30,000. Many nobles of the newly formed kingdom did not show up to the battle at all; historians believe they preferred to wait so they could throw their lot in with the victor.

Kong Jin, a seasoned veteran, took position on a long, broad hill that overlooked the square field, while Kui He spread his forces out thinly across the grassland below with his cavalry stationed in the rear.

The battle began with Kui He ordering his foot soldiers up the center. Kong Jin responded by having his archers in the front line open fire while his cavalry charged Kui He's weak left flank.

It was just what Kui He wanted. In a stunning move, Kui He's entire line of foot soldiers wheeled 90 degrees to attack the exposed flank of Kong Jin's heavy cavalry, who were engaged with Kui He's peasant conscripts.

Kong Jin frantically ordered his archers to pull back while his infantry charged down the hill. His men were already committed before he spotted Kui He's cavalry charging down his left flank.

Kui He's cavalry thundered into Kong Jin's left flank. Kong Jin's peasant conscripts, whose superstitions had already led them to believe they were fighting an unjust cause, quickly crumpled and routed. Instead of giving chase, Kui He's cavalry continued to charge at Kong Jin, who had no soldiers around to aid him except for lightly armed archers, whose bows were useless in close combat, plus twenty bodyguards.

The archers soon routed, which left Kong Jin in a sea of heavy cavalry. It is said that he killed thirteen men before being unhorsed and trampled to death.

Lord Kong Jin's death sent a shockwave through his remaining forces. Morale crumpled, and they quickly surrendered.

The Battle of Pubei solidified the power of the Lee Dynasty, allowing Kui He to gain the support of the nobles. And not a moment too soon; the following year saw attacks from both For Dei and Shui Dei. Feng Dei and Shan Dei followed suit in consecutive years as all four kingdoms fought Kui He for control over central Cathay. Thanks to Kui He's tactical cunning at the Battle of Pubei, the nobles were able to unify in time to stop these aggressive attacks, thus saving the kingdom.



## ON CHANG HE

King Chang, a Seventh Circle Weaponsmith, is renowned for his grim nature and unyielding loyalty to honor. Those closest to him can attest that not a waking moment passes without Chang He planning or otherwise plotting ways to win the war. He cares little for the comfort of his nobles, always imposing new taxes to help fuel his war machine. This policy does little to win their love, but it is not their love, or respect, Chang He wants. More than one noble has met his end at the end of an ax because of openly criticizing his king, and most now keep their tongues on a tight leash.

Chang He's wife was killed several years ago in a failed assassination attempt on the king. His son, Lee Kon Zo, is one of his most valued generals. Kon Zo trained at the White Orchid Sword Dancer *kwoon* from the age of five until the age of fifteen. He has since achieved the Fourth Circle of his Discipline, winning many honors on the battlefield.

Chang He is constantly surrounded by many advisors and diplomats, though their ceaseless chattering clearly pains him. He seems to only find peace and comfort when sitting alone with his old friend, Ku, an imposing obsidian Warrior, drinking tea and reliving old battles.

Chang He has grudgingly accepted the presence of Western merchants in his kingdom, finally relenting to his nobles' pleas by realizing that his enemies would have an advantage over him if he did not follow suit. Chang He still harbors a deep-rooted distrust for outsiders, however, and treats them with thinly disguised contempt.

Don't speak with the natives without an interpreter you trust.  
Finding a local who is trustworthy is the difficult part, of course.

— Belphegor, Elven Scout

## ON THE GOALS AND AGENDAS OF TIET DEI

Because of the central location of his kingdom, Chang He has been forced into a defensive role. His distrusting nature serves only to exacerbate this condition, as he spends just as much time keeping an eye on his nobles as he does planning war strategies. He has plans at the moment for developing a campaign that will push the southwestern borders of his kingdom to the Phoenix Throne Mountains, thus giving him a secure route to Indrisa. Though he loathes the pale Westerners, he appreciates the taxes collected from the merchant classes, which help fill his ever-hungry coffers.

## ON THE GREAT DRAGON, TIET

Tiet, the Lord of Metal, lives in a large palace made from iron and copper found on a wide plateau high in the Dragon Spine Mountains. His scales are a dull gray, though in the sunlight they shine like highly polished armor. Only the Golden Crown will save the uninvited guest from Tiet's stubborn wrath. Tiet is bound by tradition to give advice to any who approach him with the Imperial Symbol. Tiet's palace is filled with the trappings of wars: war chariots made from ivory, ancient bronze armor and weapons, and even the mummified remains of legendary warriors.

Tiet is fond of war, and often engages guests in a game of *Gon Ji*, a two-player strategy board game. Anyone who defeats the dragon

is entitled to choose one of his great treasures as a trophy, though to this day Tiet remains undefeated.

During the War with the West, it was Tiet who trained the Emperor's armies, and many of the current strategies, tactics, formations, and weaponry are all derivations of Tiet's original teachings.

Tiet is rather fond of the Lee Dynasty of Tiet Dei, finding their gruff, uncompromising attitudes quite charming. Tiet is more strong willed and combative than his brother Guardians, finding it hard sometimes to restrain himself from joining the war. Only for honor and the sake of the Empire does Tiet remain in the shadows, offering council only when called upon.

## ON THE ARMY AND NAVY OF TIET DEI

Chang He has the largest military in all of Cathay, though he is unable to put it to good use since he is constantly forced to spread it thin to cover his many borders. His army numbers roughly 100,000 men, with approximately half being conscripted peasant foot soldiers, outfitted as light infantry. Out of the remaining 50,000, two-thirds are dedicated to heavy infantry, pikemen, and archers, while the remaining are light and heavy cavalry and war chariots.

Chang He's military spends most of its time repelling attacks from Shan Dei. Chang's son, Kon, is currently stationed in the North. His letters home are often filled with requests for enough men to invade Shan Dei. Chang He is not nearly as impulsive as his son, realizing that to launch a full scale invasion would only invite his other enemies to attack, so for the moment the letters always return with a curt "no."

His navy consists of 50 naval vessels and 30 airships, although he has hundreds of smaller vessels patrolling the many rivers that cut through his kingdom. His lack of ships is adequately supplemented by the *Iron Cloud*, which remains docked at Heng Na except when Chang He decides to make a show of force.

The banner of Tiet Dei is a golden crown set against a black field.

### Iron Cloud

If the *Gentle Storm* (see p. 48) is the most magnificent air vessel to fly the skies above Cathay, the *Iron Cloud* is definitely the most fearsome. An airship constructed entirely of iron mined from the Dragons Spine Mountains, it was made to resemble a great Cathay dragon. It is a most impressive sight to behold, snaking through the skies above Tiet Dei, twisting and turning as though it were alive. In combat there is no equal to the *Iron Cloud*, though compared to other vessels it is only moderately armed, with only 50 or so cannons running its serpentine length. Though at the head of the mighty *Iron Cloud*, within the great head of the dragon, is a huge fire cannon, capable of taking down the largest of airships with a single shot. The *Iron Cloud* serves as Chang He's private ship and as a symbol of the Land of Metal's great strength.

Speed: 8

Maneuverability: 6      Firepower: 20/20

|                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| <b>Hull:</b>    |                 |
| Armor: 28       | Ramming: NA     |
| Cargo: 500      |                 |
| <b>Damage:</b>  |                 |
| Derelict: 118   | Critical: 31    |
| Destroyed: 124  |                 |
| <b>Crew:</b>    |                 |
| Captain: 8      | Crew Size: 250  |
| Morale: 100     | Crew Rating: 22 |
| <b>Special:</b> |                 |

The main cannon has a Firepower Rating of 32/32 that replaces the normal Firepower Rating when it is fired. However, it can only fire every other ship combat round and would be destroyed if the ship was to ram another ship.



# ON SHAN DEI THE LAND OF EARTH

**T**he great dragon, Shan, Lord of Earth, took the Jade Pendant to search for one worthy to wear it. Like Tiet, Shan chose to hold a challenge so one might prove himself worthy of the honor. Shan created a deep pit filled with water and erected dozens of bamboo poles for standing upon. She placed the Jade Pendant in the center and crafted sandbags swinging on pendulums to knock those who would try to claim it into the water.

"He who can retrieve the Jade Pendant will be the ruler of Shan Dei," she told the people. The strongest and most agile from across the land came to accept the challenge, but one after another were unsuccessful in retrieving the Jade Pendant.

One man, a dwarf, watched for days as bigger, faster, and stronger men than he failed. Finally he stepped forward to accept the challenge.

Onlookers laughed at the dwarf, throwing mocking jeers and japes. But the dwarf only stood there, at the edge of the pit for a long moment, ignoring them. Then he cast a simple spell and the Jade Pendant rose from its place above the pit and floated gently to his outstretched hand.

The jeers were hushed as all looked to Shan, expecting the great dragon to devour the impudent cheating dwarf. But instead Shan only smiled and said, "I did not say how you had to retrieve it."

## ON SHAN DEI TODAY

The current ruler of Shan Dei is Bai Guan Zhu, son of the clever Bai Dan Ma who had retrieved the Jade Pendant all those years ago. His capital city is Mu Li, which rests along the crystal shores of Lake Kuo in the southern reaches of the kingdom. The city's shining white walls are constructed from highly polished marble. Its broad cobblestone streets are filled with jade statues and limestone fountains surrounded by carefully tended gardens. Indeed, everywhere one looks in Mu Li one finds splendor and opulence laid out with artistic grace.

Unlike other cities, Mu Li has no poor quarter. Taxes are set at a level to keep anyone without the wealth out. This, according to Guan Zhu, keeps the city clean and unobstructed by beggars and thieves. Countless fishing villages stretch out from Mu Li in both directions along the coast of Lake Kuo. Because of this, Mu Li's bazaar is always filled with the smells of fish, crab, and seaweed soup.

Perfumes are in high demand to keep the noses of the rich and wealthy free of the sea's odor. It has become a competition among many of the citizens of Mu Li to wear the most exotic and expensive perfume. A gathering of the wealthy can become a real challenge for the untrained nose. For the same reason, seafood is shunned by the wealthy. If they serve seafood at all, it is usually a dish comprising the more exotic and esoteric sea life, and thus more expensive. A common saying is, "Only a meal earned with blood is a worthy meal," and refers to the high blood toll of the fishermen who hunt the exotic sea beasts.

One doesn't need more than a troll's brain  
to realize where the poor are living...

—Jel Lang, Human Scout

The southern half of the city is open to the lake with neatly laid rows of docks housing a steady supply of ships. Visitors will find Guan Zhu's massive ship, the *Yellow Pearl*, docked here. A luxury vessel, the *Yellow Pearl* is outfitted for pleasure rather than war.

Guan Zhu can afford to lavish his city in riches because he neglects all the others. The rest of the cities in Shan Dei are destitute, ran by corrupt officials and plagued with street gangs and thieving guilds. The larger thieving guilds have chapters in more than one city, thus spanning a kingdom-wide network of criminals, which has enabled them to become a third power group besides the merchants and the nobility.

As long as the riches continue to flow into Mu Li, however, Guan Zhu pays no mind. The citizens of other cities are hard-pressed to fill the coffers of both the officials and Guan Zhu. Revolts are dealt with swiftly and harshly, for every official fears that only a small spark is needed to ignite a rebellion among the ordinary folk.

A hero in countless tales and songs is the human Troubadour, Pol Keng, who works ceaselessly to improve the life of the ordinary people by opposing corrupt officials, greedy merchants, and unfair treatment by the nobles. However, while the common man views him as a hero, the upper classes see him as a threat to the kingdom's stability. It is no surprise that different factions have placed high bounties on his head, but so far their efforts have met with no success.

Merchants in Shan Dei find life to be most agreeable. As the noble classes grow poorer and poorer, the merchants grow richer and richer. More than one city is in debt, making the governors nothing more than mere puppets for some powerful merchants' guild. The ensuing power struggle is threatening to tear the kingdom apart. Guan Zhu is aware of the fighting but the nobles bring him soldiers and the merchants bring him wealth, so he is content to ignore them both to let them sort it out themselves.

The merchants have their own private quarter in Mu Li, separated from the rest of the city by a low wall. Their homes are splendid multistoried dwellings, decorated lavishly and guarded by stone lions that are thought to ward off evil spirits. These estates are often surrounded by gardens complete with pools and fountains. Many of the merchants hire professional *Fortune Bringers* to bring good luck to their households by wandering around their estates while chanting and carrying burning incense.

Guan Zhu has two sons, Bin Tian and Fa Xa, who are both just as greedy and lecherous as their father. Neither is trained in any Discipline nor in the ways of politics. Guan Zhu has said on more than one occasion that he is not worried about their ineptitude because he plans on living forever.

## ON THE THERAN PRESENCE IN SHAN DEI

To further supplement his extravagant lifestyle, Guan Zhu has opened up trade negotiations with Cathay's long-hated enemies: the Therans. The Theran ambassador, Kalis Venshen, is often a guest in Guan Zhu's royal palace. Weapons and supplies pour into the kingdom from Indrisa every week, along with more merchants from Thera's many noble houses. The arrival of these foreigners does not trouble Shan Dei's merchants nearly as much as the nobles; the Theran presence only strengthens the merchants' positions. The new merchants trade mainly in exotic goods, thus preventing direct competition with the merchants of Shan Dei—so far.

Ambassador Kalis has been busy trying to persuade Guan Zhu to allow the Theran military to send a large force to his kingdom to help him win the war. Negotiations are still in progress, but Guan Zhu has agreed to allow a smaller contingent of soldiers to be sent from Indrisa to help bolster the northern border against gar incursions.





Overgovernor Tahjaddian of Indrisa sent Thera's famed Thunder Legion, under the command of General Kyrak the Bold. This legion is composed entirely of cavalry, boasting a large number of mastyrliths. General Kyrak's mission is simple: show the Cathayan king just how indispensable the Theran legions really are. For his part, Guan Zhu has agreed that if the Thunder Legion performs well against the gar he will strongly consider the Therans' offer.

Meanwhile, the Cathayan king grows fond of the Western lifestyle. He has recently ordered his palace servants to begin dressing in the trappings of the West, and he has also acquired a great fondness for Theran food and wine. Many of Guan Zhu's nobles believe this is proof that if their king were to agree with the Therans' proposal it would spell the end of the Cathayan way of life.

*Every day, more Cathayans grow upset about Theran soldiers riding through their lands, or the degenerate lifestyle Guan Zhu develops. Only one small spark is needed to ignite a rebellion. Many factions prepare for this day—or are even working to be the spark.*

—Deng Shar, Ork Warrior

Another troubling development is Guan Zhu's permission to allow the exportation of peasants back to Theran lands as slaves. Although right now only those too far in debt are allowed to be sold, it is only a matter of time before the laws become less selective.

*History has shown it often enough: selling your people as slaves is not good when you want to stay in charge.*

—Gifrad, Ork Liberator

## THUNDER LEGION

### Attributes

DEX (12): 5      STR (16): 7      TOU (14): 6  
PER (8): 4      WIL (14): 6      CHA (14): 6

### Characteristics

**Initiative:** 4      **Physical Defense:** 8  
**Physical Armor:** 7      **Spell Defense:** 5  
**Mystic Armor:** 2      **Social Defense:** 8  
**Death:** 50      **Recovery Tests:** 3  
**Unconsciousness:** 40      **Knockdown:** 7  
**Wound Threshold:** 10      **Movement:** 6  
**Karma Points:** 10/10

### Cavalryman Talents

Animal Bond <sup>D</sup> (4): 10  
Avoid Blow (2): 7  
Charge <sup>D</sup> (3): 10  
Durability [7/6] (2): 2  
Empathic Command <sup>D</sup> (2): 8  
Frighten <sup>V</sup> (1): 7  
Karma Ritual <sup>D</sup> (2): 2  
Melee Weapons <sup>D</sup> (3): 8  
Trick Riding <sup>D</sup> (2): 7  
True Shot <sup>V</sup> (1): 6  
Versatility (2): 2

<sup>D</sup> Discipline Talent (The adept may spend Karma on this Talent)

<sup>I</sup> Italized Talents Require Karma. (Except when also a Discipline Talent)

<sup>V</sup> Learned through Versatility talent



#### Skills

Battle Shout (1): 7  
Climbing (1): 6  
Indrisa Province<sup>K</sup> (1): 5  
Missile Weapons (1): 6  
Music (Drum)<sup>A</sup> (1): 7  
Read/Write Language (1): 5—(Theran)  
Singing<sup>A</sup> (1): 7  
Speak Language (5): 9—(Cathay, Human, Indrisan, Theran, Troll)  
Tactics (1): 5  
Thunder Legion Organization<sup>K</sup> (1): 5  
Throwing Weapons (1): 6  
Wilderness Survival (1): 5  
<sup>A</sup> Artisan Skill; <sup>K</sup> Knowledge Skill

#### Armor

Padded Leather Armor (Phys 4), Rider's Shield (Phys 3; Init 1; Deflect 2/0; Shatter 19)

#### Weapons

Lance (Damage 13), Spear (Damage 11; Range 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes), Medium Crossbow (Damage 12; Range 40–80 yards/20–40 hexes), Quiver (w/15 medium crossbow bolts)

#### Equipment

Adventurer's Kit, Belt Pouch, Bronze Pin w/Thunder Legion Symbol, Drum, Light Quartz Lantern, Thunder Legion Uniform, Trail Rations (2 weeks), Waterskin, Whetstone, Howdah on Mastrylith (see *Gamemaster's Guide*, p. 184).

#### Loot

60 Theran silver pieces

#### Legend Award

Second Circle

#### Notes

Has the Versatility ability. Has used the Versatility talent to learn the Frighten and True Shot talents.

#### Cavalryman Abilities

Second Circle: +1 Physical Defense

#### Commentary

The Thunder Legion is a legion of elite Theran Second Circle Cavalrymen from Indrisa. They ride into combat on massive howdahs placed on the backs of gargantuan mastryliths, screaming at the tops of their lungs and furiously drumming beats in tune to the stamping of their mounts' hooves. The effect on opponents' morale is devastating. Before even a single charge most enemies decide to scatter, leaving broken formations that are easily taken apart by these veteran troops. Thunder Legionnaires achieve victory as much through fear and intimidation as through devastating cavalry charges. As high in the sky as they are on top of their mastryliths, they are not very perceptive; but one doesn't need to see ants to stomp on them.

## ON THE BROTHELS OF MADAM XIAO

Perhaps some of the most well known features of the kingdom of Shan Dei are the brothels of Madam Xiao. Found in nearly every city, including the capital of Mu Li, Madam Xiao's brothels are wildly popular among soldiers, merchants, craftsman, and just about everyone else who can afford her prices.

What most of her patrons are not aware of is that Madam Xiao and her ladies serve as Guan Zhu's secret police. With access to all kinds of gossip, Madam Xiao reports anything and anyone that may be a threat to the security of the kingdom. Despite often being pre-occupied with his own self-indulgence, Guan Zhu is wise enough to recognize that the threat of betrayal hangs always over his head, so he is careful to end it before it can begin. After all, it was his own betrayal that had caused the death of his father.

Madam Xiao is a middle-aged ork woman who decorates herself in rich silks and jewelry, and wears a heady perfume. She operates out of her brothel in Mu Li, though she sometimes travels the kingdom to inspect her other establishments. It is widely rumored that Madam Xiao personally visits Guan Zhu in his palace on occasion.

One of those places where you'd better bring  
armed friends with you, eh?

—Drogram, Dwarf Warrior

## ON THE T'SKRANG OF SHAN DEI AND THE RIVER JANG

Stretching for a thousand miles, the Jang River—the southern river that makes up Shan Dei's southeastern border—is populated by many scattered towns and villages composed mainly of t'skrang, who are often drawn to large sources of water near which to settle. They dominate trade on its slow-moving waters, along both shores. This causes no small amount of contention among the t'skrang, as the northern shore belongs to Shan Dei, but the southern shore to Tiet Dei. For the most part, this antagonism is limited to harsh negotiations and a general level of distrust, though at times minor skirmishes among small bands of mercantile guards break out.

Because of the king of Tiet Dei, Chang He, and his strict policy prohibiting merchants from dealing with other kingdoms in the highly valued iron ore mined from the Dragon Spine Mountains, black markets for these goods are common. Most of these smuggled items are ferried out of the kingdom over the Jang River to Shan Dei. This black market economy has given rise to several gangs, all run and operated by various t'skrang. These gangs are family controlled, dynastic in leadership, and always at war, each controlling its own strip of the river. The most powerful gangs control key areas, such as major bridge crossings.

The Jang River cuts through a wide variety of geographies, from broad, flat plains; through dense, mist-shrouded forests; to steep valleys and canyons. Countless coalmines dot these valleys and canyons and the t'skrang guard them jealously.

Occasional flooding along the river has been known to cause massive destruction and death. This is another reason why the t'skrang, who are at less of a risk from drowning, dominate the population along its shores.

## ON THE FRONTIER OF SHAN DEI

The northwestern border of Shan Dei is a wild frontier region, its citizens often in conflict with monstrous creatures that venture forth from the Realm of Twilight. The geography is characterized by rolling plateaus, basins, steep mountains, and rugged pine-covered hills. A popular overland trade route to the West crosses through this region, with constant traffic of merchants both coming and going. Guan Zhu heavily taxes the merchants who travel along this well-maintained road, but he makes it worth their while by retaining a large military presence to protect against bandits, rogue warlords, and the occasional monstrosity that wanders out from the Realm of Twilight.

## ON THE MERCENARIES OF SHAN DEI

Warlords are always likely to find work in Shan Dei. Guan Zhu often hires them to perform raids across the border into both For Dei and Tiet Dei, as well as guard the valuable trade route in the northwest region of his kingdom. Two bands in particular can be found prowling the lands of Shan Dei, working as Guan Zhu's enforcers: the Tears of the Sun and Moon under the command of Warlord Shian, a brutal troll with an even more brutal Rage of Thunder Staff (see **Goods and Services** on p. 130 of the *Cathay*



## ADVENTURE HOOK

An increase in merchant attacks has the forces stationed in the area spread thin. There have been no survivors from any of these attacks, and consequently no witnesses. The remains of the victims have suggested something monstrous, and many fear these organized attacks have been staged from the Realm of Twilight. King Guan Zhu is greatly troubled by these attacks, as they directly affect the revenue gained. The characters become involved when Guan Zhu offers a handsome reward to whoever stops the attacks. The initial investigation leads the group towards the forbidding Realm of Twilight. But are the mysterious attacks the result of a Horror, or of something else...?

*Player's Guide*); and Ki Tao's Horde, a rabid band of murderers and rapists who spend as much time pillaging Guan Zhu's lands as pillaging his enemies. These mercenary bands, while far from being loyal to Guan Zhu, find the constant work (and thus the constant pay) very satisfying, and therefore do not risk losing their cozy positions by entertaining offers from the other kingdoms.

## ON GUAN ZHU

Guan Zhu rose to the throne of Shan Dei after overseeing his father's murder 10 years ago. Enemy assassins ambushed Dan Ma after Guan Zhu told them that his father would be traveling from Mu Li to an outlying city Named Shing Hoa, taking with him only a small honor guard.

After securing the throne, Guan Zhu quickly put to death several of his father's most trusted nobles and replaced them with men of a more similar nature to his own. Guan Zhu then spent the next ten years slowly crippling his kingdom by draining its coffers through his excessive self-indulgences. He has only managed to prevent his enemies from overrunning him by introducing newer and more severe draft laws and by hiring bands of mercenaries, as well as through his relationship with the Therans.

Guan Zhu has a lot of enemies, but thanks to his spy network of brothels he has managed to prevent every assassination attempt plotted against him. —so far. Guan Zhu sees long knives in every shadow and it is rare for a week to go by without some unfortunate soul being dragged down to the palace dungeons to be tortured for having a connection with some phantom conspiracy.

Guan Zhu's children spend most of their time in brothels rather than in armor. Neither one is particularly ambitious, which suits Guan Zhu just fine. In fact, as long as both spend most of their time pursuing pleasure rather than ambitions, they are much safer.

Guan Zhu is a Third Circle Elementalist. Despite training in the Discipline for the better part of his 42 years, his laziness prevents him from progressing very quickly.

## ON THE GOALS AND AGENDAS OF SHAN DEI

In addition to being lazy and self-indulgent, Guan Zhu has also grown increasingly narcissistic and paranoid. This ever-growing shift in his personality has caused two things to happen: a widening of mistrust for his nobles, and a growing fondness for the Therans, who constantly shower him with flattery and gifts. Militarily, Guan



Zhu's goals are dictated by cost, and right now the cost is in the North. With the Therans' help, however, the amount of distress is lessening, and with each passing day he delegates more and more responsibilities to his Western allies.

## ON THE GREAT DRAGON, SHAN

Wise and serene, Shan is the least likely of the Five Guardians to involve herself in war, though she performs her duty to the best of her ability. Long and elegant, her body is covered in lustrous emerald green scales. She makes her home in the dense forest that creeps along the foothills of the northern mountain range, the Pillars of Heaven. Although she was very fond of Guan Zhu's father, Shan despises Guan Zhu. Guan Zhu calls on her from time to time, his attitude never anything short of mocking and arrogant. Shan spends many nights wishing that for once the selfish, diminutive king would forget to bring the Jade Pendant so she might treat him as she would any other uninvited guest. Unfortunately, Guan Zhu is nothing if not cautious. Her oath forbids her from taking any action against him, and etiquette demands her utmost politeness, but Shan secretly yearns for a new king to sit on the throne of Shan Dei.

Like most of her kind, Shan is a collector of treasures, particularly those of aesthetic design. While others hoard priceless paintings, sculptures, or other works of art, Shan uses her powerful magic to change the natural surroundings of her home into living works of art. She has a small army of slaves who tend to this paradise; each is trained in elemental magic, and they have developed an almost druidic religion and culture.

Shan often greets her guests at a large grotto, which is fed by a deep underground spring. The peculiar water from this spring tastes sweet, and she freely offers it to guests (though she never offers any to Guan Zhu).



Music is a passion for Shan, especially symphonies comprising woodwinds (of which Shan has composed hundreds, if not thousands). Shan sometimes sends her agents out into Cathay to invite those musically gifted enough to return with them to her forest to perform one of her symphonies. Such Namegivers consider themselves blessed, and are from that moment on considered legends by their peers.

Though most all of her kind can make this claim, Shan is gifted with immense patience. She is slow to anger, but quick to take action if it is needed.

## ON THE ARMY AND NAVY OF SHAN DEI

Guan Zhu's army, numbering around 70,000, comprises mainly peasant conscripts. A mere 15,000 are career soldiers, with only 2,500 of them being cavalry and war chariots. At the moment, a large portion of these forces are stationed along the northern border, protecting against the increasingly frequent gar attacks, combining with the Thunder Legion sent by the Theran Empire (see **On the Theran Presence in Shan Dei**, p. 34).

Guan Zhu often orders raids into For Dei and Tiet Dei in search of plunder. Because his border with Feng Dei is easily guarded, Guan Zhu rarely orders an attack against them.

His navy consists of 70 airships and is commanded by Admiral Tiao, an Eighth Circle human Air Sailor. The banner of Shan Dei is the Jade Pendant set against a light brown field.

### On Admiral Tiao

The venerable Admiral Tiao has protected the skies of Shan Dei from the other four kingdoms and the Therans during the reigns of both Bai Dan Ma and Bai Guan Zhu. Nobody misses Dan Ma more than Tiao. Tiao has watched all the economic and military gains of Dan Ma squandered by Guan Zhu. He is disgusted by Guan Zhu's lack of faith in the army and his navy, so much that he relies on dishonorable mercenaries instead of his kingdom's own soldiers. The greatest of Guan Zhu's insults to Tiao's honor was his invitation of the Thunder Legion from the foreign land of Thera, an ancient enemy that had long ago invaded Cathay with the intent to conquer it. He considers this an invasion from within Shan Dei and Cathay. He believes the next step of the Therans' plans is to likely consolidate their hold on the ground of Shan Dei with a larger army, and then offer the services of the Theran Navy "to protect" Shan Dei in the air. He is determined to shore up the Shan Dei Navy in preparation for what he sees as the inevitable confrontation with the Theran invaders on the ground and in the air.

So great is his respect for the memory of Dan Ma that Tiao cannot bring himself to raise his hand against his son. He knows rebellion against Guan Zhu would be worthless. If Guan Zhu were to die, his sons are even more useless as rulers than him. He believes that he is too old and military-minded to run Shan Dei himself, and in truth he is not good at either economics or politics. He also knows that a civil war in Shan Dei would likely cause the kingdom to fall to the gar, the Therans, or another kingdom.

Admiral Tiao is a serious military man who believes in honor, respect, understanding one's enemies to the core, and following military procedure to the hilt. His brown uniform, bearing his medals and a prominent jade pendant embroidered on the torso, is impeccably clean and wrinkle-free, and his white-gray hair is worn in a buzz cut with nary a hair out of place. This is in stark contrast to his stern expression, with wrinkles around worry lines and a large scar on the left side of his face splitting the left eyebrow near the edge gained in a fierce battle with air pirates. His men joke that he never laughs or smiles because his face is frozen in place with constant worry. Despite his age, Admiral Tiao is very healthy, with wiry muscles and fast reflexes.

## ON FOR DEI, THE LAND OF FIRE



**A**n old man draped in soiled rags and stinking of filth entered the village of Nu Wa. A terrible cough wracked his thin frame as he shambled along. The villagers recoiled when they saw the sores covering his flesh.

"Plague!" the villagers yelled as they tried shooing him away, as one would shoo a stray dog. The old man, frightened and confused, asked them for water, but instead of water they began throwing stones at him. The old man cried out miserably, feebly holding his hands up for protection. A rock struck him in the forehead and he lost his footing. Lying in the dirt, stones rained down on him as he curled into a fetal position, sobbing.

It was then when Qi Di Meng, a simple human farmer, ran to the old man's aid. He yelled at the others, forcing them to stop. But as he helped the old man up, the villagers began cursing him, saying that now that he had touched him he was also infected. Di Meng was disgusted with his neighbors. He told them that he would take his family and leave to care for the old man.

And so he left, helping the old man walk with him as the villagers cursed them for fools. His family was afraid, but Di Meng assured them that it was the right thing to do.

When they were beyond the village, the old man suddenly stood upright and produced from within his soiled rags a shining blade with an ivory hilt and handed it to Di Meng.

"For your selflessness, the Imperial Ivory Sword is yours." As Di Meng took the sword in a daze, the old man transformed into a giant, fiery-scaled dragon...

## ON FOR DEI TODAY

Qi Liu Meng is the current king of For Dei. He was just a small child when his father helped the old man when the others in the village would not. His father has since died of old age, passing the crown, and the Imperial Ivory Sword, to him.

Now 96 years old, Liu Meng is one of the oldest humans in Cathay. He rules from his capital of Hon Wu, which is nestled on the northern shores of Lake Buzou. Hon Wu is best known for its school of magic, the Sapphire Tower, which has one of the most extensive collections of magical lore in all of Cathay, second only to the Tower of Secrets.

Homes are built over the lake, placed on high wooden docks and pilings that stretch out over the water for nearly a quarter of a mile. Most who live out over the lake are fishermen, and Liu Meng charges them a modest tax to live there. The fishermen rise from their beds hours before the sun breaks the horizon, pushing out into the lake with their modest skiffs and fishing boats. By dawn they have their nets filled, and they return to the docks where the sleepy citizens gather to bid on the fish fresh off the boats.

Hon Wu is surrounded on three sides by two walls, an inner and an outer. The inner wall climbs to a height of 30 feet, while the lower wall only to 20 feet. There is 100 yards in between the two walls where construction of any building is forbidden. The walls travel down into the lake for approximately 20 yards before ending abruptly at watchtowers.

Simple huts lean against the outer wall, creating a long, lazy trail of homes 100 yards wide. Refugees from various parts of the kingdom put up most of these homes. Liu Meng allows them to stay for free, even offering them food when he can spare it.

For Dei's economy has suffered greatly during the war, and consequently many of its town and cities are overflowing with beggars.



Starvation grips much of the populace in these settlements, and riots and small-scale rebellions are not uncommon. This economic crisis has driven banditry to unprecedented levels, and it is rare for any overland merchant caravan to travel even a short distance without a heavily armed escort. This in turn further complicates the issue, as it inflates the merchants' prices in order to compensate for the protection.

Hostile warlords have taken control of most of the southeastern portion of the kingdom, turning the area into a feudalistic landscape with dozens of factions. This mini-kingdom is interspersed with towns and cities still loyal to the king, but they struggle to maintain their independence. Qi Liu Meng tries his best to maintain his grip on the southern parts of his kingdom, but his military is too far-spread, thus he can only deal with the most dangerous threats in the south: the warlords that try to take up diplomatic relations with one of the outer four kingdoms or even the Therans. So Qi Liu Meng has responded with heavy force to any warlord who tried this.

Despite the widespread poverty, the kingdom of For Dei remains the center of magical learning (mainly in Hon Wu), attracting magicians from across all of Cathay, and beyond. Those who come to study in For Dei are watched closely, however, as enemy magicians often attempt to sneak out knowledge to later be used against the kingdom. While there are many schools of magic scattered throughout For Dei, none are as well renowned as the Sapphire Tower.

## ON THE SAPPHIRE TOWER

The Sapphire Tower stands in the center of Hon Wu, surrounded by a thick spread of willow trees. The tower, which reaches 50 feet into the sky, was assembled soon after the War of Wu Xing began. Immediately recognizing the need for a school of magic to supplement the loss of the right to use the Tower of Secrets, Liu Meng's father ordered the construction of the Sapphire Tower before even his own palace was built.

The base of the tower is nearly 80 feet wide, stretching toward the sky through five levels. Each level is dedicated to one of the following Disciplines: Elementalism, Nethermancy, Wizardry,

Illusionism, and Sorcery. It costs visitors 30 gold pieces a day to study at the tower, and even though strangers are welcome here, the war mages are always on the look out for spies.

The tower is ruled by a council of five: one Master magician from each of the five Disciplines. Responsible for overseeing the facility, they report directly to the king. The king dictates appointment to this post, and to be chosen is an honor that many strive for. The current Masters are Ru Shan, obsidian male and Master of Elementalism; Yong Na, human male and Master of Nethermancy; Chan Pu, human male and Master of Wizardry; Nay Ying, elven female and Master of Illusionism; and Quiolin, troll female and Master of Sorcery. The masters serve until death, unless stripped of their position through an act of dishonor (which is very rare, though not unheard of).

War mages are specifically trained in the Sapphire Tower to help guard the facility, as well as serve in the military.





As I approached the city I could see the red and gold tower rising high above the walls. Merchants with whom I had spoken told tales of the glittering tower and of the golden statues of dragons that stood sentinel around its top, and of the single, enormous sapphire that sat at its peak that seemed almost to shimmer in the sunlight. And yet, despite knowing what to expect, the sight of the tower still stole my breath.

A Master magician was busy instructing an apprentice on the finer points of commanding a flying carpet, high above the city. The apprentice's graceful, acrobatic aerial stunts were quite impressive... until I realized that the Master was trying to get him fly in a straight line. The terrified cries from the apprentice faded in and out as he zoomed uncontrollably from one end of the city to the other, while the Master gave chase on his own carpet, cursing.

I chuckled to myself and decided I would visit that splendid tower, but first I needed to find the nearest inn to wash the trail dust from my parched throat...

—From the Journal of Daylen Jagaro,  
Merchant of Bartertown

## ON THE GOLDEN DESERT

Early in his reign, Liu Meng attempted to reach an accord with the Kur of the Golden Desert. Unfortunately, the Kur had little respect for the newly anointed monarch and even less respect for his offer of truce. The Kur continue to raid merchant caravans within For Dei, causing enough yearly loss to income that Liu Meng is forced to spend a considerable amount of time searching for a way to deal with them.

Years ago, Liu Meng sent 10,000 soldiers into the desert to track down the Kur and bring the unruly tribes under his control. Six months after they set out, less than half returned. The desert was cruel to outsiders, they insisted, and there was more than just the Kur to contend with. To make matters worse, the Kur seemed to be able to appear and disappear at will, forcing the soldiers to always wear their armor in fear of ambushes. Most of the men died of dehydration and heat exhaustion rather than from battle.

His attempt to bring the tribes under control only aggravated them further. Every year the attacks seem to increase in number and ferocity. Recently, Liu Meng sent envoys on a dangerous mission to meet with the *Chin Yu* of the Phoenix Throne Mountains in hopes of buying their alliance to help rid the Golden Desert of the Kur (or at least to give the nomadic tribes something to think about).

So far none of the envoys have returned.

## ON THE CHIN YU OF FOR DEI

One of the many reasons why For Dei's economy suffers is the fierce attacks from the mysterious tribal Namegivers known as the *Chin Yu*. Sightings of the *Chin Yu* describe them as standing at 8 feet, with incredibly muscular bodies that resemble large humans and hooved feet and heads that resemble oxen. Little is known about these savage raiders, though it is clear that they have knowledge of metallurgy, since they wear bronze armor, and wield large steel battle-axes. It is unclear why they do not wear steel armor as well, but it is speculated that iron might be rare to them.

No *Chin Yu* has ever been captured alive, as a *Chin Yu* raider always fights to the death. No one has yet to report ever seeing a *Chin Yu* female, which leads scholars to believe that they live in a strict, patriarchal society.

The similarity to the *t'skrang* of Henghyoke makes me curious. Do the *Chin Yu* willingly fight to the death or are they forced by magic to do it?

—K'larrtskar, T'skrang Scholar

## ON THE WESTERN BORDER OF FOR DEI

A trade route exits to For Dei in the West, but is shunned by most outsiders due to Theran influence; the Therans prefer their merchants to enter in the northern kingdom of Shan Dei, with which they have diplomatic relations. This has caused a great deal of not only economic strain on the kingdom, but also political strain, as merchants and nobility alike pressure king Liu Meng to open negotiations with the Westerners. Despite the pressing need for increased traffic along the route, Liu Meng is loathe to do so, since he views the Therans and their influence as an even greater threat than total economic collapse. However, if something is not done soon, Liu Meng may have no other choice but to bow to their wishes.

Another reason why the route is unpopular is because it cuts right through the Golden Desert, exposing caravans traveling along it to attacks from the hostile Kur tribes (see **The Golden Desert**, p. 61). However, recently more traders have been taking this route, especially the few trading companies from Barsaive that have begun trading with Cathay. Enterprising smugglers have also come into business and try to bring goods from the West to For Dei.

## ON THE LAKES OF FOR DEI

For Dei is home to many large freshwater lakes. Hundreds of cities, towns, and villages lie scattered along their shores. Residents of these communities lead marine lifestyles, with fishing being a prime source of income. Other resources include seaweed, shellfish, pearls, and scattered deposits of amber. Because of the economic significance of these lakes, Liu Meng concentrates as many of his soldiers as he can around the most profitable communities.

Hon Wu, the nation's capital, rests on the northern shore of one of the northern lakes. A very specialized school of magic is also located here, where a group of Elementalists and Wizards work together with veteran fishermen on ways to preserve the lake's fish population to make sure that an ever-growing population can be fed without draining the natural resources.

The local cuisine of For Dei consists, not surprisingly, much on seafood, often served covered with exotic spices. On the other hand, people like to show their wealth by eating imported food. Many immigrants from the other kingdoms have come to For Dei to cater to those customers. However, immigrants are usually viewed with suspicion, as they can also be spies for their former nation. More than one had disappeared without a trace overnight or decided to leave For Dei when they feel the pressure on them became too great.

## ON LIU MENG

Liu Meng has quite an extensive family, reaching down all the way to great-grandchildren. Most serve in the military, though several have chosen the lives of adventurers. His oldest son and current heir, Qi Sun Meng, is the high commander of the military and an accomplished war mage.

Liu Meng is a Twelfth Circle Sorcerer, though it has been many years since he has actually cast a spell or used a talent. He rarely



leaves his palace, spending a majority of his time taking naps. His growing feebleness greatly distresses him, and he becomes quite agitated at the slightest mention of his deteriorating condition.

Liu Meng strongly believes in the war and the righteousness of the cause—a belief that he has passed down to his children and grandchildren.

## ON THE GOALS AND AGENDAS OF FOR DEI

Liu Meng realizes that he has far more days behind him than he has before him. Although he has seen his kingdom maintain its lands and power throughout his long reign, he wishes to see his family gain an advantage in the war before he dies, which he believes will stabilize the economy as well as boost his people's morale. He currently has plans to invade Shui Dei. Trying to march an invasion force across the river is too risky and Shui Dei's air navy matches his own in power, so he devised a plan of marching his armies south, through the Jungle of Endless Wandering, then swinging back north to attack from the South. He has been sending men to chart the jungle for years now, hoping to find a suitable route. He hopes he will live long enough to see Shui Dei fall and to hold the Imperial Seal in his hands, but only time will tell.



*It's unknown how far Liu Meng would go to prolong his life, but many rumors claim that he's willing to strike a deal with the most evil powers to spend more years on Earth. His Nethermancers and Wizards are surely working hard to find a way to fulfill his wish for a longer life.*

—Jis A'ra, Human Wizard



*Liu Meng is a fool to think that his army is strong enough to conquer Shui Dei, especially after traveling such a long distance before they see battle. His advisors have to convince him to stop his plans—or does he have access to magic none can dream of?*

—Tei Long, Human Warrior



After conquering Shui Dei Liu Meng will finally have access to the Emerald Sea. From there, he plans to build a large navy in order to invade Feng Dei. After he captures the northern kingdom he will

## ADVENTURE HOOK

Liu Meng desperately wishes to extend his life so he can ensure the prosperity and expansion of his kingdom. He has been sending soldiers and adventurers out for years to search for any means that may grant him this wish. Recently he has heard of a plant that can help restore a few years to one's life that grows only on a small island far into the Emerald Sea. He hires the player characters to retrieve some of the plant for him. Unfortunately, the island is the secret base of some pirates who do not take kindly to strangers who discover their hideout...

be in a position to attack Tiet Dei from three fronts. Of course, he will have to rely on his son to complete his dream as the conquest of both Shui Dei and Feng Dei would take years to complete, and he is certain that he does not have that kind of time.

## ON THE GREAT DRAGON, FOR

For lairs in the Phoenix Throne Mountains in Southern For Dei, deep in the bowels of a narrow chasm. His palace is constructed from carved granite, imbued with True air, causing it to float high into the clouds upon his command, which he issues on occasion, though for the greater part of the year his palace remains earthbound.

For is a terrifyingly beautiful dragon, with fiery-red, scarlet-colored scales and eyes so blue they seem almost to glow. For is also quite vain, and he has his small army of slaves polish his scales daily. Despite this vanity, For is the only dragon of the Five Guardians who does not ever silently question the strict rules governing the War of Wu Xing or the instructions left by the mighty Cong Chen. To For, tradition and honor are more important than existence itself, and his firm devotion to etiquette makes other dragons look lazy by comparison. Because of this, For regards any Namegiver who exhibits the same care with tradition as he with admiration; conversely, he views any breach of etiquette with severity.

Because Liu Meng's age prevents him from making the journey, Sun Meng, his heir, now makes most of the trips in his stead whenever council from the great dragon is needed. Because of For's observance of the proper rituals, a meeting can take days before a word is finally spoken.

For admires the honor of the Qi dynasty and has grown fond of the family over the years. He is concerned about For Dei's current crisis, and wishes to help further, but he is bound to only answer questions directly, and cannot offer ideas himself. If he could, he could easily fix the kingdom's problems, but he realizes that he would then be ruling the kingdom, and what good would the trial be then?



*The role of the Five Guardians is peculiar, to say the least.*

*From what I've gleaned, they are not allowed to offer advice, only answer direct questions. The questions cannot be ambiguous, such as 'What should I do?' Likewise, they are not allowed to make choices in dynastic succession. The dragons can also offer magical knowledge, though clearly they are holding back—probably so the Cathayans don't completely annihilate each other. Clearly the strict rules governing this bizarre war are designed to prevent the dragons from making all of the decisions, thus keeping it a war amongst the lesser races, who will succeed or fail based upon their own merits.*

—Daylen Jagaro, Merchant of Bartertown



## ON THE ARMY AND NAVY OF FOR DEI

Liu Meng has a strong army of 80,000 troops. Approximately 30,000 are conscripted peasant foot soldiers. An incredible 30,000 are cavalry and war chariots, with the remaining 20,000 made up of infantry, pike, and archer units. Much of his cavalry is used for patrolling both borders of his kingdom as well as the borders of the Golden Desert. Liu Meng dedicates a large portion of his army to trying to regain the southeastern region of his kingdom, though he has thus far been unsuccessful.



His navy consists of 80 airships, which spend a great deal of time patrolling the Indrisan border, which the Therans constantly test with small scouting vessels.

The Indrisan border is only lightly patrolled on the ground, with few cavalry units shouldering the task. Liu Meng is confident that the rough and inhospitable terrain is a good natural border—and every threat that slips through the border patrols has been dealt with swiftly when discovered in his stronger patrolled areas of the kingdom.

The banner of For Dei is a symbol of the Imperial Ivory Sword set against an orange sun on a red field.

## ON FENG DEI, THE LAND OF WIND

**F**eng had taken the Imperial Phoenix Robe and, bound by his oath, began to devise a plan to find one worthy of receiving it. Feng decided that he would not search the whole of the land for a hero, but instead would make the hero show himself. He went deep into the mountains where a great and terrible beast known as the Gongqi was imprisoned, trapped by mighty heroes thousands of years before. He released the monster and watched from afar as it began to rage across the countryside, devouring men, women, and children.

The legends told that the Gongqi was impervious to both flame and steel, as well as magic and disease. They said that the Gongqi was a beast created by the Passion, Twoo, whose purpose was to determine the guilt or innocence of those charged with a crime. The innocent would go free, but the guilty would be devoured by the dreadful beast. But the Gongqi had grown wild and out of control and began killing all in its path, guilty or not. Unable to destroy the immortal creature, the heroes of old trapped and imprisoned it.

Because of its origin, before it could devour its victims the Gongqi had to force them to say their last words. This would determine the way in which they would die, it told them. If their last words were spoken truly, it would offer them a quick and merciful death. Those who would choose to speak falsely, such as those who would make up lies in an effort to save themselves, would be devoured slowly and painfully.

Many would-be heroes rushed to face the beast and one by one were devoured, until one day a hero arrived who would put an end to its terrible rampage. The man, a storm child, approached the Gongqi wearing no armor and carrying no weapon.

The Gongqi roared at the storm child, "Speak your last words mortal! If they are true, I will kill you quickly and mercifully before devouring your lifeless shell. But if they are false, I will kill you slowly and painfully! Do not try to trick me, for I can sense the truth of your words!"

The storm child stood calmly in front of the beast, replying simply, "You will kill me slowly and painfully."

The Gongqi paused a moment in confusion, and then howled in unspeakable rage. The storm child had defeated it, for if the Gongqi would kill him slowly and painfully, it would make what he had said true, meaning it would have to kill him quickly. But if he killed him quickly it would make what he had said false, meaning it would have to kill him slowly.

The storm child stood still as the Gongqi thrashed and raged, clawing and gnashing at itself. Finally, driven mad, the Gongqi tore out its own heart and perished.

Feng flew from the clouds to land before the storm child.

"What is your Name?" he asked the young one.

"I am Sen Ma," the storm child said, bowing.

"Well done, Sen Ma," said Feng, returning the bow, "The Imperial Phoenix Robe is yours."



## ON FENG DEI TODAY

Sen Ma still lives, and is the current king of Feng Dei. His capital is the coastal city of Min Yan located on the Zen Yan peninsula. The city rests on the edge of a rocky cliff that rises 100 feet above the ocean's waves. A yawning cavern allows entry beneath the city, where ships can moor and merchants can unload their cargo before bringing it up a long, winding path carved through the earth, that leads to various warehouses throughout the city above. An enormous iron portcullis can be lowered to seal the cavern during an attack, but there has been no need to do so in several years.

A 25-foot high granite wall runs around the perimeter of the city. Large pearls the size of a full-grown troll's head are imbedded into the walls at fixed intervals. From his throne in the palace, Sen Ma can command these enchanted pearls to hurl lightning bolts at incoming armies. Additional enchanted pearls are placed along the



exterior of the palace to protect it should an enemy army somehow breach the outer defenses—something that has yet to occur.

Min Yan has an intricate sewer system that runs beneath the city and is designed to dump waste out into the ocean. The grates over these exits are enchanted to prevent any would-be intruder from an easy access.

A steady stream of traffic constantly enters and leaves the city, and recently Sen Ma has ordered the construction of a second bazaar where foreign merchants, both Western and those coming from Jih'Po, can erect their stalls.

Not many Western merchants are currently trading there, but every week brings more of them to Min Yan. The centuries of isolation are finally over!

—Jis A'ra, Human Wizard

This is evidence of the wisdom of Sen Ma's rule, which has seen nothing but prosperity for his subjects. Feng Dei is one of the wealthiest of the Five Kingdoms, and, because of this wealth, the kingdom boasts a much larger population, and consequently, many more cities, than the other kingdoms. Though largely affluent, this does not save the citizens from the realities of constant warfare, however, especially the peasants, whose villages are often attacked and whose sons are drafted for the army.

The southern border of Feng Dei is marked by the River Jang, which is populated mainly by t'skrang who are drawn to its slow-moving waters. The northern shore rests in Feng Dei, while the southern shore rests in Tiet Dei. At times, the width of the river narrows so communities are within shouting distance. This causes some aggression between the two kingdoms' communities, but in the interest of trade they tend to restrict their hostilities to harsh negotiations and a general level of distrust, though occasional small skirmishes among bands of merchant guards do break out.

## ON FENG DEI'S RELATIONSHIP WITH JIH'PO

As the years pass, Sen Ma spends more time visiting the island nation of Jih'Po. He has developed a fondness for the Jih'Pen's simple, dedicated way of approaching life. It is rumored that he has become good friends with one of the most powerful lords (called a *daimyo*) of the country, Named Nori Katsu.

It is well known that Sen Ma greatly admires the Jih'Pen's elite warrior class, known as the Samurai, for their honor, integrity, and absolute devotion to their lord (see **On the Path of Servitude** on p. 54 of the *Cathay Player's Guide*).

As Sen Ma's age increases and his reflective and philosophical nature grows, the more appeal the island nation has for him. This has many of Sen Ma's nobles concerned. Because Sen Ma is unable to have children, he must Name an heir before he passes. Many of the nobles fear that the new heir will be the *daimyo*, Nori Katsu. The thought of a foreigner sitting on a throne of Cathay has some of the nobles whispering dark ideas to one another in the shadows.

## ON THE NOBLES OF FENG DEI

Sen Ma's friendship with Nori Katsu has strained the relationship between him and many of his nobles, though Sen Ma is largely

unaware of this. His more powerful nobles have been hovering around him like vultures for years, waiting for him to Name an heir to the throne of Feng Dei. Some are now plotting against him, devising a plan to finish him off before he has a chance to Name Nori Katsu, or some other foreigner, as his heir, which many of them fear. Hungry for power, many of the nobles do not even care if his true intention is to Name a foreigner. Once the idea for a coup was placed in their minds, a maddened frenzy seemed to take hold. Now the question is not *if* they are going to attempt to overthrow the throne, but *when*.

Not all of Sen Ma's nobles have turned against him, however. In fact, most are quite loyal to their king. Unfortunately for Sen Ma, his loyal lords are also oblivious of the growing duplicity, and those harboring traitorous thoughts are careful to keep out of earshot of those who would clearly never betray their liege.

## ON THE FIVE CLAWS OF CHIN ZAN

The head of the conspiracy to overthrow Sen Ma, a powerful human Thirteenth Circle Sorcerer by the Name of Chin Zan, is the wealthiest lord in all of Feng Dei. He surrounds himself with five adepts of considerable skill: Shi Rui, human female and Eighth Circle Thief; Bei Rong, male troll and Ninth Circle Warrior; Shang Po, human male and Eleventh Circle Sword Dancer; Ao Xin, elf female and Eleventh Circle Nethermancer; and finally Bi Fan, male ork and Sixth Circle Archer.

The Five Claws are Chin Zan's enforcers, and the mere sight of them strongly encourages the other nobles to do his bidding. More than one noble has gone missing after openly opposing Chin Zan's will, and the Five Claws make it no secret as to who is responsible.

It is rumored that the Five Claws have mysterious abilities granted to them by making dealings with dark powers. It is further rumored that Chin Zan is in league with an even greater conspiracy: a nation-wide network of assassins and usurpers calling themselves *the Shadowed*. Anyone investigating these rumors turns up missing, so for the moment it is mere speculation.

Blackmail, bribing, threatening the family, cold-blooded murder—you name it, they're the methods of the Five Claws. Even though I suspect the members of the Five Claws only to be skilled adepts, they have built a fearsome reputation with their ruthless methods over the years.

—Galang the Quick, Human Archer and Thief

## On Chin Zan

Chin Zan is a ruthless man who wants to lead a coup to overthrow Sen Ma and acquire the Phoenix Robe for his master, Fang Zhi, who covets the Phoenix Robe. Fang Zhi would then be able to become king of Feng Dei and use the kingdom's resources to further his greater ambition to defeat the other four kingdoms, steal the other four Imperial Symbols, and become Emperor. As part of the deal, Chin Zan would then become the governor of the kingdom of Feng Dei, ruling in the name of Fang Zhi. The Five Claws are his enforcers, bribing and intimidating nobles to his cause and killing outright those who will not turn against Sen Ma. Each member of the Five Claws is from one of the five kingdoms of Cathay.

Chin Zan is in his early thirties. His long, dark hair is parted down the middle and falls to his shoulders framing a clean-shaven and nearly effeminate face that women find appealing.



## ADVENTURE HOOK

An earthquake has recently devastated the large coastal city of Sun Wai. Its great columned buildings lie in ruin, leaving 40,000 dead and nearly 60,000 people without food, shelter, or fresh water. A great humanitarian crisis develops as diseases, fires, famines, and riots spread. As the player characters help heal the wounded and sick, bury the dead, and assist in the rebuilding, a sinister plot develops. Using a local temple as cover, a cult dedicated to an ancient power offers shelter to the homeless. Each night they kidnap a few of the dispossessed citizens and sacrifice them. The player characters' investigations eventually lead them beneath the broken city to the vast labyrinth of the sewers, where an ancient and terrible evil has been released by the recent tremors—an evil whose minions do not intend to allow a group of adventurers to foil their plans.

## ADVENTURE HOOK

A daughter of a local noble is pregnant with the child of her Troubadour lover. When her father finds out the girl is too afraid to say the real father's Name for fear of her lover's life, she blames one of the characters, whom she met by chance as the group passed through the region several weeks past. Outraged, the noble puts a price on the character's head. After an encounter or two with bounty hunters, the characters have to return and get to the bottom of the noble's enmity. Once they discover the duplicity of the daughter, they must decide whether to turn in the Troubadour, or help convince her father to allow them to marry.

### On the Five Claws

**Shi Rui:** Perhaps being born in Tiet Dei, the Land of Metal, instilled Shi Rui with her lust for stealing coin and treasure. Despite being of minor noble birth, she constantly stole from other, wealthier nobles in fits of jealousy. No amount of treasure was enough for her. She was eventually caught with a huge hoard of stolen goods. Her family pleaded for mercy, as she was only a young girl at the time, and paid heavily in bribes to prevent her hands from being sliced off. Instead she was sentenced to a prison mining facility for two years. She worked as a miner in the Dragon Spine Mountains, where she siphoned and hoarded ore to sell for herself later. One day, as she was digging more space for her secret treasure hoard, a cave-in trapped her deep in the tunnels. There she remained until the Yen'hi'ji found and saved her. She was raised to adulthood by Fang Zhi and became a member of the Shadowed. Back in Tiet Dei she is presumed dead, and truly few would recognize her even if they saw her. Shi Rui loves to exploit the greed and avarice of others as well, coercing cooperation from them through bribery. She is also fond of stealing secrets and using them for blackmail.

Shi Rui has short-cropped hair, and her face, hands, and feet are weathered from her years as a miner and spent living underground with the Yen'hi'ji. Her stocky body lacking in curves is covered

with a form fitting hardened vest and leather breeches. Rumors say if she grew a beard she could pass as a female dwarf. The rumor starter turned up dead recently...

**Bei Rong:** Bei Rong was born in Shan Dei, the Land of Earth, and is a massive troll brute who loves to throw his weight around. Bullying, torture, and intimidation are his specialties. As a child, he loved to hunt and fish, and he inflicted demented punishments on the captured animals. When he grew older he decided to hunt Namegivers, enlisting in the Shan Dei army. After passing through training and then a brief stint in the Shan Dei army proper, he was discharged for his brutality. Fang Zhi recruited him to the Shadowed, impressed by his cruelty. Now Bei Rong feels his talents are finally being utilized in full, as he is used to hunt Namegivers.

Bei Rong is hirsute, having mahogany-brown hair that is belt length on both the top of his head as well as his chin. He almost never bathes, and the stench is nearly as intimidating as his towering bulk. The rest of his body is covered by bastion armor.

**Shang Po:** Shang Po was born in Feng Dei into one of the Chin's servant families. Rumors say that he is the illegitimate son of Chin Zan's unfaithful father from one of the maids he took as a consort. Shang Po and Chin Zan are childhood friends. Shang Po has pledged his eternal loyalty to Chin Zan, and he spent eight years at a Sword Dancer kwoon in Tiet Dei training to be his bodyguard. Shang Po refuses to let Chin Zan bloody his own hands, letting Chin Zan only plan the assassinations. He does the actual killing himself, ripping them to shreds with a whirlwind of strikes from his two sabers.

Shang Po's appearance at a distance is eerily similar to Chin Zan's looks. However, upon closer inspection, the differences are easy to see. His face usually has a stubby beard and his face has been hardened and weathered by years of training, giving him a much more masculine appearance than Chin Zan.

**Ao Xin:** Ao Xin was born in Shui Dei, into one of the coastal villages near the Emerald Sea. She found some of the bodies of children that had been sacrificed to Shui, and rather than being frightened, she was fascinated by the drowned and broken bodies. As she carried the corpse of an infant for further study to a nearby grove, Shui unleashed her tidal wrath and wiped out many villages, including her own. Nothing was left of her house or her family. She found her parents' corpses, fascinated by the look of surprise frozen on their faces. She later noticed a man in black robes taking bodies away from the scene. She quietly followed and witnessed him changing them into undead. Orphaned and with no shelter at the village, she demanded that the man teach her his powers in exchange for keeping his secret. Seeing no fear in her eyes, the man simply smiled, turned around with his new servants, and waved for her to follow. Thus a member of the Shadowed initiated Ao Xin into the Nethermancer discipline at an early age. Ao Xin has raven black hair that falls to her shoulders and piercing sea-blue eyes. Her skin is wan and clammy to the touch. Skin-tight black robes barely cover her thin, curvaceous body. Her beauty makes it easy for her to seduce men, but her only love is death, and so she seduces only those whom are to be murdered on the orders of Chin Zan. Rumors say that Chin Zan took her to his bed once as a concubine but found her personality to be too cold and logical. Some say she is without feelings altogether.

**Bi Fan:** Bi Fan was born in For Dei. He grew up to be one of the finest hunters of his village. One day, after returning from a successful hunt, he was shocked to discover his village burning and under attack by the Kur. Although he rushed to join the fight against the raiders, shooting arrows into as many of the cowards as he could, he was too late to save the village, his home, or his family. In his thirst for revenge, he tracked down as many of the Kur raiders as he could with his small warband, leaving only charred remains in his wake. The Kur returned the favor, hunting down the men of his band one



by one until only he remained. In what he thought would be his last stand, he fought like a man possessed, striking down one of the Kur for every wound they inflicted upon him. He finally slipped into unconsciousness as the lifeblood drained from him. When he awoke, he was in a deep underground cave and his wounds were bandaged. Fang Zhi explained that the Shadowed wished to end the War of Wu Xing and eliminate all who would oppose them, including the independent Kur. He brought Bi Fan to the site of his battle with the Kur. The raiders were dead to a man—slain by the Shadowed. After Bi Fan burned all of the Kur corpses to ash, his vengeance for his village and family fulfilled, he pledged his eternal loyalty to the Shadowed and Fang Zhi in exchange for them saving his life.

As far as he is concerned, Bi Fan has died and been reborn, his past life nothing but a fading memory. He fights for the Shadowed and Fang Zhi out of a sense of honor and loyalty for what they did for him. He dreams of one day leading the fight against the Kur, forever wiping them out for Fang Zhi's empire.

As a member of the Five Claws, he excels at destruction through arson. In combat, he almost always uses flame arrows to burn opponents to death. Constant exposure to heat has left him hairless and bald, and blisters and boils are usually present on his olive green skin. He wears crystal ringlet armor for its resistance to fire and heat, and for the sinister way fire reflects off of its surface.

Bi Fan's *gahad* is always triggered by the presence of the Kur and the need to burn away their remains. Bi Fan's *gahad* is never triggered by insults about his ork race or his past life in For Dei.

## ON THE DRAGON SPINE MOUNTAINS

Dividing Sen Ma's kingdom into two halves are the imposing Dragon Spine Mountains. Running from north to south, the mountains reach as high as 13,000 feet. Their Northern foothills are covered in dense deciduous forests, containing birch, ash, maple, larch, walnut, and elm. These forests are home to countless animals, including pandas, boars, bears, macaques, musk deers, pheasants, and takins. Many dragons find the lofty mountain peaks perfect for their isolated lairs, including the Great Dragons, Feng and Luung (see p. 106). These forests are also home to several regions of True wood, which are mined whenever discovered.

There are three major passes through the mountain range connected the two halves of Sen Ma's kingdom. Sen Ma makes it a point to maintain these passes, and sends out small armies of diggers to keep the passes clear of snow during the winter. A series of forts occupy the passes to protect travelers, each containing two large, cumbersome horns, one facing east, and one facing west. Built with magic mimicking the Air Speaking talent, the horns on disparate towers are capable of long range communication with each other (up to 50 miles if needed, beyond which nothing can be heard).

True air is mined near the tallest peaks of the mountains. Some of the areas with the densest concentration of True air are located within the territory of dragons. Out of fear and respect, miners always conduct negotiations with the dragons before mining in their territory. If a dragon refuses, which they sometimes do without explanation, then mining is not started. No one has dared to go against a dragon's wishes in this matter, and Sen Ma has promised capital punishment for any who do.

## ON THE XAN MONKS AND THE TOWER OF SECRETS

The eastern slopes of the Dragon Spine Mountains are home to two culturally significant locations: Mount Xan and the Tower

## ADVENTURE HOOK

The Pearl of the East, a merchant guild based out of Min Yan, wants to mine True air near the peaks of the Dragon Spine Mountains. Unfortunately, a dragon by the Name of Black Lotus has denied the request. However, if a favor is done for him, he will reconsider. This favor is to travel to Spirit Mountain, located in the Phoenix Throne Mountains in southwestern Cathay, and place a single black lotus on its summit. This, explained Black Lotus, will send a message to his sister (though what this message is he did not say), White Lotus, whose lair is on that very mountain. The merchants hire the characters to perform this dangerous mission, promising them a large pecuniary reward for their troubles. However, if White Lotus catches these messengers from her brother, she won't hesitate to send back their remains as a "message" in return.

of Secrets. Both have complete autonomy, despite being located within the borders of Feng Dei. Though these areas are not under Sen Ma's rule, he benefits greatly from having them within his kingdom, as it helps the people's morale and national pride. For this reason, Sen Ma often donates money and supplies to the Xan monks; he would do the same for the Tower of Secrets, but it is forbidden for any of the Five Kingdoms to do so, as this would break the tower's neutrality.

## ON SEN MA

After nearly a century of warfare, Sen Ma enjoys nothing more than time alone to spend contemplating life's greater mysteries. To accomplish this, he spends most of his days in Jih'Po, relaxing in meadows or in Nori Katsu's many gardens.

He also uses Jih'Po as an opportunity to get away from his nobles who continuously fawn and flatter him in hopes that he will proclaim them heir. Though he is unaware of the conspiracy headed by Chin Zan, Sen Ma knows that none of his nobles will make a good king, and he frets for the future of his kingdom. He has been considering proclaiming Nori Katsu—whom he finds to be an honorable man—his heir, but fears what that could mean for Feng Dei.

Sen Ma is a Tenth Circle Sword Dancer and Fifth Circle Wizard.

## ON THE GOALS AND AGENDAS OF FENG DEI

Recently Sen Ma has devised a plan to invade the eastern half of Tiet Dei, cutting off its access to the Emerald Sea. The invasion involves three steps: first, a smaller army would invade northern Tiet Dei as a diversion. Comprising mostly mounted skirmishers, this army would conduct lightning raids across the border in an attempt to get Chang He to commit his forces. Once he does, Sen Ma's main army would thrust south into eastern Tiet Dei, cutting off reinforcements at the choke points in the Dragon Spine Mountains, while a second invasion force would be launched by sea to take the main coastal cities.

Disturbing rumors of dissension among his nobles has caused Sen Ma to put these plans on hold, however.





## **ON THE GREAT DRAGON, FENG**

Feng lairs in a palace in the clouds high above Feng Dei that is approachable only by airship or magic, resting on an island of clouds held together with powerful elemental magic. Feng's scales, like the clouds he lives among, are a soft white, and his eyes are a pale, icy blue. In bygone days Feng brought rain to parched crops, but since the beginning of the War of Wu Xing, Feng's role has been diminished to that of a councilor to Sen Ma. He greatly misses his role as a Rain God, particularly the worship of the peasants, but he understands the importance of his part in this trial and the destiny of Cathay.

Despite this, Feng has not given up on the idea of being a god. He keeps a large population of Namegivers in his airy palace, who all treat him as such. Many of these worshippers, whom he calls his children, are silversmiths, as Feng is overly fond of the mineral, though no one knows exactly why.

Feng is also peculiar in his practice of allowing his followers to ride on his back during flight. Most dragons would consider such an idea indignant at best and would respond with homicidal fury at worst, but Feng not only does not seem to mind, but actually seems to enjoy it.

Sen Ma regularly visits the great dragon and over the years the two have become great friends. The only advice Sen Ma wants these days is the only advice Feng cannot give. Because Feng is forbidden to dictate matters regarding who should rule, he is not allowed to tell Sen Ma to whom the Imperial Phoenix Robe should pass.

## **ON THE ARMY AND NAVY OF FENG DEI**

Sen Ma has the second largest army in Cathay with a force numbering 90,000. Only 15,000 are conscripted peasants, as Sen Ma spends a great deal on the training of a professional army. His cavalry and war chariots number 25,000 with the remaining 50,000 divided among infantry, pike, and archer units. Most of his troops are stationed in the western half of Feng Dei, patrolling the borders of Tiet Dei, Shan Dei, and the Land of the Gar. Skirmishes are frequent, particularly with the gar, who are constantly launching raids into settlements close to the border. He also has permanent garrisons in the passes that connect the eastern and western halves of his kingdom. His navy is split into two halves with 50 naval vessels and 85 airships.

The banner of Feng Dei is a majestic phoenix, its wings spread, set against a white field.



# ON SHUI DEI, THE LAND OF WATER

**A** merchant dressed in rich purple silks and glittering jewelry entered the simple village of Mi Tong, where he began handing out gold to the villagers. He had brought with him several bulging pouches filled with gold pieces, which he generously divided among the peasants. They all flocked to him, blessing him as an emissary of the Passions. All, that is, except one: a lone t'skrang woman Named Min Lao Ye stood just outside of the grasping mob, standing with her arms folded across her chest, frowning in disapproval.

When the gold had all been distributed, the merchant turned without a word and left.

The following week the merchant returned to Mi Tong and found that the villagers had spent all of their money. They had bought new farm tools and more animals, clothes for the coming winter, and stones for better homes. The merchant once again began handing out gold, and again the peasants flocked to him—all except for Lao Ye, who watched from afar.

The next week the merchant returned to find that the villagers had again spent all of their money. This time they had bought nice things for themselves: silk clothes, lavish furs, perfumes and makeup, porcelain cutlery, costly jewelry, and other expensive devices.

This time when the merchant went to hand out the gold Lao Ye slapped the pouch from his hands, yelling, "What are you doing? Can't you see that you are destroying this village?"

The merchant was shocked. "I am helping this village!" he said, "Can't you see how much easier I am making life?"

"Easier?!" Lao Ye shouted angrily, "How easy will it be for us when the gold is all spent? We may have pretty baubles and fancy clothes, but what will we eat? The people of this village have been neglecting their duties, spending their time in the cities or fawning over their new things!"

The merchant only smiled as one would to a child who did not understand.

"Gold is what is important," he disagreed, shaking his head, "Why work when you can pay others to do it for you?"

"Gold corrupts the spirit and poisons the mind," argued Lao Ye, "Just as you have poisoned this village. Hard work, discipline, and integrity are the only paths to a better life!"

The merchant nodded, his face serene.

"And you, Lao Ye, have the heart of a noble," he told her, as he handed her the Imperial Dragon Seal...

## ON SHUI DEI TODAY

Min Zao Ye, granddaughter of Min Lao Ye, is the current queen of Shui Dei. She lives in her capital of Pe Lin, an immense floating city that hovers 250 feet above the ocean along the eastern coast of her kingdom. The city is built upon a vast stone platform infused with elemental air and enchanted with powerful magic. Its construction was taught to Zao Ye by the Guardian dragon, Shui. Accessible only by airship, Pe Lin still oversees a great deal of daily traffic and remains one of the richest cities in all of Cathay.

Many of Zao Ye's finest airships are docked at Pe Lin at all times, ready to rush to the defense of the city. Among them is her flagship, the *Gentle Storm*, an immense construction of wood and jade that is armed with over 200 fire cannons.

Pe Lin also serves as a major naval trading center and the base of Shui Dei's seafaring navy. A significant number of large wooden airships, equipped with docks, warehouses, and small fleets of airboats, serve this flying city. Many of these airships are often in the water, serving as the city's port, ascending to unload cargo into the city itself, and descending with exports to be picked up by incoming ships. The airboats also commonly ferry military personnel to the city during their leave.

Pe Lin does not have independent water or food sources, and the queen has to depend on everything being brought in via airship. Zao Ye fears that this may be a weakness if the city is ever somehow laid under siege, so has ordered a group of Wizards and Elementalists to find new ways of providing the city with water and food. The queen has pointed out the importance of this task by banishing the first team leader, the human Wizard, Haouwou Doa, for dereliction of duty and laziness after he failed to show any progress within the first year. His successor, the dwarf Elementalist, Hian Pok, is currently working hard to avoid suffering the same fate. Results have been made, though, with a special sort of fungus that can be raised along the city's edge, where nothing else would grow. The fungus tastes unpleasant, but it supplies a Namegiver with everything he needs to survive. Hian Pok has also created elementally enchanted fountains that are capable of purifying seawater into freshwater, lessening the amount needed to be imported into the city by thousands of gallons per day.

Most of the other cities in Shui Dei huddle along the southern bank of the Pearl River, which forms the kingdom's northern border. Raids across the river to and from Tiet Dei are common. In some areas the river serves as a no-man's-land, with the cities of Tiet Dei situated just on the far side. The riverbed is a graveyard of many sunken barges and lost soldiers. Despite this, the Pearl River is a main trade route for the kingdom, for both domestic trade and international trade with For Dei and Tiet Dei.

Though Shui Dei is comparable in size with the other four kingdoms of Cathay, in fact Zao Ye controls much less land than her enemies. This is due to the presence of the Jungle of Endless Wandering in the southern portion of the kingdom, which is not under her control, and technically not a true part of her kingdom. Her subjects often use the northern edge of the jungle for natural resources, however; bark for dyes, rare fruits, timber, furs, and medicinal plants are all natural resources from the Jungle of Endless Wandering that contribute to Zao Ye's coffers.

Though Shui Dei's population is smaller than those of the other kingdoms, this doesn't prevent Zao Ye's kingdom from being one of the wealthiest in Cathay. This draws the covetous eyes of both Tiet Dei and For Dei. Zao Ye is well aware of this fact, which causes her to be defensive in her nation's policies. Some of her nobles view this purely defensive stance as cowardice, though Zao Ye defends her actions as merely prudent. Other, more old-fashioned (and

## ADVENTURE HOOK

A series of unexplained deaths plagues a small coastal city. All of the victims die at night with no witnesses, and the bodies are always found near the docks in the morning. The corpses are pale and desiccated, their faces frozen in terror. An investigation reveals that all of the victims work for a powerful and influential merchant of the city. Deeper investigation yields that the merchant had recently sent a large ship to sea even though the captain warned him that it was no longer seaworthy. The merchant, who had the ship insured, sent it out anyway. It never reached its destination. Have the vengeful spirits of dead sailors caused the deaths, or has a rival business hired a magician or other agent to perform the deeds so that the merchant's crimes are exposed, in hopes of ruining him? Either way, the merchant is not going to want this information to be made public, and once he finds out the characters know his dark secret their lives are in jeopardy.



misogynistic) nobles believe it is just further proof that women should not rule, and some of the more impudent lords have openly mocked Zao Ye's decisions in court. This is an unsettling trend she plans on remedying soon.

### The Gentle Storm

The *Gentle Storm* is quite possibly the most magnificent airship ever constructed. It is a mass of wood and jade, serving as the flagship of Zao Ye's aerial fleet. The *Gentle Storm's* hull measures an unprecedented 500 feet in length, and nearly 200 feet at its widest point, making the ship larger than the greatest treasure junks—by far the largest vessel to soar the skies above Cathay. Armed with over 200 fire cannons, the *Gentle Storm* is a formidable opponent—a massive flying fortress capable of eliminating entire fleets of ships by itself. Despite the vessel's enormous size, it can still travel the skies at great speeds, its nine sails, constructed of bamboo and magically woven and strengthened silks, catching the fierce currents, carrying it through the clouds.

Speed: 10

Maneuverability: 7

Firepower: 25/30

#### Hull:

Armor: 30

Ramming: 35

Cargo: 1,500

#### Damage:

Derelict: 126

Critical: 32

Destroyed: 132

#### Crew:

Captain: 8

Crew Size: 300

Morale: 88

Crew Rating: 25

## ON THE KI MAO, THE PO NA, AND THE JUNGLE OF ENDLESS WANDERING

Two thirds of Zao Ye's kingdom is covered in the dense foliage of the Jungle of Endless Wandering. Zao Ye has no formal relations with either the ki mao or the po na, nor does she have any plans to form any in the near future. Aside from the occasional group of ki mao who venture out from the jungle to trade with the cities, or stray po na, Shui Dei has little contact with either group.

The vast jungle is largely unexplored by Zao Ye, and thus the terrain and interior are largely unknown to her kingdom. What is known, however, is that the jungle is home to innumerable forms of life. It also widely believed that there are ancient and terrible beasts miles within the jungle, hidden under the dense canopy.

Some of Zao Ye's nobles once attempted to convince her to try and hire the ki mao as mercenaries; their inherent skills in stealth would make them effective assassins, especially. However, in the end the idea was abandoned due to the ki maos' xenophobic nature. Recently some of those same nobles have secretly begun planning a way to gain the ki maos' trust, by instigating a war between them and the po na, and then helping in the utter destruction of the latter. After the nobles help the ki mao so (seemingly) selflessly win the war against their traditional enemies, the nobles believe the ki mao will be endeared, and thus more open to diplomatic negotiations.

## ON PIRACY IN SHUI DEI

The greatest thorns in Zao Ye's side are the many pirate vessels that roam the Emerald Sea. Her royal fleet expends a great deal of effort in hunting these brigands down, but many remain at large,





plundering merchant vessels and attacking coastal cities. The merchants of Shui Dei's coastal cities employ a great many ships, often outfitted with mercenaries, catapults, ballistae, and fire cannons for protection. These cargo ships usually hug the shores, trading up and down the coast. The pirates' bases are on the many dozens of scattered islands throughout the Emerald Sea, many of which have treacherous reefs through which only the pirates may traverse safely. These hidden bases are kept concealed under the canopies of the jungles often found on these islands, so as not to be easily spied by passing airships.

The pirates have spies and informants in many coastal villages, and even merchant houses, too, that inform them when a ship with a valuable cargo has left the harbor. Piracy won't die down until this information network is destroyed.

—Galang the Quick, Human Archer and Thief

The worst of the pirates is Wei Bao, a male dwarf Fourth Circle Warrior with a fleet of at least 10 ships. It is well known that he has desperately been trying to get his hands on some airships, but so far has been unsuccessful. It is rumored that he wishes to sack the city of Pe Lin but needs the airships to do so. Wei Bao has recently been approached by agents from the kingdom of For Dei, and offered a deal for a possible alliance. If these negotiations go through, For Dei will provide Wei Bao with the airships he needs to attack Pe Lin.

### Wei Bao's Rage

The waters off the eastern coast of Cathay are treacherous and unforgiving, taking lives indiscriminately and without remorse. Some Namegivers on the Emerald Sea have taken to these murderous ways, embracing the insurmountable fury of the wild sea. The pirates of the Emerald Sea are the most notorious of all brigands throughout Cathay. The worst of them is, without argument, the infamous Wei Bao. Wei Bao travels the waves with his fleet of ships, terrorizing the waters off the coast of Shui Dei. Wei Bao rides at the fore of his fleet aboard his flagship, *Wei Bao's Rage*, a marvel of design as far as seagoing vessels are concerned. The *Rage* is without a doubt the fastest ship to set sail on the turbulent waters, able to outpace even the fastest airships. The backside of her hull is lined with two dozen fire cannons, enabling Wei Bao to sweep past his target, then speed away, firing the cannons in reverse. This tactic of run and hit has frustrated even the greatest of captains who have engaged him. Despite all of Shui Dei's efforts, *Wei Bao's Rage* continues to plague the seas off the coast.

Speed: 10  
Maneuverability: 7      Firepower: 17/17

Hull:  
Armor: 17      Ramming: 27  
Cargo: 100

Damage:  
Derelict: 69      Critical: 22  
Destroyed: 76

Crew:  
Captain: 6      Crew Size: 40  
Morale: 70      Crew Rating: 18

Rules  
*Wei Bao's Rage* may perform a sweep-by-attack as described above when the Fire Maneuver was announced. This allows two attacks against one target ship, but all tests that round are made at a -2 penalty and no other ship may be targeted.

Another dark mystery of the Emerald Sea is a pirate vessel known simply as *The Dark*. Striking always at night, it has already been the demise of over a dozen merchant ships off the coast of the kingdom of Feng Dei, and around half a dozen off the coast of the kingdom of Shui Dei.

### The Dark

*The Dark* is a midsize war junk that travels the seas off the coast of northern Cathay, on the straights between Feng Dei and the island of Jih'Po, dipping down in between Shui Dei and Jih'Po as well. Where it comes from no one can say for sure, but it likes to make its presence known. It attacks merchants traveling the straights and has been known to attack Feng Dei and Shui Dei vessels patrolling the waters. Attempts to locate the ship, by air or sea, have all met with failure. All attacks from the vessel have come at night, under the cloak of darkness, the ship hitting its targets before they even realize it is there. Sailors who have reportedly seen the junk say that the vessel is an immaculate ship, comprised almost entirely of onyx, its sails blackened silk and emblazoned with a blood-red crescent moon. The crew of the *Dark* is made up entirely of t'skrang sailors, their skin as black as night, their eyes gleaming red in the moonlight. Though these reports are sketchy at best, most who come under attack from *the Dark* never see the ship at all.

Speed: 7  
Maneuverability: 7      Firepower: 16/16

Hull:  
Armor: 17      Ramming: 27  
Cargo: 100

Damage:  
Derelict: 69      Critical: 22  
Destroyed: 76

Crew:  
Captain: 6      Crew Size: 100  
Morale: 68      Crew Rating: 17

Rules  
At night, a Result Level one higher than normal is required to spot the ship.

## ON THE ISLANDS OF SHUI DEI

The two islands found off of the southern shore of Shui Dei were settled centuries before the Scourge. Since the War of Wu Xing began they have become part of Shui Dei. Because of their isolation from the rest of the kingdom, each island has developed its own culture and attitude, making each almost kingdom unto itself, though the regional governors of the cities still pay homage to Zao Ye. The western island is Named Lianghe and the eastern island is Named Luxi.

## ON THE ISLAND OF LIANGHE

Lianghe is a bustling port of call, a safe haven for merchants traveling from Shui Dei to trade with the various tribal peoples found on the peninsula to the South of Shui Dei. Unknown to most, however, is that Lianghe is also a haven for many pirates, who hide their ships in deep coves on the southern shores. These pirates work with the governor's blessing and funding, plundering merchant ships from every nation other than their own. The governor, a female dwarf by the Name of Yubi, views this piracy as taxes due to her and her people for being unjustly annexed by the kingdom of Shui Dei two decades ago.



## ADVENTURE HOOK

After being hired to help rid Shun Dei's waters of pirates, the characters are led to a hidden cove in Lianghe. Believing they are rooting out unwanted pirates, they are surprised when they find themselves under attack by Yubi's soldiers. Trapped on an island where they thought they had allies, the characters are now hunted like animals by a governor who will kill them all to keep her secret safe.

The people of Lianghe have their own military that is not subject to compulsory duty in the army of Shui Dei. Yubi has command of an army numbering 8,000, comprising 6,000 infantry and 2,000 archers. They have no cavalry or pike. Her navy consists of four ships; she has no airships at her disposal.

The main export of Lianghe is its tea. A rich golden color, the tea is the most popular tea in all of Shui Dei. Known as Lianghe Golden Tea, it is also prized for its medicinal properties, such as the ability to cure headaches.

## ON THE ISLAND OF LUXI

The Luxi are a primitive people, by most Cathayans standards. They live in mud and straw huts and worship spirits. They have no knowledge of metallurgy; their weapons are the bow and arrow (often poisoned) and stone-tipped or fire-hardened spears. After taking control of the island of Luxi just over eight years ago, Zao Ye has since planted a large colony—the town of Yun—on its northern shore. Most of the natives live further in the interior of the island, but those who choose to live in the newly created town find themselves to be treated like second-class citizens.

The governor of Luxi, an obsidian noble by the Name of Zixin, fears a growing unrest from the natives. Some of his advisors, made up of what passes for local nobles, have told him that there is talk among some of the tribes of a possible rebellion. Zixin has passed this intelligence onto Zao Ye, but has yet to hear back from her. If a full-scale rebellion occurs, Zixin is certain the 5,000 soldiers under his command will not be enough to defend the colony. In preparation, he has recently added another three feet to the log wall surrounding the town, bringing its height to 15 feet.

## ADVENTURE HOOK

While on the island of Luxi, the characters are hired by the governor to investigate a small group of colonists who have their homes far from shore, deep in the jungle. Contact has been lost with these colonists, and the governor fears the worst. When the characters arrive, they find that the colonists—entire families—have been massacred. The players soon realize that the tribes are mobilizing under a powerful and charismatic Shaman, and will soon be attacking the town.

The characters rush back to Yun, and governor Zixin sends a ship immediately to Pe Lin to request urgent reinforcements. The characters must then help the garrison defend the town against a screaming horde of 30,000 savage warriors under the command of a powerful Shaman for at least 3 days until help arrives.

## ON ZAO YE

Min Zao Ye's politics have become reclusive over the past several years. Her policy is based on defense, rather than offense, and her closest advisors feel that she cares little for winning the war, only maintaining the integrity of her kingdom. Though this troubles some, most have complete confidence in their queen, who always puts the needs of the people above her own.

Despite being only 35 years old, Zao Ye has already managed to make remarkable progress with her kingdom, from establishing new roads for faster trade routes to building stronger walls around all of Shui Dei's cities.

Min Zao Ye is married to a t'skrang Named Xun Ren and together they have a daughter Named Min Shi Zo, who is only fourteen years old.

*The t'skrang of Cathay do not share the responsibility of raising eggs as do the t'skrang of the Serpent in Barsaive. Since ancestor worship is such a huge part of Cathayan life, each t'skrang family must deal with the successes and failures of the fertilization process on their own.*

—Daylen Jagaro, Merchant of Bartertown

## ON THE GOALS AND AGENDAS OF SHUI DEI

Zao Ye is cautious and constructive by nature, and her reign has been marked with policies geared toward economic and civic growth rather than war. Some of her more impetuous nobles have urged her to launch an invasion into Tiet Dei, but so far all of their advice has been answered with her doubts.

Lately Zao Ye has considered proposals from some of her nobles who wish to establish treaties with the ki mao and po na, and it is believed that she is assembling diplomats to make the journey into the jungle's depths to seek out an audience with the two reclusive cultures.

## ON THE GREAT DRAGON, SHUI

Shui lives in a palace made from coral and pearls, located deep beneath the waves of the Emerald Sea. This lair is approachable only through magical means, the secrets of which Shui taught the Min dynasty long ago.

Shui often swims through the murky depths of the Emerald Sea, preferring the cold depths to the sky, her dark blue scales helping to conceal her as she glides through the coral reefs. Shui rarely comes to the surface of the world, instead enjoying her solitude deep beneath the sea, far from the troubling war above.

She has many slaves, most of whom are t'skrang that have been magically altered to be able to breathe underwater. Some of these servants are sailors Shui saved from drowning.

Before the war, Shui was worshipped as a goddess of the sea. This was due to her behavior once, long ago, when a coastal village angered her by casting 100 children off of a tall cliff to dash on the rocks below. They were attempting to appease the Passions, who they believed were punishing them with a plague. Shui saw the wrecked little bodies floating below the waves and, in a rage, caused an enormous tidal wave to swallow the villagers. Nearby communities quickly heard about the devastation and, misinterpreting Shui's motivation, began to worship her to appease her wrath. Believing it a good way



to prevent another atrocity, and not having any qualms about being worshipped, Shui allowed the practice to continue.

Since the beginning of the War of Wu Xing, this practice has stopped, and Shui has retreated from the world. For a dragon, Shui is very sensitive to death and destruction. Unlike her brethren, who often view lesser Namegiver races as useful pawns at best and a snack at worst, Shui has a genuine empathy for those of the lesser races who look to her as both a goddess and protector.

## ON THE ARMY AND NAVY OF SHUI DEI

Zao Ye's military is 75,000 strong, mainly conscripted peasants. Only 35,000 are trained infantry, pike, archer, cavalry, and war chariot units. Zao Ye keeps 5,000 soldiers—an equal mix of infantry and archers—on the island of Luxi. Her navy is the strength of her forces, composed of 150 naval vessels and 120 airships, most of which she keeps close to her capital, Pe Lin.

The banner of Shui Dei is a symbol of the Imperial Dragon Seal set against a light blue field.



# THE LAND OF THE GAR

**T**he scattered trail of ragged exiles stretched over several miles like a long, snaking finger that slowly extended into the unknown. Many of the band, tired and exhausted from many days of travel, glimpsed mournfully over their shoulders back toward the only home they had ever known, but were forced to leave. Because of the betrayal of their leaders, their entire race had been banished into the bleak expanses of the North, where only death was certain to be waiting...

## HISTORY

The gar trace their ancestry back to a time before Cathayans had even begun recording their past in writing. The gar had always made their home in Cathay and were one of the most influential races in all of the Empire. The gar are not too dissimilar to other elves, and most Scholars believe that their race simply evolved through the centuries around a subculture of scholars and artisans.

The gar had always been a people of academics, of science, art, music, and magic. They pioneered the ways of the artisans, perfecting such crafts as silk painting, embroidery, pottery, and sculpturing.

When the Tower of Secrets was created to house the Empire's vast stores of knowledge, it was the gar who were called upon to oversee its construction, and many of the first Scholars of Secrets were themselves gar.

The Jade Palace, the imperial school of magic located in the capital, was founded by the gar. Ancient gar scholars wrote most of the magical theories that are still studied there, as well as other schools of magic.

Though so prevalent throughout Cathayan society, the gar were mostly located in a small coastal city Named Su-Sha. The gar city sparkled with artistic talent. Every building served not simply just as a shop or a home, but also as a work of outstanding art, with murals and bas-reliefs carved into the walls and glittering tiled patterns on the roofs. The many fountain gardens of the city served as gathering places for musicians, and the air was always alive with the sounds of flutes, bells, and harps. Scholars and philosophers would hold friendly debates in the city's many bazaars while artisans sold their works to onlookers.

The city was run by elected officials: a group of men and women who served for life. This council was not only expected to regulate the city but also oversee the affairs of all gar, by governing their culture and traditions. Aside from being a bit shorter than average elves, the gar were virtually indistinguishable from their cousins. Keeping their own culture and traditions helped the gar maintain a social identity distinct from the rest of Cathay, which many of them were proud of.

This adherence to a divided identity led some Cathayans to foster a certain prejudice against the gar, whom they found to be rather arrogant. This bigotry did little to affect the gar, however, as most of those who felt ill will towards them were of the lower classes, a part of the society most gar were unfamiliar with.

Because of their knowledge and wisdom, the gar were often chosen to serve as the Emperor's council and close advisors. Over time, this trend began to ostracize other races in the Imperial Court, who soon grew jealous of the gar's power. It was perhaps this strained relationship with the nobles that was a cause of their eventual banishment as much as their betrayal to the Empire was.

## On the Banishment of the Gar

The gar earned the wrath of Emperor Zheng Xi after they helped the foreign invaders during the War with the West (see p. 18). For their crimes, all gar from every corner of the Empire, nearly 100,000 in all, were banished to the harsh steppes of the North, where it was assumed they would all perish. Gar were stripped of their titles and positions, rounded up, and slowly marched northwards. Only one gar was given the chance to stay. At the time of his people's banish-



ment, Todek was a member of the Eight Immortals (see **Tower of Secrets**, p. 56). Such an honorable position was not to be stripped away casually, so the Emperor offered him amnesty. Todek refused, telling the Emperor that his fate would be no different than that of his people. Once he left the upper level of the Tower of Secrets, Todek perished, becoming a martyr among the gar.

When the exiles first reached the vast wilderness that was to become their new home, many perished from starvation, exposure, and attacks from the many dangerous beasts that roamed the plains. The gar quickly discovered that the skills they had so proudly cultivated over the centuries were no help in their survival. As their numbers quickly dwindled despair took hold, and for a time it seemed that the gar truly would fade quietly from the Earth.

### On the Survival of the Gar

One rose among the gar who would teach them how to survive. A scholar by trade, Buri always caught on quickly in any academic subject, and he simply treated their situation as just another academic challenge. He began organizing the survivors, searching out sources of fresh water and food. He developed their nomadic way of life, following herds of animals for food and creating a stable migratory pattern for his people. He invented their tents and devised ways of preserving food. But most importantly of all, Buri tamed the first mount.

Over the century preceding the Scourge a new culture slowly developed. Within a generation the gar lost most of their knowledge concerning history, academics, and the like. Within two generations the gar barely resembled their ancestors at all, even forming a new dialect.

Soon after Buri organized his people, they discovered that there were too many of them for the limited amount of food found on the steppes. They decided to branch out into several different groups, each with its own unique migratory pattern. Over time, however, as the population among these individual tribes grew, additional tribes sprang into being. It did not take long for tribes to begin fighting over the rights to a water source or herd of buffalo. When this occurred the transformation was complete; the gar had come from being a race of scholars and academics to a race of mounted nomadic warriors, killing one another just to survive.

The tribes spent the last quarter of a century before the Scourge honing their fighting skills against one another, developing keen horsemanship abilities and considerable prowess with stone-tipped spear and bow. It did not take them long to begin crafting metal arms, though because of the extreme temperatures of the North, they never made metal armor.

Each tribe developed similar ideologies and customs revolving around concepts such as courage, honor, and strength. By this time the gar's written language was completely lost; if something did not strengthen the tribe, it was not worth learning.

### On the Scourge

As attacks of early Horrors became more frequent the tribes set aside their differences and came together to discuss the growing threat. No longer a part of Cathay, the gar were outside the protection of the Five Guardians. Again despair burned wildly through their camps and many believed it truly was their destiny to perish after all.

Like before, it took one man to bring order back to his people. He was Nogai Khan, grandson of the venerated Buri. He told his people that he had a vision of a white stallion that would lead them to salvation. Bidding them to follow, Nogai led them to the North, further than any gar had gone before. During their long trek many fell victim to not only Horrors and other predators, but also to starvation and dehydration, for Nogai rarely let his people rest. They could only stop when the white stallion did so, he explained, otherwise they would lose its trail forever.

For several months they traveled, until finally coming to the base of the tall mountain peaks of the range now simply known as the Gar

Mountains. There, Nogai led them into a yawning cavern found high in the hills. Inside they discovered evidence that it had once been an immense lair to a mighty dragon. The lair stretched out through the underside of the mountains for miles in many directions with more than enough room for all of the gar and their mounts. They found several sources of fresh water and even large tracts of cultivated earth perfect for gardens. Though ancient, it was as though someone—or something—had prepared the dragon lair for their arrival.

Nogai told his people that they would be safe there, but they must seal the entrance. The Shamans of the various tribes set to work enchanting earth and stone with magic. Once the entrance was sealed, the gar Named the dragon's lair the Sacred Womb, and to this day they believe it once belonged to the greatest of all dragons, Cong Chen.

Despite having to work together for survival, the various tribes of the gar still held tribal allegiances higher than racial commonality. Each tribe kept its unique identity, living in different sections of the Sacred Womb. Each tribe's leader, or *khan*, formed a council to oversee the operations of the Sacred Womb, though they spent more time bickering than making policy.

To maintain their warrior and horsemanship skills, the gar invented great games and competitions. Each tribe had various teams to compete in a wide mixture of sports, ranging from wrestling and mounted archery competitions to great mounted melee tournaments. The most honored sport, however, was horsemanship, with competitions that combined horse racing and mounted acrobatics. Every member took fierce pride in these competitions and it was every boy's dream to one day compete for the honor and glory of his tribe.

## THE LAND OF THE GAR TODAY

The entrance to the Sacred Womb opened 80 years ago. Since then, the various tribes of the gar have scattered across the steppes to reclaim their former ways. They immediately fell back to warring amongst one another, their lives, for the most part, unchanged. The gar continue to be a fierce and savage people, occupying more than one bedtime story told by Cathayan parents to frighten children.

## ON THE REALM OF THE GAR

The Land of the Gar remains a cruel and unforgiving environment with a wide range of predatory animals that do not fear the sight of mounted warriors. In addition, the northern steppes are home to many Horrors that have yet to retreat from this plane of existence. The tribes have reverted back to their old might-makes-right policies, endlessly battling one another over the land's scarce natural resources.

## REGARDING THE CULTURE OF THE GAR

The gar are a nomadic people, sweeping across the great steppes of the North in tribes numbering anywhere from a few hundred to several thousands, and in some cases tens of thousands. The gar construct their domed homes from thick hides that they erect on lattices. These dwellings are designed to be easily disassembled and erected to help accommodate the nomadic lifestyle. The doors are usually covered with tanned hides that can be tied back with rope made from horsehair. The *khan's* dwelling is much larger than the others, lavishly decorated with silks and furs and scented with incense. The interior is wide and spacious, carefully attended to by slaves.

During travel the tents are carried on the backs of camels, which ride at the back of the column, led by the slaves. The gar's clothing is suited to the North's harsh climate conditions, such as thick woolen hides and furs for winter and lighter fabrics for the summer.

The gar like to drink a lot of milk, which they get from mares, camels, and yaks. Wild rice is quite common, and so are lamb, mutton soups,





stews, cheese, and the meat from various wild animals. The meat is mostly cooked over an open fire, or sometimes fried over stones. Any extra meat is dried for long journeys. Women pick pinecones and berries from forests when the tribe happens upon one.

The most important aspect of a gar's life is his mount. More than just a mode of transportation, the mount symbolizes a gar's status as a warrior. Only slaves and women go without a mount, although women can claim the right of warrior status should they capture and tame a mount of their own.

Gar who are of no use to the tribe, such as those who have grown too old and feeble to ride a horse, cripples, and the like, often leave the tribe to wander the steppes alone. Most who do this find death rather quickly. They believe this form of suicide is important to keep the tribe strong. Those who refuse to sacrifice themselves for the good of the tribe must care for themselves, usually finding themselves traveling at the back of the tribe with the slaves. Few choose this life, however, since it is viewed as a terrible disgrace.

The gar recognize the power and grace of all twelve Passions, but they only revere one. Above all the rest, they honor the Passion Maah, who they believe led them to the Sacred Womb to save them from the Scourge.

### Regarding the Rite of Manhood

When a male gar reaches the age of thirteen he is expelled from the tribe for his rite of manhood. He is allowed only to take the clothes on his back and a hunting dagger. The young man must find a wild mount, most often a horse; capture it; and tame it. He is only allowed back into the tribe if he is on the back of his new mount. Only two thirds of young gar ever return from their Rite of Manhood, and for some the journey takes several years. Once back they are considered full-grown gar warriors.

Although they do not get their own mounts until their Rite of Manhood, gar children are taught to ride before they learn to walk. In fact, for many gar walking is much harder than riding their mounts.

Most gar return from their Rite of Manhood with horses as mounts, though sometimes one will return with a magical creature. Those who return riding such a beast, especially a *poh* (see **Creatures of Cathay**, p. 99, for more information), are blessed by the tribe's Shamans and given a special status among the other

gar warriors. Such warriors are believed to be destined by the Passions for great things.

### Regarding Shamanism

Shamans play an important role within the tribe. They are responsible for the spiritual guidance of the people as well as acting as the *khan's* advisors. They spend their time reading omens and deciphering old prophecies, or creating new ones.

Either a male or female may be chosen as a Shaman but more often they are female. It is believed that women are more sensitive to the spiritual aspect of the universe while the men are better warriors.

### Regarding Slavery

The gar sometimes take women or children from conquered tribes as slaves. Males are only taken if they have not yet undergone their Rite of Manhood. For a warrior to be taken as a slave is considered highly dishonorable and gar warriors will fight to the death before they allow such a thing to occur. Males who are taken as slaves are castrated before entering service. Like the women, the males are responsible for performing menial tasks for the tribe, such as tending the livestock and pack animals, erecting tents, fetching fresh water, and so on. The warrior who captures a slave may treat the slave in any manner he wishes. Slaves are often used as bartering chips between warriors; attractive women are especially coveted.

These people need to be taught a lesson!

—Gifrad, Ork Liberator

### Regarding the Gar's Views toward Outsiders

The gar view outsiders, especially Cathayans, with a harsh animosity. The gar usually treat any outsider as a potential slave, unless he proves himself a mighty warrior. Those few who are fortunate enough to gain the respect of these savage people are treated as honored guests, provided with food and hospitality. Some are even allowed to accompany the tribe for as long as they wish.



## ON THE SACRED WOMB

Once a year the various tribes gather at the Sacred Womb to hold competitions in the spirit of the centuries they spent together there. Held during the month of Hui Ying, the tribes set aside their differences for a week while their warriors compete in a variety of games for honor and glory.

During the festivities, a grand bazaar is opened just inside the mouth of the cavern leading into the Great Womb, where the tribes barter goods and slaves. Though disapproved of, fighting among the tribes during this time is common. It is tolerated as long as the fighting does not disrupt the games. Any tribe doing so is banned from the games for five years.

## OF THE TRIBES OF THE GAR

There are countless tribes that call the Land of the Gar home. Below is a brief description of three of the most powerful.

### On the Seven Moons Tribe

The Seven Moons tribe, under the leadership of Naran Khan, an Eighth Circle War Rider, is perhaps 10,000 strong, about half of which are warriors. The Seven Moons tribe is best known for their fierce and frequent attacks into the Kingdom of Shan Dei. Naran Khan has five strong sons, all of whom are mounted warriors. Naran is known for his grim and fierce nature, punctuated by a severe hatred for all Cathayans.

The Seven Moons tribe spends most of its time in the western half of the Land of the Gar, traveling South for winter and back North again for summer.

### On the Tribe of the Fallen Sun

The tribe of the Fallen Sun is a rarity among gar tribes in that members regularly trade with merchants from the Desert of Swallowed Tears. Their leader, Tengri Khan, a Fifth Circle War Rider and Third Circle Scout, values the weapons they provide.

His tribe numbers 12,000 strong, 7,000 of which are warriors. His daughter, Narmanda, is a Sixth Circle Warrior of fearsome repute who is skilled in both mounted and hand-to-hand combat.

The tribe of the Fallen Sun spends most of its time hovering around the southern half of the Land of the Gar, occasionally raiding into either Shan Dei or Feng Dei.

### On the Golden Phoenix Tribe

The Golden Phoenix tribe is the largest and most powerful tribe of all. The renowned Eighth Circle War Rider and Second Circle Weaponsmith, Shahatai Khan, leads it. Shahatai had left his tribe for his Rite of Manhood when he was only at the age of 10. He returned a year later atop a fierce *poh* (see **Creatures of Cathay**, p. 99). Since then, Shahatai has conquered more than a dozen tribes. Rather than making slaves out of them, Shahatai offers the conquered warriors the opportunity to join him. Many refuse, however enough have joined his ranks to swell his tribe to more than 30,000, with over 15,000 warriors.

Shahatai, now 25 years old, wishes to conquer all of the gar tribes to create a force strong enough to sweep southwards and conquer

Cathay. If the estimates of there being at least one million gar in the land are accurate, then his plans may take a very long time to come to fruition.

In the meantime, the other tribes live in fear of Shahatai, who has made his intentions clear. Dozens of smaller tribes, who do not think they can survive much longer on their own, have been speaking with Shahatai about joining his great host.

His own Sixth Circle Shaman, a woman by the Name of Inkhe, has been spreading an old prophecy of one who would be born and lead the people back to their homeland. Whether or not the prophecy is genuine or a fabrication of Inkhe is unclear, but Shahatai's growing power is making many of the other *khans* very nervous.

## SAVAH, STRENGTH RATING 5 SPIRIT OF THE PLAINS

### Attributes

|        |        |        |
|--------|--------|--------|
| DEX: 9 | STR: 9 | TOU: 9 |
| PER: 9 | WIL: 9 | CHA: 9 |

### Characteristics

|                     |                      |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| Initiative: 9       | Physical Defense: 12 |
| Actions: 2          | Spell Defense: 16    |
| Attack (S): 14      | Social Defense: 16   |
| Damage:             | Physical Armor: 9    |
| Unarmed 9           | Mystic Armor: 5      |
| Death: 78           | Recovery Tests: 4    |
| Unconsciousness: 66 | Knockdown: 9         |
| Wound Threshold: 14 | Movement: 6          |
| Karma Points: 10/10 | Karma Step: 8        |

### Powers

Aid Summoner (S), Astral Sight<sup>T</sup> (S): 14, Confusion (S): 14, Durability (S), Haggles (S): 14, Manifest (S), Share Knowledge (S), Soothe (S): 14, Spear (S): 14, Spellcasting<sup>T</sup> (S): 14

### Spells

Conceal Tracks, Grass Blend, Great Sticky Vines, Hunter's Sense, Nutritious Earth, Quicken Pace, Plant Talk, Root Trap, Thorny Retreat, Thrive, Vines

### Legend Award

Fifth Circle (1 per 2 PC)

### Commentary

Savah is a Spirit of the Plains who cannot stand the Gar presence in the Land of the Gar. Always trampling the land with their beasts, in his eyes they are no friends of the grassland. With a chance summoning by Inkhe, he saw an opportunity to get rid of the Gar. If they could only unite as one tribe and go back to wherever they came from, the Land of the Gar could return to its former peace. The prophecy of return was Savah's idea. Inkhe followed his instructions, and convinced Shahatai to believe in the prophecy knowing that they would never rally around her. Unfortunately for Savah, Inkhe felt an urge to have the Spirit of the Plains on hand at all times for advice and further instructions. She went on a great quest to find the spirit of the land's true name and his pattern item, an exquisite quarterstaff made of a twisted branch of a saxaul tree. She summoned Savah and bound him to the staff to have him around at all times. Savah greatly resents his capture at Inkhe's hands.

### Rules

**Grass Blend:** The Grass Blend spell makes the spirit blend completely with his surroundings, making it more difficult to spot him. Both the spirit and the target must be standing on grass, scrubland, or low brush for the spell to work. Apart from this difference, Grass Blend works exactly as described in the Earth Blend talent description on p. 165 of the *Player's Guide*.



## CHAPTER FIVE

# PLACES OF LEGEND AND PERIL

*One could spend a lifetime exploring Cathay and still  
be three lifetimes short of seeing all of its wonders.*

• DAYLEN JAGARO,  
HUMAN MERCHANT OF BARTERTOWN •

The lands of Cathay contain many sights,  
some wondrous, some horrifying, and  
some both. The most widely known of  
these places are described below.



# THE TOWER OF SECRETS

**C**reated long before the Scourge by Emperor Chon Xi, the Tower of Secrets was built to store the sacred knowledge that would enable the emperors of Cathay to rule both wisely and honorably. Because some of this knowledge could prove to be destructive in the wrong hands, the order of the Scholars of Secrets was also established to collect and guard the information kept in the tower.

Located at the far end of a great valley found in the Dragon Spine Mountains, the Tower of Secrets sits on a jagged precipice that juts out more than one hundred feet above the valley floor. A sheer vertical cliff rises several hundred feet behind it. Two waterfalls flow over this cliff side by side to beat against the base, where the water collects and forms into pools before flowing around the sides of the tower in two narrow streams. These streams then unite in front of the tower, forming a massive waterfall that cascades over the lip of the precipice down to the valley below, where it continues its journey as the river Feng.

Carefully tended gardens of various fruits, vegetables, and herbs spread out from the base of the tower, extending all the way to the twin streams. Arched walkways cross the waters, leading to the sacred willow gardens that lie just beyond them. Veiled in shadow, the willow gardens are a place of sacred ritual, meditation, and study. The waterfalls continuously generate a rolling cloud of mist that blankets the willow gardens and the lower levels of the tower, sprinkling everything in a light layer of glimmering dewdrops.

Centered on the legendary spot where Tai Xi saved the phoenix, the hexagonal Tower of Secrets is a pagoda fifty feet wide at the base and rising nearly one hundred feet into the sky. The tower is built from stone and bamboo that is enchanted to resist the elements.

Hidden beneath this structure, within the rocky precipice, lies a labyrinth of catacombs that stretch throughout the mountain where relics, scrolls, tomes, and other valuable artifacts of knowledge are stored for safekeeping. During the Scourge this information was kept safe. The tower itself was destroyed, having to be rebuilt after the people left their dragon lairs to reclaim the land.

## DENIZENS OF THE TOWER OF SECRETS

The Tower of Secrets houses the Daughters of Heaven, the Scholars of Secrets, and their initiates. The uppermost level is home to the Eight Immortals, who never leave.

*"Experience is knowledge, knowledge is power, and power can corrupt—if not kept safe from those who would abuse it."*

—First Mantra of the Tower of Secrets

### The Daughters of Heaven

Long ago three human sisters traveled the many lands of Cathay offering their services as healers. All three had extensive knowledge of herbs and potions and soon their remarkable gift for healing became greatly sought after.

After some time, word of these legendary healers reached the ears of the ancient phoenix Yu Mi, who traveled far to witness their renowned abilities firsthand. Yu Mi watched from a distance as the three sisters entered a village that had been stricken with plague, even when none of the Imperial Healers would dare do so. Despite it being clear that the sisters had not the power to save the victims, and despite the fact that staying meant risking their own lives, the sisters did not give up.



This act of selflessness impressed the phoenix, who revealed herself to the three healers. With her great magic, Yu Mi restored the remaining villagers to health and then offered to teach the three sisters knowledge of the healing arts such as had never been shown to humans before. The sisters happily agreed. Along with the ability to heal, the phoenix taught them how to use their magic to fight. The ability to defend the weak, the phoenix told them, was just as important as the ability to heal the sick.

Their new abilities only aided in spreading their legends, and soon the three sisters were summoned to the Imperial Capital of Huan Wang. They found themselves before the Emperor, who asked them if they would teach his healers their arts. The three sisters agreed, on the condition that they would teach only females. When he inquired as to why, the sisters told the Emperor that their powers were to be used for the benefit of all Namegivers, not just the devices of one man. The aggressive nature of men would chance their powers one day being used to further some man's petty fantasies, and that they could not allow. The Emperor, impressed with the women's convictions, agreed.

They were sent to the Tower of Secrets, to share the sacred temple with the Scholars of Secrets and to begin training a new generation of sacred healers. A Daughter of Heaven is an adept, following a Discipline native to Cathay that focuses on unique healing abilities (see **On the Righteous Path of the Daughter of Heaven**, on p. 31 of the *Cathay Player's Guide*).

### The Training of the Daughters of Heaven

Taking oaths that they will never marry, the Daughters of Heaven fill their ranks with both volunteers and orphaned girls. Because of the war, Daughters of Heaven often find orphaned children in raided villages. If the child is deemed acceptable, she is taken back to the Tower of Secrets for training.



The education of a Daughter of Heaven consists of three distinct levels of training. Each level, when complete, is marked by a ceremony to commemorate the Daughter's growing level of skill.

The first phase of training occurs when the initiate is just a girl. These individuals are educated in the ideas and philosophies of the healing arts. Their duties include tending the gardens and various other chores needed to run the Tower of Secrets such as cleaning, cooking, mending, and the delicate art of processing the silk in the tower's silk garden. These many chores are designed to teach the initiate responsibility while instilling within her a sense of duty. Children who do not show promise in this stage are taken to the village of Ming Gu (see p. 60), where they are given to a family to be raised.

The first phase of training ends when the child is somewhere between the ages of seven and ten. Often several children are put through the commemoration ceremony together to give them a sense of camaraderie, which will be important for them in their adult lives.

The second phase of their training revolves around rigorous studies of the healing arts. These girls no longer tend to the needs of the tower, instead devoting 16 hours a day to study. An initiate will remain in this phase until she is judged ready to move on, which can be as young as twelve or as old as eighteen.

The third and final phase of an initiate's training occurs when she is deemed ready for practical experience. Girls at this stage of training accompany a seasoned Daughter out into the war-torn countryside of Cathay where they learn firsthand what it means to be someone's only means of survival. In this phase a young Daughter learns about both life and death, and that to truly know one, she must know the other.

The third phase usually lasts many years, after which time the initiate returns to the Tower of Secrets to celebrate her official induction into the Daughters of Heaven and her initiation into the First Circle of knowledge. She is awarded her jade bracer, and from then on is free to travel Cathay as she wishes.

## The Daughters of Heaven Today

After the death of the last emperor and the sundering of the Empire into five kingdoms, the need for the Daughters of Heaven has never been greater. The war-torn land of Cathay has produced a deep-seeded hostility in the hearts of many people as famine, plague, and war continue to rob them of their loved ones. Constant raids from neighboring kingdoms and foraging from their own armies have left many peasants with very little to take care of themselves and their children. The Daughters of Heaven actively seek out those who are in need, but the need far outmatches their limited resources.

The Daughters of Heaven, once held highly in the Empire's heart, are now treated with suspicion and fear. After the Empire fell the Daughters stayed loyal to the Tower of Secrets, remaining neutral in political concerns. If they happen upon a battlefield they do not hesitate to heal the wounded on both sides. This act of benevolence, however, marks them as traitors to all sides; although most armies grudgingly accept their help, they rarely thank them for it.

Only the peasants thank the Daughters. This is fortunate; since the Daughters provide their healing arts for free, they are often without coin for food or shelter. In nearly any village in Cathay a Daughter may find both, although she will never accept the food if the family is on the verge of starvation.

Because of their vows to protect the innocent, the Daughters sometimes find themselves battling soldiers. Since the armies of warring kingdoms rarely care about peasants, rape and murder are common occurrences. Even if death is certain, a Daughter of Heaven will not stand idly by to watch the innocent be slaughtered. Because of this attitude there is more than one Cathayan general who has vowed to kill any Daughter of Heaven he sees.

❁ ❁ ❁

*Daughters of Heaven quickly learned their lessons, and often travel with a group of other adepts for protection.*

—Jel Lang, Human Scout

❁ ❁ ❁

In addition to protecting the weak, protecting herself is vital for a Daughter of Heaven. Daughters of Heaven are often attacked while on missions. Because of this they have become specialized in a variety of weapons, such as the tail of the peacock, the bang, and a variety of swords. The Daughters also have a wide range of both defensive and offensive talents. Any enemy who is thinking of attacking a Daughter of Heaven is always careful to count the pearls on the Daughter's jade bracer first!

The most famous Daughter of Heaven is the human, Su Shen, who recently reached Ninth Circle. She is often found traveling with the jade obsidiman, Bei (see *Secret Societies of Cathay*, p. 79).

❁ ❁ ❁

*"The wind swept the clouds of smoke into rolling waves through the village streets. Horrible wracking coughs mingled eerily with the screams of the wounded and I found myself shivering despite the warmth provided by the many burning homes.*

*It was twilight and I had just arrived, barely missing the raid. I never learned whose troops had attacked the small border village. Were they soldiers from Shan Dei? Feng Dei? It didn't matter; the story was always the same. I was just grateful I hadn't been there when it occurred.*

*I rounded a corner and saw a child lying near a burning hut. A large, jagged gash ran across his belly and his life poured out in a gush, transforming the dirt beneath him into a sticky, muddy brown. I heard myself whispering a prayer to Garlen, wondering if she could still hear me in this foreign land.*

*A woman knelt beside the boy, one hand clutching his, her other on his forehead. She whispered soothing words as he stared frightfully into her eyes, locking on as if afraid to look away. The woman had long, raven-black hair wrapped in a tight ponytail that fell down between her shoulders. Around her left wrist was a bracer made of leather and jade. Embedded into the jade were five pearls that were set into a pattern resembling the beginnings of a phoenix, though it looked as though several more were needed to complete the design.*

*Beside her towered an obsidiman who watched her, silently. His skin was white with green shades, a coloring I had seen before among their kind, but the way his skin reflected the firelight I knew he was one of the celebrated jade obsidimen, who were legendary among Cathayans. His head turned slightly toward me as I neared, but other than that he seemed to ignore me.*

*The boy's blood no longer flowed, and I feared he had died. When I looked at his face I saw that it was no longer twisted with pain, and I thought it confirmed my fear, but his eyes still gazed at her with awareness. Then I noticed that the boy was still breathing. A long, jagged cut remained on his belly, but it looked as though it had clotted. I moved to stand over him to get a closer look when the woman's hand suddenly shot out, seizing a handful of my expensive silk robe that I had just purchased in Heng Na the week before. I jumped, startled, and was about to*



object when I saw that her other hand was clutching a dagger. I tried to pull away but she was surprisingly strong. The dagger darted toward me so quickly that all I saw was a silver flash before I felt it slicing through my robe. I remember screaming something, though exactly what I cannot say.

A moment later it was over. I opened my eyes to find the woman wrapping the long strip of silk she had sliced from my robe around the boy's abdomen. Shocked, I looked to the obsidian, who stood staring at me, silently chuckling. I regained my composure with a show of dignity, though my pride was carried away on the winds, along with the pathetic, unnecessary pleas for my life.

"I'm glad to be of service," I said, trying to sound unruffled. She only glanced up at me before turning to the obsidian and saying, "He will live." She stood, and after tending several other wounded, the two began to leave.

"Wait!" I called, but they continued to ignore me. "Wait!" I shouted again, chasing after them. I figured it would be safer to travel the area with two who were so experienced. It took several hours before I could get them to talk to me, but that was how I met the Daughter of Heaven, Su Shen, and the jade obsidian, Bei, and together the three of us had some grand adventures before us..."

—From the Journal of Daylen Jagaro,  
Human Merchant of Bartertown



## THE SCHOLARS OF SECRETS

Tasked with the collection and protection of Cathay's lore, the Scholars of the Tower of Secrets are the male counterparts to the Daughters of Heaven. Whereas it is the Daughters' task to protect the people of Cathay, it is the Scholars' duty to protect their knowledge.

For thousands of years the Scholars have collected a wide range of information. From history and magical lore to the many varieties of plants and animals found throughout Cathay, this vast amount of eclectic knowledge is returned to the Tower of Secrets where it is studied and catalogued. If new knowledge is judged to be safe it is then shared with libraries throughout Cathay. However, if any knowledge holds the potential to cause harm to the Empire, it is kept at the tower where its secrets are guarded from those who would abuse it. The tower boasts a large collection of magical secrets and powerful relics, some so ancient that their existence has been lost to myth. It is even rumored that the tower possesses a collection of spells that go beyond Tenth Circle.

Before the War of Wu Xing, when the land was united, the Scholars were often called upon to serve as advisors and councilors to the many governors throughout Cathay. Since the collapse of the imperial government, the Scholars now live lives of seclusion, venturing out from the Tower of Secrets only in search of knowledge. In fact, it is now forbidden for a Scholar to share his knowledge with anyone who participates in the War of Wu Xing. The tower's loyalties are to the Emperor and to the Emperor only, and until such a time when another sits upon the Jade Throne, the Scholars will continue to conduct their research and studies privately.

This unique stance of neutrality is understood and respected by the Five Kingdoms. Although the knowledge kept in the tower could cause a significant shift in the balance of power between the regions, the rulers understand that taking the knowledge by force would be considered greatly dishonorable and could undermine their efforts to unite Cathay. Some say that such an affront would

anger the dragons, and perhaps even the Passions. So far none have risked the potential consequences that would surely follow an attack against the Tower of Secrets, although there are proponents for such an action.



*If the war ever turns in favor for one of the kings, I bet one of the others is likely to give up all caution and attack the tower in a desperate attempt to learn its secrets, and thus turn the war to his favor. Desperate men don't care about dishonor.*

*Or even dragons.*

—J'all Allar, Ork Troubadour



## The Training of the Scholars

Scholars are usually inducted into the order at a very young age. As with the Daughters of Heaven, young orphans tend to make up most new initiates, although in the case of the Scholars, they are all boys.

The first phase of initiation into the Scholar Discipline includes sharing general duties around the Tower of Secrets with the young initiates of the Daughters of Heaven, such as gardening, cleaning, and cooking. A few hours in the evening are devoted to the arts of reading and writing as well as to the study of Cathay's long and proud history. This phase lasts until a child is between six and eight years of age. Those that exhibit the gift of a becoming an adept continue to the next phase, while the rest are adopted into the small village that supports the Tower of Secrets.

The second phase of initiation begins the intense studies required to become a Scholar. Duties include laboriously copying large tomes of knowledge with ink and brush; cataloging new information sent to the tower from Scholars in the field; and the further expansion of the initiate's academic knowledge, such as magical theory, mathematics, philosophy, and so on.

It is also in this phase when the young initiate is introduced to the arts of self-defense. In this age of war, it is strongly understood that in order to venture out into the land in an exploration for information, a Scholar must be able to defend himself. Unlike the Daughters of Heaven who actively defend the weak, the Scholars are interested only in the accumulation and protection of knowledge. Because of this the Scholars abide by a strict code of conduct that forbids them to become involved in battle unless it is for self-defense or the preservation of knowledge.

The third phase of initiation begins when the young man is between thirteen and fifteen years of age. At this time he ventures out into Cathay with a veteran Scholar. The initiate's duties include assisting the Scholar in any capacity that is necessary. It is also in this time when the initiate learns how to use a Moon Staff (see below). This apprenticeship lasts for two to five years, at the end of which time the initiate returns to the Tower of Secrets to be inducted fully into the ranks of the Scholars of Secrets. At this time he is presented with his own Moon Staff and rises to the First Circle of his Discipline. From this point on, the new Scholar may venture out into Cathay as he chooses. For more information on the Scholar Discipline, see **On the Scholar's Quest for Knowledge**, on p. 59 of the *Cathay Player's Guide*.

## The Scholars of Secrets Today

Although Cathay has lost its emperor and is now plagued by war, the Scholars of Secrets still embark upon great quests of discovery in the hopes that one day, when an emperor once again rules the land, he will have an abundant source of wisdom and knowledge to draw upon to help council him.



It is understood that not all Scholars will return to the Tower of Secrets. Many are lost to violence, disease, accidents, and similar misfortunes. To prevent any knowledge that they might have gained while out exploring the land from being lost, the Scholars created the Moon Staff.

Ancient in design and crafted from branches found in the tower's sacred willow garden, the Moon Staff stands five feet from the ground. Its top broadens into a flat platform. Hovering three inches above this small platform is a golden sphere of pure magical energy, roughly the size of an adult human's fist.

This sphere not only stores the knowledge a Scholar collects, but also allows the Scholar to communicate with the Eight Immortals (see below) back at the Tower of Secrets. When the Scholar returns to the tower a second-phase initiate retrieves the information from the staff and then painstakingly commits it to paper. For more information regarding the Moon Staff and its powers see the *Cathay Player's Guide*, p. 63.

The sharing of knowledge to those deemed worthy is still important to the Scholars. Outsiders are welcome to enter the Tower of Secrets in order to study but first they are required to pass a Test of Neutrality. This test ensures that knowledge gained at the tower will not later be used to affect the outcome of the War of Wu Xing. The test involves the individual being placed before a low table, blindfolded. While sitting on his knees, six fresh cups of tea are randomly placed before him. Five of the cups are filled with tea made from plants unique to one of the five kingdoms. The sixth is made from a blend of all five. The individual is told that there are six cups of tea before him, but nothing else. The individual is then asked a series of questions regarding his thoughts and feelings of the kingdoms. The questions are designed to bring the thought of the kingdoms to the front of his mind, so they are random. Common questions might include, "Have you ever been to the capital of Shui Dei?" or "Name all five kingdoms of Cathay in any order you see fit." After several minutes of such questions, the person is asked to quickly, and without thinking, reach out, select a cup of tea, and drink from it. Compelled by magic, his hand is drawn to a cup. If the individual intends to use the knowledge for the benefit of one of the kingdoms in the war, his hand is drawn to the cup that holds the tea unique to that kingdom. If the person is truly neutral in the war, then his hand is drawn to the cup containing the blend of all five types of tea. If the individual is an opportunist, seeking to gain profit by selling the knowledge but does not have a specific kingdom in mind, he will knock the cups over, spilling the tea.

If an outsider passes the test, he is then required to take a Blood Oath to never share what he has learned while there with anyone who is not also neutral. If this oath is ever broken, the oath-breaker will soon find that he is hunted by the Assassins of the Tower (see p. 79), though this insight is usually not discovered until there is a blade at his throat.

Once these two requirements are satisfied, the outsider is charged a small fee of 2 gold pieces per week to study.

## THE EIGHT IMMORTALS

Within the Tower of Secrets on the highest level live the Eight Immortals, also known as the Elders. Four experienced Scholars and four seasoned Daughters of Heaven of various races comprise this venerated group of council members who oversee the daily operations of the Tower of Secrets.

Once, long ago, the Elders received their orders directly from the Emperor, but now that the land has been thrown into chaos, the Elders serve to keep the Tower of Secrets running smoothly until the time comes when an emperor unites Cathay. Elders do not have to eat or sleep, but maintaining their existence without losing their minds takes an amount of mental willpower and self-discipline that can only be described as legendary.



The upper most level of the tower is what the Elders call home. Filled with many rooms—mainly reserved for study—this uppermost level is off limits for anyone other than the Elders, with the exception of one room. This one room, called simply the *Moon Chamber*, is a large circular room. Within its center, a golden orb hovers approximately four feet off the floor. The orb acts in a similar manner to a Scholar's Moon Staff, allowing the Elders to communicate through it directly with any Moon Staff anywhere and at any time, no matter how great the distance. This method of communication is typically only used for emergencies, such as when a Scholar is forced to hide his staff and does not believe he will survive long enough to retrieve it. Anyone granted an audience with the Eight Immortals is allowed to enter the Moon Chamber, though such an audience is granted only rarely.

The magic involved in granting the Elders immortality is not known, but the process has been safeguarded to prevent corruption. If an Elder ever leaves the upper level of the tower or ever intentionally kills another sentient being, the magic ceases to function and the Elder immediately dies. Although they can live forever through the magic, the Elders choose instead to live for only 100 years in this fashion before choosing others to take their places. In the past, the Elders would serve for much longer, but it was found that as the years slipped past the 100 year mark the likelihood of an Elder losing his mind began to grow exponentially. After a few unfortunate incidents, this new tradition was formed. The only time the Tower of Secrets was without a council of immortals was during the Scourge, when the swarm of Horrors that ravaged the land attacked the tower and destroyed the eight who were serving on the council.

Currently serving on the council are the male members Li (human), Lok (troll), Shen (human), and Shing (dwarf). The female members are Na (dwarf), Jin (elf), Fen (human), and Syng (human).



Before the Scourge, the Immortals would hand their responsibilities to their successors at different times; the interval between replacements was well developed to more than a decade. But as all of the immortals were killed during the Scourge, they were replaced all at once when our people returned from the dragons' lairs.

Consequently, their terms will end all at once.

Rumor has it they fear what this will mean during these war-ridden times, and they are unwilling to step down as tradition dictates.

—Yu Len of Heng Na

## WHAT HAPPENED TO THE EIGHT IMMORTALS?

The Eight Immortals who died during the Scourge did not simply perish—their bodies were inhabited by eight powerful Horrors. They now live in a tower that was constructed in a fashion mocking the Tower of Secrets, deep in the blighted landscape that surrounds Mount Tihan (see p. 73).

These eight demonic immortals begin sending out Horror-Tainted minions to kidnap Scholars and Daughters to be brought back to their dark tower. What foul purpose they have in mind for these unfortunate souls is unknown.

## ASSASSINS OF THE TOWER

The Assassins of the Tower, an organization comprised of both men and women, is an order that was created to safeguard the tower's secrets, after the Empire splintered into five kingdoms. Since the Scholars no longer had imperial support to protect them, the Elders felt it necessary to create a group that would ensure the continuing protection of the knowledge stored within the Tower of Secrets.

An Assassin's only purpose is to seek out and kill those who have studied at the tower and later broken their blood oaths. The Assassins are trained on the island of Jih' Po, far from both the tower and the war. The Elders chose this location for its neutrality as well as its privacy. The government of Jih' Po granted the right to train the Assassins on their land as long as the Assassins agreed to serve the government's needs when asked. So far this relationship has proved beneficial to both parties.

Little is known about the Assassins, but threat of their retribution is enough to keep most guests who study at the tower from betraying any of its secrets.

## ON THE TOWERS RITUALS REGARDING DEATH

Life and death are both held as sacred by the people of the Tower of Secrets. It is understood that there cannot be one without the other. Since neither a Scholar nor a Daughter may marry and have children, every member of the Tower of Secrets regards every other member as family. The death of a member is therefore an important event and is surrounded with very specific rituals and customs.

When a Scholar or Daughter dies honorably and his or her body can be present at the tower, a great pyre is constructed in the valley below, near the small village of Ming Gu. The body is placed on the pyre, which is then burned, with the villagers and the inhabitants of the tower looking on. The life of the deceased is then written down and stored in the tower to forever be remembered with the lives of all who had come before.

If a Daughter or Scholar has died dishonorably, such as at the hands of an Assassin of the Tower, his or her body is dismembered before being burned. All present turn their backs until the flames die. The dishonored person's Name is stricken from all records at the tower and the person is never spoken of again.

## THE VILLAGE OF MING GU

Nestled at the base of the waterfall in the valley below the Tower of Secrets lies the humble village of Ming Gu. The population of this

village consists mainly of humans, elves, and dwarfs. The fertile green land around Ming Gu slopes and curves as it stretches outward along undefined borders. The valley floor is strewn with colorful wildflowers and herbs amongst massive jagged rocks that jut out of the green sea like sharp stony islands. The towering peaks of the mountains that surround the valley reach far into the depths of the sky, standing proudly like silent guardians. Starting from the base of the waterfall, Feng River cuts through the center of the valley like a white knife. Icy blue fingers stretching out from the river caress the crops of the village, giving them life. Visitors will find that the land around the Tower of Secrets is a majestic reminder of the beauty of Cathay.

Small huts of bamboo and brick lie scattered around the base of the waterfall and extend farther down along the banks of the river. A heavy mist generated by the falls hovers about the tiny community. Because of this, sunny days gave rise to Ming Gu's nickname of "the Village of a Thousand Rainbows."

The river is the source of the village's most important yearly festival. According to myth, an evil spirit once cursed the village by casting a spell on the river that caused it to flow backwards. This curse threatened the lives of crops and livestock as the river began to run dry. The villagers cried out for Feng, the great dragon of water, to save them. According to the myth, Feng answered the villagers' pleas and arrived to banish the spirit. The villagers rejoiced, but the river continued to flow backwards. Feng then flew to the top of the cliff and blew as hard as he could against the river. Feng's breath reversed the water's flow, breaking the curse. To honor their savior, the villagers then Named the river after him. To this day they celebrate by lighting incense and hanging lanterns along the banks of the river in tribute to the great dragon that saved them.

The origins of the village coincide with the origins of the Tower of Secrets. When the Emperor had ordered the tower's construction long ago, he also ordered the relocation of several peasant families to the valley. Realizing the necessity for the Scholars of Secrets to have ample free time to devote to their studies, the Emperor ordered the families to supply the tower with all of its needs. In exchange, the peasants were allowed to live in the beautiful valley and not be subject to taxes or drafts.

At one time the villagers were responsible for going to the Tower of Secrets to clean, cook, and maintain the grounds. Since those duties have been given to the initiates of the Daughters and Scholars it is rare for a villager to ever leave the vicinity of Ming Gu.

Communication with the outside world is very rare but not unheard of. On rare occasions travelers will pass through the valley on their way to the tower or some other destination. They are welcomed and given shelter in a hut that sits on the outskirts of the village for one night only, after which time they must be on their



way. Food and water are offered during their stay but the village offers no market of any kind. Unless they have permission from the Tower of Secrets, characters should honor the privacy of Ming Gu or else face contempt from the villagers and the occupants of the Tower of Secrets. Anyone causing problems in Ming Gu is usually soon met by a compliment of Daughters of Heaven who are dispatched to deal with the troublemaker.

## THE GOLDEN DESERT

**T**he land of Cathay is home to myriad climates, from the cruel steppes of the North to the lush, dense jungles of the south, but none are as treacherous or as unforgiving as the Golden Desert. Be it from raids of the Kur, attacks from the brutal chin yu, or just the massive expanse of desert itself, the land has been the home to many an unmarked grave.

Yet the desert has much to offer the people of Cathay. The most notable of these offerings are the metal ore deposits found throughout the base of the Phoenix Throne Mountains, where the rugged hills collide with the desert sands. This ore is a valuable commodity in a land already starved for resources. Although pockets of True earth have been discovered scattered throughout the desert, most find the risks not worth their trouble. The ore, however, is too much to pass up.

Yet there are those who call this brutal desert home. The nomadic people who call themselves the Kur search the desert for merchant caravans or those foolish enough to travel the vastness unprotected. They view the constant flow of traffic through their desert as an intrusion, to be treated accordingly.

Then there are the elusive Dune Dwellers, a race of Namegivers never seen outside the desert and who are so rare that to most their existence is suspect.



But despite these indigenous people, the traders and merchants take the risk of offending them by continuing to travel through the desert. The inevitable clashes that follow have shown them that not even in the vastness of the Golden Desert can they escape the war.

Survival in this world means war. Be it in the Golden Desert, the Liaj Jungle, or on the battlefields of mankind. No one can escape it.

—Klarash Blackheart,  
Human Beastmaster and Servant of Death

## TRADE THROUGH THE GOLDEN DESERT

As the War of Wu Xing rages throughout the kingdoms, supplies continue to dwindle. Ore mined from the Phoenix Throne Mountains, while extremely valuable and essential, is not enough to sustain the kingdom of For Dei. It has forced Liu Meng to open his kingdom's borders with the West. Trade routes from neighboring Indrisa cut through the Golden Desert, converging at Shen Xiou's Embrace (see below), bringing anything from weapons and clothing to food and dry goods.

The flow of trade coming and going through the Embrace has steadily increased to fulfill the growing demand. These merchants brave the treacherous route through the Golden Desert despite all of its inherent dangers, and despite frequent Kur attacks.

Some question why the merchants would choose to travel through the perilous desert when it would seem wiser to fly over via airship, or to simply avoid the desert altogether. Most merchants answer honestly that, despite the dangers, it is more economic to travel through the Golden Desert. Not only would traveling around add several weeks to a merchant's trip, allowing perishable items to spoil and competition to arrive ahead of him, but the bypass south of Mount Tihan also contains a higher amount of Horrors that wander than is found in the Golden Desert.

Airships are likewise not an option. The sky above the Golden Desert is scattered with unexplained pockets of air where magic refuses to work, including enchantments. Airships happening upon one of these pockets plummet from the sky to crash upon the sandy dunes far below. The skeletal frames of these doomed vessels serve as a warning to anyone foolish enough to attempt to navigate through these magic-consuming sinkholes. All attempts at mapping these pockets have ended in disaster, as they seem to move at random. Because of this, the phenomenon has not been extensively researched, but most scholars believe the pockets are somehow related to an area of the Golden Desert known as the Jin Wei Flats. Located in the heart of the Golden Desert, the Jin Wei Flats is a large area approximately 10 miles in diameter that is completely devoid of magic. Even more intriguing is the utter lack of formations in the Flats, dunes or otherwise, even though the winds are always strong.

The perfect place to live. No magic means no Horrors.

—Altarja, Dwarf Philosopher



Traveling over the Phoenix Throne Mountains is equally foolish, as low temperatures and violent winds have been the end of many an Air Sailor. Countless corpses now call the high, snow-covered peaks and valleys their homes and most merchants are wiser than to risk adding to their number.

The Shen Xiou River is also treacherous. Its many shifting sandbars have trapped many barges trying to sail goods through the desert.

The only remaining option is to travel through the Golden Desert on foot, and for the time being, the profit is well worth the risk.

## SHEN XIOUS EMBRACE

Shen Xiou's Embrace is the focal point of trade that comes through the Golden Desert. This large trading outpost, which rests on the banks of the river of Shen Xiou, was originally created as a staging point for the large quantities of ore as it was mined from the nearby Phoenix Throne Mountains. It has since evolved into a large, walled complex containing approximately one hundred buildings. At its center is a massive bridge that is inlaid with gold and jade. Engraved with images that tell the story of For Dei's fledgling history, the bridge spans the river to connect both sides of the Embrace.

At any given time Shen Xiou's Embrace has a population of merchants, craftsmen, soldiers, and their families that rivals some of Cathay's smaller cities. Inns, shops, and taverns line the streets and merchant companies from all across Cathay are represented at the Embrace. Foreign merchant companies are represented as well, such as Kurmion Flames of Indrisa and the Vladstock Traders from farther away Barsaive.

Shen Xiou's Embrace is the only haven within a sea of hostility. Because the long journey through the desert awaits those leaving the Embrace, several mercenary companies have set up shop within its walls, ready to guard any caravan for the right price.

The acting governor of the Embrace is a soldier of the King's Army, General Xi Xun. An older man weary of war, General Xi requested this post to get away from the frontlines. Though his primary role is a governor, General Xi's mission is to protect the Embrace and the surrounding area from Kur intrusions, a job he loathes. General Xi makes little effort to search for the Kur or even protect caravans beyond a few miles from the Embrace. The king has heard reports of his reluctance for battle, but has yet to take any action.

### On Shen Xiou

The river of Shen Xiou is Named after the dwarf Shen Xiou, a master architect and land developer who was in the service of Emperor Lan Juan after the Scourge, spearheading the redevelopment of his fallen cities. Later he was in service to Liu Meng's father, Qi Di Meng, as the master engineer responsible for the Sapphire Tower and King's Palace. Shen Xiou went on to serve Liu Meng for several years, to die a few years after completing construction on the Embrace. Even before his death, Shen Xiou was one of the most celebrated architects of his day.

The fertile banks of the river stand in stark contrast to the desert that stretches out for miles around it. While the land around the crystal blue waters would make for excellent agriculture, the Kur are a nomadic people, and do not take kindly to any colonists attempting to farm the area. Instead, the various Kur tribes stop along the river's banks periodically throughout the year, migrating along it, and departing usually long before the next tribe arrives. Skirmishes over access have occurred in the past, but usually the tribes distance themselves so as not to come into conflict.

Shen Xiou attracts more than just the Kur, as it is the major water source for large herds of desert creatures,

including wild camels, antelopes, elephants, gazelles, hedgehogs, manticores, jackals, hyenas, and ostriches. The waters themselves are home to, among other things, alligators and mind serpents (see **Creatures of Cathay**, p. 83), both reasons the Kur approach the life-giving waters with caution.

General Xi Xun wishes to colonize the river, though he has yet to receive the necessary funding for such an operation.

### On the Mines of the Phoenix Throne Mountains

Of all the merchandise that flows through Shen Xiou's Embrace, none is more important to the king than the ore mined in the Phoenix Throne Mountains. It is renowned for its superior quality and extreme durability when forged into weapons and armor, or even air ships. It is said that the *Iron Cloud*, Chang He's flagship, is constructed with ore mined from the Phoenix Throne Mountains. However, this may just be propaganda spread by the mines' curator, Chang Ping.

The raw ore is mined from deep within a fissure that opened on the northern face of the mountains shortly after Liu Meng ascended the throne. The cause of this great fissure is unknown but the bounty that it spills forth on a daily basis overshadows curiosity.

The fissure is filled with structures pertinent to the mining operations, with Chang Ping's estate lying at the pinnacle. This opulent home is a grand mansion built on a rock formation that protrudes out above the fissure. Though Chang Ping rarely leaves his home, he is a business man through and through, always certain to see that the ore gets where it needs to go. This is not necessarily where it is needed *most*, but where it is guaranteed to fetch the best price. He does not see this as greed on his part; he believes what he is doing is bettering the way of life for the people of For Dei. But if it happens to fill up his own coffers, all the better.





At the base of the fissure, raging water spills forth from somewhere deep beneath the mountains, forming the River of Shen Xiou. Built here is an outpost located on the western banks of the river where the fresh ore is brought before shipping out of the mountains via the deng nong wagons.

The deng nong wagons are massive overland vessels pulled by deng nong (see **Creatures of Cathay**, p. 90), which are gargantuan beasts that hail from the land of Indrisa. They resemble large oxen with three horns protruding from their snouts. A full-grown deng nong is over 35 feet long, and nearly 20 feet tall.

## THE KUR

Of all the inhabitants of the desert the most common and problematic are the Kur. A nomadic people, the Kur travel the dunes while forging an existence within the harsh sands by plundering caravans that travel the many trade roads that cut through the desert. To outsiders, the Kur are a violent and hostile people who are best avoided. In general, however, the Kur are not heartless, murderous thieves. Though raiding has become their primary tool of survival, some acquire what they need through nonconfrontational means, such as offering safe passage or trading goods they have already taken from another caravan. They are not bloodthirsty, but do recognize that the easiest way to get what they want is through force.

The Kur are not one, unified people but rather a loose confederation of like-minded tribes. They view themselves as the sole inheritors of the desert, dating back to long before the Scourge. Some of the Kur tribes have been trekking the dunes for generations upon generations, and they believe that the desert is theirs by right of lineage. To them the increased traffic of outsiders through their land is an insult; their raids upon the invaders are merely collections of overdue taxes. The way they see it, their people called the desert their home long before the kingdom of For Dei existed, and they will be around when For Dei's memory is nothing more than sand in the wind.

Calling the raids a tax collection is just as easy a justification as the one the Sky Raiders constructed with their "not worthy to keep it" attitude. I can't stand thieves who aren't honest with themselves.

—Speltan

The tribes currently co-exist, for the most part, without conflict. But this has not always been so. In times past there have been headstrong tribe rulers who sought to unify the Kur in order to forge their own kingdoms in the sands of the Golden Desert. Some have even laid claim to particular regions of the desert, attacking those who overstepped their boundaries. These rulers were always suppressed or overthrown by the other Kur, whose philosophy on life does not allow room for a king.

The Kur regard freedom as the highest ideal in life. Their personal philosophy is to live every day as if it were their last, and that means seizing every opportunity for love, drink, and food, though not necessarily in that order. Most Cathayans view this lifestyle as barbaric, but to the Kur it is a way to cope with the harsh realities of living in the Golden Desert.

In recent years the Kur raids have become more frequent as the volume of trade has increased. And as reports of these attacks rise in volume, so have the responses from King Liu Meng. Liu Meng has been trying unsuccessfully to rid his kingdom of the Kur problem throughout his entire reign. After several attempts to draw them

into open battle failed, he sought an alliance with the fearsome chin yu (see **Creatures of Cathay**, p. 88) of the Phoenix Throne Mountains. So far none of his diplomats have returned from their mountainous homeland.

As the War of Wu Xing drains more of For Dei's resources, the more damaging the raids by the Kur become, as they steal what little resources the kingdom has left. The king realized long ago that there is no diplomatic solution with the Kur; there are far too many tribes, each one wanting more from a peace treaty than his neighbor, making it impossible to come to a deal that would please them all.

So the Kur raids continue, most notably near the River of Shen Xiou, where they raid caravans that travel to and from Shen Xiou's Embrace. Though Liu Meng has placed a large contingent of soldiers at the Embrace, the Kur have managed thus far to elude them. This is due in part to the unwillingness of the general of the Embrace, who has had his fill of war.

Recent calculations show that at least 28 percent of all the caravans passing through the Golden Desert are raided by the Kur, up from the 20 percent of the previous year. It is everything Liu Meng can do to persuade the merchants to continue their trade, making feeble promises of their safety.

## On the Ways of the Kur

The Kur have been traveling the Golden Desert for countless generations, developing an inherent ruggedness and ability to move under the sun's burning stare without suffering in the slightest. Though the Kur spent several hundred years in the cool, dank shadows of the earth throughout the Scourge, it did not take long for them to re-adapt to the harsh, bleak sands of the Golden Desert. Within a generation their skin assumed its traditional bronze color, and they were soon just as rugged and durable as they ever had been.

Most Namegivers find the desert sun to be unbearable, but the Kur travel for long hours during the day without much discomfort. Some Kur wear garb of exceptionally foreign styling—articles of clothing whose origins are located in the unknown lands far to the West and beyond. Some tribes have a more uniformed dress, such as the *Xiang Lau Mot* of the southern reaches of the Golden Desert, who wear red crests upon their brows and long, loose shirts of golden thread, preferably made of silk.

The many Kur tribes are comprised of nearly every Namegiver race, though, as in the rest of Cathay, humans are pre-dominant. The fact that many Namegiver races make up the Kur suggests that for one reason or another people gradually filtered into the desert to live a harsh, nomadic lifestyle. Their reasons for this immigration have been lost over time.

## On the Daily Life of the Kur

The Kur tribes constantly sweep across the dunes, never settling in one place for more than a few days. Being a nomadic people, they have no permanent settlements. The only time the Kur remain in any one spot for more than a few days is the festival of Xiang Lau. During the month of Kong the various tribes gather together at a sacred oasis in the southeastern desert to hold a week-long festival celebrating Xiang Lau, the great golden dragon who built their subterranean home and presided over them during the Scourge. It is a time of drunken revelry, when for one week out of the year the Kur are one people.

It is said among them that Xiang Lau himself attends these events, assuming the form of one of the lesser Namegiver races. This is a belief that helps encourage the Kur to be respectful to all strangers that they meet during the festival.

No one but the Kur knows the location of the oasis, but the festival is well-known among the merchants who enjoy a full week without attacks. Liu Meng has long been trying to learn the location of this sacred place, which would enable him to attack all of the Kur, who would most likely be drunk, at once.



During the course of the year the Kur roam the desert in constant search of food and fresh water. A supply of both needs can be found in the roving herds of *mau*, which are scattered across the expanse of the desert. The *mau* is a large reptilian beast that resembles an iguana with four swept horns at the base of its skull. Herds of *mau* travel below the surface of the sand, only coming up for air and sun on occasion. This makes them very difficult to capture. It isn't unusual for a tribe of Kur to spend the better part of a month trying to corral these beasts. Once the Kur have the *mau* encircled, they pierce the surface of the sand with their long throwing spears specially altered for this purpose, which can penetrate deep into the sand. The spears have long ropes tethered to the ends that enable the Kur to pull their skewered prey to the surface, making them fairly easy to kill.

The *mau* are valued among the Kur for their extremely thick hides, their meat, and for the water they store in sacs located in the backs of their wide throats. The beasts are skinned and the meat is cooked; any extra is dried then wrapped in leathers for later consumption. The horns are severed and used to make weapons or decorations on armor.

The men are responsible for the hunt of the *mau*. Women prepare food and create sweetened drinks from the *ying ying* fruit gathered from along the banks of the Shen Xiou River. Water is also collected from various forms of vegetation found throughout the Golden Desert. Some plants that have had to submit to the warmer climate have developed a method of storing water in their roots. The Kur have learned to recognize these plants, which they dig up. The roots make for handy water skins, containing enough water to last a grown man a few days. Other plants have long roots that grow deep into the earth in search of underground water sources, which the Kur can then dig up as well.

## ADVENTURE HOOK

A lone merchant, long ago reported missing while on route through the Golden Desert, emerges from the desert. He tells a fantastic story of his caravan being attacked and slaughtered by Kur raiders. He alone escaped, fleeing into the darkness. When the sun came up, he was lost in the vast desert, certain he would die. He prayed to the Passions, and was shown a sparrow. He followed the sparrow, and eventually it led him to a small oasis, in the middle of which was a shrine built to the Passion Jee. The merchant begins preaching to the locals, telling them that the Passion came to him, and told him to reclaim the oasis from the Kur. The merchant's fiery and provocative oratory begins to attract many followers, mostly from dispossessed and war-weary peasants. Fanaticism spreads, and soon the merchant has several hundred followers prepared to campaign into the Golden Desert. Local nobles are indifferent to their plans, seeing more danger in allowing such a fervent group to stay in the cities, and some even put a small hope in their success against their long time enemy. However, one of the people caught up in the enthusiasm is a friend of one of the characters. Is there really a shrine in the desert? Did the Passion Jee really call for this crusade, or is the merchant seeking vengeance? Or is it all a trap set by some sinister Horror? Whatever the truth, the pilgrims will not be allowed to travel through the Golden Desert unchallenged.

Other animals that provide sustenance for the Kur tribes include camels (though only as a last resort, as they are useful pack animals), yaks, sand grouse, and even jackals.

Kur camps are usually set at the base of large dunes, where sand-colored tents make them virtually undetectable from a distance. The Kur also use the shattered remains of fallen airships as shelter, when they come upon them.

## On the Quan

A tribe may consist of any number of members. Most range in sizes from as few as twenty to as many as three hundred. Some tribes even number in the thousands, such as the Xiang Lau Mot, though such tribes are extremely rare.

No matter the size, one man, known as the Quan, rules each tribe. The Quan is a hereditary title, with some rulers dating their lineage back one thousand years. The Quan retains his position among the tribe as long as he is able-bodied and capable enough to retain order and control. When the time comes to step down as leader, control goes to the next able male in his family. Be it brother, son, or even grandson, the position of Quan always goes to the one who is most fit to run the tribe.

If a Quan chooses to resign his post rather than wait for death, he embarks on a final journey into the dunes, accompanied only by the next of kin. They travel for one night and one day, until finally parting ways. The former Quan then travels on in search of his final resting place, the place where he commits himself to the eternity of the desert sands.

## ON THE DUNE DWELLERS

The Dune Dwellers are a race of subterranean Namegivers who have passed untold millennia largely unknown to Cathayans. In the last century there have been only a handful of sightings reported by weary-eyed desert travelers. Even among the Kur the reports are skeptical; most of the witnesses have been conveniently under the influence of wine made from the *ying ying* fruit, which makes determining the veracity of their claims a difficult task.

There are tales of lost travelers who have been led out of the desert by these strange humanoid reptiles, though they never got close enough to engage in conversation. These jumbled accounts have caused the populace in general to discount the existence of the Dune Dwellers entirely.

What little is known about the Dune Dwellers, if the tales can be considered true, comes from an infamous thief who fled to the desert while being pursued by those who would have him hanged. When he re-appeared from the desert six months later, he told an incredible tale of being rescued from the merciless sun and endless sand by a race of underground dwellers whom he described simply as being "humanoid lizards." The authorities did not care much for his tale and sentenced him to death. Hours before the thief was executed, a Scholar of Secrets managed to get a small glimpse into the lives of the Dune Dwellers.

Some legends speak of a war beneath the sands of the Golden Desert; a war between the Dune Dwellers and the minions of the terrifying serpent Horror known as Nua.

—Daylen Jagaro, Merchant of Bartertown

## On the Dune Dwellers' Way of Life

The Rihak Xi, as they are known unto themselves, have been living within the sands of the Golden Desert since before the times of the first Cathayan settler. Long ago they dwelt along the surface, but



after the release of the Twelve Terrors (see **History of Cathay**, p. 12) they abandoned the world above in favor of the subterranean world of caves, tunnels, and immense caverns far below the surface.

They remained unknown for thousands of years until the beginning of the War of Wu Xing. It was at this time when their chieftains declared they would rejoin the surface world, but they would keep their distance and remain observers.

The Dune Dwellers live extremely long lives, with the average death occurring around 700 years of age. Females are only fertile every 50 years, remaining so just long enough to conceive one child. Twins are extremely rare.

They live far below the rolling dunes in huge caverns with walls of solid sandstone. Though one people, they gather in communities ranging in size from 50 to 500 individuals. The caverns are scattered like an immense maze beneath the expanse of the desert for countless miles, stretching like a giant spider web in all directions, including down. They are connected by a complex array of tunnels and underground roads, lit by way of glowing crystals that are found in large deposits deep beneath the earth.

Multiple underground rivers flood through many of these caverns, providing the Dune Dwellers with fresh water and a means of travel. The rivers are also their prime source of food, as they are rich in indigenous aquatic life, both fish and plants.

The dwellers live a peaceful life below the sands, and many question the chieftains' decision to explore the world above. They can travel to the surface by performing an innate astral phasing ability that allows them to move through solid objects. This peculiar power allows them to seemingly appear and disappear at will.

Whether simply for the knowledge gained from exploration, or for gaining intelligence for a possible migration, the dwellers' motives for exploring the surface world remain a mystery.

## THE DESERT OF SWALLOWED TEARS



**E**ndless flowing waves cresting and crashing with the ferocity of an ocean's might, turbulent dunes throwing themselves against one another in a never-ending battle for supremacy, and the ebb and flow of tides that pass with every day are descriptions usually reserved for the great Emerald Sea. In northern Cathay, however, locals use these words to describe the tempestuous stretch of land known as the Desert of Swallowed Tears.

The desert lies at the nexus of Shan Dei, Feng Dei, and the Land of the Gar, none of which are able or willing to claim it as their own. Compelled by mysterious, magical forces, the high dunes of the desert behave like the waves along a stormy sea, rising and cresting along the currents of the tides and winds. These waves swallow anyone unfortunate enough to set foot on them, victims sinking through the sands as quickly as an obsidian through water. This makes overland travel through the desert impossible.

The desert is only traversable through the means of magically modified seafaring vessels that are able to ride the sands as a regular ship would the ocean. Their hulls are reinforced to handle the





harsh, abrasive wear of the sand, and sailors quickly learn to protect their faces from the continuous spray.

☀ ☀ ☀  
*Sounds like a wonder of magic I have to see with my own eyes!*

—Shannandohar, Human Air Sailor

☀ ☀ ☀

The violence of the waves makes this method of travel particularly dangerous, with many a sailor lost to the depths of the sands. However, there are unexplained long periods of time when the desert grows calm and captains can enjoy a smooth sail. Many of these sailors have learned to predict these periods and travel is generally restricted to their arrival, except by the brave, or foolish, few. Unfortunately, these placid times end rather quickly and the storms, known to sailors as the Tempests, arrive just as quickly. Captains who do not learn early on how to spot the warnings usually find their end beneath the relentless waves.

Scattered across the surface of the Desert of Swallowed Tears lie countless islands of safety. Usually no larger than a mile or two in diameter, these islands of stable land are rich with True earth deposits. These treasures draw those in who would brave the dangers of the desert for the promises of profit.

Over the years, cities have been erected on these small islands of sanctuary. Because of the lack of land, architects were forced to build upward along massive stone pillars reinforced with True earth. These multi-leveled communities, known simply as the Pillared Cities, are run by powerful merchant lords and contain all of the trappings of regular cities: bazaars, shops, inns, and taverns.

Because the Desert of Swallowed Tears is not claimed by any one kingdom, the Pillared Cities are sovereigns unto themselves, with the merchant lords funding their own private armies to maintain the peace. Wars are even fought among some of the more powerful merchant lords, each trying to gain control of as many islands as possible.

## ON THE FIRST MERCHANTS

Prior to the Scourge, the Desert of Swallowed Tears was, for the most part, uninhabited by Namegivers. The sands were believed to be much too treacherous to support life.

Soon after the gates were reopened and the land was being repopulated, stories of islands made completely from True earth began circulating among the people. These stories were being spread by Air Sailors that had traveled over the great expanses of the desert and soon their tales fell upon the ears of a young t'skrang airship designer by the name of Giang Xi, chief architect in the newly formed kingdom of Feng Dei.

Giang Xi, having a bold entrepreneurial spirit, thought long on these stories and on how he might go about locating these elemental isles. All requests from Giang Xi to be permitted to use an airship from Sen Ma's navy were quickly turned down, as the military did not want to waste valuable time and resources chasing stories. After all, how could one know for certain what one was seeing while so high in the sky?

Giang Xi had to look elsewhere for a solution to his quandary. So he turned to a close personal friend, Fang Pei, who ran a small shipping operation out of Min Yan running goods up and down the Emerald coast. Business for Fang Pei was not going as well as he would have liked. He was on the verge of financial devastation when Giang Xi brought forth a most interesting request: "We need to get a ship into the sands of the Desert of Swallowed Tears."

Fang Pei thought the idea to be preposterous and was highly skeptical, to say the least. But he had run out of options, and there was little he could do to save his crumbling business. So Fang Pei closed his doors and sold off his fleet, all except one—the *Emerald's Might*.

The *Emerald's Might* was a great shipping carrack and the flagship of Fang Pei's merchant fleet. It was the only ship that would stand a chance in the harsh sands of the desert. They had the ship disassembled and relocated to a small city a few miles outside the borders of the raging desert. Giang Xi had devised a way to increase the structural integrity of the ship's hull that, he hoped, would enable the sea going vessel to cut through the dunes and withstand the added weight of the sandy waves crashing into its sides.

A makeshift dock was constructed along the shore of the desert. Using the last of his resources, Fang Pei had the ship reassembled while Elementalists wove enchantments into the wood that would allow it, they hoped, to float through the sandy waves of the desert as it once did on water. Much to their delighted amazement, it worked. The large ship bobbed gently on the dunes to the cheers of the workers.

After putting together a crew made up mostly of Fang Pei's men who thought the idea might have some gravity, the *Emerald's Might* was once again ready to set sail. Giang Xi, Fang Pei, and the anxious crew embarked on what would be the first ever voyage on the sands of the Desert of Swallowed Tears.

This first voyage was anything but calm and romantic. The *Emerald's Might* was tossed about the raging sands while the crew struggled to retain control. Though Fang Pei was an experienced sailor who hailed from a strong seafaring background, he was greatly outmatched by the desert. The *Emerald's Might* was tossed about for weeks, her crews' hopes and dreams rapidly fading under the relentless desert sun. Without any trace of these mysterious isles of True earth, the stories seemed to be just that—stories.

They decided to turn the ship back toward stable land. But only a day on their return voyage a cry went up, "Land!"

Spirits lifted as the crew scrambled toward the bow of the ship. On the horizon jutted a large, rocky formation that stretched towards the sky in a seeming attempt to free itself from the desert's grasp. The *Emerald's Might* adjusted her heading and made for the formation. Closer observation revealed that the rocks were part of a large island nestled in the sea of sand, the waves breaking on its calm shores.

Although they were just off shore, when the call for anchor was given it slipped beneath the waves until the chain reached its limit, never once touching bottom. The crew stood perplexed, unsure of how to proceed. Giang Xi took a gamble, deducing that the depths of the desert floor remained constant all the way to the island. He ordered the crew to run aground on the island, hoping that the reinforced hull would hold. The ship cut through the soft sands of the shore and came to a lumbering halt, its bow resting twenty feet over the shoreline, and her hull intact.

A cheer rose from the crew as Fang Pei offered a congratulatory salute to Giang Xi. Giang Xi was the first to set foot on the shore of the island, glad to once again be standing on stable, unmoving ground. Fang Pei and the rest of the crew followed.

The island was not made of solid True earth as the stories foretold and at first looked as though it was just a desolate island, not unlike the ones that can be found scattered across the Emerald Sea, with sparse vegetation and little to no animal life. While spirits once again began to sink among the crew, Giang Xi was determined to see his dream come true.

The rock formation that the crew had spotted from the ship was just behind the tree line ahead of the moored ship. Sunlight sparkled off of it as though it were crystalline. Giang Xi made for the rocks in order to get a closer look, Fang Pei at his heels. Once the two were close enough to see the stone they stood in disbelief. Though the island was not made entirely of True earth, the rock formation was, standing some forty feet high and thirty feet wide at its base.



"There is enough True earth here to fund a fleet of vessels!" Fang Pei marveled as he ran his hand across the mass of shimmering stone. Giang Xi stood quietly, lost in the glimmer of the great earthen spire.

"Fang Pei, my friend," he finally said, "I believe this is the beginning of a very profitable relationship."

And thus was the founding of the city known as Giang-Pei, the largest and most successful of all the Pillared Cities. Both Giang Xi and Fang Pei have since passed, but the operation continued in the control of Giang Xi's son Ju Xu, and then to his son Da Xia. Fang Pei's grandson still owns the large fleet of ships that operate out of Giang-Pei, himself sailing on the flagship, the *Emerald's Might*.

### The Emerald's Might

The *Emerald's Might* is the flagship of the Giang-Pei trade organization. Having been at sail in the sands of the Desert of Swallowed Tears for three generations makes it the longest-lived vessel on the sands of the desert. The *Emerald's Might's* hull has gone through extensive repairs and upgrades throughout its lifetime, the ship hardly resembling the craft that Giang Xi plunged into the sands so long ago. At present the hull from bow to stern measures approximately 66 yards, and is covered in ornate carved jade depicting the maiden voyage on the Desert of Swallowed Tears, with a likeness of Giang Xi at the front. The *Emerald's Might* was not originally designed for combat, so is lightly armed with 40 fire cannons and is primarily used by Giang-Pei on expeditions across the desert. The six mast ship is said to be the most glorious of all the merchant junks to travel the sands, the massive bamboo sails emblazoned with the Giang-Pei insignia: a clenched fist made of emerald.

Speed: 7

Maneuverability: 6

Firepower: 14/14

#### Hull:

Armor: 18

Ramming: 28

Cargo: 300

#### Damage:

Derelict: 77

Critical: 23

Destroyed: 84

#### Crew:

Captain: 4

Crew Size: 100

Morale: 54

Crew Rating: 13

## ON THE PILLARED CITIES

Merchants throughout the land of Cathay have become prosperous in these times of war, spreading their goods far and wide. None more so than the merchants of the Pillared Cities who exploit the vast deposits of True earth that can be found throughout the Desert of Swallowed Tears. Many have come into the desert in hopes of finding unoccupied islands to claim for their own, in order to forge their own empires on the sands. Most never see this hope come to fruition, though many still do find their fortune traversing the sands.

The desert is home to many massive structures that are known as the Pillared Cities that are built on land rich with True earth deposits, which miners excavate day and night. True earth mines reach far into the Earth, spreading in an ever-deepening network of caves and shafts. Mining work is treacherous but the merchant lords are never at want for those who would brave the dangers for their generous wages.

Some of the Pillared Cities are so colossal that they resemble giant pillars that stretch hundreds of feet into the sky. The multiple levels contain all of the amenities that one would find in any regular city of Cathay, such as inns, shops, temples, and immense residential areas to house its citizens.



And the next marvel I'd like to see with my own eyes.  
Why don't such wonders of magic and architecture  
exist in Barsaive?

—Shannandohar, Human Air Sailor

Everything is connected with stairs and elemental elevators. Some of the larger cities even have ladders of wood and rope for the more agile inhabitants, and without a local guide, visitors can easily become lost when they try to navigate the vast, multi-layered structures. Unscrupulous inhabitants have been known to sometimes lure visitors into dark places and rob them and then disappear into the labyrinth. In some cities, it's rumored that occasional visitors have been kidnapped and sold to awaiting slavers. However, the merchant lords running the cities often rely on the income from tourism, and they also realize that if visiting sailors and merchants fear for their safety, they'll take their business elsewhere, so criminals are often dealt with in the most draconian of manners (this includes visiting adventurers who disturb the peace). But despite these rumored dangers, many Namegivers come to the cities in the hopes to escape the ravaging wars in the kingdoms. That makes the average pillared city a crowded place where people from all of Cathay come together. The noise, odor, and various customs can be overwhelming.



These cities are not under the control of the kingdoms but are owned and operated in whole by powerful merchants, and sometimes companies of merchants. Though independent, some of these merchants hold strong ties with the kingdoms, such as Giang-Pei which has a long standing trade agreement with the kingdom of Feng Dei.

The isolation of the desert keeps the merchants relatively safe from the threat of the war spilling into their land, but the ever-present dangers of the high sands still abound, as well as fierce competition. As the Desert of Swallowed Tears is a nexus of several kingdoms, the inhabitants are never unaware of the happenings in the outside world, and the citizens are always hungry for news or gossip. Agents of the Five Kingdoms work in most of the cities, where they track down deserters, enemy agents, or plant false information for the ears of enemy spies.

Wars rage on the open dunes among rival cities, and some even engage in acts of sabotage and terrorism. Some cities have been conquered by rival merchant lords, leading to the development of standing armies. The armies are not big, but as they are specialized in defending a towering city, they are very efficient. Attacking a city takes a high death toll on the attacking army and is never done lightly (usually agents within the city try to sabotage the defenses before an attack is launched). Most often mercenary forces are hired to lead the first waves of attacks. The defenders usually concentrate their efforts on the most important towers, while the citizens are expected to defend their quarters against attackers alone. Fighting in the close spaces usually result in long and bloody skirmishes that often take a heavy financial toll on the city. As such, raids are much more common than attempts at annexation, though such attacks do occur.

Though many merchants come to the desert and find great wealth, others come and find their undoing, spending what money they have in vain attempts to expand their dealings into the sands of the Swallowed Tears. In some circles the desert has become known as the Desert of Swallowed Hope. Each year, as the sands take more and more unfortunate souls to their fate, this Name gains popularity.

Some find islands suitable for mining and yet are forced into obscurity when the True earth suddenly runs dry after years of operation. The dunes are littered with these failed endeavors—great towering cities that once prospered and teemed with life now stand silently as tattered remains, abandoned to decay in the desert sun. They stand as constant reminders of how quickly the desert can transform fortune into misfortune and how wealth can evaporate like a bucket of spring water in the desert sun.

These ghost towns, nicknamed the Pillars of Shadows, often become home to desert pirates and other bands of miscreants, who use them as bases from where they perform their raids. The most notorious of these fallen cities was once the largest in the entire desert, Nang Xoiu, ruled by the ruthless Cao Hong, a man who once served under the great Giang Xi.

The city remains as the largest of the Pillars of Shadows, a dark reminder of deceit and greed, scarring the flawless surface of the flowing dunes.

Most of the desert's voyagers try to avoid this bastion of darkness altogether, traveling days off course to keep a wide berth of the city's menacing glare. It is said among the sand sailors that crossing paths with Nang Xoiu is bad luck.

*Naturally, the abandoned cities are attractive for shadowy folk: Horror cultists and whatnot.*

—N'beran Greatstep, Ork Scout

The tale of how Nang Xoiu gained its fearsome reputation begins many years ago, soon after the founding of Giang-Pei. Giang Xi and Fang Pei had recognized the need for additional merchants, or rather additional funding, in order for their venture to be successful. They employed other traders from across Cathay to help expand the export of True earth. They assembled a council of advisors consisting of merchants and bankers to help ensure the success and stability of their fledgling company.

One of the leading members of this board was a human by the Name of Cao Hong, who had been one of Fang Pei's rivals out of Min Yan. To Fang Pei, Cao Hong's business tactics had been too cutthroat for his tastes, and the two had never quite seen eye to eye. Despite these misgivings, Giang Xi convinced Fang Pei to allow Cao Hong to join.

The desert opened up, becoming fair game for anyone who could afford to risk its dangers. In the beginning things ran smoothly; the profits of Giang-Pei steadily increased and everyone involved began turning a handsome profit.

As more and more merchants began flooding into the desert more and more Pillared Cities took shape. Some of these rival organizations were becoming very successful, and Cao Hong felt that if they were to remain lucrative they would have to make changes to keep up with the growing competition.

Giang Xi and Fang Pei met with the council to discuss the developing changes. Giang Xi believed that their continued pace of operations did not seem to indicate a cause for worry and that they still had enough reserved funds for future expansion. Fang Pei and a majority of the other council members agreed with his assessment. Cao Hong, however, strongly disagreed and felt that immediate expansion was key to their continued success. He proposed that they spend the reserve funds to develop islands their scouts had discovered, and that they quickly fortify them with fire cannons to repel any other ship from getting close while they built the cities. The council quickly voted down his proposal, seeing these actions as being too provocative and aggressive. Cao Hong, enraged, cursed them as fools and stormed from the meeting.

It was not until much later that they realized Cao Hong had left the city. They soon discovered that he had gathered many merchants to him, including some members of the council, to begin settling islands. Within a few years Cao Hong had half a dozen islands under his control and he was quickly becoming the most powerful merchant lord of the desert. His personal city, Nang Xoiu, was the tallest and most splendid of them all, drawing in more profit in a day than Giang-Pei did in a week.

But true to form, Cao Hong was not content. He began a rather aggressive policy of ordering his ships to attack any rival merchant ship they came across. This policy soon erupted into an all-out war between the Pillared Cities. In the beginning it seemed as though Cao Hong's great fleet of ships would soon dominate the entire desert. But, as fate would have it, Cao Hong's luck ran out. His massive city was built atop an island that had far less True earth than anticipated. The resource quickly ran dry, and without the source of much of his profit, people quickly abandoned him. He called upon his other cities to send reinforcements, but the merchant lords he had placed in charge turned against him, refusing to give up their profits to help. When at last Cao Hong's pride was overcome by his will to survive he left his city in his few remaining ships, only to be met by a massive fleet sent by Giang Xi and Fang Pei to arrest him. Cao Hong ordered an attack, and after a brief, but furious, battle, the desert swallowed Cao Hong and his ships.

Though Cao Hong is dead his legacy lives on. The Pillared Cities still fight amongst themselves, sometimes declaring war on one another. There is not one sand ship in the entire desert that does not have a complement of armed soldiers and fire cannons, and there is always a war being waged in the midst of the turbulent sands.



## ON THE SAND PIRATES

Many merchants have lost their businesses over time in the desert. Some of these dispirited men have turned to piracy, stealing from others what they believe is rightfully theirs. These pirate fleets use abandoned cities as their bases, slinking along the sands searching for ships fat with cargo.

Among these rogues is the fearsome Xian Qun, a band of pirates under the command of the great t'skrang warrior known as Kwan. Kwan seized command of the Xian Qun after killing the old captain, a former dwarf merchant by the Name of Po Hen. Merchants who travel the dune sea have learned to fear his flag of crossed sabers behind an hourglass.

While the unique characteristics of the Desert of Swallowed Tears allowed the merchants to essentially forge their own realm within Cathay, unhindered by the kingdoms, the existence of the pirates shows that this comes at a price. There are many among the merchants who wish for an emperor to take his rightful place on the Jade Throne and send his representatives into the desert. That they are willing to pay the high taxes on elemental mining for more protection only confirms that the dream of the Empire has its place in the heart of the people of Cathay.

—Su Lin, Clothier of Huan Wang

### The Sand Strider

The *Sand Strider* is a mercenary war junk that traverses the rolling dunes of the Desert of Swallowed Tears, captained by a former merchant turned ship for hire, known as Kei Jin.

Kei Jin was a moderately successful merchant of the pillared city of the Dei Mi Xian, in the western reaches of the desert. He grew tired with the politics of running a trade organization and decided to sell off his stakes in the company and set out to the desert sands on his personal vessel, the *Sand Strider*, in search of his first love, the fight, selling his services to anyone who could afford him, be it the Giang-Pei, or their ultimate rival the Xin Tao. His vessel was designed for pure combat and includes his own personal modifications, making it the deadliest ship on the dune sea. Its massive hull, reinforced with an excess of armor plating, makes it almost invulnerable to regular fire cannon fire. In times of combat, sections of its deck retract to expose large catapults that fire explosive shot that bursts in the air, spreading the shot's flaming liquid contents through the air, raining death upon anyone unfortunate enough to be its target. These same catapults make the *Sand Strider* equally effective against airships within the catapult's long range.

**Speed:** 6

**Maneuverability:** 5

**Firepower:** 18/22

**Hull:**

**Armor:** 24

**Ramming:** 33

**Cargo:** 60

**Damage:**

**Derelict:** 102

**Critical:** 28

**Destroyed:** 108

**Crew:**

**Captain:** 7

**Crew Size:** 200

**Morale:** 75

**Crew Rating:** 18

**Special:**

The ship does not suffer a penalty when making Called Shots against the enemy's Crew.

## ON THE PILLARED CITY OF SHANGXIANG

Far to the north lie the shattered remains of the city of Shangxiang. The architects of the city had misjudged the stability of the island and ten years after it had been built, one of the pillars sunk into the Earth. What resulted was the complete collapse of the city, killing the thousands who called Shangxiang home.

Living amidst the ruins now is a beast that sailors call the Dune Dragon. Though it takes the form of a dragon, the beast is in fact a Horror of incredible power. Its body is composed entirely of ever-shifting sand and it is able to morph into whatever shape it desires. Why it prefers the form of a dragon is anyone's guess.

The Dune Dragon has the ability to merge itself with the sands, making it impossible to spot. It can resurface at will to attack passing ships either by smashing their hulls or incinerating both ships and crews with gouts of intense green flame it produces from within its massive maw.

Survivors have told tales of the beast blasting the sand beneath a ship with its fiery breath to create a small island of floating glass, which causes the ship to lose its buoyancy and topple over. It then smashes the glass and watches quietly as ship and crew are pulled into the hungry waves.

## ON THE CITY OF ECHOES

There are rumors of an ancient city that exists beneath the rolling waves of the desert, a city that appears for a short time only to disappear once again beneath the sand. During the short period of the city's exposure, sailors report echoing sounds of chanting in some strange, foreign language. Others report that they have seen shapes prowling among the ruins, though of what they could not say.

Some of the foolishly curious have entered the city during the brief moments of its exposure, only to be swallowed when the sands suddenly crashed back in. Because of the violent unpredictability of the sands, most are content to allow the city to remain a mystery.

## THE JUNGLE OF ENDLESS WANDERING

The Jungle of Endless Wandering is an immense expanse of evergreens, palms, and mysterious rock formations. Stretching from the southern tip to the northeastern corner of Shui Dei, the jungle is host to many mystical creatures such as the *Mon Ku* and the *Jihan Tiger*.

Only thin fingers of sunlight manage to break through the jungle's dense canopy, filtering down to the thick vegetation below. Moist ferns, vines, and other foliage blanket the jungle floor. The terrain varies from tall mountain peaks to deep chasms and ravines with crystal clear rivers cutting through valleys along their way to the Emerald Sea. Traveling farther to the east, the jungle begins to thin out, unveiling breathtaking views of thunderous waterfalls and giant volcanic stone formations.

The Jungle of Endless Wandering, full of many natural wonders, is best known as the home of the two Namegiver races called the po na and the ki mao. The two races fought each other for thousands of years until the Scourge, when both races lived for hundreds of years knowing the other only through stories. Both races have returned to the surface to reclaim the jungle as their home and the fighting has ceased, although old prejudices and hates still manage to live on.

The jungle is home to fierce predators, deadly disease, poisonous plants, and even the occasional Horror. In addition, the jungle is very disorienting to those who enter; its Name is derived from the strange effect the place has on people's sense of direction, though the ki mao and po na are immune to this effect.





## ON THE KI MAO

The ki mao make their homes in a vast network of caves carved into the side of a steep cliff face found in the western jungle. A thundering waterfall pours over this cliff, emptying into the clear green waters of the river that flows below. Ferns, small trees, and various other tropical plants grow along the cliff face, concealing the entrances to the caves, which helps protect the existence of the ki mao's home from any outsider who happens by. Though such outsiders are uncommon, the frequency has risen since the war started.

## On the Appearance of the Ki Mao

The ki mao are an exotic race of elves who are similar to their cousins in every way except for tiger-like markings that stripe their flesh, and eyes that resemble a cat's. Their bodies are lean and muscular and arrive at a height of about six feet. The ki mao speak their own dialect of the Cathayan language. In their tongue they are called the *karn maus*, which roughly translates to "shadow elves."

The ki mao's clothing is basic and durable, comprised of mainly tanned leathers, soft to the touch and ornamented with dyed strands of fibrous plants that the ki mao also use as belts and hair

ties. Shoes are leather slippers that are designed to fit snugly on ki mao feet. The shoes are also designed to enable the wearer to grip surfaces more easily when climbing.

## On the Culture of the Ki Mao

The ki mao are quite arrogant, believing that they are superior to other Namegivers. This belief has fostered a strong distrust of outsiders and has caused some to become quite xenophobic. Because of their strong detachment with the outside world, the ki mao do not believe the War of Wu Xing has anything to do with them, and have thus far stayed out of the affair entirely.

The culture of the ki mao is built around the ideas of community and sharing. They help each other in many ways, including helping in the raising of children and hunting. This attitude has caused a society where both the men and the women share an equal responsibility among their people, and neither sex is viewed as superior.

The daily life of the ki mao is a simple ritual of gathering food, watching the young, and socializing with each other. At night they gather together to share stories and legends of heroic ancestors.

The diet of the ki mao is based on plants and small animals that inhabit the jungles. Nuts, berries, and birds are the favorite staples, and sometimes hunting parties are assembled to bring down large game.

Despite their arrogance towards other Namegivers, the ki mao will occasionally travel outside of the jungle to trade exotic fruits, herbs, and handcrafted items in the cities for metal weapons and armor. Although they are not currently at war, the ki mao recognize the superiority of these weapons, which would give them an edge should their people and the po na ever resume conflict.

The ki mao are led by a council of elders. Before the Scourge, these elders were responsible for planning war strategies against the po na, but currently they serve as keepers of knowledge and bearers of guidance.

## On Marriage and Offspring of the Ki Mao

Marriage among the ki mao is a sacred time of celebration that often goes on for days. Men and women are joined by their own free will, the practice of arranged marriage a completely foreign concept to them. Many of the ki mao who are aware of such marriages call it "the false love." To the ki mao, who are a race that values freedom very highly, such an arrangement would be an insult to both the bride and the groom.

A member of the council of elders conducts the wedding ceremony with the entire family, and sometimes the entire community, watching on. To seal the union, a colorfully dyed rope is tied around the wedding couple's waists, binding them together. Throughout the rest of the ceremonial feast the newlyweds are forced to walk around so tied, symbolizing their need to work together in the times ahead.

While many in Shui Dei say it would be considered a bad omen if the rope became loose—or worse, even slip off altogether—during the feast, spelling doom or mischief on the couple, this is not entirely true. Rather, it is believed that the one who tied the rope does not actually wish the couple to be married, for whatever reason he might have.

—Leng Ju, Explorer of the Southern Coast

After the ceremony, members of the family offer items as gifts, such as beautiful, handmade crafts to decorate the couple's new home, dried fruits, and sometimes, if the family is feeling presumptuous, baby clothes.



Generally a couple raises two or three children in their lifetime. When a child is born a Naming ceremony is held the following day. The ceremony is complete when both parents shout the child's Name from atop the cliff that makes their home, so the Name may reverberate off of the canyon walls allowing the entire tribe to hear it. This act informs the rest of the ki mao that they now have one more living among them.

As a child grows he finds that punishments and rewards are handed out to children by all of the adults. Though some might find this strange, it would be considered rude to a ki mao if one were to witness a child behaving badly and not scold him, believing that by not doing so one would be contributing to the decadence of the child.

### On the Spirituality of the Ki Mao

The ki mao honor all of the Passions, though many feel that they hold a special kinship with Whoo. They also feel a special kinship with the jungle itself, many going so far as to leave offerings to what they call "the jungle spirit," holding a ceremony each year to honor both it and the animals in thanks for providing food and shelter for their people. It is a time of great celebration when they decorate the entrances to their caves with brightly colored flowers and sing and play music for the trees.

To the ki mao, death is just another natural part of life and is not observed with sorrow or tears. They celebrate instead with singing and dancing, while sharing stories about those who have passed. The ki mao believe that this life is merely the beginning, and the dead would be dishonored if one did not celebrate how they lived. The bodies of the deceased are buried deep beneath the jungle floor with stones placed over the graves to prevent predators from digging them up.

### On the Ki Maos' Relationship with the Po Na

Prior to the Scourge the ki mao fought heavily with the po na. They have had little contact with their rivals since they emerged from the dragon lairs that kept them safe during that long and dreadful time, and none at all during the time of Scourge. This gave time for old wounds to heal, though not to disappear completely. The ki mao may not be calling for the blood of their old enemies, but one would not say a po na would be entirely safe if he stumbled upon their village.

The War of Wu Xing has both sides concerned about outsiders. This has led to an unspoken agreement between the two peoples that they should center their efforts on keeping the jungle safe, though neither side is willing to invite the other over for talks on the matter.

## ON THE PO NA

The po na build their homes in the uppermost reaches of the jungle. Weaving vines and sturdy plants together around the tops of trees, the po na make these homes hard to find for anyone not looking out for them. The po na are known for their skill in climbing, so tend to find paths up into the trees where another may not; a traveler will not find any easy way up to a po na village. This helps ensure the safety of their young and their community as a whole, as well as keep them out of the reach of many of the jungle's more dangerous predators.

The po na live just a few miles inland along the southeastern coast. They spend a majority of their time in the jungle but venture to the shore for fish and clams during the warmer seasons.

### On the Appearance of the Po Na

The po na average about 6 feet in height. They have long, slender limbs. Short fur covers their skin from head to toe, ranging in color from black to light tan. Some have even been born white but this is very rare. Their faces resemble that of a monkey's and they have long prehensile tails that help them balance as they swing



through the trees around their homes. The ki mao once speculated that the po na race was created when a human woman mated with a monkey, a theory the po na do not subscribe to. In fact, the very idea of being part human is repugnant to them.

The clothing of the po na is very functional, usually including only a pair of form-fitting pants and a shirt made from small animal hides. Special slipper shoes are worn to aid them in gripping the trees, much like those worn by the ki mao. Some po na decorate their fur with dyes made from flowering plants, creating intricate, weaving patterns.

### On the Culture of the Po Na

The po na are a race driven by curiosity, much like the storm children. Their search for a greater understanding of the world has led some po na to venture out from the safety of their jungle into the common lands of Cathay. These individuals often later return with wondrous stories of the other Namegivers and how they live.

As a whole, the society of the po na tends to be peaceful and generous. Travelers that venture close to the po na homes soon discover that they are being watched with a childlike interest. The po na do not chase visitors away until they feel threatened by them. Instead they treat them as curiosities to be observed and questioned.



Their diet consists mainly of vegetation and fish that they catch in large nets made from dried vines. They tend not to eat the creatures of the jungle, except small insects such as grubs and beetles.

The po na spend most of their day outwitting one another with jokes and riddles, which is a cultural past time. Tricks and pranks are popular among the younger po na, who are encouraged by their elders who believe it sharpens their wit.

Though by nature a peaceful race the po na are fierce warriors when provoked. They spend a great deal of time training in the use of weapons, such as wooden staffs, slings, and bows, though it has been since before the Scourge when the po na have gone to war.

The po na are led by a group of five males called the *Clever Ones* who spend most of their time settling disputes that arise when practical jokes go too far.

As with that of the ki mao, the community of the po na shares in the responsibility of raising the children. Men and women are treated almost equally, though only the men can run for the office of the *Clever Ones*.

### On Marriage and Offspring of the Po Na

Marriage in a po na society is a community event. The bride and groom are thrown a lavish feast and showered with gifts of food and clothing. Songs are sung throughout the night until finally the bride and groom are led to their new home, which is constructed by their closest relatives as a wedding gift.

The po na consider having offspring to be a very important aspect to their way of life. In fact, every po na marriage is expected to be followed with children no later than one year after the actual bonding ritual, otherwise the union is considered to be on the road to failure.

When a child is born there is a great celebration held to honor the parents' good fortune as well as to perform the Naming Ritual. Unlike other cultures where it is the parents' responsibility to Name the child, the entire po na community decides on a Name. Usually the Name is given to honor a deceased tribe member or a legendary hero. If there is a special circumstance surrounding the child's birthday then a Name is sometimes chosen that is symbolic of this occurrence.

### On the Spirituality of the Po Na

Like the ki mao, the po na celebrate all the Passions, but the po na feel a special affinity towards Hoh. They also pay special tribute to the mon ku (*Creatures of Cathay*, p. 96) whom they feel are like cousins to them (though not as clever).

Every year the po na give thanks to the Spirit of the Jungle and to Hoh for giving them a healthy and thriving community. Swinging from the trees and playing musical instruments such as bamboo flutes and drums, the po na sing and romp through the trees, showing their appreciation in a loud and raucous manner.

Death in the po na community is held as a sacred event and a ritualistic silence is observed throughout the community during the First Day of Mourning, as the deceased is laid to rest deep in the soil of the jungle floor. The Second Day of Mourning, in contrast with the first, consists of telling stories regarding how clever and witty the deceased was. On the Third Day of Mourning the po na play music and dance to wish the loved one well in the afterlife, in a paradise they call the Tallest Tree.

### On the Po Nas' Relationship with the Ki Mao

The po na, in contrast to the ki mao, are quite humble when it comes to other Namegiver races. They are more inclined to react to a stranger with curiosity rather than arrogance. In this, the po na pride themselves on being more open and giving with all who enter their jungle. If a ki mao were to ever wander into their territory he would be watched with curiosity but never attacked unless he posed a real danger.

## PILLARS OF HEAVEN

**S**ituated along the western edge of the kingdom of Shan Dei, the Pillars of Heaven are best known for being the home of the Jade Liferock. The tree line of the Pillars of Heaven is high up the slopes, above which exists steep, rocky terrain that climbs into snow-capped peaks.

Before the Scourge, the Pillars of Heaven served as a location for numerous monasteries for questors, who found peace and tranquility upon those forested hills. Abandoned during the Long Night, only a handful of these monasteries have been restored. Some questors treat such quests as religious matters, spending years searching for long-lost temples. Surprisingly few explorers have ventured into the mountains, despite all rumors about the wealth of the monasteries.

## THE JADE LIFEROCK

**S**ituated high above the tree line of the Pillars of Heaven, the Jade Liferock has long been a source of mystery and wonder among Cathayans. The Liferock, a large dark green stone of incredible age, is home to a brotherhood of obsidimen whose sole mission in life is ensuring the safety of the Empire.

Prior to the war, the obsidimen of the Jade Liferock served the interests of the Empire, taking their orders directly from the Jade Throne. Recent history has made the brotherhood's job difficult. Since the beginning of the Great Trial, the brotherhood has remained loyal to the safety of Cathay but has allowed the war to continue its course while dealing with threats beyond the scope of the five kingdoms.

The brotherhood's primary enemy is an organization known only as the *Shadowed*, whose agenda is the usurpation of the Jade Throne. Beyond that, nothing is known of the secret society. The obsidimen of the Jade Liferock, along with certain key individuals from the Tower of Secrets, are the only ones who stand in their way.

Upon their birth, jade obsidimen appear just as any other obsidiman. However, after their Awakening (*Namegivers of Barsaive*, p.58), the obsidimen's skin takes on the appearance of jade. Just like jade, the obsidimen may take on a variety of colors. Aside from green, some also have white, yellow, red, black, or lavender shaded skin.

*In Barsaive, many obsidimen devote themselves to the protection of the land, not a nation. But I can see why these brothers are dedicated to protect the nation of Cathay. As it has been a unified nation for centuries, its oneness and state of empire are the very things that protect its land.*

—Omeyras

## DEMON GATE MOUNTAINS

**L**ocated in northwestern Cathay, stretching along the border between the kingdoms of Shan Dei and For Dei, lie the Horror-blighted Demon Gate Mountains. For some inexplicable reason, the mountains are home to a higher population of Horrors than anywhere else in Cathay. Even though the mountains' steep slopes are covered in trees and thick brush, there is a startling rarity in wildlife and what little is found tends to be feral and aggressive.



The Demon Gate Mountains are home to the great dragon, Thunder (see **Dragons of Cathay**, p. 106), who has made it a personal mission to rid his mountains of the Horror taint. Not much is known about his motivation, and because of his unwillingness to accept help from Namegivers, his reasons are likely to stay unknown.

## MOUNT TIHAN

Mount Tihan is a massive volcano that constantly throws forth dark clouds of thick, burning ash and flame. The surrounding area for miles is a dreadful, blighted landscape, infested with all manner of Horrors and their constructs. Only pale fingers of light manage to filter through the heavy layers of ash that continuously blanket the sky.

Peasants believe that the Dark Warrior was sealed under Mount Tihan for his crimes against the world ages ago. Though the land has been rumored to be cursed for centuries, the overwhelming density of Horrors that have remained in the area since the end of the Scourge finally seem to confirm for some this long-held legend.

## PHOENIX THRONE MOUNTAINS

**T**he Phoenix Throne Mountains serve as a natural boundary between the Theran province of Indrisa and the Kingdom of For Dei. The range boasts some of the tallest mountains known to Namegivers, their peaks covered in deep blankets of snow.

Cathayans view these mountains as sacred. According to their beliefs, the Passions created the tall, rugged peaks so they would have a place from which to observe their children whenever they came down from Heaven.

The mountains provide a home for a wide variety of flora and fauna, including the dangerous chin yu, who often raid both the Golden Desert and communities that are unfortunate enough to be near the northern slopes.

Despite all difficulties, travelers can make their way through the mountains to Indrisa, though only very few people are willing to take this hard and dangerous road. Most of those who do are smugglers, agents, or refugees from one land or another.

## SPIRIT MOUNTAIN

Located in the Phoenix Throne Mountains, Spirit Mountain has long been the inspiration of Cathayan myth and legend. The mountain soars high above all those around it, its snow-capped peak surrounded by wisps of clouds.

Spirit Mountain is home to the great dragon White Lotus, who guards the mountain aggressively from intruders. Little is known about the dragon, but legends say that Cathay's legendary founder, Tai Xi, created the mountain in an effort to win over his would-be wife, Yin Li.

## THE REALM OF TWILIGHT

**T**his lush forest was once home to countless forms of wildlife and vegetation but now is home only to darkness and terror. Tall, twisted trees stand silently throughout the shadowed wood, their limbs stretched out, frozen in mourning. The Realm of Twilight is host to countless Horrors and lost spirits, and only the very lucky have returned from the cursed territory to tell their tales.

Survivors have spoken of people's faces and limbs extending from the bark of the trees. They say that it is as if some unfortu-



nate souls were somehow absorbed into the trees, their arms still stretching out for help and their faces frozen in terror, in a nightmare collection of morbid reliefs.

Others speak of a painfully beautiful woman, a human, who makes her home in the depths of the realm. This self-proclaimed "Nightingale Queen" has an enormous collection of "living art," some so horrifying that survivors could only speak of it between sobs. Whether this sinister mistress is in fact a human or a Horror in disguise remains a mystery.



## THE VEILED PAGODA

**S**unk deep into the Earth in northeastern Tiet Dei, the Veiled Pagoda was discovered shortly after the end of the Scourge. The structure is a massive Cathayan pagoda: the bottom floor is over 40,000 square feet. It would be one of the tallest buildings in all of Cathay if it weren't for one thing: it was built upside down and into the ground.

It was first found and explored by a group of adventurers who reported the curiosity to nearby communities. They warned that the pagoda was infested with Horrors and their constructs, and other beasts besides, but that there were vast treasures within. Soon, treasure seekers from the four corners of the land appeared, each hoping to find unlimited wealth. Most of them never resurfaced from the bowels of the Earth.

It soon became apparent that the deeper one managed to descend, the wealthier the rewards became—but also the more dangers one had to face. Eventually a small marketplace grew around the entrance, and then permanent homes, until finally something similar to a small town appeared where adventurers could rest and re-supply between expeditions. King Lee Chang He has placed a permanent garrison of 100 soldiers here, as well as a tax collector's office. Adventurers entering the pagoda must first pay a small tax (10 gold pieces) before entering, as well as cataloguing all supplies, weapons, and armor they take with them. Upon leaving they are again searched and charged 25% of the appraised value of any treasure they found while in the pagoda. Among the treasures that can be found are fantastic works of art, such as vases, marble, jade, and True elemental statues; spectacularly preserved rugs; wardrobes of silk; armories of weapons and armor (some magical); various threaded magical items; ancient coins of pre-Scourge origin; and more.

Only the first two levels of the pagoda have been cleared. A quarter of the third floor has been explored so far, with a permanent base of operations set up, including an inn and a temple dedicated to the Passion Jee.

Nobody knows who, or what, created the Veiled Pagoda. A majority of people's energy has been put into clearing it of any and all treasure, though the curiosity has drawn more than one team of scholars over the years, including many Scholars of the Tower of Secrets.

## THE WANDERING MOUNTAINS OF CATHAY

**F**loating in the skies high above Cathay, drifting aimlessly amongst the clouds, winding their way lazily around like some sort of enormous serpent, are the Wandering Mountains of Cathay. Composed of enormous chunks of earth and rock imbued with elemental earth and elemental air, the Wandering Mountains range in size from small boulders to (quite literally) tall, snowcapped mountains. In what appears to be a paradox, the denser, heavier objects float the highest while the smallest objects orbit around and below them. Scholars believe this is due to the fact that the mountains contain more elemental air, thus making them lighter than the smaller objects, which contain less. However, nobody is certain what causes this mountain range to float around as if on some invisible current that runs through the Cathayan sky. The path repeats itself, taking approximately a year and a day to complete, at which point it begins anew.

Though the Wandering Mountains are a curiosity, what brings visitors back again and again are the massive deposits of True ele-

ments. Mining can be very hazardous, though. The smaller objects move at much greater velocities than the mountains, often colliding with one another. While most of the smaller chunks float below the larger mountains, many hover around and above the larger satellites, surrounding them in an unpredictable shield of debris. Most merchants are content with collecting the smallest chunks on the outskirts rather than facing destruction. Others allow their greed (or suicidal tendencies) to get the better of them, and they brave the journey to the mountains in an effort to collect the big payoff. In order to get to the mountains, they have to navigate their airships through a half of a mile (from any direction) of swarming rocks that grow larger and larger along the way. Only the truly experienced Air Sailor can possibly hope to reach a mountain safely. And even when one manages to find a safe port, smaller satellites continuously crash into the mountains, smashing people and anchored airships alike.

In addition, there have been numerous reports that all manner of bizarre and dangerous creatures call the Wandering Mountains home, including a species of large, winged, multi-limbed, humanoid beasts that devour True earth as a primary food source (though, if the reports are true, they happily supplement their diet with the flesh of Namegivers). It is also widely rumored that one of the mountains is home to a large band of airship pirates who have mastered the secrets of navigating the turbulent range.

## DRAGON SPINE MOUNTAINS

**T**he Dragon Spine Mountains sweep south for nearly 1,000 miles, cutting through the kingdoms of Feng Dei and Tiet Dei before finally ending in the kingdom of Shui Dei. This enormous range is home to countless valleys, hidden gorges, plunging chasms, and windswept peaks. Long ago, it was believed that numerous Namegiver tribes lived deep in the mountains, hidden far from civilization. Some believe they still exist, and reports of sightings sometimes filter down into the kingdoms.

The Dragon Spine Mountains are best known for being the home to a large number of dragons, including the great dragons, Luung and Black Lotus. The mountain range is also home to Mt. Xan, home of the legendary Xan Monks, and the Tower of Secrets.

## MOUNT XAN

Mount Xan, located high in the Dragon Spine Mountains, is home to the legendary Xan monks. Their monastery is a large, multi-leveled complex built on a wide plateau overlooking a deep ravine. This sacred temple contains many broad rooms with high, vaulted ceilings, and dozens of shrines honoring the Passions, as well as the dragons. The area surrounding the monastery is home to many well-tended gardens, majestic waterfalls, tranquil groves, and small pagodas.

## ON THE XAN MONKS

The history of the Xan monks dates back to several centuries before the Scourge. The great dragon, Luung, whose opulent palace rests high in the peaks due north of Mount Xan, began teaching Namegivers philosophies about attaining a higher degree of spirituality. Luung told his students that for them, the younger races, it would take a lifetime of contemplation to achieve enlightenment. To give them a place of contemplation and study where they would not be disturbed, Luung created the monastery, choosing Mount Xan for its serene beauty.



## ADVENTURE HOOK

Some of the smaller chunks that make up the perimeter of the Wandering Mountains begin falling from the sky; some crash harmlessly in fields, but some crash into populated areas, injuring some. After an investigation, the characters discover that a powerful Elementalist working for the kingdom they are in has been tampering with the mountains, attempting to control their route. He hopes to contain the mountains to the skies above his kingdom, thereby restricting access to the True elements to his sovereign. Unfortunately, his tampering is having the unintended consequence of a random bombardment. The characters must convince or otherwise stop him before his experiment causes one of the larger satellites to crash to the Earth, possibly destroying an entire city.

The school attracted followers from throughout Cathay. The Xan monks, as they were soon called, took no mate and owned no property, instead dedicating their lives to following the spiritual path laid out for them by the great dragon.

After a time, Luung realized that his students spent so much of their time in meditation that they were growing fat and lazy. To remedy this, he began teaching them a series of exercises meant to not only keep them in shape, but also to gain them mastery over their own bodies. These exercises are the foundation of the monks' unique fighting style, as well as the core of their Discipline.

Due to their absolute dedication and singularity of purpose, the Xan monks soon became capable of extraordinary abilities. As time passed and their Discipline matured, their fighting prowess and control over their minds and bodies became legendary.

Today the Xan monastery has over six hundred students, most of whom have trained since they were children. There comes a time during their path to enlightenment when a monk must venture forth and explore the world. It is believed that living in complete isolation for one's entire life leads to an individual becoming naïve. It is part of life's journey to discover all of the wonders of the world, including its evils. The time for this journey varies from monk to monk, though most make it sometime after reaching adulthood.

Life in the monastery is dedicated to the perfection of one's self. The monks spend their days performing chores, training, and meditating. Training is rigorous and demanding, comprising a total of eight hours per day—four in the morning, and four in the afternoon—and focuses on unarmed combat plus a wide variety of weapons.

The Xan monks train any who appear at their doorstep, believing that the path to enlightenment is for all Namegivers. The monastery is often filled with those who have arrived at the end of a spiritual crisis. Many find the training to be too severe and quickly leave, but some find their calling within the high stone walls.

It has been centuries since Luung has visited the monastery. However, once a year the monks make a calling to his palace, bringing gifts to honor the one who founded their order.

It is rumored by some that Luung chose Mt. Xan for a specific purpose, and that he trained the monks in their martial ways for reasons entirely different than for the benefit of their physical health and spiritual enlightenment. It is rumored that the monks are guarding a great secret hidden beneath their majestic temple; whether it is an ancient and powerful artifact, a gateway to a realm in astral space, Luung's treasure horde, or something else entirely, is unknown.

## THE GAR MOUNTAINS

Characterized by gentle slopes rising sharply into towering peaks, the Gar Mountains are as hostile and unforgiving as the people from whom they take their Name. Situated in the northern slice of the Land of the Gar, these mountains are home to the Sacred Womb (see **The Lands of Cathay**, p. 54), a place of great reverence to the itinerant warriors who call the harsh steppes south of the mountains home.

The Gar never explore the mountains, viewing any terrain unfit for a mount as unfit for Namegivers. As such, the mountains, forever looming in the distance, have become a source of superstition and mythology.

## JIH'PO

The island nation of Jih'Po was founded approximately five centuries before the Scourge. It was settled by Cathayans seeking a new way of life, whom the Emperor allowed to leave, telling them that his empire was not a prison.

Over the last millennium, Jih'Po has grown into a powerful country. A feudalistic society, land is owned and ruled by dominant lords known as *daimyos*. An elite warrior class known as the *samurai* serves as both the military and the *daimyos'* personal bodyguards.

Jih'Po has yet to become involved in the War of Wu Xing. Internal conflicts between *daimyos* keep their attention focused on home. It is unclear how receptive Cathayans would be to these outsiders; though the Jih'Pen are originally from Cathay, they have since developed a new culture with its own customs and traditions, and even a language that is alien to that of their ancestral land. The differences have caused a rift between the two nations, each viewing the other as foreign.

*Rumor has it that Jih'Po has its own dragon protectors, and that they fight an ancient feud with the dragons of Cathay, or that there is at least animosity between them.*

—Hu Pen, Elder of Ten Mu

## THE EMERALD SEA

The great body of water that lies off the eastern coast of Cathay is a massive, untamed realm that stretches deep into the unknown. The sea is home to innumerable aquatic life forms that provide entire populations with all the food they need to survive. But the Emerald Sea is not always so generous, taking its fair share of sailors and fisherman to a watery grave.

The Emerald Sea is as dangerous as it is beautiful, at times hosting massive storms that annihilate entire communities along the shore. Sometimes the sea flies into fits of rage, creating waves that swell to incredible heights then crash onto the land, dragging all that they hit back into the endless unknown.

The unpredictability of the sea is not the only danger. Dozens of pirate clans call the waters home, preying upon merchants and lightly defended coastal communities. The most infamous of these



pirates is the fearsome Wei Bao, a dreadful dwarf who commands a large fleet of junks. His personal ship, *Wei Bao's Rage*, has sent many of Zao Ye's pursuing ships to the cold depths of the ocean.

Wei Bao is rumored to be an exiled prince from a foreign land far to the south. These rumors have yet to be confirmed.

## THE IMPERIAL CAPITAL

**N**estled along the convergence of two great rivers in central Cathay, the Imperial Capital of Huan Wang has existed, according to legend, for thousands upon thousands of years. For reasons scholars have yet to explain, Huan Wang is the only city to escape the Scourge completely untouched.

Although located in the kingdom of Tiet Dei, the Imperial Capital is a sovereign unto itself. A representative from the Tower of Secrets who secures its position of neutrality throughout the war oversees its administration.

The city is a hub of traffic and merchandise, the profits placed in the Imperial Treasury to await the return of an emperor to the Jade Throne. Merchandise from across all five kingdoms can be found in the city's many bazaars and the city is the center for both import and export of goods traveling overland or by river. Because of this, there is a constant flow of traffic coming in and out of Huan Wang; so much in fact that the gates of the city never close. The broad cobblestone streets are lined with inns and taverns, cake shops, smithies, tea shops, pawnbrokers, gem dealers, cobblers, and shops of every other notable vocation, all among large homes, temples, and pagodas, while musicians, storytellers, acrobats, and jugglers ply their trade amidst pick pockets and panhandlers. Despite its high population, the city never feels packed with people or overcrowded, even though many people visit it daily. The streets are wide, the buildings tall and spacious, and even the gathering customers in front of the countless shops and inns never hinder the traffic.

The city's wall stands thirty feet high, sixty-five feet thick, and just over four miles in length. Legend holds that the wall was constructed under the order of Cong Chen, the great dragon who founded the Empire.

### ON THE NIGHTINGALE COURT

Near the center of the city sits Nightingale Court, a large building of red and white stone that trains the city's musicians. The court often holds symphonies, which anyone can come and attend for a small fee of 10 gold pieces.

Emperor Yun Gou Po created Nightingale Court nearly 700 years ago. It is said that Emperor Gou was an accomplished Troubadour adept, and that he created the order to attract musicians from across his empire. Emperor Gou wrote some of Cathay's most popular compositions during this time. Even today, in the times of constant war, musicians from all over Cathay come to the court to perform together, and many people from across Cathay travel there to hear them play. Mistress Tang, a Sixth Circle dwarf Troubadour adept of stern repute, runs the court.

### ON THE IMPERIAL LIBRARY

The Imperial Library is a vast wood-and-stone building taking up an entire city block. Three stories tall, the library stores thousands of books and scrolls covering centuries of general knowledge. During imperial rule, knowledge regarding magic, the greater mysteries of the universe, or any other topic judged too dangerous to be open to the public was kept at the Tower of Secrets, where it could be guarded more carefully. Since the War of Wu Xing this

tradition has ended and the library now contains a sizeable collection of magical lore that is open to anyone who can afford the price.

It costs 10 gold pieces per day to use the library's facilities. A staff of over 100 librarians helps maintain the building as well as assisting patrons. Books and scrolls are not allowed to leave the premises.

❁ ❁ ❁  
*I'm not impressed.*

— Eropnan, Scribe of the Great Library of Throal

❁ ❁ ❁

The Head Librarian is an aged elf by the Name of Master Shuo. Because of his short stature and capacity for knowledge, some speculate that he is the descendant of some Gar who managed to escape persecution during the Banishment. This is a rumor Shuo vehemently denies.

### ON THE CELESTIAL PALACE

The Celestial Palace sits dead center in the city. Surrounded by a fifteen-foot-high stone wall, the palace grounds house dozens of buildings and hundreds of rooms. The palace's many stone courtyards and the Imperial Gardens are decorated with statues of tortoises, lions, horses, and other animals, carved from stone, jade, marble, and even diamonds.

The central building contains the Jade Throne. Servants diligently dust and polish the throne daily, though no one has been allowed to sit in it since the war began.

The west wing of the grounds includes the administration buildings, where the city's current governor lives.

### ADVENTURE HOOK

Located far out in the Emerald Sea, the small island of Chongjiang was colonized by Shui Dei one year ago for the purposes of mining its natural resources. Business of their own brings the characters to the small town. Upon arriving, they discover that all of the inhabitants of the small town are missing. A violent battle having recently occurred is evident, though no bodies can be found. An investigation leads the characters deep into the jungle of the island where they find the remains of a long-forgotten culture. The people of this ancient city, who were once known as the Canai, were destroyed by a powerful Horror just before the Scourge. Before they were destroyed, however, they managed to seal the Horror in their great temple, and throughout the Long Night it threw its rage against the cold stone walls that were its constant and only companions. This evil has recently been rediscovered by the intrusion of curious colonists, though it remains trapped. The jungle now teems with what remains of those unfortunate settlers—Horror constructs—while the Horror searches for a way to escape its prison.





## ON THE IMPERIAL WARRIORS

Deep beneath the grounds of the Celestial Palace in a large, cavernous room, rest the Imperial Warriors. Created by the Five Guardians during the War with the West (see **History of Cathay**, p. 18), the 10,000 soldiers lie in their preserved state of clay, waiting for a new emperor to ascend the Jade Throne.

The Imperial Warriors are chosen from among Cathay's greatest heroes. Once chosen, the individual undergoes a powerful magical ritual that grants him immortality. There is a catch to this honor, however. Once the spell has been cast, the subject, and all of his belongings, transform into hardened clay. They remain in this state until the Emperor calls upon the warriors, which awakens them and restores them to flesh. Once their task is finished, they assume their place of honor beneath the temple, again turning to clay, and wait for the next time the Emperor needs them. Only an emperor of the Jade Throne may call upon the Imperial Warriors.

Furthermore, the Imperial Warriors give up their right to free will. Once they undergo the ritual, they are bound to obey the commands of the Emperor, for good or for ill. Despite these drawbacks, most see becoming an Imperial Warrior as the greatest honor. The order is meant to be the final defense should Huan Wang ever come under attack; for that reason they are also known as the Defenders of the Realm.

## ON THE GOVERNOR OF HUAN WANG

The current governor of Huan Wang is an obsidiman by the Name of Han Nu, a scholar from the Tower of Secrets. Although he was honored with this position ten years ago, he is eager to be relieved of his duties. Not that he detests the job; in fact the day he was chosen is still one of his fondest memories. But the constant duties of administration keep him from his real passion: the study and acquisition of knowledge. He sneaks to the Imperial Library whenever he can get away from his desk long enough to do so, though he finds the rather mundane stores of knowledge lacking.

## ON HUAN WANG'S DEFENSES

For purposes of defense, the city is divided into five sections. One hundred handpicked soldiers from Cathay's five Guardian Orders (see **On the Noble Duty of the Guardian of Cathay** on p. 35 of the **Cathay Player's Guide**) are sent to Huan Wang to serve for a year and a day. Each order is responsible for guarding one of the city's five sections.

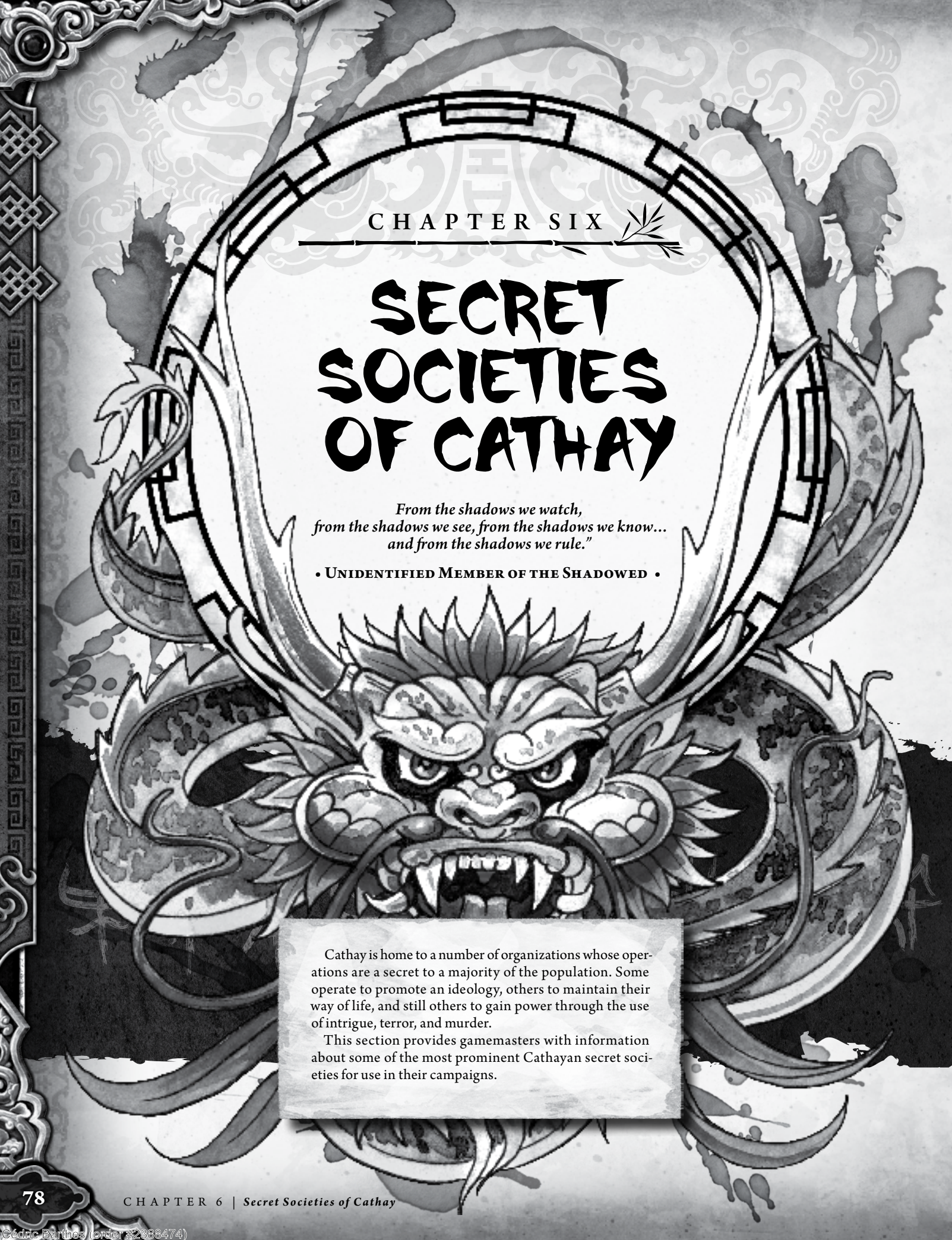
It becomes somewhat of a competition between the orders to see whose section remains the most crime free. This rivalry can get in the way of preserving order at times; since each group has a clearly defined jurisdiction, all a criminal has to do to escape justice is flee to a neighboring section of the city where the pursuing soldiers cannot follow. If they were to follow, it is likely the two orders would clash with each other rather than team up to catch the criminal.

A council of representatives from the Tower of Secrets hands down judgments. The council consists of seven members, all Scholars, who serve for life.

The laws of the Imperial City are those that were handed down from the last Emperor of Cathay, Lan Juan. Although the Five Kingdoms each holds its own laws handed down by the ruling families, strict traditions prohibit the council from removing or adding any laws, since technically the Imperial City is still part of the Cathayan Empire; thus this duty is only for an emperor. This has led to the creation of what is known as a grievance tax. Grievance taxes are fines that are issued for committing a grievance, which is basically a new law. But since the grievances are technically not crimes, an individual cannot be arrested or taken before the council for committing one. However, not paying taxes is a crime, so most make certain to pay the appropriate collector.

These grievances have been created to help deal with new issues that have needed addressing, mostly of trade and the trafficking of merchandise. Since Lan Juan died soon after the Scourge, he did not have time to deal with these matters, which rarely come up in a dragon lair.





## CHAPTER SIX

# SECRET SOCIETIES OF CATHAY

*From the shadows we watch,  
from the shadows we see, from the shadows we know...  
and from the shadows we rule."*

• UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF THE SHADOWED •

Cathay is home to a number of organizations whose operations are a secret to a majority of the population. Some operate to promote an ideology, others to maintain their way of life, and still others to gain power through the use of intrigue, terror, and murder.

This section provides gamemasters with information about some of the most prominent Cathayan secret societies for use in their campaigns.



# ASSASSINS OF THE TOWER

**T**he assassins of the Tower of Secrets were created by the Eight Immortals who had recognized the vulnerability of the tower in the absence of an emperor. It was important to keep the knowledge stored in the tower safe from any of the Five Kingdoms. Since the tower is loyal to the Emperor, and the Emperor only, it was the decision of the Eight Immortals that the tower would remain neutral in all aspects regarding the Great Trial, and that included helping the Five Kingdoms in any way.

But a prime edict of the tower is to allow others to share in the knowledge. The Eight Immortals agreed to allow outsiders to still have access to the libraries, but first they were to pass a Test of Neutrality, which would show whether or not they intended to use their knowledge in the war. If they passed the test, they would then have to take a Blood Oath swearing they would not use the knowledge to help influence the outcome of the war. If a person who has taken this oath intentionally breaks it, the assassins of the tower instantly know. And through a powerful magic, they know where the offenders are at all times. The penalty for breaking the oath, obviously, is death.

Although they had the knowledge to train these death dealers, the facilities for training such an elite group of assassins was unavailable at the Tower of Secrets, so the Eight Immortals had to send agents to search for a suitable location, one far away from the war. They eventually settled on the island nation of Jih' Po. After speaking with one of the *daimyos* by the Name of Kairu, they were allowed to build a training facility on his land, but under one condition: the assassins were to help him when needed. As long as they did not influence the war, the Eight Immortals did not have any objections and so agreed to the proposal. The assassins have trained at the island ever since.

Little is known about the assassins, only that they have never failed to find and kill one who has broken the Blood Oath. This fearsome reputation has actually made their specialty in low demand, as none wish to risk their retribution.

On the island of Jih' Po, however, the assassins are used often. *Daimyo* Kairu has steadily gained more and more power since the assassins, whom he calls *ninjas*, have been his to command. *Daimyo* Kairu has even been trying to discern the secrets of the ninja so he may build his own *dojo* for their training. So far he has been unsuccessful.

# BROTHERHOOD OF THE JADE LIFEROCK

**T**he Brotherhood of the Jade Liferock exists for only one purpose: to maintain the safety of the Empire. In times past, emperors would often call upon this majestic group to help defend the Jade Throne. Since the end of the Empire and the start of the Great Trial, the Jade Brotherhood has continued its noble quest of defending the throne, though from a distance. Like the Five Guardians, the Brotherhood is not allowed to intervene directly with the war; they must allow Fate to choose a new emperor. But there are other enemies, secret enemies, who would see that Cathay forever stays in darkness.

The elders make the decisions regarding quests and missions for the Brotherhood. Such instructions sometimes include humanitarian missions, aiding a Daughter of Heaven or Scholar from the Tower of Secrets, or guard duty at the Imperial Capital of Huan Wang. Whatever their mission, it cannot lead to the aid or interference of any one of the five factions.

The primary antagonist the Brotherhood seeks to destroy is a group known only as the *Shadowed* (see below). In reality, the Brotherhood knows very little about the organization, having only discovered them recently. The most well-known figure from the Jade Brotherhood is Bei, an Eighth Circle Warrior adept. Bei, along with his companion Su Shen, the Daughter of Heaven, has made it his goal to destroy the Shadowed.

## BEI THE WARRIOR

### Attributes

DEX (14): 6 STR (22): 9 TOU (20): 8  
PER (13): 6 WIL (17): 7 CHA (13): 6

### Characteristics

**Initiative:** 4 **Physical Defense:** 10  
**Physical Armor:** 8 **Spell Defense:** 10  
**Mystic Armor:** 8 **Social Defense:** 10  
**Death:** 116 **Recovery Tests:** 4  
**Unconsciousness:** 92 **Knockdown:** 9\*  
**Wound Threshold:** 16 **Movement:** 5  
**Karma Points:** 24/24

\* Bei knows the Wound Balance talent

### Warrior Talents (Knacks)

Acrobatic Strike (8): 14  
Anticipate Blow<sup>D</sup> (8): 14  
Avoid Blow<sup>D</sup> (9): 15  
Cobra Strike (8): 14  
Crushing Blow<sup>D</sup> (8): 17  
Durability [9/7] (8): 8  
Karma Ritual<sup>D</sup> (8): 8  
Life Check<sup>D</sup> (8): 16  
Lion Heart (8): 15  
Melee Weapons<sup>D</sup> (9): 15 (Armor Beater, Improvised Weapons)  
Missile Weapons (8): 14  
Resist Taunt\* (1): 8  
Second Attack<sup>D</sup> (8): 14  
Steel Thought\*\* (1): 8  
Swift Kick (8): 14  
Temper Self<sup>D</sup> (8): 15  
Thread Weaving (War Weaving)<sup>D</sup> (8): 14  
Throwing Weapons (8): 14  
Tiger Spring (8): 8  
Unarmed Combat<sup>D</sup> (9): 15 (Head Butt)  
Wood Skin<sup>D</sup> (8): 16  
Wound Balance<sup>D</sup> (8): 17

<sup>D</sup> Discipline Talent (The adept may spend Karma on this Talent)

<sup>I</sup>talized Talents Require Karma. (Except when also a Discipline Talent)

\* Modified by +1 Rank Bonus from Protective Brooch

\*\* Modified by +1 Rank Bonus from Protective Amulet

### Skills

Battle Shout (2): 8  
Brotherhood of the Jade Liferock Group<sup>K</sup> (4): 10  
Climbing (4): 10  
Creature Lore<sup>K</sup> (3): 9  
Jade Liferock Lore<sup>K</sup> (4): 10  
Read/Write Language (1): 7—(Cathayan)  
Secret Societies of Cathay<sup>K</sup> (4): 10  
Speak Language (1): 7—(Cathayan)  
Wilderness Survival (4): 10

<sup>A</sup> Artisan Skill; <sup>K</sup> Knowledge Skill

### Armor

**Crystal Buckler** (Phys 1; Myst 1; Deflect 1/1; Shatter 17),  
**Crystal Ringlet** (Phys 4; Myst 4; Init 2)

### Weapons

**Thread Crystal Battle-Axe** (Rank 4; Damage 24; cannot use shield),  
**2 × Throwing Spears** (Damage 13; Range 24–48 yards/12–24 hexes),  
**Heavy Crossbow** (Forged +3; Damage 19; Range 60–120 yards/30–60 hexes),  
Quiver (w/15 heavy crossbow bolts; Forged +1)



#### Thread Items

**Protective Amulet** (Rank 4; SocDef +1; SpellDef +2; Steel Thought +1 Rank Bonus),  
**Protective Brooch** (Rank 4; SocDef +2; SpellDef +1; Resist Taunt +1 Rank Bonus)

#### Equipment

Adventurer's Kit, Healing Potion, Light Quartz Lantern, Quiet Pouch,  
Trail Rations (1 week), Traveler's Garb, Waterskin

#### Loot

420 Cathayan gold pieces

#### Legend Award

Eighth Circle (1 per 2 PC)

#### Notes

As an obsidiman, Bei possesses the Increased Wound Threshold and Natural Armor racial abilities.

#### Warrior Abilities

**Second Circle:** +1 Physical Defense

**Fourth Circle:** Karma on Strength-only Tests

**Fifth Circle:** Battle Rites

**Sixth Circle:** Karma on Dexterity-only Tests

**Seventh Circle:** Karma on close combat Damage Tests

**Eighth Circle:** +1 Physical Defense

## THE SHADOWED



The seeds of the organization known as the Shadowed go back thousands upon thousands of years, long before the Empire of Cathay was founded. Long ago, after the scattering of the Yen'hi'ji, the survivors of that wicked race fled to the dark places of the Earth where they have lived throughout the millennia, dreaming of the day when they would once again rule the world. They were leaderless and divided, their number reaching only a few thousand worldwide.

Then, just before the Scourge began in earnest, an elf by the Name of Fang Zhi discovered them, and through them saw a means to his dream: to become Emperor of Cathay. In Fang Zhi, the Yen'hi'ji saw what they had been lacking: a strong and charismatic leader.

Fang Zhi was a Fifteenth Circle Beastlord who subscribed to that Discipline's darker arts (see **On the Ones Known as the Usurpers** on p. 27 of the *Cathay Player's Guide*). He was inscribed with colorful tattoos representing the souls of the animals he had killed and taken as slaves; the most impressive was the fiery orange phoenix on his back. Fang Zhi had killed the majestic creature and before it had a chance to be reborn in flame, had bound its spirit with his magic. The soul of the phoenix has given Fang Zhi an unnaturally long life. Before the Scourge, he was already nearing 500 years of age.

Fang Zhi and the Yen'hi'ji hid during the Scourge, plotting their first move against the Empire. Once the Scourge was over, Fang Zhi had Emperor Lan Juan poisoned, making his death look like an illness. He knew full well that the death of Lan Juan, who had no heir, would usher in the Great Trial. Then, as chaos lowered its gaze upon Cathay, the Shadowed made their next move by inserting themselves into places of influence and power where they might be better able to manipulate the fledgling kingdoms to their will.

Now, 88 years after the beginning of the war, the Shadowed is a vast, complex organization with thousands of members. Not confined to only the Yen'hi'ji, the Shadowed includes members of all Namegiver races from those who are hungry for power. Most hold a position of high status in society, such as nobles, successful merchants, warlords, and government officials. They have agents listening in every corner and watching from every shadow. So far they have managed to force the war into a stalemate, but have yet to accomplish even a part of Fang Zhi's goal: obtaining all five Symbols of Imperial Power.



Fang Zhi's first near success, to steal the Imperial Phoenix Robe, was foiled. Later, some of his minions were destroyed by a group of three unlikely companions: Su Shen, a Daughter of Heaven; Bei, a Jade Obsidiman; and Daylen Jagaro, a human merchant from Barsaive. Not only were those members of the Shadowed destroyed, but now the Jade Obsidimen and orders of the Tower of Secrets are fully aware of them, which has Fang Zhi most vexed.

Fang Zhi wears his long, gray hair in a ponytail braid, and bushy, gray eyebrows and a prominent, long beard that ends in a point frame his face. He wears extravagant, flowing robes that are overly long with an embroidered pattern of a phoenix on the back, covering his hands except for the fingertips and only the tips of his sandaled toes can be seen of his feet. Underneath the robe, there is a matching, large tattoo on his back of a phoenix. The phoenix pattern has the head of the phoenix at the base of his neck, the wings extending to the shoulder blades, the talons extending to the hips, and the phoenix's tail runs down his back near the spine but not on top of it. The overall effect is a three-quarters view phoenix that leans towards the left side of Fang Zhi's back.



## REGARDING THE YEN'HI'JI

The Yen'hi'ji, also known as the Children of Shadow (see the **History of Cathay** chapter, p. 11, for more information), are shape shifters. This uncanny ability has enabled them to avoid extinction over the millennia, as well as maintain such a strong, largely undetectable spy network across all of Cathay. The Yen'hi'ji can transform into any animal from as small as a mouse to as big as a horse, or any Namegiver race not larger than 12 feet in height, though when the Yen'hi'ji transforms into a Namegiver race, their skin maintains a bluish or greenish tint, depending on the individual. For this reason, most Yen'hi'ji prefer either t'skrang or obsidimen forms, though many take other forms, simply concealing their features with hoods or masks.

In their true form, the Yen'hi'ji resemble giant humanoid bats standing 11 feet tall and with a wingspan of equal distance. Their skin and fur are jet black, as if these terrible beings were carved from midnight. In this form the Yen'hi'ji still possess a fine dexterity, able to manipulate weapons and objects.

Nobody knows for a certainty how many Yen'hi'ji exist, or if the legends regarding their past are true, although most Yen'hi'ji believe they are. In fact, many worship the Dark Warrior as if he were a Passion—a tradition passed down from their ancestors.

## TRADITIONALISTS

**T**he Traditionalists are a cult only recently formed, but their numbers are steadily growing. Traditionalists are Cathayans who resent the growing influx of western merchants and western ideas into their society. The Traditionalists are a loosely affiliated band of people with a similar goal: to maintain the integrity and preservation of Cathayan culture and drive all traces of occidental influence from their land. Members work to accomplish this goal in different ways; some simply refuse to do business with westerners, some spread anti-West propaganda, while others participate in terrorist acts against westerners and any who do business with them.

This fanatical third group has drawn the wrath of leaders across Cathay. However, all efforts to put an end to the menace have ended in failure. Some speculate that the Traditionalists must have financial backing from one, or many, wealthy Cathayans.

So far the Traditionalists have been responsible for more than 200 murders across Cathay, and the authorities fear that as long as the door to the West remains open, this number will only grow higher.

## RUOLAN OF MU LI

Ruolan is a dwarf and Sixth Circle Merchant of Mu Li, head of the White Crane Trading Company, one of the city's most powerful guilds. A dwarf of 80 years, Mu Li is a long-time supporter of Cathay's isolationist policies. The recent relationship between her kingdom of Shui Dei and the West has troubled her greatly, particularly the influx of western merchants. To combat this growing threat, Ruolan has begun operating a group of Traditionalists out of her headquarters, who engage in acts of sabotage against western merchants and their holdings. Though she claims she is fighting to preserve her traditions and culture, Mu Li is actually more concerned about her loss of profits since the Therans arrived.

## FANG THE STORM LORD

Operating the most violent of all Traditionalists, Fang is a storm child who views the Therans as an even greater threat to Cathay than the War of Wu Xing. Fang uses the fact that he is a storm child

to his advantage, by exploiting the mysterious nature of his race, and telling his followers that he has been ordained by Heaven to drive all westerners from their land. This drives those Traditionalists who serve under him to acts of fanaticism.

A Tenth Circle Sword Dancer, Fang directs acts of kidnapping, murder, and terror against westerners. He has cells operating all throughout the Five Kingdoms, and recently has begun devising plans on sending agents into Thera and her provinces.

## LORD ZIHAO OF FOR DEI

Lord Zihao, a human of 45 years and Eighth Circle Cavalryman adept, has inherited his family's long-held xenophobia along with the secret war they have been waging against Thera. While the rest of his kingdom suffers from economic depression, Lord Zihao's lands are moderately prosperous. Located on the western border, far south of Mount Tihan, Lord Zihao uses his geographic position to waylay western merchant caravans passing through his lands. Recognizing the need for secrecy, Lord Zihao does not attack all caravans. Those he lets by he charges an exorbitant tax, claiming that the high cost is for the protection needed to travel through his lands which are fraught with "bandits." As a result, most merchants avoid his lands whenever possible, preferring the warm welcome they receive in Shan Dei to the north.

### Attributes

DEX (14): 6      STR (17): 7      TOU (20): 8  
PER (14): 6      WIL (14): 6      CHA (14): 6

### Characteristics

Initiative: 4      Physical Defense: 11  
Physical Armor: 15      Spell Defense: 11  
Mystic Armor: 2      Social Defense: 11  
Death: 100      Recovery Tests: 4  
Unconsciousness: 84      Knockdown: 7\*  
Wound Threshold: 13      Movement: 6  
Karma Points: 40/40

\* Lord Zihao knows the Sure Mount talent

### Cavalryman Talents

Animal Bond <sup>D</sup> (8): 14  
Armor Mount <sup>D</sup> (8): 14  
Blood Share (8): 16  
Charge <sup>D</sup> (8): 15  
Dominate Beast <sup>V</sup> (4): 10  
Double-Charge <sup>D</sup> (8): 14  
Durability [7/6] (8): 8  
Empathic Command <sup>D</sup> (8): 14  
Fearsome Charge (8): 14  
Frighten <sup>V</sup> (4): 10  
Frighten Animals <sup>V</sup> (4): 10  
Haggle (8): 14  
Heartening Laugh (8): 14  
Karma Ritual <sup>D</sup> (8): 8  
Leadership (8): 14  
Melee Weapons <sup>D</sup> (9): 15  
Missile Weapons <sup>V</sup> (4): 10  
Mount Durability [6/5] (8): 8  
Resist Taunt\* (1): 7  
Steel Thought\*\* (1): 7  
Sure Mount <sup>D</sup> (8): 15  
Tactics (8): 14  
Thread Weaving (Rider Weaving)<sup>D</sup> (8): 14  
Trick Riding <sup>D</sup> (9): 15  
True Shot <sup>V</sup> (4): 10  
Versatility (5): 5  
Wheeling Attack <sup>D</sup> (8): 14  
Wheeling Defense <sup>D</sup> (8): 14

<sup>D</sup> Discipline Talent (The adept may spend Karma on this Talent)

<sup>I</sup> Italized Talents Require Karma. (Except when also a Discipline Talent)

\* Modified by +1 Rank Bonus from Protective Brooch

\*\* Modified by +1 Rank Bonus from Protective Amulet





#### Skills

Animal Training (4): 10  
 Avoid Blow (4): 10  
 Cathay History <sup>K</sup> (4): 10  
 Extortion <sup>K</sup> (4): 10  
 For Dei Caravan Routes <sup>K</sup> (5): 11  
 Hunting (4): 10  
 Read/Write Language (1): 7—(Cathayan)  
 Speak Language (1): 7—(Cathayan)  
 Theran Military Organization <sup>K</sup> (4): 10  
 Tracking (4): 10  
 Traditionalists Group <sup>K</sup> (4): 10  
 Wilderness Survival (4): 10

<sup>A</sup> Artisan Skill; <sup>K</sup> Knowledge Skill

#### Armor

**Thread Full Body Armor** (Rank 4; Phys 12; Init 1; PhysDef +1),  
**Rider's Shield** (Phys 3; Init 1; Deflect 2/0; Shatter 17)

#### Weapons

**Cavalry Spear** (Forged +3; Damage 16; Harried while using Dismounted),  
**Dagger** (Forged +1; Damage 10; Range 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes), **Saber** (Forged +3;  
 Damage 15), **Six-Ring Saber** (Forged +3; Damage 15; Damage Bonus +1 Mounted;  
 Attack Penalty –1 Dismounted), **Crossbow** (Forged +3; Damage 15; Range 50–100  
 yards/25–50 hexes), Quiver of Endless Depths (w/ 60 crossbow bolts)

#### Thread Items

**Protective Amulet** (Rank 4; SocDef +1; SpellDef +2; Steel Thought +1 Rank Bonus),  
**Protective Brooch** (Rank 4; SocDef +2; SpellDef +1; Resist Taunt +1 Rank Bonus)

#### Equipment

Adventurer's Kit, Quiet Pouch, 3 × Tears of the Phoenix Potions,  
 Trail Rations (2 weeks), Traveler's Garb, Waterskin, Cathayan War Charger (see below)

#### Loot

410 Cathayan gold pieces

#### Legend Award

Eighth Circle (1 per 2 PC)

#### Notes

As a human, Lord Zihao possesses the Versatility racial ability. Lord Zihao has used the Versatility talent to purchase the Dominate Beast, Frighten, Frighten Animals, Missile Weapons and True Shot talents.

#### Cavalryman Abilities

**Second Circle:** +1 Physical Defense  
**Fourth Circle:** Karma on Charisma—only Tests  
**Fifth Circle:** Masterful Horseman  
**Sixth Circle:** Karma on Dexterity—only Tests  
**Seventh Circle:** Karma on mount Attack and Damage Tests  
**Eighth Circle:** +1 Physical Defense

### Lord Zihao's War Charger

#### Attributes

DEX: 7      STR: 9      TOU: 9  
 PER: 5      WIL: 7      CHA: 6

#### Characteristics

**Initiative:** 6      **Physical Defense:** 9  
**Actions:** 1      **Spell Defense:** 6  
**Attack (4):** 11      **Social Defense:** 8  
**Damage:**      **Physical Armor:** 4  
 Kick (4): 13      **Mystic Armor:** 2  
**Death:** 96\*      **Recovery Tests:** 4  
**Unconsciousness:** 81\*      **Knockdown:** 10  
**Wound Threshold:** 14      **Movement:** 8

\* Modified by Lord Zihao's Mount Durability talent

#### Powers

Enhanced Senses [Listen, Smell] (3): 8, Great Leap <sup>S</sup> (3): 10, Sprint <sup>S</sup> (4)

#### Armor

**Light Barding** (Phys 4; Init 1)

#### Equipment

Bit, Bridle, and Harness, Large Saddlebag, Light Barding, Saddle, Stirrups, and Blanket

#### Legend Award

Third Circle



## CHAPTER SEVEN

# CREATURES OF CATHAY

*"Each animal is a sacred element of the Universe. We are all part of the same tapestry, none of us being more important than the other. Therefore, it is important to respect the sanctity of all life and to understand the creatures of the air, land, and sea, so that we might better understand—"*

*"Better understand how we might kill them!"*

• TONG THE WARRIOR INTERRUPTING  
HIS FRIEND, LU FAN THE BEASTMASTER •

The high Cathayan mountain peaks, the jungles and forests, the rolling plains and vast deserts, and the waters of rivers, lakes, and seas are home to a great number of creatures found nowhere else in the known world. Some of them are unique to Cathay because of their special habitats, and some of them because Cathay's magic is interwoven with their patterns. This chapter describes them, and lists creates from the *Gamemaster's Guide* and *Companion* that have a home in Cathay.



# NEW CREATURE POWERS

**T**his section lists new powers available to the creatures introduced in this chapter. They follow the rules and guidelines presented under **Creature Powers** in the *Earthdawn Gamemaster's Guide*, p. 149.

## ABSOLUTE HEAL

**Step:** Rank+WIL  
**Action:** Standard **Type:** Magical

The creature can heal all Wounds, damage, diseases, and effects of poisons by making a successful Absolute Heal Test against the Spell Defense of a target. A creature must touch the target in order to use this ability.

## BLUR

**Step:** Rank+DEX  
**Action:** Simple **Type:** Magical

The Blur power hides the creature from having their exact location discerned by sight making them appear as a blur. Use the Blur test result as the Detection Difficulty for sight-based Perception Tests. Once a character sees through the blur, the creature must get out of that character's line of sight to use the Blur power against that character again.

## COMMON CREATURES

Many creatures known in Barsaive live throughout larger areas of the world, including the lands of Cathay. Below is a list of creatures found in the *Gamemaster's Guide* that are also typically found in Cathay.

|                               |                          |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Alligator (p.155)             | Leopard (p.182)          |
| Ape (p.155)                   | Lightning Lizard (p.182) |
| Basilisk (p.156)              | Lizard (p.183)           |
| Bat (p.156)                   | Monkey (p.185)           |
| Bear (p.156)                  | Nautilid (p.186)         |
| Cat (p.161)                   | Plague Lizard (p.189)    |
| Chakta Bird (p.162)           | Poison Vines (p.190)     |
| Creeping Vines (p.164)        | Rat (p.192)              |
| Crojen (p.164)                | Relan (p.192)            |
| Demiwrath (p.166)             | Rhinoceros (p.194)       |
| Dog (p.166)                   | Rockworm (p.195)         |
| Eagle (p.167)                 | Saural (p.196)           |
| Earth Q'wril (p.167)          | Sea Snake (p.197)        |
| Elephant (p.168)              | Selachi (p.198)          |
| Giant Spider (p.174)          | Shrieker Bat (p.199)     |
| Giant Trapdoor Spider (p.174) | Snake (p.199)            |
| Goat (p.176)                  | Tiger (p.203)            |
| Krilworm (p.181)              | Wild Boar (p.207)        |
| Leech Rat (p.181)             |                          |

Below is a list of creatures found in the *Gamemaster's Companion* that are also typically found in Cathay.

|                    |                   |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| Cloud Bird (p.114) | Krillra (p.119)   |
| Inshalata (p.118)  | Manticore (p.120) |
| Kraken (p.118)     |                   |

## DECOMPRESS

**Step:** Rank+WIL  
**Action:** Free **Type:** Magical

*Water.* This power pushes water around a submerged victim's chest further forcing water from the victim's lungs. The creature makes a Spellcasting Test against the target's Spell Defense. The range of this power is 14 yards/7 hexes. If successful, the creature makes a Decompression Test in place of a Damage Test. If the victim takes a Wound, he loses any breath he is holding and begins to drown (see *Gamemaster's Guide*, p.109). Mystic Armor protects against this damage. This power cannot target characters not submerged in water.

## DRAIN LIFE

**Step:** Rank+WIL  
**Action:** Free **Type:** Magical

The Drain Life power allows a creature to drain a victim's life force. The creature stretches its palms out towards its victim who must be within Drain Life Rank  $\times$  4 yards (x 2 hexes) of the creature. The creature makes a Spellcasting Test against the victim's Spell Defense. If the test is successful, the creature makes a Drain Life Test for damage. Mystic Armor protects against this damage. If this damage causes a Wound, the creature gains a Recovery Test. The creature can spend this Recovery Test as a Simple Action on its turn, even immediately after it is gained. If the creature already has its maximum number of Recovery Tests and has no current Damage Points, then this extra Recovery Test is lost if it is not used within 3 rounds.

## EMPATHY NET

**Step:** Rank+PER  
**Action:** Standard **Type:** Magical

The creature waits until a Namegiver approaches within 350 yards of it, at which point its strange telepathy alerts the creature of a victim's presence. The creature then makes an Empathy Net Test against the highest Spell Defense of any Namegivers within a 350 yard range. If the test succeeds, the Empathy Net power fills the creature's mind with images from the Namegivers' minds. From this telepathic flow, the creature can determine what the Namegiver's strongest desire is to use as a lure to get them close enough to eat.

## PROJECTED IMAGE

**Step:** Rank+WIL  
**Action:** Standard **Type:** Magical

The Projected Image power allows the creature to project illusory images gained from the Empathy Net power. When the creature attempts to lure a potential victim, the gamemaster rolls its Projected Image Test against the target's Spell Defense. If the snake is successful, the victim sees the projected illusion. This power can be used against multiple targets at the same time, although each victim experiences a different illusion, depending on what would most likely draw him in. For example, a Thief might see a very valuable treasure, while a Daughter of Heaven might see a small, stranded child. There is no magical compulsion for an affected character to investigate, but the illusion chosen is always one that the character finds very compelling. Once a victim is within range the snake attacks, gaining Surprise (see *Player's Guide*, p.228). The illusion has a Disbelief Difficulty of 15 and a Sensing Difficulty of 25 (as per a Fifth Circle Illusionism spell with a +5 bonus from the Empathy Net power making the illusion more believable).



## RESHAPE SELF

**Step:** Rank+WIL

**Action:** Standard

**Type:** Magical

The Reshape Self power allows the creature to take the form of any inanimate object that is within 10% of its size and has had physical contact with previously. The creature takes 2 Strain and makes a Reshape Self (6) Test. If the test is successful, the creature transforms into the item, mimicking its physical properties (but not magical ones if any). Maintaining the item's form requires the creature's complete concentration. Changing back is a Free Action, and only requires the creature to break the concentration on maintaining the form.

**Speak Language:** The Cathayan ferret can speak any language through the use of the Multi-Tongue power. The Cathayan ferret can make a Speak Language Test against the Learning Difficulty to retain the knowledge of that language, usually Cathayan. The Speak Language Rank is considered assigned to that language. The Cathayan ferret can opt "to drop" a language it has learned in order to learn a different language using the same process.

## SEDUCTIVE CALL

**Step:** Rank+PER

**Action:** Standard

**Type:** Magical

The creature can entrance male members of any Namegiver race. To use this ability, the creature makes a Seductive Call Test against the target's Spell Defense. If the test succeeds, the victim falls under the creature's control, though the creature can only force him to walk in the direction of its choice. A charmed character can break free from the creature's influence by making a successful Willpower Test against the creature's Seductive Call Test result. Additionally the charm ends if the victim sustains Damage Points equal to this number. The victim cannot defend himself until he successfully breaks free of the Seductive Call.

## TIDAL SPLASH

**Step:** Rank+STR

**Action:** Free (see text)

**Type:** Magical

The Tidal Splash power allows the creature to cause an enormous tsunami by furiously undulating its tentacles in a circular motion. The creature sacrifices all of its other actions for the round and takes 5 Strain Points to use this power. The creature makes an Attack Test and the result becomes the height of the wave and range in yards that the wave extends in a 90-degree arc using the tentacles as the arc's center. The power of the wave causes damage equal to the Tidal Splash Test to all creatures and structures caught within it. No armor protects against this damage.

## WATER BURST

**Step:** Rank+WIL

**Action:** Free

**Type:** Magical

**Water.** This power allows the creature to form a burst of water from the river that can knock down (see *Player's Guide*, p.222) prey. The creature makes a Spellcasting Test against the target's Spell Defense. The range of this power is 6 yards/3 hexes. If successful, the creature makes a Water Blast Test in place of a Damage Test to determine the Knockdown Difficulty. If the victim is Knocked Down, he is pulled or pushed by the water 3 hexes in the direction of the creature's choice. This power cannot be used if the creature is not submerged in water.

## CREATURE DESCRIPTIONS



The following creatures roam the various parts of Cathay and its borderlands. Note that some of them feature new Creature Powers explained in the creatures' rules sections, but others require the *Gamemaster's Guide* to be at hand, or reference creature tactics described in it. For explanations of the statistics used in this chapter, see p.145 of the *Gamemaster's Guide*.

### ANTELOPE

Antelope are commonly found throughout Cathay including such animals as deer, gazelle, and takin. The musk deer is particularly prized for its musk gland by hunters and the takin's golden fur is coveted for shearing by clothing merchants.

#### Deer

##### Attributes

DEX: 6

STR: 4

TOU: 5

PER: 5

WIL: 5

CHA: 6

##### Characteristics

Initiative: 6

Physical Defense: 8

Actions: 1

Spell Defense: 6

Attack (1): 7

Social Defense: 7

Damage:

Physical Armor: 0

Horns (2): 6

Mystic Armor: 1

Death: 34

Recovery Tests: 2

Unconsciousness: 26

Knockdown: 7

Wound Threshold: 9

Movement: 8

##### Powers

Charge (2), Enhanced Senses [Listen, Smell] (2): 7, Great Leap S (2): 8, Sprint S (2)

##### Legend Award

First Circle

##### Commentary

Deer are herbivores that live in throughout the many forests of Cathay. Deer are typically timid, and will run from any potential dangers, though males can sometimes be aggressive.

#### Gazelle

##### Commentary

A type of antelope, the gazelle is a herd animal that lives in the grasslands of Cathay.

The gazelle survives off of various plants and leaves.

For statistics use the Deer entry. Sprint increases to Rank 4.

#### Musk Deer

##### Commentary

This type of deer, found throughout the forests of Cathay, is hunted for its musk glands. These glands, are used to create a wide variety of perfumes, which are popular throughout not only all of the Five Kingdoms but also in the West. For statistics use the Deer entry with the addition of Loot: Musk organ worth D10 gold pieces.

#### Takin

##### Commentary

The takin is a type of goat antelope found in the bamboo forests found in the hills of the Phoenix Throne Mountains. A takin's body is wrapped in a thick layer of wool that is golden in color everywhere but the belly, where it is black. Standing only 3 to 4 feet in height, the takin present very little risk to the stray traveler.

For statistics use the Goat entry (see *Gamemaster's Guide*, p. 176) with the addition of Loot: Golden wool worth D6 silver pieces.

### BIRD

Both flightless and flight capable birds are common in Cathay's skies and near its waterways including the crane, hawk, heron, and peafowl. The peacock is particularly prized for its colorful plumage.

#### Crane

##### Attributes

DEX: 5

STR: 4

TOU: 3

PER: 5

WIL: 5

CHA: 7



### Characteristics

|                     |                     |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| Initiative: 5       | Physical Defense: 7 |
| Actions: 1          | Spell Defense: 7    |
| Attack (1): 6       | Social Defense: 10  |
| Damage:             | Physical Armor: 0   |
| Bite (1): 5         | Mystic Armor: 1     |
| Death: 26           | Recovery Tests: 1   |
| Unconsciousness: 17 | Knockdown: 4        |
| Wound Threshold: 6  | Movement: 2/8*      |

\* Flying Movement Rate

### Legend Award

First Circle

### Commentary

These spectacularly graceful birds are revered by Cathayans for their beauty. An image of a crane features, prominently on various forms of Cathayan artwork.

## Hawk

### Attributes

|        |        |        |
|--------|--------|--------|
| DEX: 8 | STR: 3 | TOU: 4 |
| PER: 7 | WIL: 5 | CHA: 6 |

### Characteristics

|                           |                      |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Initiative: 8             | Physical Defense: 12 |
| Actions: 1                | Spell Defense: 9     |
| Attack (2): 10            | Social Defense: 8    |
| Damage:                   | Physical Armor: 0    |
| Bite (5): 8; Claws (3): 6 | Mystic Armor: 1      |
| Death: 34                 | Recovery Tests: 1    |
| Unconsciousness: 24       | Knockdown: 4         |
| Wound Threshold: 7        | Movement: 2/9*       |

\* Flying Movement Rate

### Powers

Durability (1), Enhanced Senses [Sight] (2): 9, Hunting<sup>S</sup> (2): 10, Tracking<sup>S</sup> (2): 9

### Legend Award

Second Circle

### Commentary

The hawk is a bird of prey found throughout Cathay and the Land of the Gar. Hawks are often trained by Cathayan hunters, who value the bird's natural skills.

## Heron

### Attributes

|        |        |        |
|--------|--------|--------|
| DEX: 7 | STR: 4 | TOU: 3 |
| PER: 5 | WIL: 5 | CHA: 5 |

### Characteristics

|                     |                     |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| Initiative: 7       | Physical Defense: 9 |
| Actions: 1          | Spell Defense: 7    |
| Attack (1): 8       | Social Defense: 7   |
| Damage:             | Physical Armor: 0   |
| Bite (1): 5         | Mystic Armor: 1     |
| Death: 26           | Recovery Tests: 1   |
| Unconsciousness: 17 | Knockdown: 4        |
| Wound Threshold: 6  | Movement: 2/8*      |

\* Flying Movement Rate

### Powers

Enhanced Senses [Sight] (2): 7, Hunting<sup>S</sup> (1): 8

### Legend Award

First Circle

### Commentary

This magnificent bird lives in the wetlands of Cathay. It preys on fish, mice, frogs, snakes, and insects.

## Peafowl

### Attributes

|        |        |        |
|--------|--------|--------|
| DEX: 5 | STR: 4 | TOU: 3 |
| PER: 5 | WIL: 4 | CHA: 6 |

### Characteristics

|               |                     |
|---------------|---------------------|
| Initiative: 5 | Physical Defense: 7 |
| Actions: 1    | Spell Defense: 7    |
| Attack (1): 6 | Social Defense: 8   |
| Damage:       | Physical Armor: 0   |
| Bite (1): 5   | Mystic Armor: 0     |

Death: 26

Unconsciousness: 17

Wound Threshold: 6

Recovery Tests: 1

Knockdown: 4

Movement: 6

### Legend Award

First Circle

### Loot

Peacock feathers worth D6 gold pieces.

### Commentary

The peafowl (male peacock, female peahen) is an exotic bird found throughout Cathay. The male's iridescent plumage is highly prized by those who can afford it, while the meat is considered a delicacy.

## BITING BOAR

### Attributes

|        |        |        |
|--------|--------|--------|
| DEX: 6 | STR: 7 | TOU: 8 |
| PER: 6 | WIL: 6 | CHA: 4 |

### Characteristics

|                       |                     |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Initiative: 6 (10)    | Physical Defense: 8 |
| Actions: 1            | Spell Defense: 7    |
| Attack (4): 10        | Social Defense: 8   |
| Damage:               | Physical Armor: 4   |
| Bite (2): 9 (disease) | Mystic Armor: 2     |
| Death: 68             | Recovery Tests: 4   |
| Unconsciousness: 58   | Knockdown: 8        |
| Wound Threshold: 13   | Movement: 8         |

### Powers

Battle Shout [Scream]<sup>S</sup> (4): 8, Charge (4), Disease [Infectious Gore; SD 9, see Rules below], Durability (4), Enhanced Senses [Listen, Smell] (2): 8, Sprint<sup>S</sup> (4), Surprise Attack (4)

### Legend Award

Third Circle (Group)

### Commentary

The biting boar is most certainly a victim of the Scourge. Believed to have once been a mundane species, this creature is now recognizable by the foam that always covers its mouth and by its highly aggressive nature. Biting boars are found throughout Cathay's many forests and jungles. Victims rarely know a boar is near until it suddenly explodes from the underbrush. If one spots the beast first, the best defense is to not allow it near, by killing it with missile weapons or magic. The biting boar is terribly tenacious, so unless one has a horse, outrunning it is not an option.

### Rules

The biting boar will attack anything or anyone it comes into contact with, whether or not it feels threatened or is hungry. It begins combat by releasing a terrible scream before charging its victim.

**Infectious Gore Disease:** When the boar's bite causes damage to a target, the target must make a Toughness (9) Test (the Difficulty Number is the disease's Spell Defense). On failure, the target immediately develops a rash that causes the skin all across his body to itch uncontrollably. At the beginning of every round, the target must make a Willpower (9) Test to refrain from scratching himself; failure means he cannot perform any Action other than scratching. The scratching is so intense, however, that the target damages himself. It causes Damage Step 1 in the first round, adding +1 Step per round, up to a maximum of Damage Step 5. Succeeding at a Willpower Test resets the Damage Step to 1. No Armor protects against this damage. If the target is wearing armor that does not allow access to the skin, he will even remove one piece of armor every time he fails a Willpower Test. Once the target has been affected by the disease, and if there are no other targets around, the biting boar will stop attacking to watch as the hapless victim scratches and tears at his flesh while screaming hysterically. Once the victim has scratched himself to unconsciousness, the boar will feast if hungry, or move on if not. The disease lasts for 24 hours, but also ends when the boar dies or is more than 500 yards away.

## BULL SCORPION

### Attributes

|        |        |        |
|--------|--------|--------|
| DEX: 5 | STR: 6 | TOU: 9 |
| PER: 5 | WIL: 5 | CHA: 4 |

### Characteristics

|                         |                     |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Initiative: 5           | Physical Defense: 7 |
| Actions: 1              | Spell Defense: 7    |
| Attack (3): 8           | Social Defense: 9   |
| Damage:                 | Physical Armor: 5   |
| Horns (7): 13           | Mystic Armor: 2     |
| Stinger (2): 8 (poison) |                     |





**Death:** 60      **Recovery Tests:** 4  
**Unconsciousness:** 51      **Knockdown:** 7  
**Wound Threshold:** 14      **Movement:** 8

#### Powers

Charge (3), Durability (2), Enhances Senses [Smell] (2): 7, Poison [SD 12; Step 5 Damage], Sprint <sup>S</sup> (3)  
<sup>S</sup> General skill

#### Loot

Stinger worth D10 gold pieces (worth Legend Points).

#### Legend Award

Third Circle

#### Commentary

Found on the plains of Cathay, the bull scorpion resembles a large bull with a scorpion's tail. The bull scorpion is aggressive and territorial, often attacking on sight. It usually charges an opponent, attempting to gore it with its sharp horns, and then engages with its poisonous stinger.

## CAMEL

#### Attributes

**DEX:** 5      **STR:** 8      **TOU:** 9  
**PER:** 3      **WIL:** 5      **CHA:** 3

#### Characteristics

**Initiative:** 4      **Physical Defense:** 6  
**Actions:** 1      **Spell Defense:** 4  
**Attack (1):** 6      **Social Defense:** 7  
**Damage:**      **Physical Armor:** 0  
     Bite (2): 10      **Mystic Armor:** 1  
**Death:** 47      **Recovery Tests:** 4  
**Unconsciousness:** 40      **Knockdown:** 9  
**Wound Threshold:** 13      **Movement:** 8

#### Powers

Enhanced Senses [Listen, Smell] (2): 5

#### Legend Award

First Circle

#### Commentary

Camels are used throughout Cathay, the Land of the Gar, and the Golden Desert, as both pack animals and mounts, and sometimes for meat and milk.

## CATHAYAN FERRET

#### Attributes

**DEX:** 4      **STR:** 2      **TOU:** 3  
**PER:** 7      **WIL:** 7      **CHA:** 7

#### Characteristics

**Initiative:** 5      **Physical Defense:** 6  
**Actions:** 1      **Spell Defense:** 10  
**Attack (2):** 6      **Social Defense:** 10  
**Damage:**      **Physical Armor:** 0  
     Bite (1): 3      **Mystic Armor:** 3  
**Death:** 26      **Recovery Tests:** 1  
**Unconsciousness:** 17      **Knockdown:** Immune  
**Wound Threshold:** 6      **Movement:** 7

#### Powers

Climbing <sup>T</sup> (2): 6, Enhanced Senses [Listen, Smell, Touch] (3): 10, Multi-Tongue <sup>T</sup> (1): 8, Reshape Self (1): 8 (see below), Silent Walk <sup>T</sup> (2): 6, Speak Language <sup>T</sup> (1): 8 (see below)

#### Legend Award

First Circle

#### Commentary

The Cathayan ferret is a rare, intelligent, shape-shifting rodent, roughly 20 inches in length. Capable of learning and speaking any language, the Cathayan ferret is able to take the form of inanimate objects that are within 10% of its size, as long as it has previously made physical contact with such an item. Maintaining this form requires considerable concentration, and most Cathayan ferrets find the task physically exhausting. Transforming into an object or back takes 1 Standard Action. The Cathayan ferret is generally curious, friendly, and non-violent, though distrustful of most Namegivers. The legendary Thief, Ping, had a companion Cathayan ferret Named Bik-Bik that was renowned for its acerbic wit.

#### Rules

An angered Cathayan ferret attacks by biting, and often employs the Bite and Shake attack (see *Gamemaster's Guide*, p. 147). The Cathayan ferret has special rules for its shape-shifting and speaking languages.

## CATHAYAN OGRE

#### Attributes

**DEX:** 7      **STR:** 11      **TOU:** 9  
**PER:** 4      **WIL:** 5      **CHA:** 3

#### Characteristics

**Initiative:** 4      **Physical Defense:** 10  
**Actions:** 1      **Spell Defense:** 8  
**Attack (6):** 13      **Social Defense:** 6  
**Damage:**      **Physical Armor:** 8  
     Ogre Club (5\*): 16      **Mystic Armor:** 3  
**Death:** 59      **Recovery Tests:** 4  
**Unconsciousness:** 50      **Knockdown:** 11  
**Wound Threshold:** 13      **Movement:** 6  
**Karma Points:** 4/4      **Karma Step:** 4

\* Damage includes Harden Club power Rank

#### Powers

Durability (2), Enhanced Senses [Sight] (2): 6, Gold Sense <sup>T</sup> (1): 5, Harden Club (2)

#### Armor

**Plated Vest** (Phys 5; Init 2), **Footman's Shield** (Phys 3; Init 1; Deflect 2/0; Shatter 17)

#### Weapons

Ogre Club (Damage 14)

#### Loot

D8 gold pieces

#### Legend Award

Fourth Circle



### Commentary

The Cathayan ogre is physically similar to its Barsaivian cousin in nearly every aspect, except the Cathayan ogre's skin ranges in color from dark blue to light green. Dim witted and brutal, the Cathayan ogre finds its home within the forested mountains of Cathay. Cathayan ogres are usually spotted traveling alone, although there have been reports of groups as large as three or four.

Although as crude as a Barsaivian ogre in many ways, the Cathayan ogre is a bit more sophisticated. For example, the Cathayan ogres build fires over which they cook their food. However, this food is often a stray traveler with unfortunate luck.

It is widely believed that the Cathayan ogre is a jealous creature. One story tells us of the Thief, Ping, who, while hanging from a spit above an ogre group's cooking fire, singled one of them out with flattery. He then told the ogre where his bag of gold was. Once the ogre opened it, the others grew jealous and began grasping for the prize. The ensuing battle left all of the ogres dead, and Ping was able to escape.

Although it worked for Ping, it is unknown if all ogres are so lustful over gold, so it is best to keep a distance from them altogether.

Clubs are the Cathayan ogre's weapons of choice; a club, of course, being any chunk of wood of incredible size.

## CHAN LI

### Attributes

DEX: 6      STR: 5      TOU: 8  
PER: 9      WIL: 5      CHA: 5

### Characteristics

Initiative: 6      Physical Defense: 8  
Actions: 1      Spell Defense: 12  
Attack (2): 8      Social Defense: 7  
Damage:      Physical Armor: 4  
Tail (5): 10      Mystic Armor: 1  
Death: 50      Recovery Tests: 4  
Unconsciousness: 41      Knockdown: 6  
Wound Threshold: 13      Movement: 8/2\*

\* Burrowing Movement Rate

### Powers

Climbing<sup>S</sup> (2): 8, Durability (1), Enhanced Senses [Listen, Smell] (2): 11

### Loot

Tail, worth D4 × 10 gold pieces (worth Legend Points).

### Legend Award

Second Circle

### Commentary

Found in the deserts of Cathay, these great lizards have long snouts and torsos, their bodies reaching in lengths of up to six feet. On the ends of their thick tails are massive, bony clubs with spikes protruding from all sides. An average chan li weighs nearly 200 pounds.

Although the chan li subsists mainly on desert shrubs and insects, it is a danger to anything that comes near it. Highly territorial, chan li attack anyone or anything that gets too close to their burrows, using their tails with brutal perfection.

The Kur of the Golden Desert often train chan li as guard animals, putting their territorialism to effective use.

### Rules

The chan li fights with its rear facing its opponent, whom it tries to smash with its tail. If an opponent's odor is masked and he makes no noise, the chan li is considered blindsided by that opponent.

## CHIN YU

### Attributes

DEX: 7      STR: 10      TOU: 9  
PER: 5      WIL: 5      CHA: 5

### Characteristics

Initiative: 2      Physical Defense: 10  
Actions: 1      Spell Defense: 7  
Attack (5): 12      Social Defense: 7  
Damage:      Physical Armor: 8  
Battle-Axe (8): 18      Mystic Armor: 1  
Death: 62      Recovery Tests: 4  
Unconsciousness: 53      Knockdown: 10  
Wound Threshold: 14      Movement: 7

### Powers

Battle Shout<sup>S</sup> (5): 10, Climbing<sup>S</sup> (5): 12, Durability (2), Enhanced Senses [Smell] (2): 7



### Armor

Bronze Platemail (Phys 8; Init 5)

### Weapons

Chin Yu Battle-Axe (Damage 18; Size 5; equivalent to Troll Battle-Axe)

### Legend Award

Third Circle

### Commentary

The chin yu stand nearly 8 feet tall and weigh close to 400 pounds. They are built like massive humans with hooved feet and the heads of oxen. They often wear bronze armor and carry heavy steel battle-axes.

The chin yu are a warlike tribal people who live high in the peaks surrounding Spirit Mountain. They often come down in force to raid the Kur for supplies, the most important to them being metals and prisoners for sacrifices. All reports say they are savage and cruel, and every diplomatic attempt with them has failed.

No Namegiver has ever been to a chin yu village and lived to tell the tale, so little is known of their ways and cultures. But it is understood that they worship a brutal Passion known to them as Chi You, who demands Namegiver sacrifices.

### Rules

Fierce, brave, and powerful, the chin yus' weakness lies in their desire for personal glory. The chin yu rush into battle swinging their battle-axes, which they consider to be a true warrior's weapon. They always target whomever the most dangerous looking opponent is first.

## DAI FOK

### Attributes

DEX: 8      STR: 9      TOU: 10  
PER: 5      WIL: 6      CHA: 5

### Characteristics

Initiative: 8      Physical Defense: 10  
Actions: 2      Spell Defense: 7  
Attack (6): 14      Social Defense: 7  
Damage:      Physical Armor: 6  
Fists (2): 11;      Mystic Armor: 2  
Horns (4): 13

Death: 72      Recovery Tests: 5  
Unconsciousness: 62      Knockdown: 9  
Wound Threshold: 15      Movement: 6



**Powers**

Battle Shout [Roar]<sup>S</sup> (3): 8, Charge (4), Climbing<sup>S</sup> (2): 10 Durability (3), Enhanced Senses [Smell] (2): 7, Great Leap<sup>S</sup> (2): 10, Sprint<sup>S</sup> (4)

**Legend Award**

Third Circle (1 per 2 PC)

**Commentary**

The dai gok is found deep within the bowels of the Jungle of Endless Wandering. A terrifying killer, this powerful creature resembles a large, monstrous gorilla with a pair of oversized bull horns protruding from its skull. Standing 9 feet tall, the dai gok is a nocturnal being, surviving mainly on grubs, various fruits, and leaves. The dai gok is highly territorial, especially with its own kind. Unafraid and aggressive, it is rare for the dai gok to not pick a fight with anyone unfortunate enough to enter its domain.

**DA-ZUANG NIN****Attributes**

DEX: 11 STR: 7 TOU: 7  
PER: 5 WIL: 8 CHA: 4

**Characteristics**

**Initiative:** 12 **Physical Defense:** 12  
**Actions:** 2 **Spell Defense:** 7  
**Attack (4):** 14 **Social Defense:** 6  
**Damage:** **Physical Armor:** 3  
Bite (6): 13; **Mystic Armor:** 4  
Claws (3): 10  
**Death:** 60 **Recovery Tests:** 3  
**Unconsciousness:** 49 **Knockdown:** 8  
**Wound Threshold:** 11 **Movement:** 10\*

\* Also Flying Movement Rate

**Powers**

Charge (3), Dissonant Screech (3): 11, Durability (3), Enhanced Senses [Sight] (2): 7, Spellcasting (3): 8, Wingbeat (3): 14

**Legend Award**

Third Circle (Group)

**Commentary**

Common in Cathay in the Forest of Wailing Shadows, these creatures are said to come from Jih'Po where they are called simply tengu. They are a twisted mockery of a bird and dog, appearing much like a giant eagle from the air, just one with a very long beak. However, when they land they unfold their four almost dog-like legs and can run remarkably fast on land with their wings folded up to great height. They usually charge, either on land or from the air with their sharp beaks. They then often buffet opponents with their wings to knock them down before a very aggressive stab. They have little fear of people, and will often land and run right into shelters or dwellings in search of people's food and shiny baubles. Their beaks are their most dangerous weapon, both for its sharpness and for the terrible, harrowing sound they can emit from it. Warriors from the region see it as a sign of prestige to have a Da-Zuang Nin spear, showing you or someone in your family bested one in combat.

**Rules**

The da-zuang nin only makes charge and swoop attacks with its sharp beak, never with its claws.

**Dissonant Screech** (Step Number: Rank+WIL, Action: Standard, Type: Magical): The creature emits a painful screech that damages the ears of anyone on front of the creature's mouth. Deaf opponents are immune to this power. The power targets everything within a 90-degree arc, using the creature's mouth as the arc's center, in front of the creature that extends to 4 yards/2 hexes away. The creature makes a Spellcasting Test against the target's Spell Defense. If successful, the creature makes a Sonic Screech Test as a Damage Test. Mystic Armor protects against this damage. If a target takes a Wound from this damage, they become temporarily deafened for Sonic Screech Rank rounds and take a -rank penalty to all hearing-based Action Tests. Deafened targets are further immune to the effects of this power until the temporary deafness wears off.

**Swooping Attack:** An attacking da-zuang nin swoops down on an opponent and strikes them with their sharp beak. If this attack is successful, the da-zuang nin gains a +6 to the Damage Test but sacrifices its other action for the round. The da-zuang nin then lands, as it is a more effective combatant on the ground than the air. A da-zuang nin can make a swoop attack after it has used its Full Movement Rate of 10, and may follow up with its two actions as normal in the next round.

**Wingbeat:** This works like the Wingbeat dragon power (*Gamemaster's Guide*, p.251) except that it only works on opponents in a 90-degree arc in front of the da-zuang nin up to 4 yards/2 hexes away and an opponent who fails his Knockdown Test is only Knocked Down, not knocked back.

**DIAO SI GUI****Attributes**

DEX: 8 STR: 10 TOU: 11  
PER: 8 WIL: 11 CHA: 4

**Characteristics**

**Initiative:** 7 **Physical Defense:** 10  
**Actions:** 2 **Spell Defense:** 11 (16; see Rules)  
**Attack (4):** 12 **Social Defense:** 15  
**Damage:** **Physical Armor:** 7  
Claws (4): 14 **Mystic Armor:** 7 (12; see Rules)  
Tongue (3): 13  
**Death:** 80 **Recovery Tests:** 5  
**Unconsciousness:** NA **Knockdown:** Immune  
**Wound Threshold:** 16 **Movement:** 5

**Powers**

Blood Magic Drain (4): 15, Durability (4), Frighten<sup>T</sup> (4): 15, Locate Target (4): 12, Sense Blood Magic (4): 12

**Legend Award**

Fourth Circle (Group)

**Commentary**

Floating corpses of dead criminals who swore dying curses upon their deaths. Their bodies bear the marks of the method of execution used to kill them in life, and they are often sworn to kill their very executioners and their families. They are also drawn to the use and presence of blood magic, as they seem to somehow leech power from such types of magic. Diao Si Gui also typically have extremely elongated tongues and fingers able to strike or choke their victims from a surprising distance. The sight of a Diao Si Gui, even one not seeking to kill you, is taken as a sign of a year and a day or bad luck only atoned for by bringing food to prisoners awaiting execution.

**Rules**

Like demiwraths, diao si gui are not true undead, increase its Spell Defense and Mystic Armor by 5 against spells and powers that are designed to specifically affect undead such as Undead Struggle.

**Blood Magic Drain:** As per the Magic Drain power on p.153 of the *Gamemaster's Guide*, except that it affects only targets that have a current blood magic charm or blood magic oath. Characters affected by this power take a penalty to any test they make that uses blood magic such as a blood magic charm activation and talents boosted by blood magic oaths. The diao si gui gains a bonus to its Action Tests equal to the penalty given by this power when used. For example, an Average result giving a -1 penalty to blood magic using characters would give the diao si gui a +1 bonus on Action Tests while the Blood Magic Drain is in effect.

**Claws and Tongue:** The claws and tongue of a diao si gui can reach up to 2 yards/1 hex away. The tongue of a diao si gui is an entangling weapon (see *Player's Guide*, p.229). The diao si gui likes to grapple opponents with its claws and entangle opponents with its tongue. Once a character is entangled or grappled, the diao si gui makes a new Attack Test each round attempting to get an Excellent result. If successful, the diao si gui begins to strangle the victim who then takes automatic damage from the claws or tongue each round.

**Float:** The diao si gui moves by floating, and is not affected by powers and spells that affect only the ground such as the Uneven Ground spell.

**Locate Target:** The diao si gui's locate target power only works against its executioner or a blood relative of his executioner. The power's range is 4 miles.

**Sense Blood Magic:** As per the Sense Magic power on p.153 of the *Gamemaster's Guide*, except that it can only detect the use of blood magic oaths or blood magic charms. The Difficulty Number is 4 for death magic, 10 for blood magic oaths, 12 for blood magic charms and living armors, and 14 for other uses of blood magic such as making a spell's effect permanent for a year and a day or a locked in spell crystal lock.

**DEMTAXA****Attributes**

DEX: 8 STR: 12 TOU: 12  
PER: 8 WIL: 8 CHA: 7

**Characteristics**

**Initiative:** 7 **Physical Defense:** 10  
**Actions:** 2 **Spell Defense:** 11  
**Attack (4):** 12 **Social Defense:** 9  
**Damage:** **Physical Armor:** 12  
Bite (6): 18; **Mystic Armor:** 8  
Claws (3): 15  
**Death:** 86 **Recovery Tests:** 6  
**Unconsciousness:** 75 **Knockdown:** 15  
**Wound Threshold:** 18 **Movement:** 7  
**Karma Points:** 4 **Karma Step:** 4



#### Powers

Climbing <sup>T</sup> (4): 12, Durability (4), Gold Sense <sup>T</sup> (4): 12, Heat Sight

#### Legend Award

Fourth Circle (Group)

#### Commentary

This spider-like creature is found in the deepest mountain caves and mines. The average demtaxa is about the size of a dwarf, but there have been rumors of far larger specimen. The demtaxa's mouth is round with rows of teeth for crushing rocks rather than one of fangs for delivering poison.

Demtata are a pest for miners, as the creature is attracted to gold and orichalcum. The creature feeds on rocks and minerals, which is the rumored reason for the hard shell protecting the creature's back. They are known to swallow gold and orichalcum nuggets when they find them. Demtata coins are often carried by miners—solely for throwing them at such creatures to create a suitable diversion for escape.

#### Rules

The hard shell protecting the demtaxa's back is extremely effective at deflecting all sorts of attacks. The demtaxa uses its heat sight to see in the darkness. Sudden flashes of light easily affect its weaker normal eyesight.

**Hardened Shell:** Armor-Defeating Hits require one result level higher than normal (usually an Extraordinary result) to succeed against a demtaxa's hard shell.

**Light Sensitivity:** Light-based spells and powers that target the demtaxa's vision such as Light and Blinding Glare require one result level lower than normal to succeed. The demtaxa is frightened by such attacks and flees battle unless it can succeed at a Willpower (11) Test.

## DENG NONG

#### Attributes

DEX: 5 STR: 17 TOU: 17  
PER: 4 WIL: 10 CHA: 4

#### Characteristics

Initiative: 4 Physical Defense: 5  
Actions: 1 Spell Defense: 12  
Attack (2): 7 Social Defense: 12  
Damage: Physical Armor: 13  
Horns (4): 21; Mystic Armor: 12  
Kick (2): 19  
Death: 103 Recovery Tests: 8  
Unconsciousness: 92 Knockdown: 18  
Wound Threshold: 22 Movement: 6

#### Powers

Charge (4), Durability (4), Enhanced Senses [Smell] (2): 6, Sprint <sup>S</sup> (4)

#### Legend Award

Sixth Circle

#### Commentary

The deng nong are gargantuan herbivores that hail from the land of Indrisa. Already domesticated when they were brought to Cathay, they resemble large oxen with third horns protruding from their snouts. They can grow to sizes of over 35 feet long and nearly 20 feet tall.

#### Rules

The deng nong are domesticated animals, and it is rare for one ever to attack a Namegiver. However, if sufficiently provoked (such as by attempting to take a calf from its mother, for example) or maddened somehow, the deng nong is fantastically frightening to behold. It charges at its targets and attempts to gore them with its horns or trample them underfoot.





## DZO

| Attributes |        |        |
|------------|--------|--------|
| DEX: 4     | STR: 8 | TOU: 8 |
| PER: 3     | WIL: 6 | CHA: 3 |

| Characteristics     |                     |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| Initiative: 3       | Physical Defense: 6 |
| Actions: 1          | Spell Defense: 4    |
| Attack (2): 6       | Social Defense: 7   |
| Damage:             | Physical Armor: 3   |
| Horns (2): 10;      | Mystic Armor: 2     |
| Kick (3): 11        |                     |
| Death: 43           | Recovery Tests: 3   |
| Unconsciousness: 35 | Knockdown: 9        |
| Wound Threshold: 12 | Movement: 8         |

| Powers                                                              |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Charge (2), Enhanced Senses [Smell] (2): 5, Sprint <sup>S</sup> (2) |

| Legend Award |
|--------------|
| First Circle |

| Commentary                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A hybrid of a yak and a cow, the dzo is used by Cathayans as a farming animal, for pulling plows or hauling equipment. The dzo is a domesticated animal. |

## GIANT LEECH

| Attributes |        |        |
|------------|--------|--------|
| DEX: 5     | STR: 6 | TOU: 6 |
| PER: 5     | WIL: 6 | CHA: 3 |

| Characteristics     |                     |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| Initiative: 4       | Physical Defense: 7 |
| Actions: 1          | Spell Defense: 7    |
| Attack (3): 8       | Social Defense: 7   |
| Damage:             | Physical Armor: 2   |
| Bite (2): 8         | Mystic Armor: 2     |
| Death: 38           | Recovery Tests: 3   |
| Unconsciousness: 30 | Knockdown: 4        |
| Wound Threshold: 10 | Movement: 4*        |

\* Swimming Movement Rate

| Powers                                           |
|--------------------------------------------------|
| Blood Veins (3): 9, Swimming <sup>S</sup> (2): 8 |

| Legend Award |
|--------------|
| First Circle |

| Commentary                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Giant leeches are found in the depths of the Emerald Sea and are often confused with the Anshe (p. 112), a terrifying Horror that preys on sailors. They feed by biting and draining the blood of their victims. |

## GIANT PANDA

| Attributes |        |        |
|------------|--------|--------|
| DEX: 5     | STR: 6 | TOU: 5 |
| PER: 3     | WIL: 4 | CHA: 6 |

| Characteristics     |                     |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| Initiative: 3       | Physical Defense: 7 |
| Actions: 1          | Spell Defense: 4    |
| Attack (2): 7       | Social Defense: 8   |
| Damage:             | Physical Armor: 4   |
| Claws (2): 8        | Mystic Armor: 0     |
| Death: 34           | Recovery Tests: 2   |
| Unconsciousness: 26 | Knockdown: 7        |
| Wound Threshold: 9  | Movement: 8         |

| Powers                                                                                     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Climbing <sup>S</sup> (2): 7, Enhanced Senses [Smell] (2): 5, Swimming <sup>S</sup> (1): 7 |

| Legend Award |
|--------------|
| First Circle |

| Commentary                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Found throughout the forests of Cathay, the giant pandas are a type of bear whose diet is mostly bamboo. Cathayans view giant pandas as noble and sacred creatures. |

## GIANT SCORPION

| Attributes |         |         |
|------------|---------|---------|
| DEX: 10    | STR: 16 | TOU: 12 |
| PER: 4     | WIL: 6  | CHA: 5  |

| Characteristics          |                      |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| Initiative: 11 (17)      | Physical Defense: 13 |
| Actions: 3               | Spell Defense: 6     |
| Attack (6): 16           | Social Defense: 6    |
| Damage:                  | Physical Armor: 8    |
| 2 × Claws (3): 19        | Mystic Armor: 2      |
| Stinger (6): 22 (poison) |                      |
| Death: 98                | Recovery Tests: 6    |
| Unconsciousness: 85      | Knockdown: 18        |
| Wound Threshold: 18      | Movement: 8/3*       |

\* Burrowing Movement Rate

| Powers                                                                                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Camouflage (7): 13, Durability (6), Poison [SD 6; Step 5 Damage; 5 rounds], Surprise Attack (6) |

| Loot                                                                                                                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Scorpion shell, worth D6 × 10 gold pieces (worth Legend Points); venom sac, worth D6 × 100 gold pieces (worth Legend Points). |

| Legend Award           |
|------------------------|
| Seventh Circle (Group) |

| Commentary                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Found in the Golden Desert of Cathay, these scorpions are similar in every aspect to their smaller cousins except that they are considerably larger. Averaging six feet in length, they are often found half buried in the sands waiting for prey to wander into close range. |

| Rules                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The giant scorpion's coloring is that of the sands that make up its home.                                       |
| <b>Camouflage:</b> The giant scorpion's Camouflage power only works in sand-colored areas such as desert dunes. |

## GOI

| Attributes |        |        |
|------------|--------|--------|
| DEX: 8     | STR: 8 | TOU: 7 |
| PER: 6     | WIL: 5 | CHA: 5 |

| Characteristics     |                      |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| Initiative: 8       | Physical Defense: 11 |
| Actions: 4          | Spell Defense: 8     |
| Attack (5): 13      | Social Defense: 7    |
| Damage:             | Physical Armor: 0    |
| Tentacles (5): 13   | Mystic Armor: 1      |
| Death: 78           | Recovery Tests: 3    |
| Unconsciousness: 64 | Knockdown: NA        |
| Wound Threshold: 12 | Movement: 7*         |

\* Swimming Movement Rate

| Powers                                                                                     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Blood Veins (5): 13, Durability (6), Seductive Call (6): 12, Swimming <sup>S</sup> (6): 14 |

| Legend Award         |
|----------------------|
| Fifth Circle (Group) |

| Commentary                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The top half of this creature is that of a beautiful, naked young woman but the lower half below the navel is a hideous, tentacled monster. The goi live in shallow lakes, ponds, and sometimes rivers throughout Cathay.                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| The Myth of Goi begins long ago when a man and woman married. The man, a noble by birth, was very kind, giving his wife anything she ever asked for. All he asked in return was that she give him a son so that one day he might have an heir to whom he could pass all of his land and wealth. His wife, in contrast, was a wicked woman and did not want to give him a son. She wanted to inherit all his fortune for herself. |
| Although the woman became pregnant a number of times, each time she lost the child part way through the pregnancy. She told her husband that it was not meant to be, but she was secretly drinking small dosages of poison to abort the children. The man, never the wiser, forgave her but fell deeper into despair with every death.                                                                                           |
| One day, after suffering so much, the man decided to end his life and give his wife all of his wealth.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| "I know she tries her best. Maybe the fault lies with me," he confessed to a friend.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| He vowed to make a visit to the local midwife, who was wise in the ways of potions. He meant to ask for a vial of poison with which to end his life.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |



Upon arriving the next morning he spied his wife leaving the midwife's hut from the back door, with something held in her hand. The man hid and watched his wife leave then barged into the old woman's hut and made her confess what was going on. After learning the terrible truth the man stormed home to confront his wife. She fearfully admitted her evils. In an act of rage, the man screamed to the Passion Two for justice. Just then his wife screamed and collapsed to the floor. The man fled in terror from what he witnessed, never to return.

It is said that Two cursed the wife to a half-life. She became the first monster known today as the goi. She would forever creep along shallow waters of lakes and rivers to live a tortured existence until the end of time.

Whether or not the myth of the goi is fact is beyond anyone's knowledge. Some even say that the goi is a type of Horror or Horror construct, although scholars refute this statement, citing several documented sightings of goi dating back at least 1,000 years. No one knows for certain how many goi are in Cathay, but no more than three have ever been reported killed. Goi victims are usually found floating face down in the water, completely drained of blood. By then, the goi has already moved on.



#### Rules

The goi seduces men to their doom by raising its upper half from the waters and calling out to them using their Seductive Call ability (see below). Once under the goi's control, it compels the victim to walk towards the goi. Once the target is in range, the goi's tentacles rise from the water and attack.

**Tentacles:** When attacking a target, a goi makes an Attack Test for each of its four tentacles. If a goi achieves an Excellent result or better on an Attack Test with its tentacles, its victim becomes grappled and cannot move or take any other action except to try and break free. The result of the goi's Attack Test is the Grappling Difficulty Number to break the hold and all Grappling attack rules apply (see *Player's Guide*, p.230). A victim's allies may hack at the goi's tentacles to free the entangled victim. Each tentacle can take 18 points of damage.

Once grappled, the goi quickly disappears beneath the water, where the victim begins to drown (see Drowning in the *Gamemaster's Guide*, p.109). In addition, the many barbed suckers on the goi's tentacles drain the victims blood using the Blood Veins power.

## GOLDEN RAM

#### Attributes

DEX: 5 STR: 5 TOU: 4  
PER: 5 WIL: 5 CHA: 6

#### Characteristics

Initiative: 5 Physical Defense: 7  
Actions: 1 Spell Defense: 7  
Attack (2): 7 Social Defense: 8  
Damage: Physical Armor: 0  
Ram (4): 9 Mystic Armor: 1  
Death: 36 Recovery Tests: 2  
Unconsciousness: 26 Knockdown: 6  
Wound Threshold: 7 Movement: 8

#### Powers

Charge (S), Climbing<sup>S</sup> (2): 7, Durability (1), Enhanced Senses [Listen, Smell] (2): 7, Sprint<sup>S</sup> (4)

#### Loot

Orichalcum horns worth D6 × 50 gold pieces (worth Legend Points).

#### Legend Award

Second Circle

#### Commentary

Covered in gold-colored fur and adorned with horns of orichalcum, the golden ram of Cathay is a rare and magnificent creature. Though the golden ram is revered by Cathayans, the orichalcum horns make the ram a prime target for western hunters, particularly the Therans who inhabit Shan Dei.

## HORSE

Horses are a mainstay of transportation throughout all but the most desolate and extreme desert regions of Cathay. As the War of Wu Xing drags on, the demand for hale, powerful horses far outstrips supply. The Gar tribes breed the best horses in all of Cathay.

### Cathayan Riding Horse

#### Commentary

The Cathayan riding horse is the most common mount found in Cathay. These horses are capable of carrying one rider and a small load of goods—up to 250 pounds without suffering encumbrance penalties.

The Cathayan riding horse's endurance is legendary and these horses are sought after for extended travel. For statistics use the Riding Horse entry (see *Gamemaster's Guide*, p.179).

### Cathayan Trail Pony

#### Commentary

A stocky creature as well as the shortest breed of all the horses in Cathay, the trail pony is used primarily for hauling carts and plowing fields. These horses are capable of carrying up to 125 pounds without suffering encumbrance penalties.

The trail pony can be found in many colors such as black, tan, white, and brown.

For statistics use the Pony entry (see *Gamemaster's Guide*, p.179).

### Cathayan War Charger

#### Commentary

The war charger is a specially bred mount trained specifically for battle. This has given the war charger a strong body, ready for heavy loads, and slim legs for running at great speeds. The war charger is normally found within cavalry units, although may be purchased by anyone with the money to do so. The war charger can carry up to 350 pounds of equipment without suffering encumbrance penalties.

War chargers are typically black; any other color horse is thought to be of lesser breeding. For statistics use the War Horse entry (see *Gamemaster's Guide*, p.179).

### Chariot Horse

#### Attributes

DEX: 6 STR: 10 TOU: 10  
PER: 4 WIL: 7 CHA: 5

#### Characteristics

Initiative: 5 Physical Defense: 7  
Actions: 1 Spell Defense: 5  
Attack (2): 8 Social Defense: 6  
Damage: Physical Armor: 0  
Kick (4): 14 Mystic Armor: 2



**Death:** 51      **Recovery Tests:** 4  
**Unconsciousness:** 44      **Knockdown:** 11  
**Wound Threshold:** 15      **Movement:** 8

#### Powers

Enhanced Senses [Listen, Smell] (2): 6, Great Leap<sup>S</sup> (2): 8

#### Equipment

Typically has Bit, Bridle, Harness, Saddlebags, and Barding.

#### Legend Award

Second Circle

#### Commentary

These horses, of smaller stock than the regular horse, or war charger are used to draw Cathayan chariots. They are bred for strength and durability, but not height, so as to not impede attacks made over their backs.

A chariot horse can be burdened greatly with the weight of the chariot, its passengers, and often barding. Chariot horses are not as fast as regular horses, though.

## JIAOLONG

#### Attributes

**DEX:** 8      **STR:** 14      **TOU:** 14  
**PER:** 12      **WIL:** 11      **CHA:** 7

#### Characteristics

**Initiative:** 9      **Physical Defense:** 10  
**Actions:** 2      **Spell Defense:** 17  
**Attack (S):** 13      **Social Defense:** 9  
**Damage:**      **Physical Armor:** 10  
     Bite (7): 21;      **Mystic Armor:** 7  
     Horns (4): 18

**Death:** 105      **Recovery Tests:** 7  
**Unconsciousness:** 92      **Knockdown:** 15  
**Wound Threshold:** 20      **Movement:** 6/8\*

\* Swimming Movement Rate

#### Powers

Charge (6), Decompress (6): 17, Durability (6), Spellcasting (6): 18, Swimming<sup>T</sup> (6): 20, Thread Weaving [Elementalism]<sup>T</sup> (6): 18, Thread Weaving [Illusionism]<sup>T</sup> (6): 18, Water Burst (6): 17

#### Spells

Displace Image, Monstrous Mantle, Phantom Warrior, Puddle Deep 11

#### Legend Award

Sixth Circle (Group)

#### Commentary

A jiaolong is a fearsome predator, living in the many rivers of Cathay. It looks much like a crocodile, but it is often white or opalescent in coloring with two horns on its head. However, this is where the similarity ends. Jiaolong are quite crafty and adept at magic. The jiaolong likes to cast the Monstrous Mantle spell on itself in the form of a Cathayan dragon and then take to the land. The jiaolong likes to charge prey with its horns and uses its Monstrous Mantle spell to show an image of a swooping Cathayan dragon when it does this. Those fighting the jiaolong in this form get +3 to Disbelief and +6 to Sensing Tests versus Monstrous Mantle. Once discovered the jiaolong "retreats" to the water using either Displace Image or Phantom Warrior to create more copies of itself to confuse prey. Once it reaches the water, it hopes to have angered its prey enough for them to chase it. The jiaolong likes to cast the Puddle Deep spell on puddles that have formed from its brief time on land, especially on beaches, surprising prey as the river suddenly engulfs them from nowhere. The other tactic the jiaolong employs is to use its water burst power to knockdown prey close to the water then bite them and drag them into the water. Some survivors have claimed the water itself constricted about them as they were struggling to not drown.

#### Rules

Sight-based Perception Tests made to detect a partially submerged jiaolong require a Good or better result. The jiaolong's uses its bite attack to quickly capture prey using a Bite and Hold attack (see *Game Master's Guide*, p.147) against a Knocked Down victim, dragging it underwater to drown.

**Aquatic:** Jiaolong can hold their breath for a number of minutes equal to their Toughness Step before drowning.

## JIAPPA

#### Attributes

**DEX:** 11      **STR:** 6      **TOU:** 6  
**PER:** 8      **WIL:** 6      **CHA:** 7

#### Characteristics

**Initiative:** 12      **Physical Defense:** 14  
**Actions:** 4      **Spell Defense:** 10  
**Attack (S):** 16      **Social Defense:** 9  
**Damage:**      **Physical Armor:** 2  
     2 × Claws (3): 9;      **Mystic Armor:** 2  
     2 × Hand Axe (4): 10;  
     Tail (1): 7; Tongue (2): 8

**Death:** 62      **Recovery Tests:** 3  
**Unconsciousness:** 50      **Knockdown:** 6  
**Wound Threshold:** 10      **Movement:** 6

#### Powers

Block and Counter<sup>T</sup> (S): 16, Disarm<sup>T</sup> (4): 15, Durability (4), Great Leap<sup>T</sup> (4): 15, Parry<sup>T</sup> (4): 15, Picking Pockets<sup>T</sup> (4): 15, Riposte<sup>T</sup> (S): 16, Silent Walk<sup>T</sup> (4): 15

#### Weapons

2 × **Hand-Axe** (Damage 10; The Jiappa like to use one in each hand. A disarmed Jiappa uses its claw attacks instead.)

#### Loot

Belt w/ belt pouch containing 5d10 Cathayan gold coins and d6 gems

#### Commentary

Jiappa, also known as kappa in Jih'Po, are mischievous and somewhat intelligent creatures that can talk, but usually choose to play dumb as they torment and play pranks on those passing by their home rivers. They have the head and leg muscles of a frog, but a fur-covered body and monkey-like tail for grasping things. Sometimes they will even act in concert to perform larger antics, such as taking all the pins out of the wheels of caravans for the night, or stealing money and jewels for themselves. While they joke first, they can be formidable opponents, as their quick tail and tongue for grappling and hitting let them get a lot of hits on their opponent for every one they get in. Seeing as they can wield weapons in their front hands, their tails and with their tongues, such small attacks can result in many small wounds.

#### Rules

The Jiappa likes to disarm opponents with its tail and tongue, use its tail to grapple or tongue to entangle them, and then use either its hand-axes or claws to finish them off.

**Tail and Tongue:** The tongue of a Jiappa can reach up to 2 yards/1 hex away. The tongue of a Jiappa is an entangling weapon (see *Player's Guide*, p.229). The Jiappa can make Disarm Tests with its tail and tongue.

## JIHAN TIGER

#### Attributes

**DEX:** 10      **STR:** 8      **TOU:** 9  
**PER:** 6      **WIL:** 8      **CHA:** 5

#### Characteristics

**Initiative:** 11 (15)      **Physical Defense:** 13  
**Actions:** 2      **Spell Defense:** 8  
**Attack (S):** 15      **Social Defense:** 7  
**Damage:**      **Physical Armor:** 4 [6; see Rules]  
     Bite (S): 13;      **Mystic Armor:** 4 [6; see Rules]  
     Claws (2): 10

**Death:** 68      **Recovery Tests:** 4  
**Unconsciousness:** 58      **Knockdown:** 9  
**Wound Threshold:** 14      **Movement:** 8

#### Powers

Battle Shout [Roar]<sup>S</sup> (4): 9, Camouflage (4): 12, Climbing<sup>S</sup> (3): 13, Durability (3), Enhanced Senses [Listen, Sight] (2): 8, Great Leap<sup>S</sup> (3): 13, Low-Light Vision, Silent Walk<sup>S</sup> (3): 13, Sprint<sup>S</sup> (2), Surprise Attack (4)

#### Loot

Hide, D6 × 10 gold pieces (worth Legend Points).

#### Legend Award

Third Circle (1 per 2 PC)

#### Commentary

Found only in the Jungle of Endless Wandering, the jihan tiger is a large and powerful predator. Because of its size—an adult tiger can reach up to 12 feet in length—and ferocity, Cathayans have long held a deep respect for the beast, and the creature figures prominently in many of their legends and myths. Jihan tigers are protected from hunters by the ki mao. Hunters prize the jihan tiger for its coat. Not only does the black fur with thin white stripes make for a handsome cloak, but it also has the ability to absorb heat, keeping its wearer comfortably warm no matter the temperature.



## Rules

The jihan tiger is a nocturnal hunter, preferring to stalk its prey before pouncing from behind, raking with its claws before sinking in with its teeth.

Absorb Heat: The jihan's tiger Physical Armor Rating and Mystic Armor Rating increases to 6 against any attack from a fire or heat-based weapon or power.

## Jiji

### Attributes

DEX: 8 STR: 6 TOU: 4  
PER: 4 WIL: 4 CHA: 2

### Characteristics

**Initiative:** 9 **Physical Defense:** 12  
**Actions:** 2 **Spell Defense:** 6  
**Attack (3):** 11 **Social Defense:** 3  
**Damage:** **Physical Armor:** 0  
One Target (9): 15; **Mystic Armor:** 0  
Two Targets (6): 12;  
Three Targets (3): 9  
**Unconsciousness:** 34 **Recovery Tests:** 2  
**Wound Threshold:** NA **Knockdown:** 7  
**Movement:** 7

### Powers

Climbing<sup>S</sup> (1): 9, Durability (1), Swimming<sup>S</sup> (1): 7

### Legend Award

Second Circle (Group)

### Commentary

This is a two-headed rat that is known for being almost exclusively carnivorous. Swarms of them are common pests in the Jungle of Endless Wandering, but other areas throughout Cathay also see occasional outbreaks. They tend to swarm over targets, making it very difficult to move and inflict so many small, but deep, bites that their victims often bleed to death if they manage to get away momentarily. Fortunately, the vermin are quite fearful of fire and often disperse when it is brought to bear against them.

## Rules

The jiji is a swarm monster that restricts an opponent's movement if they are in the swarm's area. Characters in the swarm are affected by a -3 Movement Rate penalty and must make a Dexterity (5) Test or have their movement halted. (see *Player's Guide*, p.228; Medium Impaired Movement). Any character that gets a Pathetic Result on this test is Knocked Down.

**Bleeding Wounds:** Any Wound inflicted by a jiji swarm bleeds (see *Player's Guide*, p.222; Wounds That Bleed) inflicting 2 Damage Points more per round until they make a successful Recovery Test or a healing kit or physician bandages the wound.

**Fear of Fire:** Jiji are afraid of fire. In the presence of someone wielding fire-based spells or weapons (including torches), they must make a Willpower (4) Test or disperse.

**Swarm Attack:** The jiji swarm takes up a 1 hex radius with a center origin hex and all surrounding hexes (for a total of 7 hexes covered). A jiji swam uses 1 Standard Action to make an attack. The attack is made against up to three targets in the swarm's area. The attack result is compared to all target's Physical Defense. The Damage Step used is based on the number of targets in the swarm's area.

**Unconsciousness:** A jiji swarm reduced to its Unconscious Rating disperses.

**Vulnerability:** Jiji take double damage from area of effect attacks that cover their entire area. Unfortunately, they also usually affect any victims in the swarm as well.

## Jiu Tou Niao

### Attributes

DEX: 8 STR: 10 TOU: 8  
PER: 7 WIL: 6 CHA: 5

### Characteristics

**Initiative:** 8 **Physical Defense:** 9  
**Actions:** 4 **Spell Defense:** 10  
**Attack (5):** 13 **Social Defense:** 7  
**Damage:** **Physical Armor:** 4  
Bite (4): 14; **Mystic Armor:** 2  
Claws (3): 13  
**Death:** 88 **Recovery Tests:** 4  
**Unconsciousness:** 74 **Knockdown:** 10  
**Wound Threshold:** 13 **Movement:** 4/10\*

\* Flying Movement Rate

### Powers

Durability (7), Enhanced Senses [Sight] (9): 16, Locate Target (5): 12



### Legend Award

Fifth Circle (Group)

### Commentary

The jiu tou niao is a savage beast, so rare that most Cathayans believe it is only a myth designed to scare children. This creature appears as a 12-foot tall bird of prey with a 24-foot wingspan and nine heads attached to long, sinewy necks. The jiu tou niao is an excellent hunter, feasting on a wide variety of creatures, though it isn't above scavenging. However, the favorite meal of the jiu tou niao is Namegiver flesh, especially the flesh of Namegiver children.

The jiu tou niao prefers to hunt by swooping down and grasping its prey with its talons, flying high into the sky and then dropping the unfortunate creature onto jagged rocks. This drop usually results in the prey's body literally exploding, allowing the nine heads to peck at the exposed meat at their leisure.

## Rules

The jiu tou niao starts combat with a swooping and grappling attack with its talons (see *Player's Guide*, p.234). The jiu tou niao dives, grabs a victim on a Excellent result or better, and then flies back up. When the jiu tou niao drops the victim onto jagged rocks, the victim takes Falling Damage (no armor protects against this damage) and an additional Step 12 Damage from the jagged rocks (see *Gamemaster's Guide*, p.109). If the victim manages to break free on his own, he still takes Falling Damage, but avoids the jagged rocks. If the jiu tou niao cannot grab a victim, it sometimes moves on to easier prey or if voraciously hungry lands on the ground and attacks savagely with bite attacks from its many heads. The jiu tou niao lacks coordination and cannot makes both bite and claw attacks in the same round.



## JUN

### Attributes

DEX: 9 STR: 9 TOU: 7  
PER: 5 WIL: 6 CHA: 5

### Characteristics

Initiative: 9 Physical Defense: 11  
Actions: 2 Spell Defense: 7  
Attack (3): 12 Social Defense: 7  
Damage: Physical Armor: 0  
Bite (2): 11; Mystic Armor: 2  
Claws (3): 12

Death: 60 Recovery Tests: 3  
Unconsciousness: 49 Knockdown: 9  
Wound Threshold: 12 Movement: 3/9\*

\* Flying Movement Rate

### Powers

Camouflage (6): 12, Durability (3), Enhanced Senses [Sight] (2): 7, Low-Light Vision, Reinforcements

### Legend Award

Sixth Circle

### Commentary

The jun is a giant raven that stalks the night skies of Cathay. With a wingspan reaching twelve feet in length, these giant carnivorous birds are some of the most feared hunters in the land. Juns have been known to sweep down upon large groups of travelers, flying off with unfortunate victims in their talons.

Unlike its smaller cousin, the jun rarely scavenges and does most of its hunting by night, when the dark sky offers it the most camouflage. The jun has jet-black feathers, a razor sharp beak, and wicked talons that can slice through most armor; special care should be taken when traveling Cathay by night.

If food is scarce, juns separate from one another, allowing the individuals to hunt solitarily. However, if one bird spots a large group of prey—a merchant caravan foolish enough to travel during the night, for example—it lets out a caw which can be heard for miles, attracting the rest of its brethren. An unkindness of juns ranges from as few as 3 to as many as 10 birds.

### Rules

Jun attack either much like the jiu tou niao with a swooping and grappling attack with its claws to carry the victim away (see *Player's Guide*, p.234), or they attack using their swooping attack to rend their target's flesh through their armor with their razor-sharp beaks or talons. All of a jun's attacks require one Result level less than normal to inflict Armor-Defeating Hits. A solitary jun caws for reinforcements against a large group of victims (see below).

**Camouflage:** The jun's Camouflage power only works at night when it's jet-black feathers are concealed by the surrounding darkness.

**Reinforcements:** A jun can give a caw that summons five more jun with a range of three miles. These "reinforcements" arrive within 3D6 minutes.

**Swooping Attack:** A jun's swooping attack gains a +3 bonus to the Damage Test if the creature hits the target character, but a swooping jun sacrifices its remaining attack for the round. A jun may make a swooping attack after it has used its Flying Full Movement Rate in a round, and may follow up with a non-swooping beak and talons attack in the next round.

## Ki-Lin

### Attributes

DEX: 10 STR: 8 TOU: 7  
PER: 9 WIL: 10 CHA: 10

### Characteristics

Initiative: 11 Physical Defense: 13  
Actions: 2 Spell Defense: 13  
Attack (6): 16 Social Defense: 13  
Damage: Physical Armor: 0  
Bite (8): 16; Mystic Armor: 7  
Horn (10): 18; Kick (6): 14

Death: 78 Recovery Tests: 3  
Unconsciousness: 64 Knockdown: 9  
Wound Threshold: 12 Movement: 10  
Karma Points: 20/20 Karma Step: 9

### Powers

Air Dance <sup>T</sup> (6): 17\*, Calm Others (6): 16, Durability (6), Enhanced Senses [Listen, Smell] (2): 11, Great Leap <sup>T</sup> (6): 16, Impossible Hide <sup>T</sup> (6): 16, Second Chance <sup>T</sup> (6): 16, Silent Walk <sup>T</sup> (6): 16, Sprint <sup>T</sup> (2), Water Dancing <sup>T</sup> (6): 16

\* Modified by Ki-Lin's +1 Quick Trait

### Loot

The horn of the k'i-lin is worth at least 200 gold pieces (worth Legend Points), but to kill a k'i-lin is considered a very bad omen.

### Legend Award

Seventh Circle (1 per 2 PC)

### Commentary

The k'i-lin is equine in appearance, though smaller than a horse, with delicate legs that end in gold, cloven hooves and a single horn sticking out from its forehead. Variations of color include white, silver, blue/gray, and dappled strawberry. All k'i-lins grow thin white beards at the bases of their lower jaws. Not much is known about the breeding behaviors or gestation periods and it is widely believed that these beautiful creatures can live to be 1,000 years old.

### Rules

K'i-lin can be found in dense woods and by fresh water sources, though they are elusive and will hide at the first sense of a Namegiver. When a k'i-lin willingly approaches a civilization it is said to herald the coming of a great and wise ruler. It is also said that the k'i-lin will never harm an innocent being but will head butt anyone with ill intent.

**Untraceable:** A K'i-lin's steps are so light that it leaves no physical traces of its passage on land.

## KING COBRA

### Attributes

DEX: 7 STR: 7 TOU: 5  
PER: 3 WIL: 4 CHA: 4

### Characteristics

Initiative: 7 Physical Defense: 8  
Actions: 1 Spell Defense: 4  
Attack (4): 11 Social Defense: 6  
Damage: Physical Armor: 0  
Bite (3): 10 (poison) Mystic Armor: 0  
Death: 58 Recovery Tests: 2  
Unconsciousness: 46 Knockdown: Immune  
Wound Threshold: 9 Movement: 5

### Powers

Climbing <sup>S</sup> (4): (11), Durability (4), Enhanced Senses [Smell] (2): 5, Heat Sight, Poison [SD 10; Death], Silent Walk <sup>S</sup> (4): (11)

### Legend Award

Fourth Circle

### Commentary

The king cobra is a vicious and deadly serpent that can be found up to 18 feet in length. Its poison is highly toxic, and has been the end of many a Cathayan.

## KONGMA

### Attributes

DEX: 12 STR: 14 TOU: 13  
PER: 12 WIL: 13 CHA: 9

### Characteristics

Initiative: 13 Physical Defense: 17  
Actions: 2 Spell Defense: 17  
Attack (7): 19 Social Defense: 12  
Damage: Physical Armor: 9  
Bite (7): 21; Mystic Armor: 9  
Stamp (2): 16  
Death: 113 Recovery Tests: 6  
Unconsciousness: 98 Knockdown: 15  
Wound Threshold: 19 Movement: 8  
Karma Points: 16 Karma Step: 8

### Powers

Disrupt Fate (6): 19, Durability (8), Great Leap <sup>T</sup> (7): 19, Second Chance <sup>T</sup> (6): 19, Spellcasting (7): 19, Thread Weaving [Illusionism] <sup>T</sup> (7): 19, Thread Weaving [Wizardry] <sup>T</sup> (7): 19

### Spells

Dampen Karma, Improve Karma, Karma Cancel, Karmic Connection 23

### Loot

Magical karma organ worth 800 Cathayan silver pieces (worth Legend Points)

### Legend Award

Eighth Circle (Group)



### Commentary

An ancient and rare beast, most often seen in central Cathay near the former imperial capital. A kongma has the body of a horse, but the head of a dragon and is completely covered in golden, red, and blue scales. Seeing one is taken as a good omen, and those seeking a judgment from the emperor would take sighting one as an indication of receiving a favorable ruling from him when they finally arrived. As they are revered by many still living in the area, anyone seen harming one or with their skins is often rebuffed at every turn and eventually may be pursued by mobs of outraged peasants. These creatures have magical organs that enhance karma and are highly sought after by sorcerers for their powers. However when facing them in combat the creatures use them not only to their own benefit in spending karma, but to cause bad luck to come upon those who mean them harm.

### Rules

The kongma manipulates karma to bring itself good fortune and its enemy's bad fortune.

**Disrupt Fate:** This power can only be used if the Action Test to be rerolled had a Karma Point spent on it

**Second Chance:** This power can only be used if the kongma used a Karma Point on the original Action Test.



## LIANG HAO SIEH

### Attributes

DEX: 8 STR: 12 TOU: 11  
PER: 5 WIL: 5 CHA: 4

### Characteristics

Initiative: 8 Physical Defense: 9  
Actions: 2 Spell Defense: 7  
Attack (6): 14 Social Defense: 6  
Damage: Physical Armor: 6  
Bite (5): 17 (poison) Mystic Armor: 1  
Death: 91 Recovery Tests: 5  
Unconsciousness: 78 Knockdown: Immune  
Wound Threshold: 16 Movement: 5

### Powers

Climbing<sup>S</sup> (6): 14, Durability (6), Enhanced Senses [Smell] (2): 7, Heat Sight, Poison [SD 15; Death], Silent Walk<sup>S</sup> (6): 14

### Legend Award

Sixth Circle (1 per 2 PC)

### Commentary

The liang hao sieh is a tremendous double-headed serpent that haunts the many forests of Cathay. Three feet in diameter and growing up to 40 feet in length, the liang hao sieh is the undisputed master of its domain. Its scales are often a deep shimmering green, with golden diamond patterns along its back. Some have been reported with solid black scales, though these are exceptionally rare.

Because of its immense size, the liang hao sieh must eat large quantities of food every day. Its primary food sources are deer, cranes, monkeys, and other forest-dwelling creatures, though it won't hesitate to make a meal out of a wandering band of Namegivers if it happens upon them. In combat, the great two-headed serpent attempts to bite its prey, hoping its deadly toxin will do the work, though the saber-like fangs are deadly enough to do the job most of the time.

## MIND SERPENT

### Attributes

DEX: 7 STR: 6 TOU: 6  
PER: 6 WIL: 6 CHA: 5

### Characteristics

Initiative: 7 Physical Defense: 8  
Actions: 1 Spell Defense: 8  
Attack (4): 11 Social Defense: 7  
Damage: Physical Armor: 2  
Bite (4): 10 (poison) Mystic Armor: 2  
Death: 62 Recovery Tests: 3  
Unconsciousness: 50 Knockdown: Immune  
Wound Threshold: 10 Movement: 5/7\*

\* Swimming Movement Rate

### Powers

Climbing<sup>S</sup> (4): 11, Durability (4), Enhanced Senses [Smell] (2): 7, Empathy Net (S): 11, Heat Sight, Poison [SD 7; Paralyze D4 rounds], Projected Image (S): 11, Swimming<sup>S</sup> (S): 11

### Loot

Scales worth D6 × 50 gold pieces (worth Legend Points).

### Legend Award

Fourth Circle

### Commentary

This large snake, which averages 12 to 15 feet in length, can be found near shallow lakes and ponds. Although unintelligent, the mind serpent is quite deadly. With its natural illusionism abilities mixed with a strange telepathy, it can lure a victim close enough to eat by creating an illusion while it remains hidden.

### Rules

The mind serpent uses its Empathy Net power to discover a Namegiver's desires, and then projects an illusory image of those desires using the Projected Image power. When the victim approaches the illusory bait, the mind serpent uses its surprise bite attack to paralyze the victim and then uses the Grab and Bite Combat Option (see *Gamemaster's Guide*, p.147) to drag them into the water to drown while paralyzed. After the prey drowns, the mind serpent unhinges its jaw and swallows the victim whole.

## MONKEY

Like the po na, monkeys can be found everywhere throughout the Jungle of Endless Wandering and forests of Cathay.

## Gibbon

### Commentary

Found in the forests of Cathay, gibbons are small apes that use brachiation to move about the treetops 200 feet off the forest floor. Using this method of locomotion, the gibbon is able to swing up to distances of 50 feet while traveling up to 35 miles per hour. Gibbons are about 3 feet long and weigh on average only 15 pounds.

For statistics use the Monkey entry (see *Gamemaster's Guide*, p.185). Climbing skill improves to Rank (3): 10 and Climbing Movement Rate improves to 8. Brachiation: Climbing Tests require only a Poor Result to succeed for gibbons.

## Macaque

### Attributes

DEX: 7 STR: 4 TOU: 3  
PER: 5 WIL: 3 CHA: 5

### Characteristics

Initiative: 7 Physical Defense: 11  
Actions: 1 Spell Defense: 7



|                               |                          |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Attack</b> (1): 8          | <b>Social Defense:</b> 6 |
| <b>Damage:</b><br>Bite (4): 8 | <b>Physical Armor:</b> 0 |
| <b>Death:</b> 26              | <b>Mystic Armor:</b> 0   |
| <b>Unconsciousness:</b> 17    | <b>Recovery Tests:</b> 1 |
| <b>Wound Threshold:</b> 6     | <b>Knockdown:</b> 4      |
|                               | <b>Movement:</b> 6/7*    |

\* Climbing Movement Rate

**Powers**Climbing<sup>S</sup> (2): 9, Enhanced Senses [Smell] (2): 7, Great Leap<sup>S</sup> (2): 9**Legend Award**

First Circle

**Commentary**

These small monkeys are common throughout the Jungle of Endless Wandering. They are popular among hunters, who capture and sell them to the traveling entertainers, who find the small monkeys a sure crowd pleaser—once they're properly domesticated.

**Rules**

Easy to Domesticate: Reduce the Result Level by one for attempts to tame or domesticate a macaque. For example, using the Animal Training talent or skill usually requires an Average Result, but when used against a macaque, it only requires a Poor Result.

## MON KU

**Attributes**

|                |               |               |
|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| <b>DEX:</b> 11 | <b>STR:</b> 5 | <b>TOU:</b> 4 |
| <b>PER:</b> 7  | <b>WIL:</b> 5 | <b>CHA:</b> 5 |

**Characteristics**

|                                |                             |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Initiative:</b> 12          | <b>Physical Defense:</b> 16 |
| <b>Actions:</b> 2              | <b>Spell Defense:</b> 10    |
| <b>Attack</b> (3): 14          | <b>Social Defense:</b> 7    |
| <b>Damage:</b><br>Bite (5): 10 | <b>Physical Armor:</b> 0    |
|                                | <b>Mystic Armor:</b> 1      |
| <b>Death:</b> 48               | <b>Recovery Tests:</b> 2    |
| <b>Unconsciousness:</b> 36     | <b>Knockdown:</b> 5         |
| <b>Wound Threshold:</b> 7      | <b>Movement:</b> 6/7*       |

\* Climbing Movement Rate

**Powers**Avoid Blow<sup>S</sup> (5): 16, Blur (5): 16, Climbing<sup>S</sup> (5): 16, Durability (3), Enhanced Senses [Smell] (2): 9, Fast Hand<sup>S</sup> (5): 16, Great Leap<sup>S</sup> (5): 16, Silent Walk<sup>S</sup> (5): 16**Legend Award**

Third Circle (1 per 2 PC)

**Commentary**

These miniature monkeys are bothersome tricksters that live in the Jungle of Endless Wandering. Standing an average of only six to eight inches tall, these pests love playing tricks on visitors to their home. They move so incredibly fast that witnesses report seeing only a blur just before discovering that their daggers have been replaced with bananas. From those who have actually seen a mon ku, they are reported as having white fur with black rings around their large eyes, and multi-colored tails of orange, brown, and black. Because of the mon kus' appearance and playful nature, many believe that the mon ku are the creation of the Passion, Hoh.

**Rules**

The mon ku are incredibly fast, and love playing tricks on unwary travelers. If attacked, the mon ku retreat into the trees, hurling insults over their furry little shoulders in their strange monkey language.

## MU GU

**Attributes**

|                |                |                |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>DEX:</b> 13 | <b>STR:</b> 27 | <b>TOU:</b> 20 |
| <b>PER:</b> 7  | <b>WIL:</b> 8  | <b>CHA:</b> 8  |

**Characteristics**

|                                                           |                             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Initiative:</b> 14                                     | <b>Physical Defense:</b> 15 |
| <b>Actions:</b> 5                                         | <b>Spell Defense:</b> 15    |
| <b>Attack</b> (9): 22                                     | <b>Social Defense:</b> 16   |
| <b>Damage:</b><br>Bite (12): 39;<br>4 × Tentacles (8): 35 | <b>Physical Armor:</b> 15   |
|                                                           | <b>Mystic Armor:</b> 9      |
| <b>Death:</b> 169                                         | <b>Recovery Tests:</b> 9    |
| <b>Unconsciousness:</b> 150                               | <b>Knockdown:</b> Immune    |
| <b>Wound Threshold:</b> 25                                | <b>Movement:</b> 9*         |
| <b>Karma Points:</b> 8/8                                  | <b>Karma Step:</b> 8        |

\* Swimming Movement Rate

**Powers**Durability (13), Multi-Strike<sup>T</sup> (2): 15, Swimming<sup>S</sup> (13): 40, Tidal Splash (3): 30**Legend Award**

Fourteenth Circle (Group)

**Commentary**

This terrifying creature, as far as anyone knows, is the only one of its kind. Living within the cold depths of the Emerald Sea, this creature rises from time to time to devour entire ships. It has even been reported that it has attacked entire fleets.

The monster is reported as resembling a monstrous octopus with a large, circular mouth filled with sharp teeth where its beak should be, and having 100 tentacles. The total length of the creature is nearly 300 feet.

Legends speak of this terrible monster rising from the waves to create tsunamis that have destroyed entire cities along the coast of the Emerald Sea. Fortunately no sightings of the Mu Gu have been reported since the end of the Scourge. However, many ships have been lost at sea since then, so maybe it's just that none have survived to tell the tale.

**Rules**

The Mu Gu prefers to attack vessels directly rather than those who are aboard them. Once a ship is destroyed and pulled beneath the waves, the Mu Gu picks off the bodies one by one as a meal.

Sometimes the Mu Gu will cause an enormous tsunami with waves up to 40 feet high to destroy coastal settlements, knowing that the tide will bring it the bodies to feast on.

**Multi-Strike:** The Mu Gu can only use its Multi-Strike power with its Tentacle attacks.

## NETHERMONK

**Attributes**

|                |                |               |
|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| <b>DEX:</b> 7  | <b>STR:</b> 5  | <b>TOU:</b> 5 |
| <b>PER:</b> 10 | <b>WIL:</b> 10 | <b>CHA:</b> 5 |

**Characteristics**

|                                       |                             |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Initiative:</b> 7                  | <b>Physical Defense:</b> 10 |
| <b>Actions:</b> 2                     | <b>Spell Defense:</b> 13    |
| <b>Attack</b> (5): 12                 | <b>Social Defense:</b> 7    |
| <b>Damage:</b><br>Quarterstaff (4): 9 | <b>Physical Armor:</b> 0    |
|                                       | <b>Mystic Armor:</b> 6      |
| <b>Death:</b> 70*                     | <b>Recovery Tests:</b> 2    |
| <b>Unconsciousness:</b> 55*           | <b>Knockdown:</b> 5         |
| <b>Wound Threshold:</b> 9             | <b>Movement:</b> 6          |

\* Adjusted by Blood Magic

**Powers**Astral Sight<sup>T</sup> (6): 16, Drain Life (6): 16, Durability (7), Spellcasting (8): 18, Spell Matrix (8), Thread Weaving [Nethermancy]<sup>T</sup> (8): 18**Spells**

Nethermancy (Eighth Circle)

**Weapons**

Quarterstaff (Damage 9)

**Equipment**

Robes

**Legend Award**

Fifth Circle (1 per 2 PC)

**Commentary**

Nethermonks are a mysterious type of Namegivers that exist in underground caves, deep forests, and secluded wildernesses throughout Cathay. Scholars are uncertain if nethermonks are a unique race of Namegiver, or if they were once humans who twisted themselves into a new race through the use of dark and forbidden magic.

The nethermonk resembles a sickly, pale human, completely hairless, with its eyes and mouth sewn shut. Nethermonks wear dark, hooded robes; carry tall, knotted staffs; and travel only by night. Masters of Nethermancy, nethermonks feed by draining the life energy from living creatures through the use of powerful Blood Magic.

It is believed by most scholars that nethermonks belong to a type of religious order, devoted to the pursuit of immortality. However, very little has been learned about these dangerous beings, as any who encounter them are lucky to escape with their lives.

**Rules**

Nethermonks prefer to fight from a distance, using their Drain Life power.



## PENG

### Attributes

DEX: 7                      STR: 8                      TOU: 7  
PER: 6                      WIL: 4                      CHA: 6

### Characteristics

Initiative: 7                      Physical Defense: 8  
Actions: 1                      Spell Defense: 8  
Attack (3): 10                      Social Defense: 8  
Damage:                      Physical Armor: 3  
Bite (7): 15;                      Mystic Armor: 0  
Claws (6): 14

Death: 42                      Recovery Tests: 3  
Unconsciousness: 34                      Knockdown: 8  
Wound Threshold: 12                      Movement: 2/9\*

\* Flying Movement Rate

### Powers

Enhanced Senses [Sight] (4): 10

### Legend Award

Second Circle

### Commentary

Peng are gargantuan eagles with wingspans of up to 60 feet. They are typically only found flying over the Emerald Sea, diving to pluck small whales out of the ocean as they surface. Peng nest in the high mountain peaks throughout the many small islands that dot the region. These magnificent, but thankfully rare, birds have been known to be a danger to seagoing vessels as well. Legends tell of great heroes who would domesticate a peng and use them as mounts. No known Namegiver within living memory has accomplished such a task, though many have tried.

## PHOENIX

### Attributes

DEX: 15                      STR: 5                      TOU: 5  
PER: 15                      WIL: 15                      CHA: 15

### Characteristics

Initiative: 15                      Physical Defense: 19  
Actions: 3                      Spell Defense: 19  
Attack (3): 18                      Social Defense: 19  
Damage:                      Physical Armor: 0  
Bite (7): 12;                      Mystic Armor: 10  
2 × Claws (4): 9

Death: 124                      Recovery Tests: 2  
Unconsciousness: 101                      Knockdown: 5  
Wound Threshold: 9                      Movement: 4/10\*  
Karma Points: 20/20                      Karma Step: 15

\* Flying Movement Rate

### Powers

Absolute Heal (10): 25, Blinding Glare (5): 20, Burning Aura (20), Calm Others (5): 20, Durability (15), Endure Cold <sup>T</sup> (10): 15, Enhanced Senses [Sight] (4): 19, Fire Trail (5): 20, Locate Target (5): 20, Magic Drain (5): 20, Spellcasting (10): 25, Thread Weaving [Elementalism] <sup>T</sup> (6): 21, Thread Weaving [Wizardry] <sup>T</sup> (10): 25

### Spells

Elementalism (Sixth Circle), Journey to Life

### Loot

Phoenix Feather, worth 4D10 × 100 gold pieces (worth Legend Points).

### Legend Award

Eleventh Circle (Group)

### Commentary

The phoenix is a large bird of immense wisdom and intelligence. Some even suggest that phoenixes rival the dragons in intellect, though none would say so to a dragon's face. Their plumage is comprised of fire-colored feathers of red and orange, and some have yellow on their long, flowing tail feathers. Their average size is about four feet in height with a wingspan of just over eight feet. Phoenixes can be found in the mountains near water sources such as lakes and rivers, where they nest in the highest branches of the tallest evergreens.

### Rules

It is well known that the phoenix is immortal, perishing every 500 years to be reborn in flames. Phoenixes are also renowned for their healing powers.



## Pixiu

### Attributes

DEX: 9                      STR: 13                      TOU: 10  
PER: 11                      WIL: 9                      CHA: 7

### Characteristics

Initiative: 9                      Physical Defense: 12  
Actions: 2                      Spell Defense: 15  
Attack (5): 14                      Social Defense: 10  
Damage:                      Physical Armor: 6  
Bite (3): 16;                      Mystic Armor: 5  
Claws (2): 15; Horns (5): 18

Death: 84                      Recovery Tests: 5  
Unconsciousness: 72                      Knockdown: 14  
Wound Threshold: 15                      Movement: 9  
Karma Points: 5/5                      Karma Step: 5

### Powers

Battle Shout [Roar] <sup>S</sup> (5): 12, Charge (5), Durability (5), Enhanced Senses [Sight] (2): 13, Gold Sense <sup>T</sup> (5): 16, Low-Light Vision

### Loot

Various loot from victims

### Legend Award

Fifth Circle (1 per 2 PC)

### Commentary

The pixiu resembles a lion with great, brightly colored, feathered wings and ram horns atop its skull. The beast lives in remote regions, typically forested hills, where it hoards treasure—usually in a cave—that it has acquired from its victims. The pixiu lusts after silver and gold, and it has the ability to sense these precious minerals from far away. These creatures have been known to attack travelers carrying as little as one silver piece. It is believed that magicians originally created the pixiu, though it is uncertain as to why. Some scholars argue that they were designed to guard personal vaults, while others believe they were created to hunt for silver and gold, much in the same way that pigs are used to hunt truffles. However, whatever the reason, the pixiu is a very deadly creature, and most travelers know to throw down all of their gold and silver before attempting to flee from one.



## POH

## Attributes

DEX: 7 STR: 11 TOU: 9  
PER: 5 WIL: 7 CHA: 6

## Characteristics

**Initiative:** 8 **Physical Defense:** 10  
**Actions:** 1 **Spell Defense:** 10  
**Attack (S):** 12 **Social Defense:** 12  
**Damage:** **Physical Armor:** 0  
Bite (7): 18; **Mystic Armor:** 7  
Claws (5): 16; Horns (10): 21  
**Death:** 68 **Recovery Tests:** 4  
**Unconsciousness:** 58 **Knockdown:** 12  
**Wound Threshold:** 14 **Movement:** 8

## Powers

Durability (3), Enhanced Senses [Listen] (2): 7, Great Leap<sup>S</sup> (5): 12, Hunting<sup>S</sup> (5): 12, Silent Walk<sup>S</sup> (5): 12, Sprint<sup>S</sup> (2), Tracking<sup>S</sup> (5): 12

## Legend Award

Fifth Circle

## Commentary

With the teeth and claws of a tiger, the body of a horse, and the horn of a unicorn, the poh is one of the most feared and respected hunters that can be found in the Land of the Gar. To the gar, capturing and taming a poh for a mount is one of the greatest acts of courage; anyone doing so is granted a special place of honor among his tribe. The poh typically hunts tigers and leopards but has also been known to make a meal out of the occasional stray traveler. The poh typically travel in packs, hunting together in an uncanny, systematic way. They can be found in the plains or in the mountains.

## RIVER DOLPHIN

## Attributes

DEX: 8 STR: 9 TOU: 7  
PER: 7 WIL: 5 CHA: 6

## Characteristics

**Initiative:** 9 **Physical Defense:** 11  
**Actions:** 1 **Spell Defense:** 10  
**Attack (2):** 10 **Social Defense:** 8  
**Damage:** **Physical Armor:** 3  
Ram (3): 12 **Mystic Armor:** 1  
**Death:** 42 **Recovery Tests:** 3  
**Unconsciousness:** 34 **Knockdown:** Immune  
**Wound Threshold:** 12 **Movement:** 8\*

\*Swimming Movement Rate

## Powers

Charge (3), Locate Target (3): 10, Swimming<sup>S</sup> (3): 12

## Legend Award

Second Circle

## Commentary

Found in the freshwater rivers of Cathay, the river dolphins are honored by Cathayans, who view them as guardians of the Namegivers. Indeed, many stories tell of how a river dolphin saved a drowning child or rescued a fisherman from a dangerous beast. Hunting a river dolphin is considered dishonorable, and in many regions the practice has been outlawed.

## SCAVA BIRD

## Attributes

DEX: 7 STR: 9 TOU: 9  
PER: 6 WIL: 4 CHA: 4

## Characteristics

**Initiative:** 7 **Physical Defense:** 8  
**Actions:** 2 **Spell Defense:** 8  
**Attack (S):** 12 **Social Defense:** 6  
**Damage:** **Physical Armor:** 5  
Bite (5): 14; **Mystic Armor:** 0  
Claws (2): 11  
**Death:** 68 **Recovery Tests:** 4  
**Unconsciousness:** 58 **Knockdown:** 9  
**Wound Threshold:** 14 **Movement:** 3/9\*

\*Flying Movement Rate

## Powers

Durability (3), Enhanced Senses [Sight] (5): 11

## Legend Award

Third Circle (1 per 2 PC)

## Commentary

The scava bird, so Named by the kur, is a terrifying scavenger of the Golden Desert. Resembling a two-headed vulture, the scava bird stands eight feet tall and has a wingspan of nearly 16 feet. Though it usually sates itself on the dead, the scava bird is not afraid to make its prey dead if need be. Fortunately scava birds rarely travel in flocks, though more than one might be attracted to the same food source. However, it is not in their nature to share, and more than one lucky traveler has escaped from scava birds fighting each other over him.

## SHENG

## Attributes

DEX: 11 STR: 16 TOU: 13  
PER: 8 WIL: 8 CHA: 7

## Characteristics

**Initiative:** 12 **Physical Defense:** 15  
**Actions:** 3 **Spell Defense:** 11  
**Attack (4):** 15 **Social Defense:** 10  
**Damage:** **Physical Armor:** 8  
2 × Claws (7): 23 **Mystic Armor:** 4  
Stinger (4): 20 (curse)  
**Death:** 156 **Recovery Tests:** 6  
**Unconsciousness:** 134 **Knockdown:** 18  
**Wound Threshold:** 19 **Movement:** 9  
**Karma Points:** 20/20 **Karma Step:** 15

## Powers

Call Scorpions (15): 23, Durability (15), Entrancement (5): 12, Locate Target (6): 14, Magic Drain (4): 12, Scorpion Talk (15): 23, Sheng's Curse (5): 13, Spellcasting (15): 23, Thread Weaving [Nethermancy]<sup>T</sup> (7): 15, Thread Weaving [Sorcery]<sup>T</sup> (14): 22, Thread Weaving [Wizardry]<sup>T</sup> (15): 23

## Spells

Nethermancy (Preserve, Cold Storage), Sorcery (Fourteenth Circle), Wizardry (Fifteenth Circle)

## Loot

Lair hoard worth 10,000 gold pieces (see Commentary)

## Legend Award

Fourteenth Circle (Group)

## Commentary

The legend of Sheng is only whispered among Cathayans. The tale speaks of a wealthy and powerful woman so beautiful that people wept when she passed. Her unspeakable beauty was only rivaled by her vanity. As she grew older and her beauty began to fade, Sheng grew intensely jealous of young, beautiful girls. Her jealousy drove her to begin murdering any girl whom she believed to be more beautiful than her. This rather subjective requirement soon grew to encompass all females. Her crimes offended the Passions, who eventually decided to put an end to her ways. They laid upon her a terrible curse, stripping her of her mortality by granting her eternal life, but cursing her with the lower half of a giant scorpion. Sheng's upper half is just as beautiful as it ever was, though her eyes are now a solid, dead black that can never blink. They placed her palace on a remote mountaintop, at the end of a labyrinth of canyons. It is said that the canyons are pocketed with caves filled with giant scorpions that attack anyone entering. Sheng's palace is believed to be filled with all of her riches—riches that she can never spend, but jealously guards. More than one Troubadour sings of ancient and powerful artifacts that Sheng supposedly keeps within the bowels of her prison. The Passions also filled the immense palace with 1,000 mirrors that repair themselves when shattered, so that no matter where Sheng looks she might forever gaze upon her hideousness. Sheng has mastered the ways of both the Sorcerer and the Wizard Disciplines, learning all of the spells. If her spells fail her, she still has her stinger, which injects not a poison, but a terrible curse. It is said that those stung by Sheng become scorpions themselves, to live out the rest of their days as her guardians in her great labyrinth. The legend of Sheng is true. She has grown powerful over the centuries and all spells of both the Wizard and Sorcerer Disciplines are hers to command. Her palace and the scorpion labyrinth are found deep in the Demon Gate Mountains. Her riches include no less than 10,000 gold pieces plus an assortment of magical items, including rare and unique ones. Her dimly lit palace contains many levels and has more than just her in it. Over the years Sheng has gathered a great deal of deadly creatures to keep her company. And in addition to the many mirrors, visitors will find the petrified statues of others who came before them, transformed by Sheng's Sorcerer magic.



## Rules

Sheng's only weakness is her vanity. If a male character speaks of her beauty she may keep them around, showering them with riches. These characters are never allowed to leave, but they will be kept alive as long as they make Sheng feel beautiful.

Females are killed without hesitation and without mercy. Sheng keeps an "art gallery" of all the female corpses she has collected since her imprisonment. She mutilates their bodies to make them appear hideous and horrifying before magically preserving them in poses that speak of frozen terror and pain.

**Call Scorpions:** The Call Scorpions power allows the creature to summon scorpions. The creature makes a Call Scorpions Test against the scorpion's Spell Defense. If the test succeeds, the scorpions sense the creature's call and attempt to make their way to the creature at their fastest Movement Rate. The power's range is equal to the Call Scorpions Rank  $\times$  20 in miles. Other than these changes, this power works exactly like the Call Animal Companions talent (see *Player's Guide*, p.63).

**Scorpion Talk:** The Scorpion Talk power allows the creature to communicate with scorpions and control them. The creature makes a Scorpion Talk Test against the scorpion's Spell Defense. If the test succeeds, the scorpions understand the creature and obey its instructions. Other than these changes, this power works exactly like the Animal Talk talent (see *Player's Guide*, p.60).

**Sheng's Curse:** If a character is stung by Sheng and survives the damage, he might succumb to the curse. The gamemaster rolls Sheng's Sheng's Curse Step against the character's Spell Defense. If Sheng is successful, the character painfully transforms into a giant scorpion, losing all intelligence. The transformation takes 1D6+2 rounds, during which the character can take no action, though the curse may be dispelled while the transformation still goes on. A character changed in this way is considered lost. Only the magic of a phoenix or dragon may change him back. These giant scorpions obey Sheng's every word, and she can summon them even from a great distance (up to 300 miles).

## SHIFTER

### Attributes

DEX: \* STR: \* TOU: 10  
PER: \* WIL: \* CHA: \*

### Characteristics

Initiative: \* Physical Defense: \*  
Actions: \* Spell Defense: \*  
Attack: \* Social Defense: \*  
Damage: \* Physical Armor: \*  
Mystic Armor: \*  
Death: 54 Recovery Tests: \*  
Unconsciousness: \* Knockdown: \*  
Wound Threshold: \* Movement: \*  
Karma Points: 10/10 Karma Step: 5

\* Same as current elemental form

### Powers

Manifest 4

### Legend Award

Fourth Circle (1 per 2 PC)

### Commentary

The shifter is a type of formless energy that can inhabit and animate any of the five elements: air, fire, earth, water, or wood. Before the shifter can attack—or be attacked—it must first "possess" an area of air, fire, earth, water, or wood. When it does so, it assumes the characteristics of a Strength rating 4 elemental spirit of the appropriate type (see *Gamemaster's Guide*, p. 214). However, the shifter is not a true spirit, so it cannot be banished.

## Rules

A shifter has no characteristics of its own except for Toughness, Death Rating, Karma Points, and Karma Step. When inhabiting an element, the shifter actually has two sets of attributes: its true rating and its elemental spirit rating. If, while in the form of an elemental spirit, the elemental spirit form is destroyed, the shifter can simply rematerialize as another elemental spirit. Each time the shifter "possesses" an element, it costs it 1 Karma Point. If it has no Karma, it cannot rematerialize. Because of this, shifters rarely use Karma on Action Tests.

If, while in its elemental spirit form, a shifter suffers a Wound, its true self takes that damage as well. This is the only known way a shifter can be destroyed.

## SNOW LEOPARD

### Attributes

DEX: 7 STR: 4 TOU: 3  
PER: 3 WIL: 5 CHA: 3

### Characteristics

Initiative: 7 Physical Defense: 10  
Actions: 1 Spell Defense: 4  
Attack (3): 10 Social Defense: 4  
Damage: Physical Armor: 0  
Claws (2): 6 Mystic Armor: 1  
Death: 26 Recovery Tests: 1  
Unconsciousness: 17 Knockdown: 5  
Wound Threshold: 6 Movement: 8

### Powers

Climbing S (3): 10, Endure Cold <sup>T</sup> (5): 8, Enhanced Senses [Sight] (2): 5,  
Great Leap <sup>S</sup> (3): 10, Low-Light Vision, Silent Walk <sup>S</sup> (3): 10

### Legend Award

First Circle

### Commentary

Lurking in Cathay's many mountain ranges, the snow leopard is a fierce predator. However, it is much smaller than its western cousin, weighing only 120 pounds on average.

## VA

### Attributes

DEX: 7 STR: 5 TOU: 5  
PER: 7 WIL: 4 CHA: 3

### Characteristics

Initiative: 7 Physical Defense: 10  
Actions: 1 Spell Defense: 10  
Attack (3): 10 Social Defense: 4  
Damage: Physical Armor: 0  
Bite (1): 6 (poison); Mystic Armor: 0  
Claws (2): 7  
Death: 34 Recovery Tests: 2  
Unconsciousness: 26 Knockdown: 5  
Wound Threshold: 9 Movement: 2/9\*

\* Flying Movement Rate

### Powers

Enhanced Senses [Sight] (2): 9, Poison [SD 10; Step 7 Damage; 3 rounds]

### Legend Award

Second Circle

### Commentary

The va is a large bird of prey, half reptile and half raptor, the size of a vulture. It has feathered wings, a long neck like a snake, and a long, forked tongue. The creature also has a long, serpent-like tail, doubling its length.

## VAK

### Attributes

DEX: 4 STR: 9 TOU: 8  
PER: 3 WIL: 6 CHA: 3

### Characteristics

Initiative: 3 Physical Defense: 6  
Actions: 1 Spell Defense: 4  
Attack (2): 6 Social Defense: 7  
Damage: Physical Armor: 4  
Horns (2): 11; Mystic Armor: 2  
Kick (3): 12  
Death: 46 Recovery Tests: 4  
Unconsciousness: 39 Knockdown: 10  
Wound Threshold: 13 Movement: 8

### Powers

Enhanced Senses [Listen, Smell] (2): 5

### Legend Award

First Circle

### Commentary

This shaggy-haired bovine is found throughout the Five Kingdoms as well as the Land of the Gar. It is prized for its meat, milk, and labor usage.



# SPIRITS

## SAND SPIRIT (SAMPLE EARTH SPIRIT)

### Attributes

DEX: 8 STR: 11 TOU: 12  
PER: 6 WIL: 8 CHA: 4

### Characteristics

Initiative: 9 Physical Defense: 18  
Actions: 2 Spell Defense: 15  
Attack (8): 16 Social Defense: 13  
Damage: Physical Armor: 7  
Fist (5): 16 Mystic Armor: 8  
Death: 62 Recovery Tests: 6  
Unconsciousness: 55 Knockdown: 19  
Wound Threshold: 18 Movement: 6/5\*  
Karma Points: 16/16 Karma Step: 11

\* Movement Rate when physically manifested

### Powers

Aid Summoner (8), Astral Sight <sup>T</sup> (8): 14, Avoid Blow <sup>T</sup> (8): 16, Detect True Element (8), Engulf (8): 16, Manifest, Manipulate Element (8): 16, Share Knowledge (8), Spear (8): 19, Spellcasting (8): 14, Thread Weaving [Elementalism] <sup>T</sup> (8): 14

### Spells

Air Blast 17, Earth [Sand] Blend 15, Earth Darts 14

### Legend Award

Eighth Circle (1 per 2 PC)

### Commentary

The sand spirit is found in the Desert of Swallowed Tears. Utterly formless, the sand spirit is somehow able to manipulate sand so it can manifest a body. It usually forms as a swirling torso with a humanoid upper body, sometimes with four or even six arms. It rises from the sands to a height of 15 feet. It is unclear where the sand spirit comes from or what its motivations are, or whether or not it's truly a spirit, though scholars have their theories. The most popular is that the sand spirits live off of the True elements that are being mined from the Pillared Cities, and that they are attacking the merchants in an effort to get them to stop. Opponents argue that the sand spirits never seem to attack ships docked at the cities, and that those theories are nothing more than an effort to victimize the merchants by their enemies, who fear their growing wealth and power. The truth remains a mystery.

### Rules

Sand Spirits are Strength Rating 8 earth spirits that can only manifest in sand. Sand spirits attack merchant vessels on sight, and most sailors who ride the waves of the Desert of Swallowed Tears have had an encounter with one at one time or another. Due to their sandy bodies, sand spirits are not vulnerable to wood. Instead, their sandy bodies harden easily.

## NEW SPIRIT POWER: POSSESSION (OBJECT)

**Step:** WIL+Strength Rating **Action:** Standard

The spirit makes a Possession (Object) Test versus the object's Spell Defense, usually 2 for non-magical items. If the test is successful, the spirit can control the object for a number of minutes equal to the spirit's Strength Rating, causing it to fly and even strike targets in the physical plane. The spirit makes an Attack Test with the object against the target, and the inanimate object does damage as if it were an improvised weapon + spirit's Strength Step. The object can be destroyed; the gamemaster decides the Health rating and Barrier rating if any an object has. If the object is destroyed, the spirit is expelled from the object. A spirit can only use this power a number of times per day equal to their Strength Rating.



**Manifestation Restriction:** Sand spirits require the presence of sand to manifest.

**Sandy Body:** Because their bodies are made of sand, sand elementals absorb water attacks and quickly harden. Decrease the result level to inflict an Armor-Defeating Hit on sand elementals by one level (from Excellent to Good, for example) if the attack is made with a water-based weapon or spell.

## SPECTRAL ANCESTOR (SAMPLE ALLY SPIRIT)

### Commentary

The spectral ancestor is a tortured spirit that has been denied passage to the afterlife until it has regained its honor. Unfortunately for Cathayans, the spectral ancestor most often needs help in order to accomplish this.

### Rules

The ancestor seeks out one whom it believes can help it accomplish its mission and haunts this unlucky individual until he agrees to help. If the character attempts to fight the spectral ancestor or otherwise drive it away, it will attack.

Spectral ancestors are tireless in their pursuit for eternal rest. Once chosen, it is often best for the character to do what he can to help or else have to forever deal with the poltergeist, sometimes at the most inopportune times.

Spectral ancestors are ally spirits with a Strength Rating equal to the Circle the ancestor had when he died, with a minimum of Strength Rating 1 for non-adepts. These ally spirits have lost the Manifest power and cannot actively materialize in the physical plane. All spectral ancestors have the Possession (Object) power instead, which works like the Possession power except that it works only on inanimate objects. Usually the spectral ancestor uses this power against the person it haunts to frighten or hurt the one it is haunting to goad them into doing the spectral ancestor's bidding. If the spectral ancestor is left unheeded, the spirit becomes more malicious with its use of the Possession (Object) power. For example, possessing the character's weapon in combat and attacking him, making him suddenly defenseless.

Spectral ancestors cannot learn the Manifest or Possession power.





CHAPTER EIGHT

# DRAGONS OF CATHAY

*You can trust a dragon.  
As long as you observe proper etiquette.*

• CATHAYAN PROVERB •



*In the brief time I had to prepare for my journey to Cathay, I tried to gather as much material as possible about the Five Kingdoms. The Royal Library of Throal conveniently close, I ordered copies of every treatise they had about the East. I enclose what they handed to me. It was not particularly helpful in day-to-day business, I must say...*

—Daylen Jagaro, Merchant of Bartertown

## CATHAY DRAGONS

*To the merchant Daylen Jagaro of Bartertown.  
The enclosed document, compiled on your request, contains information about the lands of Cathay. It was transcribed by Tiabdjinn the Knower, one of our library's scribes, from a conversation with the common dragon known as Vasdenjas. The entire work covers many more pages, detailing dragons in general, which surely are of no concern to you. The enclosed excerpts remain unpublished, as they were of no concern to Barsaivians until recently, due to Cathay's borders being closed to the West.*

*Should you be interested in the entire document, please contact me, but consider that additional work required would incur an additional cost.*

—Ela Pono, Apprentice Archivist of the Royal Library

**I**n the lands to the east of Barsaive, far across the Aras Sea and far beyond the borders of Indrisa, are dragons as different from western dragons as day is from night. These dragons of far Cathay are the Dragons of the Wind. When the hatchlings of Dayheart chose their domains, one pair chose the endless blue sky. They traveled to the east and used the clouds to build their immense palaces and lairs.

To the people of the eastern lands, they are known as the “celestial ones,” the “masters of wind and storm,” and “kings of rain.” The people of Barsaive call them Cathayan Dragons—a far more respectful name than “common,” wouldn’t you say, Tiabdjinn? It seems the Young Races of Barsaive are apparently more reverent towards exotic, foreign beings than to the wonders living in their own lands.

## ON THE FORM OF CATHAYAN DRAGONS

Cathayan dragons are similar in appearance to leviathans in that they have no wings and long, sinuous bodies, but the similarities end there. Cathayan dragons have small, iridescent scales in a variety of colors. The most common is green with gold highlights, but blue, red and predominantly gold are also known. They have a fringe of whiskers along the chin and back of the head, as well as a pair of handsome horns. Cathayan dragon limbs are not the tiny, weak things possessed by leviathans, but quite well developed.

In fact, the forelimbs of Cathayan dragons have considerable dexterity. I have seen a wind-dragon hold a delicate vase in its claws without so much as chipping it. I suspect their love of fine and delicate things has helped to cultivate this careful sense of touch. Cathayan dragons

likewise have sharp senses of sight and smell, having large eyes and even larger nostrils compared to us western dragons.

*Your pardon, Master, but how does a Cathayan dragon fly if they have no wings?*

I was coming to that. You are so impatient, you small folk.

Cathayan dragons swim through the air by magic as the leviathans do, though much more gracefully. They tuck their legs up close to their bodies and move with an undulating motion, allowing them to fly quite quickly. While western dragons appear to float aloft in the sky when they fly, Cathayan dragons are not so sedate, constantly moving about, swirling through the air, a testament to a mastery of the winds undisputed among dragons.

Cathayan dragons love the freedom of the air, so they have their lairs in high places exposed to the air, such as mountain peaks. Many Cathayan dragons use elemental magic to sculpt “cloud islands” high above the earth, lairs the likes of which are unheard of in Barsaive or anyplace else in the world! Cathayan dragon lairs are usually elaborate structures, unlike the simple network of caves associated with most western dragons. The Namegivers who serve these dragons build them great palaces and halls and help to see to their comfort, and the process of building often goes on and on as each dragon continues to modify its home over the centuries. Personally, I find all of the decoration and delicate building excessive, but at least the Cathayan dragons and their creations are appreciated by the Young Races in their domains, very much so in fact.

## ON SERVANTS (AND SLAVES)

The Young Races in Cathay give dragons the reverence we deserve. They respect the wisdom, age and magical power of the Cathayan dragons, and consider them close to the Passions in terms of respect. (A considerable error, confusing a dragon with something as ... flighty as a Passion, but still, it’s the thought that counts.)

Most Cathayan dragons have Namegiver servants and slaves rather than drakes, and seem to prefer it that way. Most of the Young Races in that part of the world consider it a great honor to be taken into the home of a dragon. Many of the heroes and legends of distant Cathay and the Lands of the East have been taught by wind-dragons, or inspired by them in the very least. For example, there is the tale of Mi Ling, the Dragon’s Daughter.

In the land of Cathay, long, long ago, there lived a human champion by the Name of Feng Po, who was somewhat akin to what you might call a Swordmaster; a daring Warrior greatly skilled with a blade. Feng Po fought many creatures and explored many places. While traveling into the highest mountains in the land, he chanced upon a wondrous palace, the likes of which he had never seen. Entering the palace, he found few people in its vast halls and rooms. The first person he encountered was a beautiful woman, who looked at Feng Po, such a strong and dashing human, with great admiration in her eyes.

She told Feng Po that her Name was Mi Ling. She had lived her entire life to that point in the palace, which belonged to the great dragon Luung. Except for the palace servants, Mi Ling had never before seen another human, and she was quite taken with Feng Po.

Just then, the master of the palace chose to appear. The great dragon Luung filled the great hall and towered over Mi Ling and Feng Po. The daring hero found himself struck with fear at the appearance of the mighty dragon, who asked why Feng Po violated the privacy of his palace. Fortunately for him, Feng Po kept his wits about him and remained polite and showed the master of the palace the proper respect. (A lesson other Namegivers in Barsaive would do well to learn!) He apologized most abjectly for entering the dragon’s home unbidden, and requested the right of guestship in the palace, as the high mountains were harsh and night was fast closing in. Ever the gracious host, Luung agreed and invited the human to dine with him.

That night, a fine feast was presented for Luung, Feng Po and Mi Ling. Luung had assumed the form of a human, and the three dined in a



manner more lavish than Feng Po had ever imagined. As they ate, Feng Po told tales of his travels and adventures, and Mi Ling's admiration for him grew and grew. The hero also found himself increasingly drawn to Mi Ling's flower-like beauty. By the end of the evening, Feng Po asked the dragon for permission to court the beautiful lady.

"If you would court my daughter," the great dragon said, "you must prove yourself worthy." Luung tested Feng Po with many strenuous challenges, from obtaining a majestic pearl from the depths of the sea, to learning and committing to memory a library of ancient lore. After many tests and trials that have become legends among his people, Feng Po proved himself to the Dragon Master of the Wind and married Mi Ling, giving rise to a great family line in his homeland.

*Was Mi Ling truly a dragon, then? If she was Luung's daughter ...*

A figure of speech, of course. As if a great dragon—from any land—would allow a true child of dragon-kind to marry and mate with a human! Why, the very thought is ridiculous! The truth of this is based on ancient Cathayan dragon traditions handed down from a time long since past. Where dragons of some regions of the world chose to enslave Namegivers as servants, the dragons of Cathay followed a different course, that of adopting Namegivers as children from time to time. This practice allowed the Cathayan dragons to avoid the unpleasantness other dragons faced when their servants rebelled, as these adopted children grew to honor and respect their dragon elders in a way that has caused many dragons the world over to envy the wisdom of their Cathay brothers.

In fact, the appellation "Son (or Daughter) of a Dragon" is well-known among the great nobles and heroes of Cathay. Mi Ling's parents were loyal servants of Luung who died serving their master. The great dragon took the infant and raised her with the aid of his other servants, protecting her from the dangers of the outside world. When the time came for Mi Ling to be married, Luung made certain her potential husband was worthy of her. His honor demanded no less. Cathayan dragons are very honorable creatures.

*But did you not say that Cathayan dragons keep slaves?*

Ah, yes, the Throalic bias against slavery. Does doing so make Cathayan dragons without honor in your eyes? I see that it does. One day you and yours will learn that the world is not so simple, not so black and white, so good versus evil. Simply because the dragons of Cathay keep slaves is no reason to liken them to the slavers of the Theran Empire. For while the Therans capture slaves to keep their Empire alive and running, Cathayan dragons enslave only those who are deserving of such treatment.

It is true that many Cathayan dragons make slaves of members of the Young Races, but you will find that these slaves are thieves and brigands who sought to rob the dragon's home or otherwise stole something of value to the dragon. Rather than killing them outright as most dragons (or even some other Namegivers) would, some Cathayan dragons choose to enslave such criminals instead. The wrongdoers save their lives through serving and entertaining their dragon masters. If they please the dragon, these criminals may eventually earn their freedom as well, and leave considerably older and wiser than when they first entered their master's service. It is a considerable mercy on the part of the Cathayan dragons who are—as I said—most curious and honorable creatures.

## ON THE CULTURE OF CATHAYAN DRAGONS

Although they interact with the Young Races more often than most of my kind in Barsaive, Cathayan dragons have not left behind any of the traditions or beliefs of dragon-kind (as some maintain). Quite the contrary, they are staunch traditionalists in most ways, making even the most traditional dragons of Barsaive seem unconventional by contrast.





Cathayan dragons follow the same cycle of life as other dragons. Their eggs are cared for by the eldest of their kind, hatched and cared for while the young learn how to survive in the world. Cathayan dragons appear to mate quite infrequently, although that may simply be because so few of them make their way this far west of their homeland. I have not been to Cathay for quite some time, so perhaps Cathayan dragons are more populous in lands further east.

*What of the ancient tales from Cathay I have seen recorded in the Great Library, tales that speak of the Cathayan dragons descending from the stars long ago?*

Oh, those. Hyperbole on the part of the Cathayan dragons, I'm sure. When the first of them chose to settle in the Lands of the East, they flew there to take up residence. To the Young Races living in those lands at the time, the arrival of the Cathayan dragons, flying through the night sky, must have certainly made it appear as if they had descended from the heavens themselves. It is a tale the Cathayan dragons have done nothing to discourage, and even quietly encourage from what I have seen. Indeed, some in the east call Cathayan dragons "the starborn."

Adult Cathayan dragons choose lairs for themselves and usually gather servants to build and maintain their palaces. Many such dwellings are created using magic, indeed, some can exist only through the power of magic, as they take forms quite impossible to build otherwise. I have seen palaces of crystal, ice, water and mist built by Cathayan dragons. They are quite skilled artists, with a fine appreciation of beauty.

As part of that appreciation, Cathayan dragons collect many diverse items that capture their attention. The hoard of a Cathayan dragon is a sight to behold, containing artworks and fine things from far and wide. Cathayan dragons are less interested in the memories captured by a particular item—although they do collect such things—than in its sheer artistic value. They love beautiful and delicate things in particular. A Cathayan dragon collects things no other dragon would bother with: fine sculptures in jade and agate, painted scrolls, pottery more thin and delicate than a Namegiver skull. I know of few other dragons who could even hold such things without breaking them. Cathayan dragons not only gather them, they carefully organize and display their treasures in a variety of pleasing ways.

Creatures of strict protocol and tradition, Cathayan dragons adhere to the many Rites and Rituals we dragons use in our social encounters. They demand similar politeness and etiquette from other dragons as well as from the other Namegivers who choose to visit them. Should you (or anyone who reads this text) ever have the opportunity to speak with a Cathayan dragon, exercise your most polite and precise manners, and you may be invited to dinner as something other than the entrée.

I suspect the main reason Cathayan dragons are so frequently gracious to the Young Races is because of their fascination with stories and lore. Like myself and a few others of my kind, most Cathayan dragons are scholars and desire a sharing of knowledge. I suspect they would find many of the volumes in your Great Library most amusing, but Cathayan dragons prefer to hear stories from the mouths of others, rather than reading them from texts. There are many cases of Cathayan dragons taking in Namegivers to hear their tales and rewarding them if the story is good enough.

## ON THE MAGIC OF CATHAYAN DRAGONS

As part of their interest in lore and knowledge, nearly all Cathayan dragons study and practice the arts of magic. While not all dragons in lands like Barsaive choose to hone their natural magical abilities to greater levels, most Cathayan dragons do. They are particularly skilled in elementalism, especially the secrets of the winds. Cathayan

dragons know how to raise storms, command rain and create thick mists to hide their mountain homes, or cloud banks to conceal their sky castles.

They also use illusion magic, often weaving complex spells to enhance the appearance of their homes and conceal them from prying outsiders. When dealing with a Cathayan dragon, nothing is entirely as it seems. They delight in puzzles and complex mazes of words and images to fool the unwary.

More than most other dragons, Cathayan dragons traffic with various spirits, mostly air spirits they use as servants, messengers, spies and guards for their homes. Cathayan dragons summon and command other elemental spirits, particularly water spirits. I am quite sure elementals are used to create some of the more elaborate palaces I have seen and heard about. Cathayan dragons have little use for nethermantic spirits of any kind, and rarely bother with such things.

As is the case with all dragons, great Cathayan dragons practice magical skills far beyond those of their adult brethren. In fact, great dragons of Cathay are among the most magically skilled and powerful of all dragons, far surpassing the power even of some of Barsaive's great dragons. Like other great dragons, those of Cathay are skilled in the creation of drakes, and in assuming the form of other Namegivers. In fact, many great dragons of Cathay prefer to appear in Namegiver form when entertaining visitors. Though I have never dared ask their reasons for this, I believe they adopt this strategy to make themselves appear more like their Namegiver subjects than they truly are. While most western great dragons prefer to remain in dragon form, allowing our imposing size and stature to convey our strength and power to visitors, Cathayan dragons are supremely confident in their abilities and power, so they rarely resort to such tactics. They prefer lulling their subjects into a false sense of security, revealing the true scope of their power only as needed. Whether this approach has contributed to their success with their servants and subjects is uncertain.

*After completing his discourse on Cathayan dragons, Vasdenjas excused himself and left for a few hours in search of food. While he was out I compiled and read through his comments, preparing them to be eventually transcribed into the document you are now reading. As I read through my notes, I noticed something that made me quite curious, and I planned to inquire about it upon Vasdenjas' return.*

*The dragon returned a few hours later with a pair of his favorite delicacy, cave crabs. As Vasdenjas roasted one of the crabs, I asked him about some of his comments, specifically about his use of the term subjects when referring to the Namegivers who visit the great dragons of Cathay. His only response, which he made with a distinct tone of voice and mannerism that told me to pursue the topic no further, was that the relationships between Namegivers and dragons are not the same everywhere. Where the dragons of Barsaive tend to remain aloof from the affairs of Namegivers, the same is not necessarily the case elsewhere.*

## TYPICAL CATHAYAN DRAGON

### Attributes

DEX: 18 STR: 27 TOU: 24  
PER: 23 WIL: 21 CHA: 21

### Characteristics

|                      |                      |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| Initiative: 23       | Physical Defense: 22 |
| Actions: 5           | Spell Defense: 30    |
| Attack (S): 23       | Social Defense: 28   |
| Damage:              | Physical Armor: 30   |
| Bite (11): 38;       | Mystic Armor: 22     |
| 4 × Claws (8): 35    |                      |
| Death: 198           | Recovery Tests: 12   |
| Unconsciousness: 181 | Knockdown: 28        |
| Wound Threshold: 28  | Movement: 7/14*      |
| Karma Points: 40/40  | Karma Step: 15       |

\* Flying Movement Rate



### Powers

Armored Matrix <sup>T</sup> (11), Armored Scales (6), Dispel Magic (9): 30, Disrupt Fate (9): 30, Durability (11), Dragon Breath (9): 30, Dragonsight (7): 30, Dragonspeech (7): 30, Enhanced Matrix <sup>T</sup> (11), Enhanced Matrix <sup>T</sup> (11), Enhanced Matrix <sup>T</sup> (11), Fear (5): 26, Regeneration (5): 29, Spellcasting (12): 35, Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (11), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (11), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (11), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (11), Summoning (14): 35, Suppress Magic (9): 30, Thread Weaving [Discipline; see Rules] <sup>T</sup> (12): 35

### Spells

By Discipline (up to Eleventh Circle; see Rules)

### Loot

Scrolls, books, gems, artwork and precious metals worth about 300,000 silver pieces (counts as treasure worth Legend Points)

### Legend Award

Fifteenth Circle × 2 (Group)

### Commentary

Cathayan dragons generally measure about 50 feet in length, with their tail adding another 50 feet. These dragons come from Cathay, a land to the far east of Barsaive, beyond even the realm of the Theran Empire. The most sociable breed of dragons, Cathayan dragons often hire Namegiver servants, and have also been known to keep Namegiver slaves. They sometimes invite travelers to dine with them, to entertain the dragons with tales of other places and exciting times. Though sufficiently skilled entreaties can sometimes entice them to show off their treasures, Cathayan dragons allow no one to touch or take any of their truly valuable possessions.

### Rules

All Cathayan dragons can cast spells of one or more of the magician Disciplines. Most pursue either the Illusionist or Elementalism Disciplines, or (more rarely) both, though some also cast spells of the Wizard Discipline. Nethermancy is rarely followed among Cathayan dragons. Cathayan dragons who know only one Discipline know spells up to and including Eleventh Circle. Those who follow more than one Discipline know spells up to and including Eighth Circle.

## GREAT DRAGONS OF CATHAY

**S**everal great dragons call Cathay home. Aside from the Five Guardians, here are some of the most powerful:

### LUUNG

#### Attributes

DEX: 21      STR: 33      TOU: 28  
PER: 26      WIL: 27      CHA: 23

#### Characteristics

**Initiative:** 26      **Physical Defense:** 26  
**Actions:** 5      **Spell Defense:** 33  
**Attack (8):** 29      **Social Defense:** 30  
**Damage:**      **Physical Armor:** 38  
Bite (7): 40;      **Mystic Armor:** 32  
4 × Claws (5): 38  
**Death:** 259      **Recovery Tests:** 14  
**Unconsciousness:** 238      **Knockdown:** 34  
**Wound Threshold:** 31      **Movement:** 7/14\*  
**Karma Points:** 50/50      **Karma Step:** 18

\* Flying Movement Rate

#### Powers (Knacks)

Armored Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Armored Scales (10), Dispel Magic (5): 32, Disrupt Fate (5): 32, Dragon Breath (7): 34 (Friendly Fire), Dragonsight (5): 31, Dragonspeech (5): 31, Durability (15), Enhanced Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Enhanced Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Enhanced Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Fear (8): 31 (Awe), Feng-Lung Lore S (10): 36, Karma Cancel (6): 33 (Lend Karma), Kip <sup>T</sup> (5): 26, Lair Sense (6): 32 (Identify Intruder), Magic Lore S (10): 36, Phantom Strike <sup>T</sup> (8): 29, Regeneration (6): 34 (Regrowth), Spellcasting (15): 41, Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (13), Summoning (9): 36, Suppress Magic (5): 32, Thread Weaving [Elementalism] <sup>T</sup> (15): 41, Venom (5): 32, Wingbeat (6): 27

### Spells

Elementalism (Fifteenth Circle)

### Loot

Magical items (some quite ancient) and a hoard of coins and gems worth around 56,000 Cathayan gold pieces (worth Legend Points).

### Legend Award

Fifteenth Circle × 3 (Group)

### Commentary

An ancient and powerful great dragon, Luung has scales of a dark red with bright, golden highlights. His dark eyes are like deep wells of endless knowledge. Luung keeps his palace high in the Dragon Spine Mountains just to the north of Mount Xan. He maintains a company of many slaves and servants made up of various Namegiver races. The great dragon often courts guests, though to arrive without invitation risks discovering his rage. Luung once had a protégé, another great dragon whom he had raised since a hatchling, Named Ri Mao. Ri Mao was impatient, wishing to learn all at once the secrets Luung possessed. His hot temper and impetuousness illustrated to Luung that Ri Mao was not yet ready for the more esoteric knowledge of the dragon arts, and so Luung refused to reveal it, instead withholding the magic from Ri Mao until such a time that the younger dragon could demonstrate patience and wisdom. However, Ri Mao instead flew into a rage and left Luung's tutelage. Fearing that Ri Mao would one day return and attempt to steal the knowledge by force, Luung created the order of the Xan Monks to protect Mount Xan—a source of much of the great dragon's power. He was wise to do so, for years later Ri Mao returned with followers of his own—powerful adepts who fought to the death attempting to wrest Mount Xan from Luung's control. In the end, Luung and his monks were victorious, and Ri Mao was defeated. Sparing Ri Mao's life, Luung banished him from Cathay. Ri Mao fled to the island nation of Jih'Po, where he remains to this day, building a network of followers and making plans for his eventual, triumphant return. Luung is a keeper of magical arts; he covets lore, artifacts, and arcane knowledge. Duplicitous, arrogant, and exploitive—just like the rest of his kind—Luung does sincerely believe that the younger races are worthy of a destiny that is more than just being servants to his kind. Though his prime motivation for creating the order of the Xan Monks was to protect Mount Xan, he does take pride in the wise and enlightened lives his followers lead, believing that such an existence truly does alleviate the misery that the younger races tend to create for themselves through their petty and short-sighted motivations. The epitome of patience, Luung never makes a hasty decision, nor do any of his plans come to fruition within a short period of time. Indeed, most of his agents grow old and die before the plans they started manifest themselves. As such, very few of Luung's agents are aware of their master's intentions, and many, including the Xan Monks, are completely oblivious to being manipulated by the great dragon at all, instead viewing him as a selfless benefactor. Traditionally, Luung has limited his interests to the gathering of magic, but since the beginning of the War of Wu Xing, his ambitions have grown. In the past, the Five Guardians were the final arbiters over all matters concerning any long, drawn out conflict between Cathay's dragons, but with the preoccupation and division of the civil war, they have had less control. Luung has sensed this lapse of authority and has started attempting to gain control over more sites of magical power similar to Mount Xan, which known as the feng-lung. Luung has already set several plans in motion.

### THUNDER

#### Attributes

DEX: 20      STR: 33      TOU: 28  
PER: 26      WIL: 25      CHA: 24

#### Characteristics

**Initiative:** 25      **Physical Defense:** 24  
**Actions:** 5      **Spell Defense:** 33  
**Attack (8):** 28      **Social Defense:** 31  
**Damage:**      **Physical Armor:** 37  
Bite (7): 40;      **Mystic Armor:** 30  
4 × Claws (5): 38  
**Death:** 259      **Recovery Tests:** 14  
**Unconsciousness:** 238      **Knockdown:** 34  
**Wound Threshold:** 31      **Movement:** 7/14\*  
**Karma Points:** 50/50      **Karma Step:** 18

\* Flying Movement Rate

#### Powers (Knacks)

Armored Matrix <sup>T</sup> (13), Armored Scales (9), Battle Shout <sup>T</sup> (6): 30, Dispel Magic (5): 30, Disrupt Fate (5): 30, Dragon Breath [Lightning] (7): 32 (Friendly Fire, Lightning Bolt), Dragonsight (5): 31, Dragonspeech (5): 31, Durability (15), Enhanced Matrix <sup>T</sup> (13), Enhanced Matrix <sup>T</sup> (13), Enhanced Matrix <sup>T</sup> (13), Fear (8): 32 (Awe), Horror Lore S (5): 31, Karma Cancel (6): 31 (Lend Karma), Lair Sense (5): 31 (Identify Intruder), Regeneration (5): 33, Sonic Shriek (5): 38 (Deafening Voice), Spellcasting (13): 39, Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (13), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (13), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (13), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (13), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (13), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (13), Summoning (9): 34, Suppress Magic (5): 30, Thread Weaving [Elementalism] <sup>T</sup> (13): 39, Thread Weaving [Illusionism] <sup>T</sup> (13): 39, Venom (5): 30, Wingbeat (5): 25





### Spells

Elementalism (Thirteenth Circle; prefers sound-affecting spells like Thunderclap), Illusionism (Thirteenth Circle; prefers sound-affecting spells such as Bellow of the Thundras, Thundering Walls)

### Loot

Magical items (some quite ancient) and a hoard of coins and gems worth around 56,000 Cathayan gold pieces (worth Legend Points).

### Legend Award

Fifteenth Circle × 3 (Group)

### Commentary

Large and powerful, with deep, midnight blue scales and fiery red eyes, Thunder is an ancient great dragon who lairs in the jagged peaks of the Demon Gate Mountains. His voice is so deep and resonant that any non-dragons who hear him speak must cover their ears in order to prevent their ears from popping, or worse, their eardrums from rupturing. In times long gone by, peasants would leave offerings for Thunder so he would bring the rains to feed their crops. Since the war, many villages that once worshipped him as a deity have been destroyed, so Thunder is no longer called upon as he once was.

Unlike most of his kin, Thunder does not participate in dragon politics; he does not concern himself with the accumulation of power or prestige among his peers. Like the Five Guardians, who were chosen by the mighty Cong Chen to safeguard the Cathayan people and culture, Thunder concerns himself more with the matters of the younger races. However, unlike the Five Guardians, Thunder's motivations are tied inexorably with his ego; for a millennium Thunder was worshipped as a god—a station and esteem he enjoyed very much. In response to his worshippers' offerings, reverence, and endless flattery, he would prevent floods and drought with his powerful elemental magic. At first, the Five Guardians were content to allow him to play his little game, until he began dictating their politics. The Namegivers whom he protected began forsaking the Emperor, instead giving their sole allegiance to the great dragon. The Five Guardians demanded that he stop before his actions caused a civil war. Thunder refused. The people of the various villages and small towns stopped paying taxes to the Emperor, instead paying homage only to their protector. In response, the Emperor sent in a contingent of troops. When Thunder attempted to stop the soldiers, the Five Guardians overpowered him and prevented him from returning to the area for more than a decade. The peasants, believing Thunder had abandoned them, fell back under the firm control of the Empire.

When the Five Guardians finally allowed Thunder to return, humbled, he was forced to promise that he would never again attempt to undermine the Emperor's rule. He agreed, though ever since he has had a bitter view of the Guardians.

When the War of Wu Xing began, Thunder saw his chance to reclaim his past glory. However, the war quickly saw the destruction of most of the villages, and when he tried to intervene he was prevented by the Guardian, Shan, who defeated him in one-on-one combat. Since then, Thunder has been brooding over a way to defeat Shan so he might once again claim his place as a living god.

Interrupting these plans is Mount Tihan, the Horror-infested volcano in the Demon Gate Mountains. The mountain range, which Thunder considers his, has become a haven for many Horrors and their twisted constructs since the Scourge. He considers this a taint that must be removed.

Over the past few decades, Thunder has, on occasion, saved Namegivers from a certain death and brought them back to his lair in the Demon Gate Mountains to become part of his small army of followers. These worshippers are trained as adepts and sent out into the countryside to slay Horrors. Thunder demands strict obedience and reverence from his followers, whom he calls "the Children of Thunder." Though most are honored to be chosen by a great dragon to become a follower, a few have made the terrible mistake of offending his pride by requesting to be returned to family. Those unfortunates have served as grim reminders that dragons enjoy the occasional Namegiver snack.

### Rules

Thunder possesses the following Dragon Power knacks.

**Deafening Voice Dragon Power Knack:** A dragon using this talent knack can use the Sonic Shriek power to cause damage to the ears of living targets rather than brittle objects. The dragon makes a Sonic Shriek Test and compares the result against the Spell Defense (increased by +10) of anyone within 24 yards/12 hexes. If the test succeeds, and the target has no protection for its ears (even covering them with its hands counts), the target takes a Wound and Damage equal to its Wound Threshold as its ears drums pop and possibly rupture and bleed. The target suffers a -5 Action Test penalty until the end of the round and is deafened for Step 5 rounds, adding +5 to the Detection Difficulty of any hearing-based Perception Test he makes. Dragons are immune to this power.

**Lightning Bolt Dragon Power Knack:** With this knack, the dragon breathes a line or bolt of electricity at a single target, rather than an arc. The Strain cost of a Lightning Bolt is half the normal cost (round up) and it causes normal Dragon Breath damage to its target. A dragon can use this knack to strike at multiple targets in one attack with individual lightning bolts, as long as all intended targets are within 50 yards/25 hexes. The dragon uses the knack as described, but takes an additional 3 Strain Points for each additional target beyond the first.



# WHITE LOTUS

| Attributes           |                      |         |
|----------------------|----------------------|---------|
| DEX: 18              | STR: 35              | TOU: 30 |
| PER: 24              | WIL: 24              | CHA: 25 |
| Characteristics      |                      |         |
| Initiative: 23       | Physical Defense: 22 |         |
| Actions: 5           | Spell Defense: 31    |         |
| Attack (10): 28      | Social Defense: 33   |         |
| Damage:              | Physical Armor: 39   |         |
| Bite (7): 42;        | Mystic Armor: 29     |         |
| 4 × Claws (5): 40    |                      |         |
| Death: 269           | Recovery Tests: 15   |         |
| Unconsciousness: 248 | Knockdown: 36        |         |
| Wound Threshold: 33  | Movement: 7/14*      |         |
| Karma Points: 50/50  | Karma Step: 18       |         |

| Powers (Knacks)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| Armored Matrix <sup>T</sup> (10), Armored Scales (9), Dispel Magic (5): 29, Disrupt Fate (5): 29, Dragon Breath (6): 30 (Flame Ball), Dragonsight (6): 30, Dragonspeech (6): 30, Durability (15), Enhanced Matrix <sup>T</sup> (10), Enhanced Matrix <sup>T</sup> (10), Fear (9): 34 (Paralyzing Gaze, Terror), Feng-Lung Lore <sup>S</sup> (5): 29, Karma Cancel (6): 30, Lair Sense (6): 30 (Identify Intruder), Magic Lore <sup>S</sup> (5): 29, Regeneration (6): 36, Spellcasting (12): 36 (Anchored Spell, Maintain Spell Threads), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (10), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (10), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (10), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (10), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (10), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (10), Summoning (11): 35, Suppress Magic (5): 29, Thread Weaving [Elementalism] <sup>T</sup> (10): 34, Thread Weaving [Illusionism] <sup>T</sup> (9): 33, Thread Weaving [Sorcery] <sup>T</sup> (9): 33, Venom (5): 29, Wingbeat (5): 23 |  |

| Spells                                                                          |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Elementalism (Tenth Circle), Illusionism (Ninth Circle), Sorcery (Ninth Circle) |

| Loot                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Magical items (some quite ancient) and a hoard of coins and gems worth around 56,000 Cathayan gold pieces (worth Legend Points). |

| Legend Award                 |
|------------------------------|
| Fifteenth Circle × 3 (Group) |

**Commentary**

Slender and elegant, with luminous white scales and sky blue eyes, White Lotus lives high in the snow-capped peak of Spirit Mountain, found in the Phoenix Throne Mountains. Reclusive and mysterious, this mighty dragon has only a handful of tales about it. One such legend tells us of her duel long ago with another great dragon by the Name of Earthroot (see *Gamemaster's Companion*, p.128). Earthroot, a dragon powerful in the ways of Elementalism, sought to claim Spirit Mountain as his own. However, White Lotus had already claimed Spirit Mountain long ago, and so an epic battle ensued. Comparable in strength, the two great dragons soared through valleys and canyons, blasting apart stone with their fiery breath and powerful magic. After days of battling, White Lotus finally called upon powerful spells that brought down a large mountain peak upon her enemy. Trapped and badly wounded, Earthroot had no choice but to surrender. Forbidden to kill another of her kind without the express permission from the Five Guardians, White Lotus was forced to spare his life, for fear of retribution. She banished him from Cathay, and he fled to the occident, to the backwater province of Barsaive where he remains to this day.

Spirit Mountain is a place of great importance to White Lotus and is guarded aggressively. Though Cathayans revere the tall mountain peak as a sacred site, few know that it is a location of powerful magical energies. White Lotus guards this source of power jealously and has been known to kill trespassers without so much as a warning. This fierce territorialism is well known by Cathayans in the area, so only the ignorant or the very foolish ever brave its steep slopes.

Recently, the great dragon, Luung, has cast a covetous gaze upon the mountain, which has caused White Lotus to grow very defensive. A subtle power play has developed between the two, with many unwitting pawns caught in the middle. Typically a recluse, White Lotus has begun gathering contacts from amongst the younger races for what will no doubt be a very long and protracted struggle between the two great dragons. This is uncharacteristic of White Lotus and only done out of complete necessity. Believing the lesser Namegiver races to be inferior in every way, White Lotus at first expected her pawns to do her bidding without question. However, she soon discovered that a servant, if he believes himself to be appreciated, works much harder (and is thus much more valuable) than one who obeys her simply out of fear. Here Luung has a distinct and possibly critical advantage: whereas he is much more experienced and skilled in manipulating the younger races, White Lotus is still learning how to wield her powers of manipulation like a sharp blade rather than an unwieldy club.

In addition to gathering servants from among the younger races, White Lotus has begun creating drakes to assist her. As the process is difficult, she has only thus far been able to create four drakes. They are Named quite simply Yi, Er, San, and Si (one, two, three, and four), and are comprised of two males (Yi and San) and two females (Er and

Si). Obedient and loyal to a fault, the four drakes are often scattered throughout the Five Kingdoms working on the interests of their master.

# BLACK LOTUS

| Attributes           |                      |         |
|----------------------|----------------------|---------|
| DEX: 19              | STR: 32              | TOU: 27 |
| PER: 28              | WIL: 28              | CHA: 23 |
| Characteristics      |                      |         |
| Initiative: 24       | Physical Defense: 23 |         |
| Actions: 5           | Spell Defense: 37    |         |
| Attack (9): 28       | Social Defense: 29   |         |
| Damage:              | Physical Armor: 38   |         |
| Bite (7): 39;        | Mystic Armor: 35     |         |
| 4 × Claws (5): 37    |                      |         |
| Death: 254           | Recovery Tests: 13   |         |
| Unconsciousness: 233 | Knockdown: 33        |         |
| Wound Threshold: 29  | Movement: 7/14*      |         |
| Karma Points: 50/50  | Karma Step: 18       |         |

| Powers (Knacks)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| Armored Matrix <sup>T</sup> (10), Armored Scales (11), Camouflage (5): 33, Dispel Magic (5): 33, Disrupt Fate (5): 33, Dragon Breath (6): 34 (Smoke Cloud), Dragonsight (6): 34 (True Sight), Dragonspeech (10): 38, (Learn Language, Read Thoughts, Second Sight, Suggestion, Thought Probe), Durability (15), Enhanced Matrix <sup>T</sup> (10), Enhanced Matrix <sup>T</sup> (10), Fear (7): 30, Karma Cancel (5): 33, Lair Sense (8): 36 (Identify Intruder, Lair Mark, Lair Vision), Regeneration (6): 33, Spellcasting (11): 39 (Anchored Spell), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (10), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (10), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (10), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (10), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (10), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (10), Summoning (11): 39, Suppress Magic (5): 33, Thread Weaving [Elementalism] <sup>T</sup> (10): 38, Thread Weaving [Illusionism] <sup>T</sup> (9): 37, Thread Weaving [Sorcery] <sup>T</sup> (9): 37, Venom (5): 33, Wingbeat (5): 24 |  |

| Spells                                                                          |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Elementalism (Tenth Circle), Illusionism (Ninth Circle), Sorcery (Ninth Circle) |

| Loot                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Magical items (some quite ancient) and a hoard of coins and gems worth around 56,000 Cathayan gold pieces (worth Legend Points). |

| Legend Award                 |
|------------------------------|
| Fifteenth Circle × 3 (Group) |

**Commentary**

Sleek and powerful, with scales darker than a starless night and eyes that seem to burn a ghostly blue, Black Lotus is mostly seen flying high above the Dragon Spine Mountains, where he lairs in one of its mighty peaks. Black Lotus is White Lotus' elder brother. Like most dragon siblings, the two do not get along very well, and are constantly playing games on one another. Though harmless to each other, these games sometimes cause the deaths of their pawns.

The games usually involve getting a third party to successfully enter the other's territory without the other noticing. These games, though meant as a way to merely annoy and outwit one another, can sometimes be very serious for those involved. Both White Lotus and Black Lotus are arrogant and extremely proud creatures, even by a dragon's standards. This means that unwitting pawns of the siblings who are caught typically end up as lunch, or worse. Neither of the two can recall who started these games, but it is clear that it is Black Lotus who takes the most delight in them, and is clearly "winning." Always managing to somehow outwit his younger sister, Black Lotus has so far managed to have a Master Thief steal a priceless vase from her lair and replace it with a clay jug (with Black Lotus' inscription on the bottom); chopped down a tree from the slopes of Spirit Mountain, had it brought back to him, constructed a small wooden statue of her, and had it returned to the tree's stump; and, by far the most daring, sealed the entrance to her lair using powerful magic. For her part, White Lotus has managed to pull a couple things over on her older brother, but nothing, so far, that equals what he has managed to do to her.

Aside from pestering his sister, Black Lotus does not have much to occupy his time. He delights in games and often concocts brilliantly complex schemes that force the involvement of members of the younger races. Designed for his amusement, these elaborate adventures, which are often fatal to those involved, are usually completely unnecessary, though the participants never realize this. Sometimes, however, Black Lotus will create a truly high-risk game, where the stakes are the survival of an entire community, for example. Those who survive such ordeals are always granted great rewards for successfully amusing the great dragon, though this also marks them as "entertaining players" who will most likely be sucked back into his sometimes bizarre and always dangerous games.

The other great dragons, including the Five Guardians, view Black Lotus as slightly insane, though Black Lotus would simply tell you that he's lived too long. Boredom has always plagued him; he is incredibly brilliant, and the idea of gathering power or controlling others' destinies has never appealed to him. He has always been drawn to risks and chance. He loves not knowing the outcome, and, above all else, absolutely adores a good challenge.



Beyond his own amusement, Black Lotus' ambitions are limited to the occasional meal or nap. Like other dragons, he has a vast collection of treasures, though he does not collect them for his own pleasures, but rather as tools to be used to manipulate others. Once, he placed a large pile of gold and jewels at an equal distance between two villages that had a long history of antagonism with one another and then, while disguised as a dwarf, quickly told both communities about it, just to see what would happen. A small war between the two villages, costing dozens of lives, was the result, though to Black Lotus all it meant was a couple of weeks of diversion.

## THE FIVE GUARDIANS

**T**he Five Guardians are the most powerful dragons found in Cathay. Their role, position, and business with the Five Kingdoms is described in the **Lands of Cathay** chapter found on p. 28 (see the dragons' commentaries for individual page references), though their role stretches far into the past and they have guarded Cathay since its early beginnings, see the **History of Cathay**, p. 10. The Guardians' characteristics and abilities are listed below.

### FENG

| Attributes |         |         |
|------------|---------|---------|
| DEX: 21    | STR: 33 | TOU: 28 |
| PER: 26    | WIL: 25 | CHA: 24 |

| Characteristics      |                      |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| Initiative: 26       | Physical Defense: 25 |
| Actions: 5           | Spell Defense: 33    |
| Attack (8): 29       | Social Defense: 31   |
| Damage:              | Physical Armor: 37   |
| Bite (7): 40;        | Mystic Armor: 30     |
| 4 × Claws (5): 38    |                      |
| Death: 261           | Recovery Tests: 14   |
| Unconsciousness: 240 | Knockdown: 34        |
| Wound Threshold: 31  | Movement: 7/14*      |
| Karma Points: 50/50  | Karma Step: 18       |

\* Flying Movement Rate

| Powers (Knacks)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| Air Ward (5): 31 [see Rules], Armored Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Armored Scales (9), Dispel Magic (5): 30, Disrupt Fate (5): 30, Dragon Breath [Ice] (6): 31 (Hail Sphere, see Rules), Dragonsight (5): 31, Dragonspeech (5): 31, Durability (15), Endure Cold <sup>T</sup> (5): 33, Enhanced Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Enhanced Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Enhanced Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Fear (8): 32 (Awe), Karma Cancel (5): 30, Lair Sense (6): 32 (Identify Intruder), Regeneration (5): 33, Spellcasting (13): 39, Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Summoning (12): 37 [Prefers air spirits], Suppress Magic (5): 30, Thread Weaving [Elementalism] <sup>T</sup> (13): 39, Venom (5): 30 (Chilling Touch, see Rules), Wingbeat (6): 27 (Dust Cloud) |  |

| Spells                                                                         |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Elementalism (Fifteenth Circle; Prefers air-affecting and rain-causing spells) |

| Loot                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Magical items (some quite ancient) and a hoard of coins and gems worth around 56,000 Cathayan gold pieces (worth Legend Points). |

| Legend Award                 |
|------------------------------|
| Fifteenth Circle × 3 (Group) |

| Rules                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Feng possesses the following special power and dragon power knacks.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Air Ward:</b> The Air Ward power reduces the damage inflicted on the dragon from attacks utilizing any form of air, including those made by air-based weapons or spells. Other than this change, this power works like the Metal Ward talent (see <i>Player's Companion</i> , p.109).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Chilling Touch Dragon Power Knack:</b> Instead of causing damage, the Venom of a dragon with this knack makes the dragon's target becomes severely cold, freezing the victim in his tracks. Each round, the victim takes the Venom rank in Damage Points, and can take no action until the Chilling Touch is dispelled, or the character overcomes the effect by making a Willpower Test against the dragon's Venom step. No armor protects against this damage. Otherwise, the effects of this power last for 10 rounds as normal. |
| <b>Hail Sphere Dragon Power Knack:</b> Using Hail Sphere, a dragon can spit a pellet of ice that shatters into a sphere of hail shards on impact with its target, creating an effect similar to the Elementalist spell Blizzard Sphere. The sphere has a radius equal to half the range of the pellet, based on the Strain taken by the dragon. For example, a Hail Sphere with a range of 100 yards/50 hexes has a 50-yard/25-hex radius.                                                                                             |

The dragon makes a normal Spellcasting Test and compares the result to the Spell Defense of all targets within the radius of the hail sphere to determine who takes damage. Damage from a hail sphere attack continues to damage the targets each round as normal for Dragon Breath.

| Commentary                                                         |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Feng is described on p. 109 of the <b>Lands of Cathay</b> chapter. |

### FOR

| Attributes |         |         |
|------------|---------|---------|
| DEX: 20    | STR: 33 | TOU: 28 |
| PER: 26    | WIL: 24 | CHA: 25 |

| Characteristics      |                      |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| Initiative: 25       | Physical Defense: 24 |
| Actions: 5           | Spell Defense: 33    |
| Attack (8): 28       | Social Defense: 33   |
| Damage:              | Physical Armor: 37   |
| Bite (7): 40;        | Mystic Armor: 29     |
| 4 × Claws (5): 38    |                      |
| Death: 261           | Recovery Tests: 14   |
| Unconsciousness: 240 | Knockdown: 34        |
| Wound Threshold: 31  | Movement: 7/14*      |
| Karma Points: 50/50  | Karma Step: 18       |

\* Flying Movement Rate

| Powers                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Armored Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Armored Scales (9), Dispel Magic (5): 29, Disrupt Fate (5): 29, Dragon Breath (9): 33 (Flame Spout, Flame Ball, Friendly Fire, Smoke Cloud), Dragonsight (5): 31, Dragonspeech (5): 31, Durability (15), Enhanced Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Enhanced Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Enhanced Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Etiquette S (10): 35, Fear (10): 35 (Awe, Paralyzing Gaze, Terror), Fire Ward (5): 31 [see Rules], Fire Heal <sup>T</sup> (5): 29, Karma Cancel (5): 29, Lair Sense (6): 32 (Identify Intruder), Regeneration (5): 33, Spellcasting (15): 41, Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Summoning (13): 37 [Prefers fire spirits], Suppress Magic (5): 29, Thread Weaving [Elementalism] <sup>T</sup> (15): 41, Venom (5): 29 (Fire Touch, see Rules), Wingbeat (5): 25 |

| Spells                                                         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Elementalism (Fifteenth Circle; Prefers fire-affecting spells) |

| Loot                                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Magical items (some quite ancient) and a hoard of coins and gems worth around 56,000 Cathayan gold pieces (counts as treasure worth Legend Points). |

| Legend Award                 |
|------------------------------|
| Fifteenth Circle × 3 (Group) |

| Rules                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| For possesses the following special power and dragon power knack.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Fire Ward:</b> The Fire Ward power reduces the damage inflicted on the dragon from attacks utilizing any form of fire, including those made by fire-based weapons or spells. The dragon makes a Fire Ward Test against his Spell Defense. Other than this change, this power works like the Metal Ward talent (see <i>Player's Companion</i> , p.109).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Fire Touch Dragon Power Knack:</b> Instead of causing damage, the Venom of a dragon with this knack makes the dragon's target believe that he is burning on the inside. Each round, the victim takes the Venom Rank in Damage Points, and decreases his Initiative by -2 steps. No armor protects against this power. Once his Initiative Step is reduced to 1, the target can only writhe on the ground in pain. To shrug off the effects of this ability, the target must make a successful Willpower Test against the dragon's Venom step. Otherwise, the effects of this power last for 10 rounds as normal. |

| Commentary                                                        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| For is described on p. 109 of the <b>Lands of Cathay</b> chapter. |

### SHAN

| Attributes |         |         |
|------------|---------|---------|
| DEX: 21    | STR: 33 | TOU: 28 |
| PER: 26    | WIL: 26 | CHA: 26 |

| Characteristics   |                      |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| Initiative: 26    | Physical Defense: 25 |
| Actions: 5        | Spell Defense: 33    |
| Attack (8): 29    | Social Defense: 34   |
| Damage:           | Physical Armor: 37   |
| Bite (7): 40;     | Mystic Armor: 31     |
| 4 × Claws (5): 38 |                      |



**Death:** 261  
**Unconsciousness:** 240  
**Wound Threshold:** 31  
**Karma Points:** 50/50  
\* Flying Movement Rate

**Recovery Tests:** 14  
**Knockdown:** 34  
**Movement:** 7/14\*  
**Karma Step:** 18

#### Powers (Knacks)

Armored Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Armored Scales (9), Dispel Magic (5): 31, Disrupt Fate (5): 31, Dragon Breath (5): 31, Dragonsight (5): 31, Dragonspeech (5): 31, Durability (15), Earth Merge [see Rules], Earth Skin <sup>T</sup> (5): 33, Earth Ward (5): 31 [see Rules below], Empathic Sense <sup>T</sup> (8): 34 (Disassociate), Enhanced Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Enhanced Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Enhanced Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Fear (8): 34 (Awe), Gardening <sup>S</sup> (10): 36, Karma Cancel (5): 31, Lair Sense (6): 32 (Identify Intruder), Music [Composer] <sup>S</sup> (10): 36, Regeneration (5): 33, Spellcasting (15): 41, Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Stone Skin <sup>T</sup> (5): 33, Summoning (11): 37 [Prefers earth and wood spirits], Suppress Magic (5): 31, Thread Weaving [Elementalism] <sup>T</sup> (15): 41, Venom (5): 31, Wingbeat (6): 27 (Dust Cloud), Wood Skin <sup>T</sup> (5): 33

#### Spells

Elementalism (Fifteenth Circle; Prefers earth and wood-affecting spells)

#### Loot

Music compositions, and living art worth 56,000 Cathayan gold pieces (worth Legend Points).

#### Legend Award

Fifteenth Circle × 3 (Group)

#### Rules

Shan has the following special powers.

**Earth Merge:** Like Earthroot, Shan can move through the earth itself merging with earth and rock and traveling through it as easily as one might walk on land. In Cathay, she is the only dragon able to use this power.

**Earth Ward:** The Earth Ward power reduces the damage inflicted on the dragon from attacks utilizing any form of earth, including those made by earth-based weapons or spells and stone weapons. Other than this change, this power works like the Metal Ward talent (see *Player's Companion*, p. 109).

#### Commentary

Shan is described on p. 109 of the *Lands of Cathay* chapter.

## SHUI

#### Attributes

**DEX:** 19      **STR:** 34      **TOU:** 29  
**PER:** 25      **WIL:** 25      **CHA:** 25

#### Characteristics

**Initiative:** 24      **Physical Defense:** 23  
**Actions:** 5      **Spell Defense:** 32  
**Attack (8):** 27      **Social Defense:** 32  
**Damage:**      **Physical Armor:** 38  
     Bite (7): 41;      **Mystic Armor:** 30  
     4 × Claws (5): 39  
**Death:** 265      **Recovery Tests:** 14  
**Unconsciousness:** 244      **Knockdown:** 35  
**Wound Threshold:** 32      **Movement:** 7/12\*/14\*\*  
**Karma Points:** 50/50      **Karma Step:** 18

\* Swimming Movement Rate

\*\* Flying Movement Rate

#### Powers

Armored Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Armored Scales (9), Dispel Magic (5): 30, Disrupt Fate (5): 30, Dominate Beast (5): 30, Dragon Breath (4): 29, Dragonsight (5): 30, Dragonspeech (6): 31 (Animal Talk), Durability (15), Endure Cold <sup>T</sup> (5): 34, Enhanced Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Enhanced Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Enhanced Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Fear (7): 32 (Awe), Karma Cancel (5): 30, Lair Sense (6): 31 (Identify Intruder), Poison Resistance <sup>T</sup> (6): 35, Regeneration (5): 34, Spellcasting (14): 39, Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Summoning (12): 37 [Prefers water spirits], Suppress Magic (5): 30, Swimming <sup>S</sup> (6): 40, Thread Weaving [Elementalism] <sup>T</sup> (14): 39, Venom (5): 30, Water Breathing [see Rules], Water Ward (5): 30 [see Rules], Wingbeat (6): 25 (Tidal Wave, see Rules)

#### Spells

Elementalism (Fifteenth Circle; Prefers water-affecting spells)

#### Loot

Magical items (some quite ancient) and a hoard of coins and gems worth around 56,000 Cathayan gold pieces (worth Legend Points).

#### Legend Award

Fifteenth Circle × 3 (Group)

#### Rules

Shui possesses the following special powers and dragon power knack.

**Water Ward:** The Water Ward power reduces the damage inflicted on the dragon from attacks utilizing any form of water, including those made by water-based weapons or spells. Other than this change, this power works like the Metal Ward talent (see *Player's Companion*, p. 109).

**Tidal Wave Dragon Power Knack:** A dragon using this talent knack can furiously beat its wings and tail to cause a tidal wave to hit the nearby shore. To use the talent knack, a dragon must be completely submerged in water. The dragon sacrifices all of its standard actions to use this power. The wave extends for 24 yards /12 hexes in a 90-degree arc from the front of the dragon. Characters struck by the tidal wave must succeed at a Knockdown Test versus the Wingbeat Test result as normal. Any character who fails the Knockdown Test is Knocked Down and is swept up into current of the water. Attempts to get out of the current require a Swimming (21) Test (see *Player's Guide*, p. 102).

**Water Breathing:** Shui can breathe while completely submerged in water and is immune to drowning effects.

#### Commentary

Shui is described on p. 110 of the *Lands of Cathay* chapter.

## Tiet

#### Attributes

**DEX:** 21      **STR:** 34      **TOU:** 29  
**PER:** 24      **WIL:** 28      **CHA:** 21

#### Characteristics

**Initiative:** 26      **Physical Defense:** 25  
**Actions:** 5      **Spell Defense:** 31  
**Attack (8):** 29      **Social Defense:** 27  
**Damage:**      **Physical Armor:** 38  
     Bite (7): 41;      **Mystic Armor:** 33  
     4 × Claws (5): 39  
**Death:** 256      **Recovery Tests:** 14  
**Unconsciousness:** 244      **Knockdown:** 35  
**Wound Threshold:** 32      **Movement:** 7/14\*  
**Karma Points:** 50/50      **Karma Step:** 18

\* Flying Movement Rate

#### Powers (Knacks)

Armored Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Armored Scales (9), Dispel Magic (5): 33, Disrupt Fate (5): 33, Dragon Breath (6): 34 (Friendly Fire), Dragonsight (5): 29, Dragonspeech (5): 29, Durability (15), Enhanced Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Enhanced Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Enhanced Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Fear (8): 29 (Awe), First Impression <sup>T</sup> (7): 28, Gold Sense <sup>T</sup> (13): 37, Gon Ji Strategy <sup>S</sup> (10): 34, Impress <sup>T</sup> (7): 28, Karma Cancel (5): 33, Lasting Impression <sup>T</sup> (7): 28, Lair Sense (6): 30 (Identify Intruder), Metal Ward <sup>T</sup> (5): 29, Military Formations and Strategy <sup>S</sup> (10): 34, Regeneration (6): 35 (Regrowth), Spellcasting (15): 39, Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Spell Matrix <sup>T</sup> (15), Summoning (9): 37, Suppress Magic (5): 33, Tactics <sup>S</sup> (10): 34, Thread Weaving [Elementalism] <sup>T</sup> (15): 39, Venom (5): 33, Weapon Lore <sup>S</sup> (10): 34, Wingbeat (5): 26

#### Spells

Elementalism (Fifteenth Circle; Prefers metal-affecting spells)

#### Loot

Magical items (some quite ancient) and a hoard of coins and gems worth around 56,000 Cathayan gold pieces (worth Legend Points).

#### Legend Award

Fifteenth Circle × 3 (Group)

#### Commentary

Tiet is described on p. 110 of the *Lands of Cathay* chapter.



## CHAPTER NINE

# HORRORS OF CATHAY

*I never figured what's more numerous:  
raindrops or Horrors.*

• CHO PIN, HUMAN PHILOSOPHER •



Though Cathayans do not view the Horrors with the singular dread that westerners do, that does not make the Horrors in Cathay any less dangerous, cunning, or downright vile. The following are a few examples of Horrors found in Cathay and the surrounding regions.

## HORROR DESCRIPTIONS

### THE ANSHE

#### Attributes

DEX: 9      STR: 10      TOU: 11  
PER: 9      WIL: 11      CHA: 6

#### Characteristics

**Initiative:** 8      **Physical Defense:** 12  
**Actions:** 1      **Spell Defense:** 15  
**Attack (4):** 13      **Social Defense:** 11  
**Damage:**      **Physical Armor:** 7  
  Bite (4): 14      **Mystic Armor:** 10  
**Death:** 70      **Recovery Tests:** 5  
**Unconsciousness:** 61      **Knockdown:** 10  
**Wound Threshold:** 16      **Movement:** 4\*  
**Karma Points:** 16/16      **Karma Step:** 4

\* Swimming Movement Rate

#### Powers

Anshe's Embrace (4): 15, Corrupt Karma (4): 15, Durability (2), Horror Mark (6): 15, Sticky Body (4): 14, Swimming<sup>S</sup> (5): 15, Thought Worm (4): 13

#### Legend Award

Fourth Circle

#### Commentary

The anshe is a type of Horror that preys upon sailors. Resembling a giant leech most often found in the depths of the Emerald Sea, the anshe attaches itself to the underside of a ship's hull when it passes overhead. Using telepathy to locate its prey, the anshe chooses one of the sailors and places a Horror mark upon him, then uses the mark to slowly drive him insane. An anshe has been known to methodically destroy entire crews who were out on a long voyage. If forced somehow into combat, the anshe attempts to bite its victim, relishing in the pain its multiple rows of needle-like teeth cause.

#### Rules

An anshe can use its Horror Mark power on Namegiver targets on a ship to which it is attached, without directly seeing the targets.

**Anshe's Embrace:** The Anshe's Embrace automatically affects any target the Horror has marked if the Horror wishes it, but cannot affect more targets at the same time than the Horror has Ranks in Anshe's Embrace. Every day the Horror-marked character makes a Willpower Test against the Willpower Step of the anshe. If unsuccessful, the character loses one Step from his Willpower Value. As the character loses Willpower, he slowly becomes more and more delusional, seeing conspiracies among his crewmates and becoming frightened and withdrawn. When his Willpower Value reaches zero, he loses his mind, violently thrashing out at everyone and anyone, doing everything in his power to kill them. The anshe can speed this process, once per day it may make an Anshe's Embrace Test against a marked character's Spell Defense, reducing his Willpower Value by an additional 1 per Result Level achieved, starting at Average. All too often, however, it enjoys to see its victims go mad ever so slowly. If the Horror is killed or the mark removed, the afflicted character regains 1 Willpower Step per day until fully recovered.

### CHICANE

#### Attributes

DEX: 17      STR: 12      TOU: 18  
PER: 20      WIL: 20      CHA: 22

#### Characteristics

**Initiative:** 16      **Physical Defense:** 22  
**Actions:** 3      **Spell Defense:** 26  
**Attack (7):** 24      **Social Defense:** 29  
**Damage:**      **Physical Armor:** 14  
  Tendrils (5): 17      **Mystic Armor:** 16  
**Death:** 149      **Recovery Tests:** 9

**Unconsciousness:** 134

**Knockdown:** 10

**Wound Threshold:** 24

**Movement:** Same as form taken/5\*

**Karma Points:** 20/20

**Karma Step:** 10

\* Movement in true form

#### Powers

Animate Dead (4): 24, Corrupt Karma (4): 24, Damage Shift (4): 24, Durability (9), Transformation (see Rules below), Unnatural Life (4): 24

#### Legend Award

Eleventh Circle (Group)

#### Commentary

The chicane is a type of Horror that never remains in the same shape or size for long. A chicane consumes a victim and then assumes its form, which can be anything in size from a mouse to an elephant. The chicane can also assume the form of a Namegiver. Even though it kills often, a chicane can choose when to assume a new form, which must be once every month. If it does not assume a new form it begins transforming uncontrollably through all the shapes it has ever mimicked, unable to stop until it consumes a new victim.

#### Rules

The chicane has no true form of its own. When it attacks, it may use its current form's abilities in battle. If it wishes, it can mutate into what passes for its true nature, becoming horribly distorted, monstrous, and twisted, roughly 8 feet in height. From this form it lashes out with long, fleshy tendrils like a whip. Once it has killed and consumed its victim it assumes the victim's form, gaining all of its memories and abilities until a new form is assumed.

**Transformation:** A chicane that kills and consumes a victim may take the victim's form. If the chicane chooses to take the victim's form, the chicane becomes a physical duplicate of the victim. As a physical duplicate of the victim, the chicane has most of the same attributes, characteristics, powers, spells, talents, and skills as the victim, but retains its Death and Unconscious Ratings, Karma, and Horror Powers while in the duplicate form. The chicane retains the victim's memories as long as it remains in the duplicate form. The chicane may revert back to its true self at any time. In order to transform again after reverting back to its true self, the chicane must kill and consume a new victim. Transforming into a new form or reverting to its true self takes a Standard Action.

### DUNE DRAGON

*While traveling through the Desert of Swallowed Tears, I saw the ghostly ruins of Shangxiang framed against the twilight sky far in the distance. I asked the captain if we could get a little closer so I might get a good look at the once-fabulous pillared city. His face went pale, and he told me that not for all the gold in Cathay would he ever go there. When I asked why, he told me the following tale.*

—Daylen Jagaro, Merchant of Bartertown

I have captained this ship across these waves for over ten years, and I have seen many things, though nothing as terrifying as the dune dragon. That is what they call it: dune dragon. It's no dragon, though. Dragons don't delight in the maiming and torture of Namegivers like this beast does. I saw it with my own eyes.

Ze'jin and I came to this desert together, investing in our first ship, Fortune's Eye. We were daring, Ze'jin and I. We would brave these waves during their most turbulent hours. We learned the desert's personality, you see...mastered her secrets. Because of this, we outclassed our rivals, and soon we had enough for a second ship. "Double our cargo, double our profits!" Ze'jin said to me. Images of endless rows of stacks of gold coins filled our minds, and we commissioned a second ship to be built. The Lady Midnight, we Named her. Ze'jin wanted her; I was content with letting him have her—my place is on the Fortune.

Business, as they say, was good; excellent, in fact...for a time. The desert's secrets were there for anyone to discover, and eventu-



ally they did. Competition grew more difficult, and our business began to fade as our rivals undercut our prices. We were not in any danger of going under; far from it, in fact. We were still doing well for ourselves, but Ze'Jin was furious. He took it as a direct challenge to his honor, and he demanded we step up our efforts. I was less enthusiastic, but Ze'Jin was persuasive.

There was one merchant, a tenacious ork Named Xue, who was trying to steal our stone importing contract with the pillared city of Dejing. It became a race; whoever could get the stone to Dejing first would win the contract. Xue's ship was fast, but Ze'Jin had a plan.

"We'll cut past Shangxiang," he said, "It will save time." We had both heard the stories of that ruined place; how ships that ventured too near were never heard from again. Most attributed their mysterious losses to the random whirlpools that sometimes manifest in the desert. I once saw a whirlpool over 300 yards across abruptly appear, grow in size to about 350 yards, and then vanish. No doubt more than one ship has met its end in such a way. But there were other stories...stories of a monster that lived in those ruins and devoured whole ships and their crews. Ze'Jin scoffed at my fear, calling it superstition. My gut told me it was a mistake, but as I said, Ze'Jin was very persuasive.

It was dark when we passed the ruins, guided by the stars and a full moon. Our ships were perhaps 200 yards apart, with the *Lady Midnight* closer to the ruins. I could see the ruins somewhat: silhouettes of shattered pillars and great stone slabs that were once the various levels of the city. And that's when I saw it: a ripple. I was immediately alarmed; a ripple, beginning from the sandy shores of the island, moved across the waves toward the Lady Midnight—against the waves. And suddenly an enormous wave rose up on the Lady Midnight's starboard side, but instead of crashing down on top of her deck, it stopped—and I saw that the wave had eyes. Two bright green eyes that shone like fiery gemstones gazed down at the ship. I could see Ze'Jin standing directly beneath it, staring up in what I can only imagine was frozen disbelief. The creature's mouth dropped open, and a great column of green flame shot out, enveloping the Lady Midnight. The fire shot out with such force that it didn't so much as burn Ze'Jin as it blasted his flesh from his bones. I didn't give any commands, but suddenly the Fortune was turning hard to port. My crew decided not to wait for my decision to flee, which was a good thing, since I think it was several days before I spoke again.

Vengeance crossed my mind, but I am only a merchant. What could I do to such a terrible beast besides offer it another shipload of victims? No, I will not be seeking to avenge my fallen friend, nor will I ever be returning to Shangxiang. And I strongly urge others to adopt my policy.

| Attributes           |                      |         |
|----------------------|----------------------|---------|
| DEX: 14              | STR: 20              | TOU: 22 |
| PER: 12              | WIL: 13              | CHA: 10 |
| Characteristics      |                      |         |
| Initiative: 19       | Physical Defense: 19 |         |
| Actions: 3           | Spell Defense: 16    |         |
| Attack (6): 20       | Social Defense: 13   |         |
| Damage:              | Physical Armor: 18   |         |
| Bite (6): 26;        | Mystic Armor: 9      |         |
| 2 × Claws (4): 24    |                      |         |
| Death: 154           | Recovery Tests: 11   |         |
| Unconsciousness: 142 | Knockdown: 21        |         |
| Wound Threshold: 27  | Movement: 7/4*       |         |
| Karma Points: 18/18  | Karma Step: 6        |         |

\* Burrowing Movement Rate

| Powers                                                                            |  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| Breath Weapon (6): 19, Durability (6), Horror Mark (6): 18, Spellcasting (6): 18, |  |
| Thread Weaving [Elementalism] <sup>T</sup> (6): 18                                |  |

## Spells

Elementalism (Sixth Circle)

## Loot

Shangxiang's horde; Magical items (some quite ancient) and a hoard of coins and gems worth around 36,000 Cathayan gold pieces (worth Legend Points).

## Legend Award

Eleventh Circle (Group)

## Commentary

The pillared city of Shangxiang, though once a testimony to wealth and ingenuity, now lies in ruins (see **Places of Legend and Peril**, p. 67). Amongst those ruins lives the dune dragon, a terrifying Horror of insatiable cruelty. It prefers to take the form of a dragon. Its body is composed of sand that seems to constantly shift.

The dune dragon merges with the sands, resurfacing suddenly to smash a ship's hull, or incinerating both ship and crew with a gout of intense green flame it produces from within its massive maw.

Another favorite tactic of the beast is blasting the sand beneath a ship with its fiery breath to create a small island of floating glass, which causes the ship to lose its buoyancy and topple over. It then smashes the glass and watches quietly as ship and crew are pulled into the hungry waves.

## Rules

**Breath Weapon:** The dune dragon's breath weapon is a 90-degree arc of withering green flame. The power is used the same as Dragon Breath (see *Gamemaster's Guide*, p. 246). When attacking a ship, the dune dragon uses its Attack and Damage Steps or Spellcasting and Breath Weapon powers as if attacking a character, but these actions are handled as in ship combat, using ship combat rounds and rules. As a result, the dune dragon can make only one attack against a ship per ship combat round. If it does, it only has 2 Standard Actions in rounds in-between.

## FALLEN

### Attributes

DEX: 8                      STR: 20                      TOU: 15  
PER: 5                      WIL: 7                      CHA: 2

### Characteristics

|                         |                      |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Initiative: 8           | Physical Defense: 10 |
| Actions: 2              | Spell Defense: 7     |
| Attack (5): 12          | Social Defense: 13   |
| Damage:                 | Physical Armor: 10   |
| Various weapons (5): 25 | Mystic Armor: 3      |
| Death: 71               | Recovery Tests: 7    |
| Unconsciousness: NA     | Knockdown: 20        |
| Wound Threshold: 21     | Movement: 5          |
| Karma Points: 16/16     | Karma Step: 4        |

### Powers

Spellcasting (4): 9, Thread Weaving [Nethermancy] <sup>T</sup> (4): 9

### Spells

Nethermancy (Animate Skeleton)

### Loot

Various arms and armor worth 1D10 × 10 gold pieces.

### Legend Award

Fourth Circle (1 per 2 PC)

### Commentary

The fallen are bizarre and twisted Horror constructs formed from the souls of those who have fallen and been left unburied on the battlefield. The creatures' bodies are masses of corpses, arms, and armor, around which are the swirling vortices of their auras. Within their auras can be seen the twisted faces of all the souls that are trapped in this realm of existence.

The fallen attack living beings on sight, ruthlessly and without mercy. Fortunately, these constructs are rare, as Cathayans make it a point to bury their dead. However, sometimes this is not possible, and occasionally one of these aberrations is unleashed upon the world.

### Rules

The fallen lashes out with the various weapons that comprise its body. It typically uses one of its actions to attack and its other to prepare the two threads or cast Animate Skeleton on a portion of itself, which then peels away to attack its victims.



*I was staying in a town in Shui Dei when I met a beggar Named Bai Wang. He used to be a soldier; he told me, but was discharged for cowardice and desertion. I was dismayed; normally execution awaited deserters. He shook his head slowly, a haunted look in his eyes, and told me that his story was an exception. After I gave him a few silvers, he shared it with me.*

—Daylen Jagaro,  
Human Merchant of Bartertown

Forces from Tiet Dei had ambushed our unit while patrolling our northern border. The skirmish was brief and bloody. They overwhelmed us before we could form into ranks. About a dozen others and I managed to cut our way free. We fled from our pursuers, all thoughts of courage but dim memories. Deep into the night we rode until we finally managed to shake the enemy. When we eventually stopped, our horses were lathered and we found ourselves in a hilly, forested land. Our senior officer ordered us to keep near the tree line as we started to circle our way back to check for survivors.

We saw the blood glistening in the moonlight among a sea of torn flesh and strewn innards. At first we thought the enemy had slaughtered the villagers. They had been slaughtered—just not by the enemy we had imagined.

One of the men was the first to see it: the teeth marks that marred both bone and flesh. There were dozens of victims, though the age and sex of most was difficult to tell. The remains had been strewn about in sloppy, half-eaten piles. Bones and clumps of hair mingled with organs too tough to chew.

We were ordered to dismount and search for survivors, but my heart told me to remain mounted. My horse was skittish, and the others were as well, though my comrades were too fixated on the horror to notice.

It did not take long to realize that the search for survivors was in vain, though everyone seemed to absorb the carnage with a slow and measured fascination. Fear crawled across my skin and sank its icy teeth into my bowels. I did not wish to linger; I said as much to my commander, but he seemed to have forgotten that I was even there. Whispered theories of what could have caused the horrid devastation began to float from my comrades' pale lips. I proposed no theory; I feared that whatever it had been had not traveled far.

"Survivors!" someone shouted, breaking everyone's morbid trance. I looked toward the tree line and saw them. Dozens of villagers, pale in the moonlight, shambled from the darkness. Men, women, and children comprised their ranks. Something about their jerking, stuttering movement caused my breath to forget its way. My horse likewise panicked and reared, though my training took over and I quickly steadied her.

"We must go, now!" I called, though again, nobody seemed to hear me. A few of the others had already made their way forward, demanding answers. They did not see what I saw.



"No, wait—!" I started, but it was too late. The faces of the villagers finally reached the cold light of the moon. Their dark, soulless eyes stared with a ravenous hunger; their tattered, blood-drenched clothes clung to their emaciated frames; their arms stretched out longingly. My comrades gave pause, but with a suddenness that took them unaware, the villagers lunged forward, and within a moment were upon them, their teeth finding flesh, pulling away long, red strips. I sat, the morbid fascination returning, unable to move. I watched as my comrades hacked uselessly at their attackers. I watched a child no older than twelve summers get his arm hacked off at the elbow and not react to the blow at all.

The villagers fell upon my comrades, one after another like an unrelenting sea of flesh. The others tried to get atop their mounts but were thrown free from the maddened beasts. Then the villagers, who had found some unholy speed, were upon them. My comrades cried out to me for help; I turned my mount and fled. Their fading screams, mingled with the haunting moans of the villagers, still echo in my ears at night...

#### Attributes

|         |         |         |
|---------|---------|---------|
| DEX: 16 | STR: 19 | TOU: 20 |
| PER: 19 | WIL: 22 | CHA: 18 |



**Characteristics**

|                             |                             |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Initiative:</b> 15       | <b>Physical Defense:</b> 21 |
| <b>Actions:</b> 3           | <b>Spell Defense:</b> 25    |
| <b>Attack (6):</b> 22       | <b>Social Defense:</b> 24   |
| <b>Damage:</b>              | <b>Physical Armor:</b> 0    |
| Bite (3): 22;               | <b>Mystic Armor:</b> 18     |
| 2 × Fists (2): 21           |                             |
| <b>Death:</b> 193           | <b>Recovery Tests:</b> 10   |
| <b>Unconsciousness:</b> 176 | <b>Knockdown:</b> 18        |
| <b>Wound Threshold:</b> 25  | <b>Movement:</b> 3          |
| <b>Karma Points:</b> 20/20  | <b>Karma Step:</b> 15       |

**Powers**

Animate Dead (3): 25, Damage Shift (4): 26, Durability (11), Forge Horror Construct (3): 22, Horror Mark (4): 23, Skin Shift (3): 25, Spellcasting (8): 27, Terror (5): 23, Thread Weaving [Nethermancy]<sup>T</sup> (8): 27

**Spells**

Nethermancy (Eighth Circle)

**Legend Award**

Thirteenth Circle (Group)

**Commentary**

Famine appears as a grotesquely obese human male with no body hair and a mouthful of needle-sharp teeth. He gorges on raw Namegiver flesh, preferring human meat to that of other Namegivers. Famine is so large that it is difficult for him to move. His flesh lies in layers like a massive pile of melted wax. He lairs in secluded areas, far from danger, allowing his famine ghouls to nourish him from afar.

**Rules**

Whenever Famine causes damage to a Namegiver with its bite, Famine may make a Horror Mark Test against the target's Spell Defense as a Simple Action. If the test is successful, the target becomes Horror-marked by Famine. The victims of Famine's Horror marks suffer from an insatiable appetite; no matter how much they eat, they cannot assuage their hunger. All taste and nourishment ingested by a marked victim instead goes to Famine. No magic can cure this ailment (aside from removing the Horror mark), and eventually the victim starves to death. The Horror mark speeds the process of starvation along: a character dies after a number of days equal to his Toughness Step. Each day the victim is starving, he suffers a -1 penalty to his Strength Step. Those who die this horrible death return as a Famine ghoul (see below), about an hour later.

**Famine Ghouls****Attributes**

|               |               |               |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| <b>DEX:</b> 4 | <b>STR:</b> 6 | <b>TOU:</b> 7 |
| <b>PER:</b> 3 | <b>WIL:</b> 6 | <b>CHA:</b> 4 |

**Characteristics**

|                            |                             |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Initiative:</b> 4       | <b>Physical Defense:</b> 36 |
| <b>Actions:</b> 1          | <b>Spell Defense:</b> 4     |
| <b>Attack (3):</b> 7       | <b>Social Defense:</b> 6    |
| <b>Damage:</b>             | <b>Physical Armor:</b> 0    |
| Bite (2): 8                | <b>Mystic Armor:</b> 2      |
| <b>Death:</b> 39           | <b>Recovery Tests:</b> 3    |
| <b>Unconsciousness:</b> 31 | <b>Knockdown:</b> 6         |
| <b>Wound Threshold:</b> 11 | <b>Movement:</b> 5          |

**Legend Award**

Second Circle

**Commentary**

Those who die from Famine's mark return as constructs known as Famine ghouls. Famine ghouls are slow, shambling corpses cursed with an eternal hunger. In their dim minds, only living flesh will sate their painful cravings. Legions of these constructs have been known to sweep across the countryside, wiping out entire villages, adding to their ranks until they are finally destroyed, usually at a great cost to the kingdom. No one has been able to find Famine to put an end to this evil.

**Rules**

The Famine ghoul lunges at the nearest living creature to satisfy its hunger, preferring Namegivers to non-sentient beings. It is largely mindless, driven on by its instinct to feed. Whenever a Famine ghoul causes damage to a Namegiver with its bite, Famine, no matter where he is at the time, may make a Step 7 Horror Mark Test (Famine's Horror Mark Rank of 4 + the Famine ghoul's Perception Step of 3) against the target's Spell Defense as a Simple Action. If the test is successful, the target becomes Horror-marked by Famine.

**LEECH LORD****Attributes**

|                |                |                |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>DEX:</b> 3  | <b>STR:</b> 12 | <b>TOU:</b> 18 |
| <b>PER:</b> 15 | <b>WIL:</b> 20 | <b>CHA:</b> 14 |

**Characteristics**

|                            |                            |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Initiative:</b> 1       | <b>Physical Defense:</b> 4 |
| <b>Actions:</b> 3          | <b>Spell Defense:</b> 19   |
| <b>Attack (6):</b> 9       | <b>Social Defense:</b> 18  |
| <b>Damage:</b>             | <b>Physical Armor:</b> 21  |
| Tentacle (3): 15           | <b>Mystic Armor:</b> 23    |
| <b>Death:</b> 163          | <b>Recovery Tests:</b> 9   |
| <b>Unconsciousness:</b> NA | <b>Knockdown:</b> 13       |
| <b>Wound Threshold:</b> 24 | <b>Movement:</b> 4         |
| <b>Karma Points:</b> 30/30 | <b>Karma Step:</b> 10      |

**Powers**

Blood Veins (3): 15, Corrupt Karma (3): 23, Durability (11), Forge Horror Construct (3): 18, Horror Mark (3): 18, Spellcasting (7): 22, Terror (3): 17, Thread Weaving [Nethermancy]<sup>T</sup> (7): 22, Thought Worm (3): 18

**Spells**

Nethermancy (Seventh Circle)

**Legend Award**

Eleventh Circle (Group)

**Commentary**

The leech lord is a type of bloatform Horror (see *Gamemaster's Guide*, p. 286). Its body is filled with a mass of writhing leeches, which it vomits forth in a large, slimy swarm. The leeches, which are deceptively quick, gorge themselves on creatures' blood, then return to the bowels of the lumbering Horror. The leech lord itself is quite slow and cumbersome, often dormant, and it must rely on its leeches to provide it with nourishment. For this reason, the leech lord usually remains hidden—deep in a swamp or deep in a city's sewers—while it sends its swarm out in search of victims.

**Rules**

The leech lord only attacks when forced to, instead sending out its leech swarm to hunt for victims. Releasing the swarm takes one Standard Action:

**Leech Swarm****Attributes**

|               |               |               |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| <b>DEX:</b> 8 | <b>STR:</b> 6 | <b>TOU:</b> 8 |
| <b>PER:</b> 4 | <b>WIL:</b> 2 | <b>CHA:</b> 2 |

**Characteristics**

|                                           |                            |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Initiative:</b> 7                      | <b>Physical Defense:</b> 8 |
| <b>Actions:</b> 2                         | <b>Spell Defense:</b> 6    |
| <b>Attack (2):</b> 10                     | <b>Social Defense:</b> 12  |
| <b>Damage:</b>                            | <b>Physical Armor:</b> 4   |
| One Target (9): 15;                       | <b>Mystic Armor:</b> 0     |
| Two Targets (6): 12; Three Targets (3): 9 |                            |
| <b>Unconsciousness:</b> 44                | <b>Recovery Tests:</b> 4   |
| <b>Wound Threshold:</b> NA                | <b>Knockdown:</b> Immune   |
| <b>Movement:</b> 5                        |                            |

**Powers**

Blood Veins (3): 9

**Legend Award**

Second Circle (1 per 2 PC)

**Rules**

**Swarm Attack:** The leech swarm takes up a 1 hex radius, with a center origin hex and all surrounding hexes (for a total of 7 hexes covered). A leech swarm that uses its Standard Action to make an attack against up to three targets in the swarm's area. The attack result is compared to all targets. The Damage Step used is based on the number of targets in the swarm's area.

**Swarm Vulnerability:** A leech swarm takes double damage after subtracting armor from area of effect attacks that cover their entire area. Unfortunately, they also usually affect any victims in the swarm area as well.

**Unconsciousness:** A leech swarm reduced to its Unconsciousness Rating disperses.



The following is a portion of Bo Chen's transcripts to the magistrates of Lang Soon concerning the mysterious death of the merchant Huang Li. I managed to get a copy of the city's court transcripts after no small amount of negotiations, though I was looking for other information entirely. When I stumbled upon this story I decided to include it, as it may one day save a visiting Barsaivian's life.

—Daylen Jagaro, Merchant of Bartertown

As you say, I shall tell you again my story. I am Bo Chen, merchant of Tiet Dei. I specialize mainly in dyes, nutmeg, cinnamon, wax, and honey, which I import from the neighboring kingdoms. Huang Li was a rival merchant, yes, but also a friend. He and I had competed for years, but we also shared a deal when it suited us, often meeting at the Noisy Teapot in Lang Soon. It was there that we had met when he told me of her.

Normally Huang Li and I eat sweetbread, drink tea, and speak of business, very rarely speaking of our personal lives beyond the polite conversation that is expected. But on this day he spoke only of her: his new love. He spoke of her skin, as pale as milk; her lips, as red as the dawn; and her hair, as dark as night. I listened politely, nodding in feigned interest, eager to get on with the transaction, but his words continued to pour forth. He spoke as one enchanted; his words spilling out as sloppy poetry, as only the foolishly in love are able to do.

Since it was all too apparent that he was not going to talk about business until he was finished talking about her, I decided to participate in the conversation in an effort to speed it along. I asked what her Name was, and he said it was Mu. I asked him how long he had known her, and he told me that he had only just met her, and that they were to meet again that night. I asked who her father was, expecting that she would surely be the daughter of a affluent merchant, or perhaps even a noble, but Huang told me that he did not know of her family! Can you believe that? In addition to this, he did not even care! I was shocked! But Huang did not seem to think it was of any consequence; he prattled on for nearly another hour before finally turning his mind to business. Of course, it was at this moment when he realized that he had forgotten his ledgers! I hid my irritation behind my teacup and accepted his many apologies with grace. He told me that he would return that evening with them. I asked him why he couldn't retrieve them right then and there, but he said his precious Mu was awaiting him! The deal was too sweet to allow my pride to ruin, so I graciously accepted his proposal of meeting him later that night. We finished our tea and parted ways.

Punctuality is the mark of a good merchant, and I am an excellent merchant. Huang was not there. I ordered tea and sweetbread, and still he did not come. After waiting far beyond what I would consider good grace, I decided to go meet him in his room at the inn across town. Maybe then I would get to see this Mu for myself; maybe then I would understand who could possibly keep a normally adequate merchant from striking a profit.

I swept along the narrow cobbled streets, greeting those who met my gaze with a courteous smile, as always. When I arrived I flew past the proprietor and followed the long, wide staircase all the way to the third floor. I didn't bother to knock; part of me hoped to catch him in a compromising situation to teach him a lesson! Of course, what I found instead had showed me that the lesson had been learned all too well.

He lay there upon the large, plush bed on his back, his legs dangling over the edge, his arms limp and outstretched. His body was a dried husk, his eyes wide, staring sightlessly at the ceiling. It looked as though he had starved to death and been left out in the sun for too long. My shock was broken by... it. This creature, resembling a human baby with a head far too large and arms far too long, wiggled its upper-body from underneath the soft, silk covers. Its large, oversized eyes came to rest on me. The face... there was no mistaking its face. It was Huang. He stared at me with his eyes, which looked as lost and bewildered as a newborn child. And then suddenly, the creature wiggled its way the rest of the way out of the covers, and I saw that its lower half was like a pale, white larva. It flung itself to the floor and began rapidly crawling toward me, using its long claws to help pull itself along, its tail wriggling madly back and forth. I reached for the door and slammed it shut. I could hear it scratching at the wood, crying out as a hungry babe would for its mother. I turned then and fled down the long, wide staircase; out the front door; down the cobbled streets; and out of the city. I do not think I will be conducting any more business in Lang Soon.

#### Attributes

DEX: 20 STR: 22 TOU: 18  
PER: 20 WIL: 23 CHA: 19

#### Characteristics

Initiative: 20 Physical Defense: 26  
Actions: 2 Spell Defense: 26  
Attack (S): 25 Social Defense: 25  
Damage: Physical Armor: 0  
NA (see Rules) Mystic Armor: 19  
Death: 167 Recovery Tests: 9  
Unconsciousness: 152 Knockdown: 22  
Wound Threshold: 24 Movement: 6  
Karma Points: 20/20 Karma Step: 14

#### Powers

Conversation <sup>S</sup> (S): 24, Corrupt Karma (S): 28, Durability (9), First Impression <sup>T</sup> (S): 24, Flirting <sup>S</sup> (S): 24, Forge Horror Construct (S): 25, Horror Mark (8): 28, Karma Tap (S): 25, Seduction <sup>S</sup> (S): 24, Spellcasting (10): 30, Thread Weaving [Illusionism] <sup>T</sup> (10): 30, Thought Worm (S): 25

#### Spells

Illusionism (Tenth Circle)

#### Legend Award

Twelfth Circle

#### Commentary

Mu appears as a beautifully seductive human woman. She spends her time traveling from town to town and from city to city searching for her next victim. After finding a suitable choice, Mu Horror marks the victim, and sets to work on seducing him. The act of courtship is just as important to Mu as the final act of transforming her lover into a Horror construct.

#### Rules

Mu uses her appearance and charm to seduce men, whom, after a brief courtship, she locks in a passionate kiss. Any character kissing Mu is locked into a Contest of Wills. Both Mu and the target make Willpower Tests. If Mu has the higher result, the target's Willpower Step is temporarily reduced by 1. If the target has a higher result than Mu, he will break free from the kiss, until seduced again by the Horror, unknowing of the Horror's attempt to reduce his Willpower. Once a victim's Willpower Step reaches zero he instantly dies, dropping to the ground as a hollowed, desiccated husk. Mu's belly then swells, impregnated. In a violent, painful birth, a Horror construct, assembled from the soul of the victim, is born after only 3 rounds. These creatures are known as Mu's Children (see below). In combat, Mu attempts to lock opponents—race or gender is irrelevant—in her embrace forcefully, to the same effect. This is treated as a Grappling attack (see p.230 of the *Player's Guide*).

Those killed by Mu in this way cannot be brought back to life through any means. If a character manages to escape the embrace of Mu, he regains 1 Willpower Step per day until fully recovered.

### Mu's Children

#### Attributes

DEX: 5 STR: 4 TOU: 6  
PER: 3 WIL: 3 CHA: 5



**Characteristics**

|                            |                            |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Initiative:</b> 4       | <b>Physical Defense:</b> 7 |
| <b>Actions:</b> 1          | <b>Spell Defense:</b> 4    |
| <b>Attack (3):</b> 8       | <b>Social Defense:</b> 6   |
| <b>Damage:</b>             | <b>Physical Armor:</b> 0   |
| Stinger (3): 7             | <b>Mystic Armor:</b> 0     |
| <b>Death:</b> 38           | <b>Recovery Tests:</b> 3   |
| <b>Unconsciousness:</b> 30 | <b>Knockdown:</b> 3        |
| <b>Wound Threshold:</b> 10 | <b>Movement:</b> 5         |

**Legend Award**

First Circle

**Commentary**

Forged from the souls of Mu's victims, Mu's Children are horrifying aberrations of their former selves. They are the size of human infants with grossly disproportionate skulls that are covered in large, pulsing veins. Their faces resemble their former selves, but their eyes are large and unblinking, and their mouths are lined with long, thin, sharp teeth. Their lower halves, from the waist down, resemble large, white maggots. These larva-like tails wriggle quickly back and forth, enabling the Horror constructs to speed across the ground, using their disproportionately long arms to help by digging their sharp claws into the earth and pulling.

**Rules**

Always abandoned by their "mother," Mu's Children are on an eternal quest to search for a womb to return to. When they come upon another living creature they attack. When they engage in battle, long, wicked stingers protrude from the ends of their tails which they stab into the abdomens of their victims, wiggling them rapidly back and forth, burrowing deeper and deeper into their bowels. Once a victim is dead, one of Mu's Children burrows into the stomach of the deceased until it can fit at least mostly inside, where it sleeps, calm and peaceful. Mu's Children will stay inside their new 'wombs' until the corpses literally rot apart around them, at which time they go out in search of new "mothers."

**NIGHTSKIN****Attributes**

|               |                |                |
|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>DEX:</b> 8 | <b>STR:</b> 11 | <b>TOU:</b> 10 |
| <b>PER:</b> 7 | <b>WIL:</b> 7  | <b>CHA:</b> 5  |

**Characteristics**

|                            |                             |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Initiative:</b> 7       | <b>Physical Defense:</b> 11 |
| <b>Actions:</b> 1          | <b>Spell Defense:</b> 10    |
| <b>Attack (6):</b> 14      | <b>Social Defense:</b> 7    |
| <b>Damage:</b>             | <b>Physical Armor:</b> 6    |
| Tentacles (6): 17          | <b>Mystic Armor:</b> 3      |
| <b>Death:</b> 96           | <b>Recovery Tests:</b> 5    |
| <b>Unconsciousness:</b> 83 | <b>Knockdown:</b> 10        |
| <b>Wound Threshold:</b> 15 | <b>Movement:</b> 6          |
| <b>Karma Points:</b> 18/18 | <b>Karma Step:</b> 6        |

**Powers**

Avoid Blow<sup>T</sup> (6): 14, Corrupt Karma (6): 13, Disguise Self<sup>T</sup> (6): 13, Durability (6)

**Equipment**

Robe

**Legend Award**

Sixth Circle

**Commentary**

The nightskin is a type of Horror whose true form is a collection of slimy, dark tentacles. These tentacles can wrap and intertwine, forming various animal and humanoid shapes. A nightskin Horror prefers to take the form of a large troll or obsidian man, then throw on a robe. In this way, it is able to pass as a Namegiver at first glance.

**Rules**

A nightskin's tentacles can be used to either grapple or to lash out like fleshy whips, splitting open armor and flesh.

**Tentacles:** A victim's allies may hack at the nightskin's tentacles to free a grappled victim. This requires a called shot as an attack against the tentacles, armor protects as normal. Once 15 Damage Points have been dealt by called shots at grappling tentacles, they release the grappled victim. This reduces the Nightskin's number of Standard Actions by 1, up to a minimum of 1. Tentacles cannot be attacked to reduce the number of Standard Actions when no character is grappled. The Nightskin regenerates a Standard Action whenever it makes a Recovery Test.

**NUA**

Li Bao is brash, arrogant, and overly fond of wine and women. However, he is also a great storyteller. I debated whether or not to include the following tale and was finally convinced when I heard separate, yet disturbingly similar stories later, while visiting the Kur of the Golden Desert.

—Daylen Jagaro, Merchant of Bartertown

*"Bring forth the sallow souls  
Conjure now the endless sleep  
Bind them now to eternal shadow  
Come now forth from the dark and the deep."*

Those are the words as I heard them, the chanting echoing in the dim light of the cavern. I clung there, to the sharp precipice overlooking the abyss, thinking about how I had gotten myself into this mess. It had begun simply enough: a job guarding a caravan through the Golden Desert to Shen Xiou's Embrace; what could be easier for a Warrior such as myself? I enjoyed the desert. I liked being away from civilization. I had on occasion made friends with several different Kur tribes, whose ways I have always found respectable and



wonderfully simple. I enjoyed the way they seized life every day, tackling it as a Warrior would tackle a foe. Thoughts of spending my earnings on a camel once I reached Shen Xiou's Embrace, so I might be able to ride out to meet them, was all I could think of the entire trip. It's ironic; my employers were terrified of a Kur attack, and all I could think about was how wonderful it would be to see them again!

Maybe that's why I didn't see the sinkhole. I think I was lost in a daydream of flat-bellied Kur women performing their seductive dances around a campfire while I enjoyed their peculiar ale. But that delightful fantasy ended when the lead wagon disappeared suddenly before my eyes.

It happened so quickly. There was a loud sucking sound and spray of sand. The next thing I knew, the rider was leaping free as the cart was pulled beneath the sand. The camels tried to scramble free, crying their cries, but the wagon was much too heavy, and within a moment, both the wagon and the camels were gone. And that's when the merchant began his shouting. One-third of his goods had just been lost to the sands; I could understand his displeasure. But I was hired to guard against a flesh-and-blood foe, not the desert itself. He threw his rage at me and the other guards, of which there were perhaps a dozen. I was growing impatient. I had taken all I was prepared to take when suddenly a sinkhole opened beneath his feet. He screamed as he went down, just like the camels had, trying to find purchase in the hot sand that fell in all around him, but he found nothing. Before any of us could react, he was gone. Several of the others ran to where he had just been, clawing at the sand. Not me. I was too busy thinking about how I probably wasn't going to be paid. Well, that and climbing atop a nearby boulder.

And just in time, too. Just then the others began to go down, one by one. And the carts. And the mounts. My mount. I had forgotten to bring my horse atop the boulder with me when I had sought high ground. It started to kick and scream as it went down, and I reached instinctively for its reins. And though I might be strong for a human, I'm not that strong, and down I went with it. Damn my keen reflexes.

For one horrifying moment there was nothing but darkness—darkness and the weight of the sand pressing down all around me. But before I could even think to panic, I was falling, sliding recklessly down a smooth chute worn into the rock. It dumped me into a cool, damp chamber. I stood, shaking sand from my clothes. Sand can be irritating when it reaches places it has no business being. And that's when I realized there was light coming from an adjoining cavern.

When my eyes adjusted I saw that they had already killed my horse. There were three of them huddled around it. They weren't exactly humans, though that's the closest thing they resembled. They were some sort of snake hybrid, maddened and monstrous. They lunged at me, but my sword was already in my hand, and whatever they were, they died just as easily as men.

I followed the source of the light, and that's when I first heard the chanting. I could hear the others screaming in pain and terror. I hurried, hoping to spare them the same fate that had befallen my horse—not that I liked any of them as much as I had liked that horse. I came to an edge that fell sharply away into darkness. On the other side of the chasm, perhaps five yards below me, was an opening to yet another cavern, where the source of light originated. That's when I started to climb down. When I was about halfway down the chanting grew stronger, more insistent. I craned my neck, and I could see their shadows displayed on the cavern wall.

From their shadows, I could tell there were several of those creatures pinning someone down on





what appeared to be a large altar. He was struggling, his screams mingling with the chant. And suddenly the shadow of the man began to transform. His screams turned to alien shrieks as the shadow twisted into a grotesque mockery of what it once was. And then I saw the shadow of its tail raise, and heard its rattle shake.

That's when I realized there was no saving them. I had to abandon them to the horrors that lay in that cavern. I climbed back up and fled, not looking back until I had crawled back to the surface of the desert. And even then my feet continued to carry me forward as I glanced over my shoulder.

I'm not so fond of the desert now. The flat-bellied Kur women will have to entertain a different Warrior; I don't think I shall be returning.

| Attributes            |                      |         |
|-----------------------|----------------------|---------|
| DEX: 20               | STR: 20              | TOU: 20 |
| PER: 25               | WIL: 25              | CHA: 20 |
| Characteristics       |                      |         |
| Initiative: 20        | Physical Defense: 23 |         |
| Actions: 1            | Spell Defense: 33    |         |
| Attack (5): 25        | Social Defense: 25   |         |
| Damage:               | Physical Armor: 16   |         |
| Bite (6): 26 (poison) | Mystic Armor: 21     |         |
| Death: 184            | Recovery Tests: 10   |         |
| Unconsciousness: 168  | Knockdown: Immune    |         |
| Wound Threshold: 25   | Movement: 5          |         |
| Karma Points: 20/20   | Karma Step: 15       |         |

| Powers                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| Corrupt Karma (7): 32, Cursed Luck (7): 32, Durability (10), Forge Horror Construct (5): 30, Horror Mark (8): 33, Poison (SD 12; Step 10 Damage; 5 rounds), Spellcasting (10): 35, Spit Venom (10): 35, Thread Weaving [Nethermancy] <sup>T</sup> (10): 35 |  |

| Spells                     |
|----------------------------|
| Nethermancy (Tenth Circle) |

| Legend Award      |
|-------------------|
| Thirteenth Circle |

| Commentary                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Nua lives somewhere within the deepest reaches of the Golden Desert. He resembles an enormous golden king cobra that stretches over 150 feet in length. When rising to his full height, he stands nearly 40 feet. Nua spends his time capturing Namegivers, mainly from among the Kur, and transforms them into twisted, Namegiver/snake hybrid constructs called the Nua gi (see below). It is believed that Nua is steadily developing a legion of these Horror constructs. For what purpose, none can say. |

| Rules                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Nua prefers to keep his distance, spraying an enemy with venom, using his powers, and sending his legions of Nua gi to attack. If confronted, Nua's bite, coupled with the poison that goes along with it, makes him a very dangerous melee opponent. |

**Spit Venom:** This power works like the Dragon power knack of the same name except that its duration is only 5 rounds and the Nua can only spit venom. Damage dealt by the Nua's bite attack deals Poison damage only, not Venom damage.

| NUA GI SNAKE PART TABLE |                                         |                                                              |                                                                                                                                                        |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Body Part               | Attack Type and Damage                  | Powers                                                       | Traits                                                                                                                                                 |
| Snake Arm               | Bite: 8<br>Fang: 7                      | Poison (SD 8; Step 4 Damage; 4 rounds)<br>Spit Venom (4): 10 | When wearing a cloak or long coat that covers the arm can pass as a Namegiver as long as the arm remains clothed. Cannot use snake arm to use weapons. |
| Snake Head              | Bite: 9                                 | Poison (SD 9; Step 5 Damage; 5 rounds)<br>Spit Venom (5): 11 | When wearing a hood, can pass as a Namegiver at a distance.                                                                                            |
| Snake Leg               | Bite: 8<br>Fang: 7                      | Poison (SD 8; Step 4 Damage; 4 rounds)<br>Spit Venom (4): 10 | <b>Knockdown:</b> 4<br>Movement 5<br>Easily passes as a Namegiver when wearing breeches and boots over snake leg. Walks with a strange limp.           |
| Snake Tail              | Constrict: 6, Damage max 12.<br>Fang: 7 | Poison (SD 8; Step 4 Damage; 3 rounds)<br>Spit Venom (4): 10 | <b>Knockdown:</b> Immune<br>Movement 5<br>Cannot pass as a Namegiver.                                                                                  |

## Nua Gi

| Attributes          |                     |        |
|---------------------|---------------------|--------|
| DEX: 6              | STR: 5              | TOU: 6 |
| PER: 5              | WIL: 6              | CHA: 5 |
| Characteristics     |                     |        |
| Initiative: 6       | Physical Defense: 8 |        |
| Actions: 1          | Spell Defense: 7    |        |
| Attack (6): 12      | Social Defense: 7   |        |
| Damage:             | Physical Armor: 2   |        |
| Saber (5): 10       | Mystic Armor: 2     |        |
| Death: 38           | Recovery Tests: 3   |        |
| Unconsciousness: 30 | Knockdown: 5        |        |
| Wound Threshold: 10 | Movement: 6         |        |

| Powers                      |
|-----------------------------|
| See Nua Gi Snake Part Table |

| Weapons           |
|-------------------|
| Saber (Damage 10) |

| Legend Award  |
|---------------|
| Second Circle |

| Commentary                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The Nua gi are twisted snake/Namegiver hybrids created by the Horror, Nua. They scour the Golden Desert in packs, attacking to bring prisoners back to Nua's lair where they undergo the horrible transformation themselves. Each Nua gi is different. Some have the lower half of a snake while others may only have the head of a hooded cobra, or perhaps just an arm or leg replaced with a snake ending with a snake's head where the hand or foot would be. All are fiercely loyal to Nua, with no sense of their former selves remaining. |

| Rules                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The Nua gi often fight with broadswords that they either stole or had in their previous lives as a Namegiver. Many fight with just their fangs, which inject a potent poison. They also have the ability to spray venom, which they often do before closing for melee. To create a Nua Gi choose what part of the Namegiver has been replaced by snake parts using the table below and add it to the template above. |

**Constrict:** Make an Attack Test against the Physical Defense of the victim. If the test is successful, both the Nua gi and the victim make a Strength Test, with the higher result being successful. If the victim's result is higher, he is able to prevent the Nua gi from constricting him. If the Nua gi's result is higher, it coils around the victim as a simple action. Each round thereafter, both opponents repeat the Strength Test. If the character remains ensnared, he takes damage, increasing by +1 Damage Step each round, up to a maximum of Step 12 Damage. For each +1 Damage Step gained, the Nua gi adds the Damage increase as a bonus to its Strength Test in following rounds versus the victim up to a +6 maximum.

**Spit Venom:** This power works like the Dragon power knack of the same name except that its duration is only 5 rounds and the Nua gi can only spit venom. Damage dealt by the Nua's bite or fang attack deals Poison damage only, not Venom damage.

## Qi

| Attributes                    |                      |        |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|--------|
| DEX: 8                        | STR: 9               | TOU: 8 |
| PER: 6                        | WIL: 7               | CHA: 6 |
| Characteristics               |                      |        |
| Initiative: 9                 | Physical Defense: 10 |        |
| Actions: 1                    | Spell Defense: 8     |        |
| Attack (5): 13                | Social Defense: 8    |        |
| Damage:                       | Physical Armor: 4    |        |
| Bite (4): 13;<br>Kick (2): 11 | Mystic Armor: 3      |        |
| Death: 50                     | Recovery Tests: 4    |        |
| Unconsciousness: 41           | Knockdown: 10        |        |
| Wound Threshold: 13           | Movement: 10*        |        |

\* This value is also the Horror construct's Flying Movement Rate

| Powers                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Durability (1), Enhanced Senses [Listen] (2): 8, Locate Target (3): 9 |

| Legend Award  |
|---------------|
| Second Circle |

| Commentary                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The qi is a Horror construct that resembles a large black horse with giant bat wings. It is only found in the area around Mount Tihan. It is uncertain for what purpose these constructs are created, but they seem to hover around an isolated valley a few miles east of the volcano. |



### Rules

In battle, the qi fight with hoof and teeth, much like a regular horse. Carnivorous, the qi hunt in packs, circling a potential meal high in the sky, and taking turns swooping down to take nibbles at it until finally, too weak to go on, it collapses, at which time they all swoop in for the kill.

## TWILIGHT ENTITY

### Attributes

DEX: 10      STR: 12      TOU: 12  
PER: 10      WIL: 10      CHA: 7

### Characteristics

Initiative: 10      Physical Defense: 11  
Actions: 2      Spell Defense: 13  
Attack (6): 16      Social Defense: 10  
Damage:      Physical Armor: 8  
Fists (4): 16      Mystic Armor: 6  
Death: 96      Recovery Tests: 6  
Unconsciousness: 83      Knockdown: 12  
Wound Threshold: 17      Movement: 6  
Karma Points: 18/18      Karma Step: 6

### Powers

Chilling Touch (6): 16, Durability (6), Terror (6): 13

### Legend Award

Sixth Circle (1 per 2 PC)

### Commentary

This 15-foot tall Horror construct is active only during the hours of twilight. It resembles a lanky humanoid built entirely out of shadow. Its touch is icy cold, and it harbors a deep hatred of anything living. The twilight entity has no language and no motivation beyond taking life.

Though they appear to be solid blackness, twilight entities are not incorporeal. During any hour other than twilight, they prefer to slumber, stirring only if aroused.

### Powers

Acid Skin (18), Animate Dead (4): 24, Corrupt Karma (4): 24, Damage Shift (4): 24, Durability (9), Unnatural Life (4): 24

### Legend Award

Thirteenth Circle (Group)

### Commentary

The yao mo is a hideous Horror that resembles a giant tadpole, roughly nine feet long, that has eight octopus tentacles protruding from its rubbery hide, four on each side. The belly of this monster is one giant, fleshy mouth, and it, along with the suckers on its tentacles, excretes a constant flow of slimy, digestive acid. The Horror crawls sluggishly along, searching for anything living to eat, preferring fauna over flora, and leaving behind a glistening trail that reeks of bile. Once it finds a potential meal, the yao mo latches onto it, attempting to drag it to its mouth. Its common tactic is to lie atop its prey, smothering it, and then slowly digesting it with its acid and slurping up the resulting, mushy soup.

### Rules

The yao mo excretes an aura of digestive acid that can burn flesh, and even dissolve wood and metal.

**Acid Skin:** The Yao Mo's skin exudes a constant flow of slimy, digestive acid. Creatures that touch it automatically suffer its Acid Aura Rank Damage Points; Physical Armor protects against this Damage. If the Yao Mo attacks a target in close combat, it suffers Acid Skin damage and may have its armor covered in acid, though the Acid Skin Damage is applied separately from the normal Damage Test. The acid may damage or dissolve fragile objects, such as clothing or wooden weapons, instantly. Other materials take longer to dissolve, depending on their nature. It is suggested items like metal weapons or leather armor lose 1 Damage Step or Armor Point every 5 rounds they are covered in acid, subject to change for circumstance and attempts to wipe it off. Magical items with True Patterns are usually resistant to the acid, common magical items may dissolve over longer periods, though.

## YAO MO

### Attributes

DEX: 17      STR: 12      TOU: 18  
PER: 20      WIL: 20      CHA: 22

### Characteristics

Initiative: 16      Physical Defense: 22  
Actions: 4      Spell Defense: 26  
Attack (6): 23      Social Defense: 28  
Damage:      Physical Armor: 13  
Tentacles (5): 17      Mystic Armor: 16  
Death: 150      Recovery Tests: 9  
Unconsciousness: 135      Knockdown: 12  
Wound Threshold: 24      Movement: 5  
Karma Points: 20/20      Karma Step: 10





## CHAPTER TEN

# MAGICAL TREASURES

*Treasure is more than power and riches...it is a story.*

• YAUN, DWARF TROUBADOUR •

This chapter details new magical treasures found in Cathay and the surrounding lands. The magical treasures listed in this chapter follow the same format as presented in the **Magical Treasures** chapter in the *Gamemaster's Guide*, p.130 and *Gamemaster's Companion*, p.27.



# GENERAL TREASURES

**T**his section describes magical items of a general type. More than one item of a type may exist that exhibits the same magical properties, but each has its own, individual Name.



## BLADE WIG

**Maximum Threads:** 1      **Spell Defense:** 16  
**Legend Point Cost:** Journeyman

For a time, wigs of long, black hair were in fashion among the nobility of Cathay. Though the trend died out during the Scourge, it has recently seen a revival. The blade wigs were created for warrior nobles. Made from real Namegiver hair (typically elven), these wigs were made in a fashion for males. They are highly sought after by the nobility class, who value them not only for their magical abilities but also for being a symbol of social status. A blade wig counts as a weapon of Size 2. Its Spell Defense is used as the Difficulty Number to detect its nature as a weapon, as if the Conceal Object talent had been used.

### Thread Rank One

**Key Knowledge:** The wearer must learn the Name of the wig.

**Effect:** The wearer adds +1 to his Social Defense.

### Thread Rank Two

**Effect:** The wearer adds +2 to his Social Defense.

### Thread Rank Three

**Key Knowledge:** The wearer must learn the Name of the magician who created the wig.

**Effect:** The wearer may whip the long strands of hair at an opponent while wearing the wig. These attacks are made as unarmed Attack Tests. The wig is Damage Step 4 for this purpose, as the hair hardens when whirled around.

### Thread Rank Four

**Effect:** The wearer adds +3 to his Social Defense. The hair can now extend up to 3 yards in length and be used to entangle with an Entangling Difficulty of 10 (*Player's Guide*, p. 229). The wig is not destroyed if the opponent breaks free from entanglement.

### Thread Rank Five

**Key Knowledge:** The wearer must learn the Name of the person from whom the hair that makes the wig was taken.

**Effect:** When used to attack, small blades formed from magical energy appear at the end of the strands of hair, increasing the Damage Step of the wig to 7. The wearer may make an attack with the wig in addition to other attacks that round. This is treated like the Tail Attack combat option (*Player's Guide*, p. 226; the wig grants an additional unarmed attack, but all Action Tests that round suffer a -2 penalty).

## BRITHAN SKULL HELMET

**Maximum Threads:** 1      **Spell Defense:** 14

**Legend Point Cost:** Journeyman

This is a full-faced thread bone helmet made of a Brithan's skull. General Kyrak (p. 35) possesses one of these from a Brithan he slew in his youth. With no threads attached, the helmet has the bone armor property of a +1 bonus to Interaction (Intimidation) Tests (*Namegivers of Barsaive*, p. 240).

### Thread Rank One

**Key Knowledge:** The wearer must learn the helmet's Name.

**Effect:** The wearer adds +1 to his Physical Armor.

### Thread Rank Two

**Effect:** The wearer adds +1 to his Social Defense.

### Thread Rank Three

**Key Knowledge:** The wearer must learn the Name of the helmet's creator.

**Effect:** The wearer adds +2 to his Physical Armor. The helmet's Deflection Bonus is now +3.

### Thread Rank Four

**Effect:** The wearer adds +2 to his Social Defense. The wearer gains a +2 bonus to Interaction (Intimidation) Tests.

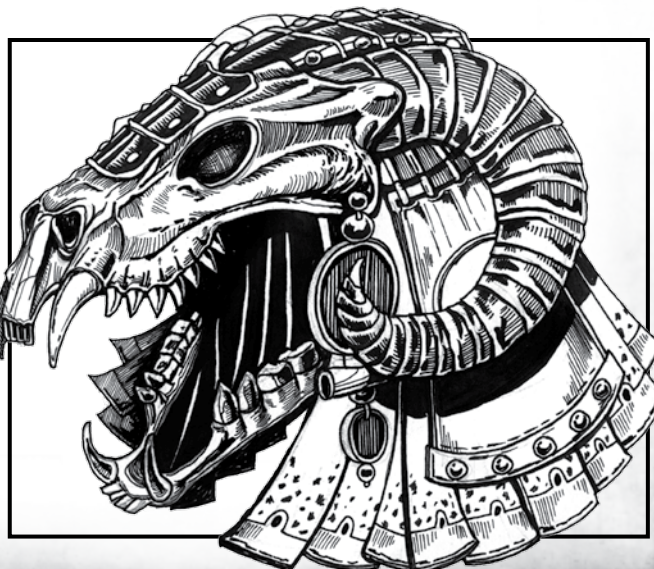
### Thread Rank Five

**Deed:** The wearer must defeat a brithan in single combat.

**Effect:** The wearer adds +3 to his Physical Armor. The helmet's Deflection Bonus is now +4.

### Thread Rank Six

**Effect:** The wearer adds +3 to his Social Defense. The wearer gains a +3 bonus to Interaction (Intimidation) Tests.







## DRAGON BONE RUNES

**Maximum Threads:** 2

**Spell Defense:** 19

**Legend Point Cost:** Warden

The dragon bone runes come in a small, leather pouch, usually only 3 by 5 inches in size. They resemble smooth chips with Cathayan characters burned into their surfaces. All dragon bone runes come from the Cathay dragon Shuou who was killed one thousand years ago by a powerful Nethermancer Named Pan. Pan used the dragon's carcass to create a wide variety of magical items and weapons for his dark agents. Pan and his minions were eventually destroyed, and most of the magical items and weapons were eventually tracked down and destroyed by the Five Guardians. Only a handful of the dragon bone runes still exist.

The possession of dragon bone runes is a great offense to dragons.

### Thread Rank One

**Key Knowledge:** The owner must learn the Name of the pouch.

**Effect:** The owner adds +1 to his Spell Defense.

### Thread Rank Two

**Effect:** The owner adds +1 to his Social Defense.

### Thread Rank Three

**Key Knowledge:** The owner must learn the Name of the last owner of the pouch.

**Effect:** The owner adds +1 to his Physical Defense.

### Thread Rank Four

**Effect:** The owner adds +1 to his Mystic Armor.

### Thread Rank Five

**Effect:** The owner adds +1 to his Physical Armor.

### Thread Rank Six

**Key Knowledge:** The owner must learn that the dragon bones came from the dragon Shuou.

**Effect:** The owner may roll the dragon bone runes once per day, gaining a +4 bonus to one of his characteristics for 5 hours, determined by the way they fall. A D6 is rolled to randomly determine its nature. The bonus is to Physical Defense on a 1, to Spell Defense on a 2, to Social Defense on a 3, to Physical Armor on a 4, to Mystic Armor on a 5, and to his Karma Step on a 6.

## DRAGON ROBE

**Maximum Threads:** 3

**Spell Defense:** 15

**Legend Point Cost:** Warden

Dragon robes are made from beautifully woven fabrics, usually decorated with an embroidered dragon. Whenever the wearer is casting a spell, the dragon appears to swim across the surface of the robe. The dragon robes were created long before the invention of the Spell Matrix talent by the magicians of Cathay in order to cast spells without suffering from the ill effects of raw magic. Dragon robes are popular among magicians who hold to the old traditions.

### Thread Rank One

**Key Knowledge:** The wearer must learn the Name of the dragon robe.

**Effect:** The robe acts as a Spell Matrix Object that can hold 1 spell. The highest-Circle spell the object can hold is equal to the Thread Rank woven to the robe.

### Thread Rank Two

**Effect:** The wearer adds a +1 bonus to Spellcasting Tests for the spell stored in the robe.

### Thread Rank Three

**Key Knowledge:** The wearer must learn who created the robe.

**Effect:** The wearer adds a +1 bonus to Thread Weaving Tests for the spell stored in the robe.

### Thread Rank Four

**Effect:** The wearer adds a +1 bonus to Effect Tests for the spell stored in the robe.





### Thread Rank Five

**Key Knowledge:** The wearer must learn where the robe was created.

**Effect:** For 2 Strain, the wearer can treat the robe's matrix as a Shared Matrix for 12 hours. At the end of that time, the matrix is wiped, and reverts to a normal Spell Matrix, with no spells attuned to it.

### Thread Rank Six

**Effect:** The wearer adds a +2 bonus to Effect Tests, Spellcasting Tests, and Thread Weaving Test for the spell stored in the robe.

## FALCON ROBE

**Maximum Threads:** 2

**Spell Defense:** 16

**Legend Point Cost:** Journeyman

A falcon robe can appear as any normal, nondescript robe. The falcon robes were created centuries ago for the court of Emperor Kun Yin, *the Songbird Emperor*. The robes were created for his many spies, whom he had scattered throughout his empire. This practice led to the Cathayan axiom, "I'm under the eyes of a falcon," to describe a feeling of unease.

Driven by paranoia from the curse of Blood Orchid, the witch of Cai'Fu swamp, Emperor Kun Yin's reign was marked by fear, oppression, and summary executions until the Five Guardians finally killed him, and his son took the throne, restoring order and peace. When this happened, his spies fled to the four corners of Cathay and beyond, fearing retribution, and taking their robes with them.

### Thread Rank One

**Key Knowledge:** The wearer must learn the Name of the falcon robe.

**Effect:** The wearer adds +1 to his Physical Defense.

### Thread Rank Two

**Effect:** The wearer adds +1 to his Social Defense.

### Thread Rank Three

**Key Knowledge:** The wearer must learn where the falcon robe was created.

**Effect:** The wearer adds +1 to his Spell Defense.

### Thread Rank Four

**Effect:** The wearer adds +2 to his Physical Defense.

### Thread Rank Five

**Key Knowledge:** The wearer must learn the Name of the last person to have owned the falcon robe.

**Effect:** The robe may change the wearer into a falcon once per day for up to five hours. Using this ability costs the wearer 4 Strain. This is treated as if the Falcon's Cloak spell was cast on him.

## ROBE OF IRON SILK

**Maximum Threads:** 2

**Spell Defense:** 18

**Legend Point Cost:** Warden

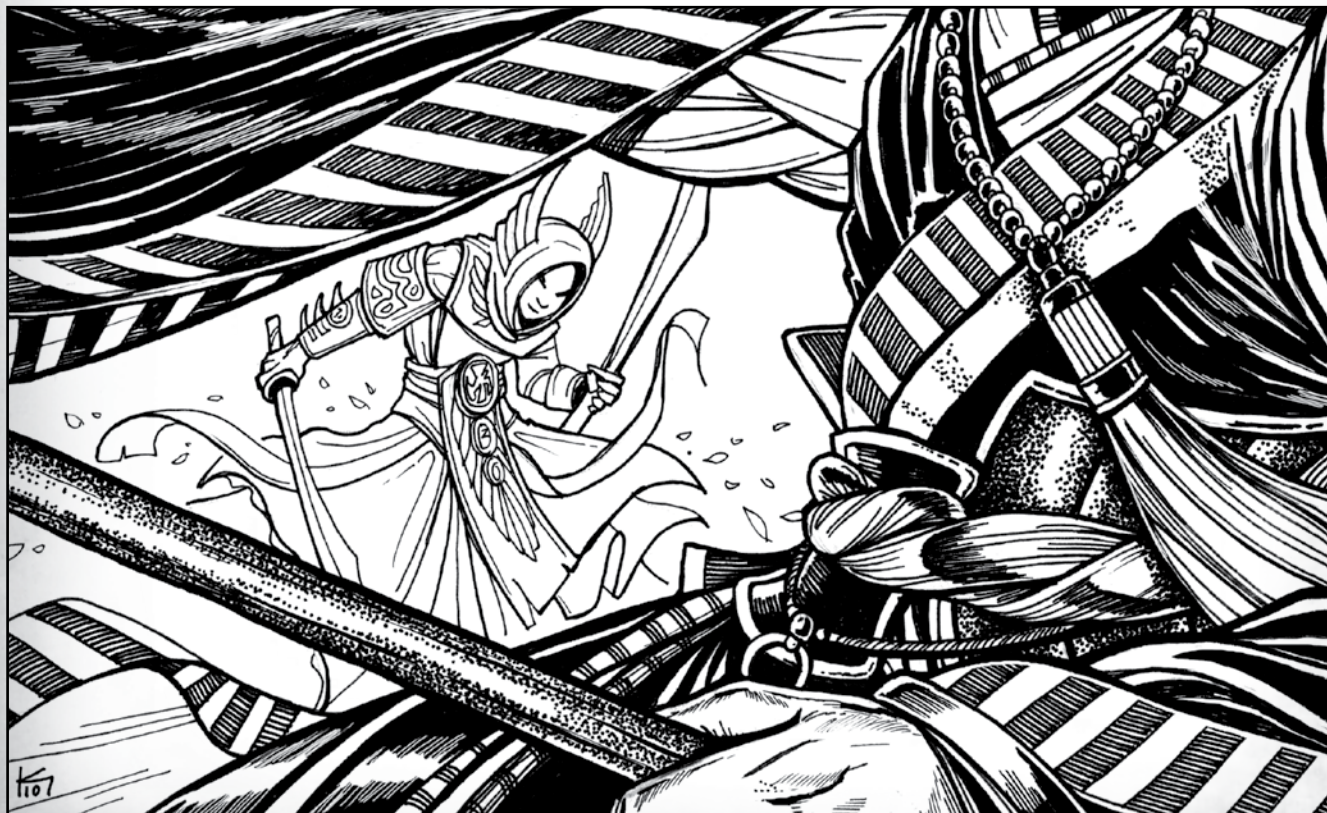
The robe of iron silk is an elegant silk robe, usually dyed green or blue and embroidered with many artistic designs. It repels dirt and always appears clean and fresh.

Robes of iron silk are usually commissioned by those nobles who prefer not to wear armor. The oldest known robe of iron silk dates back over 3,000 years and is owned by Lord Shek Tan of Shui Dei. A Robe of Iron Silk can be worn over other armor.

### Thread Rank One

**Key Knowledge:** The wearer must learn the Name of the robe.

**Effect:** The robe grants a +2 bonus to Interaction Test against targets who owe allegiance to the wearer.





**Thread Rank Two**

**Effect:** The wearer adds +1 to his Physical and Mystic Armor.

**Thread Rank Three**

**Key Knowledge:** The wearer must learn where the robe was created.

**Effect:** Targets who owe allegiance to the wearer can be asked for a large favor as if it was a small favor.

**Thread Rank Four**

**Effect:** The wearer adds +2 to his Physical and Mystic Armor.

**Thread Rank Five**

**Key Knowledge:** The wearer must learn the Name of the last person to own the robe.

**Effect:** The Result Level to achieve an Armor-Defeating Hit against the wearer is increased by one.

**Thread Rank Six**

**Effect:** The wearer adds +3 to his Physical and Mystic Armor.

**Thread Rank Seven**

**Effect:** When wearing no other armor than the robe, the wearer adds +5 to his Physical and Mystic Armor and gains a +4 bonus to Interaction Tests against anyone who owes him allegiance.

**RAZOR KAMAS**

**Maximum Threads:** 2

**Spell Defense:** 14

**Legend Point Cost:** Warden

Already feared for their use by the Assassins of the Tower, razor kamas strike even more fear into the hearts of those who would defy the Immortals. Razor kamas always come as a pair, and the magic that powers them makes their blades so hard they can be used like climbing hooks. All razor kamas are made in Jih'Po. With no threads attached, the threaded razor kama has the same characteristics as a normal Jih'Po sickle, except that the edge never dulls even when used for climbing purposes.

**Thread Rank One**

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn the Name of the Weaponsmith who created the pair of kamas.

**Effect:** The kamas are now Damage Step 5. The wielder gains a +1 Rank Bonus to his Climbing talent.

**Thread Rank Two**

**Effect:** The kamas are now Damage Step 6. The wielder now gains a +2 Rank Bonus to his Climbing talent.

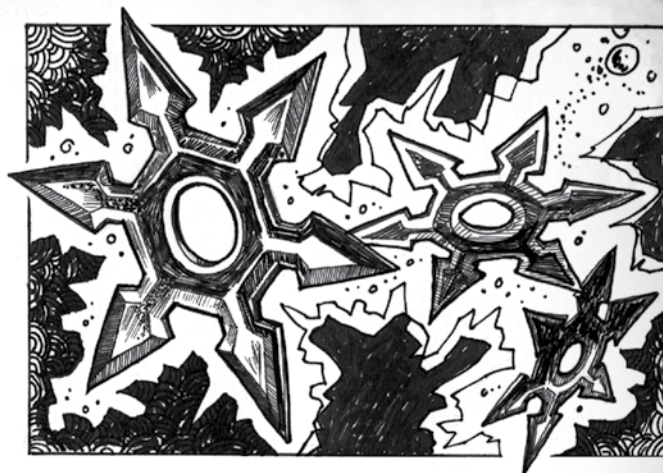
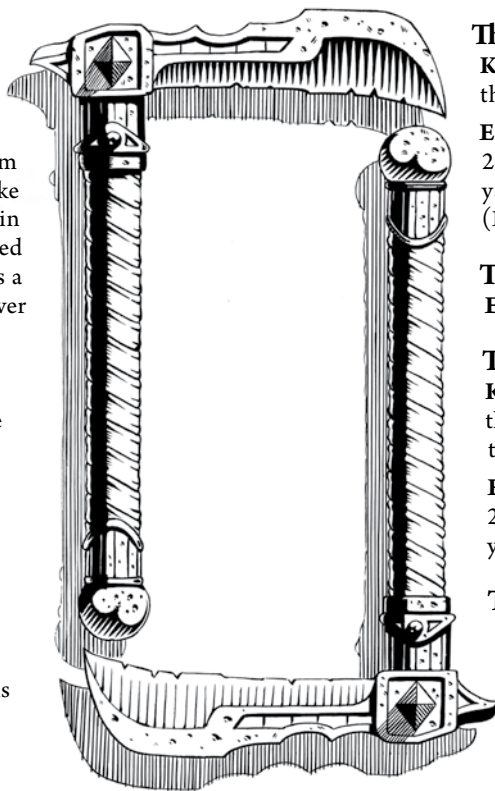
**Thread Rank Three**

**Effect:** The kamas are now Damage Step 7. The wielder now gains a +3 Rank Bonus to his Climbing talent.

**Thread Rank Four**

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn the source of the ore of the metal used in making the kama blades.

**Effect:** The kamas are now Damage Step 8. The wielder now gains a +4 Rank Bonus to his Climbing talent.

**SHURIKEN**

**Maximum Threads:** 3

**Spell Defense:** 17

**Legend Point Cost:** Journeyman

The shuriken is a small metal throwing weapon usually crafted into the shape of a star (*hira shuriken*) or a straight spike (*bo shuriken*). Hailing from the island of Jih'Po, the shuriken is an easily concealable weapon. Threaded shuriken are often used by the Assassins of the Tower. With no threads attached, the threaded shuriken has the same characteristics as a normal shuriken except that it repels dirt and rust no matter how many times it is thrown.

**Thread Rank One**

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn the Name of the shuriken.

**Effect:** The shuriken is now Damage Step 2. Increase the Ranges to Short: 2–18 yards (1–9 hexes), Long: 19–36 yards (10–18 hexes).

**Thread Rank Two**

**Effect:** The shuriken is now Damage Step 3.

**Thread Rank Three**

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn the Name of the Weaponsmith who forged the shuriken.

**Effect:** Increase the Ranges to Short: 2–22 yards (1–11 hexes), Long: 23–44 yards (12–22 hexes).

**Thread Rank Four**

**Effect:** The weapon is now Damage Step 4.

**Thread Rank Five**

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn the Name of the last owner of the shuriken.

**Effect:** The weapon is now Damage Step 5. Increase the Ranges to Short: 2–26 yard (1–13 hexes), Long: 27–52 yards (14–26) hexes.

**Thread Rank Six**

**Effect:** Taking 1 Strain, the wielder adds a +3 bonus to a Damage Test for the weapon.



### Thread Rank Seven

**Effect:** By speaking its Name, the wielder can recall the shuriken to his hand from a range of no greater than 52 yards (26 hexes) once per round. If the weapon is a *hira shuriken*, its Detection Difficulty when concealed is increased by +5 and it can be called back twice per round. If the weapon is a *bo shuriken*, it now also counts as a melee weapon, and its Damage Step is 6.

## STORM SHAN

**Maximum Threads:** 2

**Spell Defense:** 14

**Legend Point Cost:** Novice

The storm shan resembles a normal, nondescript Tail of the Peacock (see *Cathay Player's Guide*, p.130). It is believed that the original storm shan was created by the storm child, Jia'Fen, a powerful Elemental. According to legend, she created them after surviving a terrible monsoon that destroyed several coastal cities along Cathay's southeastern border. Awed by the power of the wind, she constructed the first storm shan in an effort to harness its awesome power. Her design has since been replicated, and dozens of storm shans now exist throughout Cathay. With no threads attached, the storm shan has the same characteristics as a normal *tail of the peacock*.

### Thread Rank One

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn the Name of the storm shan.

**Effect:** The storm shan is now Damage Step 3.

### Thread Rank Two

**Effect:** The storm shan is now Damage Step 4.

### Thread Rank Three

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn where the storm shan was created.

**Effect:** The storm shan is now Damage Step 5.

### Thread Rank Four

**Effect:** The storm shan is now Damage Step 6.

### Thread Rank Five

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn the Name of the last owner of the storm shan.

**Effect:** By waving the weapon around, the wielder can cause a gust of wind that may knock opponents over. This ability is treated like casting the Air Blast spell, using the wielder's Melee Weapons Step for the Spellcasting Test and his Willpower+9 to make the Effect Test. No spell threads need to be woven, but using this ability causes 2 Strain Points of damage.

## TAISHI'S CROSSBOW

**Maximum Threads:** 2

**Spell Defense:** 14

**Legend Point Cost:** Journeyman

The magician, Taishi, created these crossbows 70 years ago to help aid the Kingdom of For Dei in the Great Trial. Taishi was killed in the Battle of Gonhai, but several of his crossbows still live on, scattered throughout Cathay.

The crossbow appears as a regular crossbow (see *Cathay Player's Guide*, p.132) of excellent craftsmanship. Images of Cathayan dragons are etched along its sides, highlighted in gold. With no threads attached, Taishi's crossbow has the same characteristics as a normal crossbow.

### Thread Rank One

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn the Name of the crossbow.

**Effect:** The crossbow is now Damage Step 9. Increase the Ranges to Short: 2–62 yards (1–31 hexes), Long: 63–124 yards (32–62 hexes).

### Thread Rank Two

**Effect:** The crossbow is now Damage Step 10.

### Thread Rank Three

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn where the crossbow was created.

**Effect:** Increase the Ranges to Short: 2–75 yards (1–37 hexes), Long: 76–150 yards (38–75 hexes).

### Thread Rank Four

**Effect:** The crossbow is now Damage Step 11

### Thread Rank Five

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn the Name of the last person who owned the crossbow.

**Effect:** For 5 Strain, the wielder can shoot a fireball as per the Fireball spell from the crossbow. No spell thread needs to be woven, and the wielder makes a missile weapons Attack Test against the Physical Defense of all targets in the area of effect. The fireball causes damage equal to the wielder's Willpower+8. This ability uses the crossbow's Ranges. The area of effect is the same as the Fireball spell.





## TAISHI'S DAGGER

**Maximum Threads:** 3

**Spell Defense:** 14

**Legend Point Cost:** Novice

In addition to his crossbows, the war mage, Taishi, created a sizeable quantity of these daggers. These daggers are ornately carved, depicting dragons, tigers, lions, and phoenixes etched along the blades. Each usually has a precious gem set in the pommel. These daggers were awarded to generals who achieved five or more victories. However, many of these generals have since been killed, and their daggers taken from the battlefield by their enemies. With no threads attached, Taishi's dagger has the same characteristics as a normal dagger.

### Thread Rank One

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn the Name of the dagger.

**Effect:** The dagger is now Damage Step 3.

### Thread Rank Two

**Effect:** The dagger is now Damage Step 4.

### Thread Rank Three

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn where the dagger was created.

**Effect:** The dagger is now Damage Step 5.

### Thread Rank Four

**Effect:** For 4 Strain, the wielder can shoot a lightning bolt at a living target within 20 yards (10 hexes), making a ranged Attack Test against the target's Physical Defense. If successful, the bolt causes the wielder's Willpower+5 Steps Damage to the target, non-metal Physical Armor protects against this damage. If the target suffered at least 1 Damage Point, the wielder compares his Attack Test result to all characters adjacent (within 2 yards or 1 hex) to the target. Targets against whose Physical Defense the Attack Test achieved a Good Result are hit by lightning jumping towards them from the original target, and suffer the wielder's Willpower Step damage, non-metal Physical Armor protects against this damage. If successful, the lightning bolt causes damage to the target equal to the wielder's Willpower+5.

## VASE OF HIDDEN WONDERS

**Maximum Threads:** 3

**Spell Defense:** 13

**Legend Point Cost:** Warden

Constructed from jade, the vase of hidden wonders is a simple magical item that allows its owner to safely store precious possessions, hidden from the eyes of all but him. Any item stored inside of it is invisible and irretrievable except by those with threads attached to it. An item must be able to fit through the opening in the top of the vase in order to be stored in this way. Any item, despite its length, can fit into the vase as long as it can squeeze through the opening (for example, a staff could be placed within the vase). The

openings of vases of hidden wonders vary from as little as 2 inches to as wide as 6 inches in diameter.

If the vase is destroyed, all objects inside are considered lost. No matter how much is stored in the vase, the vase does not rise above its original weight.

The vases are always a testimony to exquisite Cathayan art and craftsmanship. Typical decorations include pagodas surrounded by a bamboo forest; images of tigers, eagles, and dragons; and various florae and bird motifs.

### Thread Rank One

**Key Knowledge:** The owner must learn the Name of the vase.

**Effect:** The vase can store any number of objects up to a total Weight of 10 lbs.

### Thread Rank Two

**Effect:** The vase can store any number of objects up to a total Weight of 30lbs.

### Thread Rank Three

**Key Knowledge:** The owner must learn the Name of the magician who created the vase.

**Effect:** No matter the distance between him and the vase, the owner learns of any change to the vase's contents and can, as a Standard Action, request a quick inventory in case he has forgotten what the vase contains.

### Thread Rank Four

**Effect:** The vase can store any number of objects up to a total Weight of 50lbs.

### Thread Rank Five

**Key Knowledge:** The owner must learn where the jade that was used to construct the vase came from.

**Effect:** If he is within 100 yards of the vase, the owner may take 1 Strain to transport an item no larger than his arm from his vase to his hand or vice versa as a Simple Action.

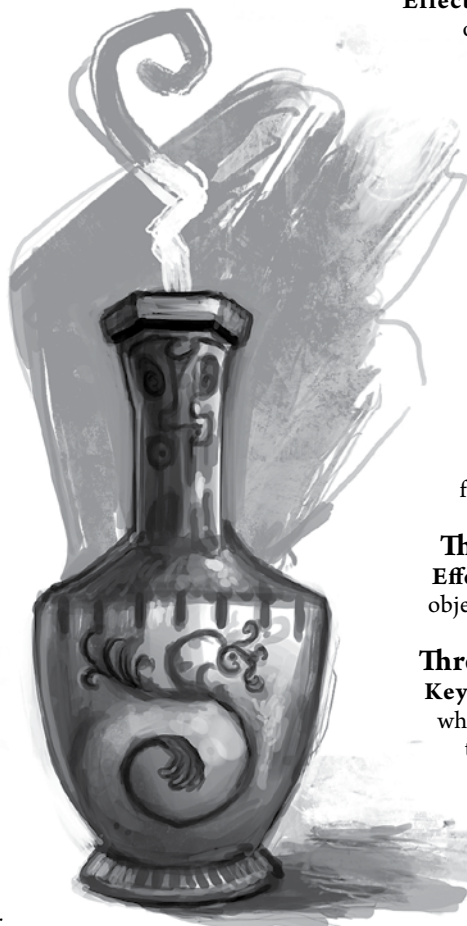
### Thread Rank Six

**Effect:** The vase can store any number of objects up to a total Weight of 70lbs.

### Thread Rank Seven

**Key Knowledge:** The owner must learn the Name of the last owner of the vase.

**Effect:** If the vase is destroyed the owner may take a Blood Wound to have its contents drop at his feet out of thin air, no matter the distance between him and the vase. He has to decide instantly if he wants to take the Blood Wound or risk losing the items stored (there is no time to use the Thread Rank Five Effect to retrieve a specific item). If multiple Thread Rank Seven threads to the vase exist, each owner decides separately (there is no time to even talk about it, should they be near each other), and if several take a Blood Wound, the items are divided between them at random. The owner is Stunned in the round the vase is destroyed.





# UNIQUE TREASURES

**T**hese items are unique magical treasures spoken of in Cathay's tales and legends, from the deep ocean to the East to the high mountains in the West, from the jungles of the South to the harsh steppes of the Gar's homeland in the North.

## BRUSH OF TELEPORTATION

**Maximum Threads:** 2

**Spell Defense:** 14

**Legend Point Cost:** Journeyman

The Brush of Teleportation resembles a regular, non-descript calligraphy brush, old and worn from use. It was created long ago by a Scholar and Sorcerer adept Named Wei Zu, who used its powers to travel throughout Cathay, and even the netherworlds, searching for knowledge to catalogue and bring back to the Tower of Secrets. Today, Wei Zu is a legend among Cathayan Scholars.

The Brush of Teleportation was lost just prior to the Scourge; it was in the possession of the Scholar, Yong-Nian, who mysteriously vanished. Some say he was the victim of Horrors, while others believe he fled to a different plane of existence.

### Thread Rank One

**Key Knowledge:** The owner must learn the Name of the brush.

**Effect:** Before the invention of the Moon Staff, the Scholars of the Tower of Secrets had to painstakingly write down all of their information. The brush can record automatically onto paper anything the owner wishes it to that he speaks out loud.

### Thread Rank Two

**Key Knowledge:** The owner must learn who created the brush.

**Effect:** The owner can telepathically dictate to the brush.

### Thread Rank Three

**Key Knowledge:** The owner must learn where Wei Zu got the hair that makes up the tip of the brush.

**Effect:** The brush produces its own ink. The owner can choose to make the ink invisible to any but his own eyes, but has to decide for each document beforehand.

### Thread Rank Four

**Effect:** By writing with the brush the Name of the location the owner wishes to go, the brush allows the character to instantly transport there. The location cannot be a greater distance than 10 miles away from the character's current location, and must be Named. Using the brush in this way costs the owner 1 Recovery Test and 5 Karma Points.

### Thread Rank Five

**Deed:** The character must travel to the Tower of Secrets and give a written copy of all of his adventures to the Scholars.

**Effect:** The range of the teleportation increases to 50 miles.

### Thread Rank Six

**Effect:** The range of the teleportation increases to 75 miles.

### Thread Rank Seven

**Key Knowledge:** The owner must learn how and when Wei Zu died.

**Effect:** The owner can travel to different planes of existence using the teleportation method as outlined above. This ability can only be used once per day and costs the owner 2 Recovery Tests and 10 Karma Points.

## CIU DANG WHITE ORB

**Maximum Threads:** 1

**Spell Defense:** 26

**Legend Point Cost:** Warden

Ciu Dan's White Orb is a legendary Moon Staff (*Cathay Player's Guide*, p. 63). Ciu Dan crafted this Moon Staff for himself when he was already a well-established Scholar, but he performed even more legendary deeds afterwards, serving the Emperor directly as an investigator and advisor. Ciu Dan's Moon Staff has a white orb instead of a golden one, and

the legend tells that the white orb has special powers that are a gift of the dragon, Tiet. The shaft of the staff is charred, but it is impossible to remove the burned wood to see if there is an unburned core underneath or if the staff is indeed composed of coal.

Legend tells that Ciu Dan once bet his life on a piece of advice given to the Emperor. The Emperor's decision resulted in a catastrophe, and Ciu Dan's life was forfeit.

All rules for the Moon Staff apply to Ciu Dan's White Orb, and it is used in the same fashion as a normal Moon Staff by any Scholar, except where otherwise noted.

### Thread Rank One

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn the Name of the Moon Staff.

**Deed:** The wielder must know the Secret Weaving talent, and must use Secret Weaving to weave threads to the Moon Staff's Thread Ranks. Other versions of Thread Weaving cannot be used to weave threads to a Moon Staff.

**Effect:** The staff is now Damage Step 9. The wielder now receives the Thread Rank woven as a bonus to the Moon Ray's Effect Step.

### Thread Rank Two

**Effect:** The range of the Moon Ray is now 30 hexes (60 yards).



### Thread Rank Three

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn the Name of the first Scholar to wield this staff.

**Effect:** The wielder now gains a +2 Rank bonus to his Evidence Analysis talent.

### Thread Rank Four

**Effect:** The Moon Staff can now store a number of Moon Points equal to the Thread Rank woven.

### Thread Rank Five

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn the Name of the Scholar who crafted this staff.

**Effect:** The wielder can now store 6 additional books in the Moon Staff and the range of the Moon Ray increases to 40 hexes (80 yards).

### Thread Rank Six

**Effect:** The Staff is now Damage Step 10 and when using the Defensive Stance or Giving Ground combat option, the additional Physical Defense bonus from being a quarterstaff is +2.

### Thread Rank Seven

**Deed:** The wielder must fuel the Moon Staff's orb with True fire.

**Effect:** The wielder gains the **Searing Orb** ability. By spending 4 Strain, the staff's orb becomes incredibly hot for a number of rounds equal to the Thread Rank woven. The Moon Staff gains a +4 bonus to Damage Tests in close combat. An Armor-Defeating Hit causes the target to ignite, suffering Step 4/D6 Damage each round until **Searing Orb** expires, no armor protects against this damage, although it can be extinguished or dispelled as a spell with a Circle equal to the Thread Rank woven. At the gamemaster's discretion, **Searing Orb** may be used to ignite combustible materials or even cut through them.

### Thread Rank Eight

**Effect:** The wielder can now store 2 spells absorbed with Absorb Spell in the Moon Staff. The wielder gains a +2 Rank Bonus to the Block Spell talent.

### Thread Rank Nine

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn that the dragon, Tiet, assisted in the staff's construction by putting very rare materials at Ciu Dan's disposal.

**Effect:** The weapon is now Damage Step 11. The range of the Moon Ray increases to 50 hexes (100 yards).

### Thread Rank Ten

**Effect:** Moon Points are now Step 5/D8. The **Searing Orb** now adds a +6 damage bonus and causes Step 6/D10 damage per round to ignited targets.

### Thread Rank Eleven

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn that the dragon, Tiet, charred the Moon Staff with his fiery breath and caused the orb to become white doing this.

**Effect:** The **Searing Orb** ability now improves the wielder's Moon Ray attacks, adding both the damage bonus and the ignition ability to the ray.

### Thread Rank Twelve

**Effect:** The Moon Shield talent can now be used to defend against attacks the Scholar cannot normally perceive. The wielder gains

a +2 Rank Bonus to the Moon Shield talent. He may enhance any Moon Shield Test with a number of Moon Points up to the Thread Rank woven to the staff.

### Thread Rank Thirteen

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn how and where Ciu Dan met his end.

**Effect:** The wielder gains the **Crucial Advice** ability. Whenever giving advice to another character to help that character make a decision, the wielder may declare a number of Moon Points to lend the target to help him make the decision. The target may add up to 5 Moon Points to any test made in the process of making the decision.

### Thread Rank Fourteen

**Effect:** The Scholar can use Moon Points instead of Karma Points for Scholar Discipline Talents, but cannot use both Moon Points and Karma Points on a single test. The wielder can now store 3 spells absorbed with Absorb Spell in the Moon Staff. The wielder gains a +2 Rank Bonus to his Absorb Spell talent.

### Thread Rank Fifteen

**Deed:** The wielder must appear before the dragon, Tiet, and ask him to fuel the staff's fire. The dragon will demand that additional deeds be done.

**Effect:** The wielder gains the **Radiant Orb** ability, which allows him to target multiple targets with his Moon Ray talent. He declares targets up to a number of 15, taking 1 Strain per target. He then makes a Moon Ray Test as normal, comparing the result with the Spell Defense of each target. Each target the Moon Ray Test was successful against is hit by a ray and receives damage as normal.

## COBRA WHIP

**Maximum Threads:** 2

**Spell Defense:** 22

**Legend Point Cost:** Master

The Cobra Whip resembles a 13-foot-long coiled king cobra made from illustrious gold. Upon command, a character who has a thread attached to it may grasp it by its tail, causing it to uncoil. He may then use it as a whip, coiling it back to its original state when he's done. The Cobra Whip was invented by a Weaponsmith and Beastmaster adept Named Da-Xia, a female ork and snake tamer. With no threads attached, the item cannot be used as a weapon. The Cobra Whip is never destroyed by a character breaking free of Entanglement.

### Thread Rank One

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn the Name of the whip.

**Effect:** The whip is now Damage Step 6.

### Thread Rank Two

**Effect:** The whip is now Damage Step 7.

### Thread Rank Three

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn the Name of the whip's creator.

**Effect:** The whip can be used to entangle opponents up to 4 yards (2 hexes) away.

### Thread Rank Four

**Effect:** The whip is now Damage Step 8.



### Thread Rank Five

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn the Name of Da-Xia's king cobra that inspired the construction of the whip.

**Effect:** The Entangling Difficulty is now 12.

### Thread Rank Six

**Deed:** The wielder must find a wild king cobra and tame it.

**Effect:** On an Excellent Result on the Attack Test, the whip bites the target. The target suffers the effects of poison (SD 10; Damage 10).

## DAgger OF PING

**Maximum Threads:** 3      **Spell Defense:** 15

**Legend Point Cost:** Journeyman

Ping was a famous Thief adept who lived nearly 2,000 years ago. His roguish and often comical exploits with his companion (a Cathayan ferret with a caustic wit, Named Bik-Bik) still captivate Cathayans of all ages. The Dagger of Ping resembles an ornate silver dagger embedded with flecks from a black ruby. The bottom of the dagger's hilt twists and loosens, revealing a thin, ten-foot-long silver chain that is weighted down at one end by the bottom of the hilt, while remaining attached at the other end to the dagger. The dagger magically forms itself to whoever touches it, so that it is always the size of a dagger in relation to the size of the wielder. With no threads attached, the Dagger of Ping has the same characteristics as a normal dagger.

### Thread Rank One

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn the Name of the dagger.

**Effect:** The dagger is now Damage Step 3.

### Thread Rank Two

**Effect:** The dagger is now Damage Step 4.

### Thread Rank Three

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn that Ping stole the dagger from a great giant Named Du Shu and that he did so while he was the giant's prisoner. The wily Thief accomplished this feat by convincing Du Shu to accept his challenge to a drinking contest—and then winning!

**Effect:** When the wielder uses the dagger as a throwing weapon, he can tug on the chain, returning the dagger to his grasp immediately if the target was within reach of the chain. Increase the Ranges to Short: 2–12 yards (1–6 hexes), Long: 13–25 yards (7–12 hexes).

### Thread Rank Four

**Effect:** The wielder can throw the dagger, embedding it into a wall or other surface and then use the chain as a rope. The dagger can hold up to 2,000 pounds. The chain can now magically grow to a length of 20 yards.

### Thread Rank Five

**Key Knowledge:** Legend says that after Ping died he stole his spirit back from the Nether Realm and became an immortal with the Passions. The wielder must learn how and when the great Thief died.

**Effect:** Once a day the wielder can use the dagger and chain as if it were enchanted with the Rope Guide spell. The Effect Step of this ability is the wielder's Willpower +4.

### Thread Rank Six

**Deed:** The wielder must learn one of Ping's other feats and repeat it.

**Effect:** The dagger and chain double as a lighter version of the Dragonhead Whip (*Cathay Player's Guide*, p. 128), as a two-handed weapon. When used in this capacity, the Damage Step is 6, the Entangling Difficulty 12, and the chain cannot be destroyed by breaking free from entanglement.

## DAWN SPREADS MORNING LIGHT

**Maximum Threads:** 2      **Spell Defense:** 15

**Legend Point Cost:** Warden

Dawn Spreads Morning Light is a dew of the lotus sword in the possession of Su Shen. With no threads attached, Dawn Spreads Morning Light has the same characteristics as a normal dew of the lotus sword except that the sword edge never dulls, a beautiful weapon that seems to reflect light whenever in its presence.

### Thread Rank One

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn the Name of the sword.

**Effect:** The sword is now Damage Step 8. The wielder gains a +1 Rank Bonus to her Melee Weapons talent.

### Thread Rank Two

**Effect:** The wielder adds +1 to her Physical Defense.

### Thread Rank Three

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn the Name of the Weaponsmith who created the sword.

**Effect:** The sword is now Damage Step 9. The wielder gains a +2 Rank Bonus to her Melee Weapons talent.

### Thread Rank Four

**Effect:** The wielder adds +2 to her Physical Defense.

### Thread Rank Five

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn the Name of the material that the Weaponsmith used to create the reflective surface on the blade edge.

**Effect:** The wielder gains a +3 Rank Bonus to her Blade Dance talent (*Cathay Player's Guide*, p. 81). When using the Blade Dance talent, the swirling tassel combines with the reflective, whirling blade to further confuse opponents, counting as an additional source of distraction. This imposes a second Harried modifier on them that subsists the entire fight (note that every Harried modifier after the first only applies an additional –1 penalty, so the total penalty from the wielder's Blade Dance is –3; however, when only one opponent remains, and the Blade Dance ends, this opponent now suffers a –2 penalty from the second Harried modifier until the end of the fight).

### Thread Rank Six

**Effect:** The wielder gains the **Dazzling Blade** ability. By taking 2 Strain, as a Standard Action, the wielder can swing the blade in a wide arc, shooting a flash appearing to be sunlight at a target's eyes. The wielder makes a Melee Weapons Test against the target's Physical Defense. On a Good Result, the target is Dazzled, taking a Full Darkness (–3 penalty) for 10 rounds.



## THE DRAGON ARMOR OF JUNG

Maximum Threads: 2

Spell Defense: 19

Legend Point Cost: Warden

Pan, creator of the dragon bone runes, crafted this dark green, full-body armor (*Cathay Player's Guide*, p. 134), made from the scales of the great dragon, Shuou, for his chief lieutenant, the troll Warrior Jung. Though Pan had created many suits of armor for his lieutenants and generals, the Dragon Armor of Jung is the only known suit to have escaped the destruction of the Five Guardians. Wearing this armor is a great offense to dragons. With no threads attached, the Dragon Armor of Jung has the same characteristics as normal full body armor.



### Thread Rank One

**Key Knowledge:** The owner must learn the Name of the armor.

**Effect:** The armor is now Physical Armor 12.

### Thread Rank Two

**Effect:** The armor is now Initiative Penalty 2.

### Thread Rank Three

**Key Knowledge:** The owner must learn how Jung died.

**Effect:** The armor is now Mystic Armor 1.

### Thread Rank Four

**Effect:** The armor is now Initiative Penalty 1.

### Thread Rank Five

**Key Knowledge:** The owner must learn how Pan slew the dragon, Shuou.

**Effect:** The armor is now Mystic Armor 2. The wearer adds +1 to his Physical Defense.

### Thread Rank Six

**Effect:** The armor has no Initiative Penalty.

### Thread Rank Seven

**Deed:** The wearer must find the location of Jung's grave.

**Effect:** The armor is now Mystic Armor 3. The wearer adds +2 to his Physical Defense.

### Thread Rank Eight

**Effect:** The armor is now Mystic Armor 4.

### Thread Rank Nine

**Key Knowledge:** The wearer must learn where the dragon, Shuou, was killed.

**Effect:** The wearer gains the Regeneration dragon power at Rank 2 (see *Gamemaster's Guide*, p.249).

### Thread Rank Ten

**Key Knowledge:** The wearer must learn where the armor was forged.

**Effect:** The wearer gains the Fear dragon power at Rank 3 (see *Gamemaster's Guide*, p.248). To use this power, the wearer lets out a terrible roar, mimicking the roar of a dragon.



## THE DRAGON STAFF OF PAN

**Maximum Threads:** 1      **Spell Defense:** 19  
**Legend Point Cost:** Warden

The Dragon Staff of Pan is a quarterstaff made from bone charred black from fire. Pan crafted the staff from the bones of the dragon, Shuou. Wielding the Dragon Staff of Pan is a great offense to dragons.

### Thread Rank One

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn the Name of the staff.

**Effect:** The staff is now Damage Step 9 and functions as a Spell Matrix with a Rank equal to the Thread Rank woven to the staff.

### Thread Rank Two

**Effect:** The staff is now Damage Step 10 and grants the wielder a +1 bonus to his Spell Defense.

### Thread Rank Three

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn how Pan was destroyed.

**Effect:** The staff is now Damage Step 11 and functions as an Enhanced Matrix with a Rank equal to the Thread Rank woven.

### Thread Rank Four

**Effect:** The staff is now Damage Step 12 and grants the wielder a +2 bonus to his Spell Defense.

### Thread Rank Five

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn the Name of the last person to own the staff.

**Effect:** The staff is now Damage Step 13 and functions as an Armored Matrix with a Rank equal to the Thread Rank woven.

### Thread Rank Six

**Effect:** The staff is now Damage Step 14 and grants the wielder a +3 bonus to his Spell Defense.

### Thread Rank Seven

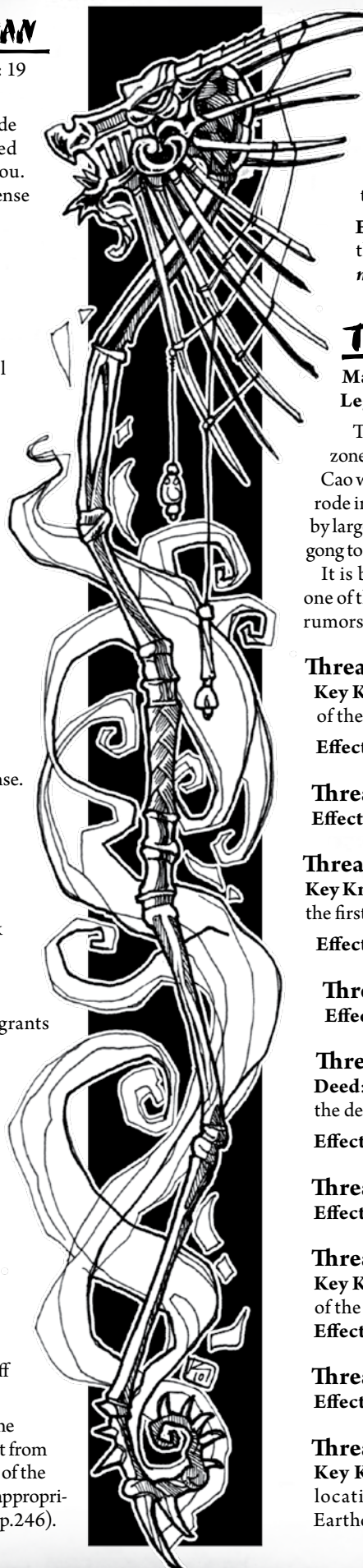
**Deed:** The wielder must learn where Pan's remains are and leave an offering to the dead Nethermancer worth at least 2,000 gold pieces.

**Effect:** The staff is now Damage Step 15 and functions as a Shared Matrix with a Rank equal to the Thread Rank woven.

### Thread Rank Eight

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn from which of Shuou's bones the Dragon Staff of Pan was created.

**Effect:** The wielder gains a +3 Rank Bonus to the Dragon Breath Dragon Power. The flames erupt from the tip of the staff in a 90-degree arc. The range of the flames is variable, and the wielder takes Strain appropriate to the range chosen (*Gamemaster's Guide*, p.246).



### Thread Rank Nine

**Effect:** The staff is now Damage Step 16 and may spend 1 Karma Point on tests for dragon powers.

### Thread Rank Ten

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn the last words of the dragon, Shuou.

**Effect:** The wielder gains a +3 Rank Bonus to the Suppress Magic Dragon Power (*Gamemaster's Guide*, p.250).

## THE GONG OF CAO

**Maximum Threads:** 2      **Spell Defense:** 15  
**Legend Point Cost:** Journeyman

The Gong of Cao resembles a bronze gong emblazoned with the relief of a Cathay dragon. In ages past, Cao was a mighty troll Warrior and Elementalist who rode in a flying chariot that was drawn across the sky by large flying reptiles. Legends say that Cao used the gong to level entire cities during his short reign of terror.

It is believed that the Gong of Cao was taken by one of the Five Guardians after Cao's death, but these rumors have never been confirmed.

### Thread Rank One

**Key Knowledge:** The owner must learn the Name of the gong.

**Effect:** The owner adds +1 to his Physical Armor.

### Thread Rank Two

**Effect:** The owner adds +1 to his Physical Defense.

### Thread Rank Three

**Key Knowledge:** The owner must learn the Name of the first city that was destroyed by the gong.

**Effect:** The owner adds +1 to his Mystic Armor.

### Thread Rank Four

**Effect:** The owner adds +1 to his Spell Defense.

### Thread Rank Five

**Deed:** The owner must travel to the location where the destroyed city once stood and strike the gong.

**Effect:** The owner adds +2 to his Physical Armor.

### Thread Rank Six

**Effect:** The owner adds +2 to his Physical Defense.

### Thread Rank Seven

**Key Knowledge:** The owner must learn the Name of the last owner of the gong.

**Effect:** The owner adds +2 to his Mystic Armor.

### Thread Rank Eight

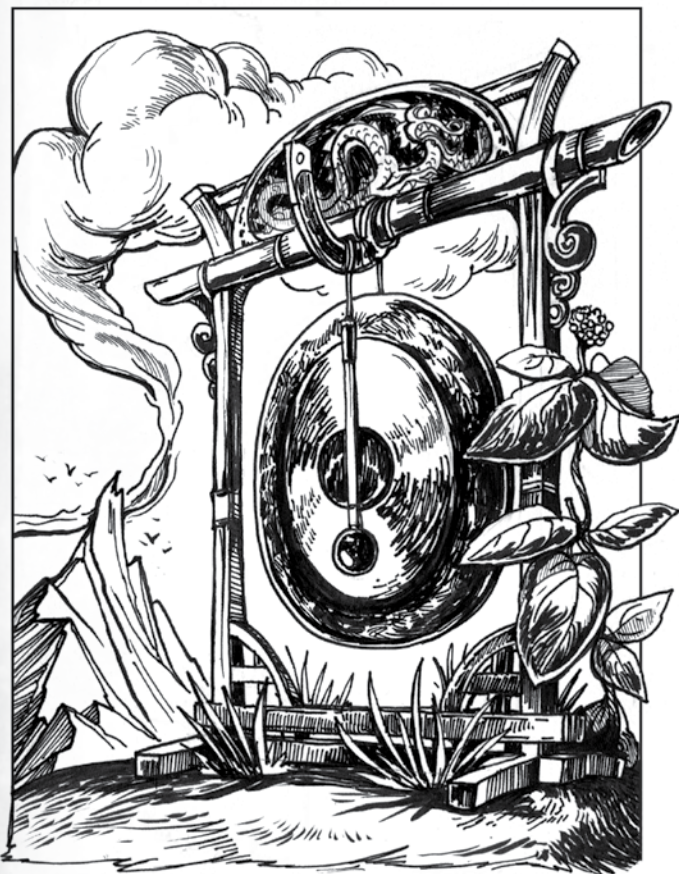
**Effect:** The owner adds +2 to his Spell Defense.

### Thread Rank Nine

**Key Knowledge:** The owner must learn the last location where the gong was used to create an Earthquake.



**Effect:** By striking the gong, the character casts the Giant Stomps his Feet spell (see *Cathay Player's Guide*, p. 107), centered on the gong. The Effect Step of this ability is the character's Willpower+15. This ability can only be used once per day.



## JADE DRAGON

**Maximum Threads:** 2

**Spell Defense:** 22

**Legend Point Cost:** Master

The Jade Dragon is a six-inch tall statue of a Cathayan dragon carved from green jade. The position of the dragon indicates whether or not there is a thread attached to it: if there is no thread, the dragon is curled up in gentle repose; if a thread is attached, the dragon stands alert and ready. The statue is old and worn, marking its great age. The Jade Dragon houses a powerful spirit of unknown origin, though many believe it the spirit of an ancient, long-dead dragon. Since the spirit refuses to speak of itself, the truth may forever be a mystery.

### Thread Rank One

**Key Knowledge:** The owner must learn the Name of the statue.

**Effect:** Once per day the owner may commune with the spirit, asking it only brief, specific questions relating to one single topic. The Jade Dragon's answers are not so often as specific. This ability is handled as if the owner had Knowledge appropriate to the topic, and he may make a Knowledge Test as if he had a Knowledge Skill of his choice at a Rank equal to the Thread Rank woven to the statue.

### Thread Rank Two

**Effect:** The owner adds +1 to his Spell Defense.

### Thread Rank Three

**Key Knowledge:** The owner must learn the Name of the Jade Dragon's creator.

**Effect:** The owner can now ask two questions per day.

### Thread Rank Four

**Effect:** The owner adds +1 to his Mystic Armor.

### Thread Rank Five

**Key Knowledge:** The character must learn that the jade that comprises the statue was mined from the Dragon Spine Mountains.

**Effect:** The owner adds +2 to his Karma Modifier.

### Thread Rank Six

**Effect:** The owner can now ask three questions per day.

### Thread Rank Seven

**Key Knowledge:** The owner must learn the Name of the Sorcerer who trapped the spirit in the statue.

**Effect:** The owner adds +2 to his Spell Defense and Mystic Armor.

### Thread Rank Eight

**Effect:** The owner can now ask four questions per day.

### Thread Rank Nine

**Key Knowledge:** The owner must learn the Name of the last owner of the Jade Dragon.

**Effect:** The owner adds a +1 bonus to his Perception and Willpower Attribute Values.

### Thread Rank Ten

**Effect:** The owner can now ask five questions per day.

### Thread Rank Eleven

**Effect:** The owner adds a +2 bonus to his Perception and Willpower Attribute Values.

### Thread Rank Twelve

**Deed:** The owner must travel to the location in the Dragon Spine Mountains where the jade was quarried and mine a small piece of jade.

**Effect:** The owner adds a +3 bonus to his Spell Defense and Mystic Armor. He adds a +4 bonus to his Karma Modifier.

### Thread Rank Thirteen

**Effect:** The owner can now ask six questions per day.

### Thread Rank Fourteen

**Effect:** The owner adds a +1 bonus to his Charisma, Dexterity, Strength, and Toughness Values. He may spend 1 Karma Point on any Attribute-only Test that he cannot otherwise spend Karma on.

### Thread Rank Fifteen

**Deed:** The owner must communicate with the spirit trapped within the Jade Dragon and convince it to tell him its Name.

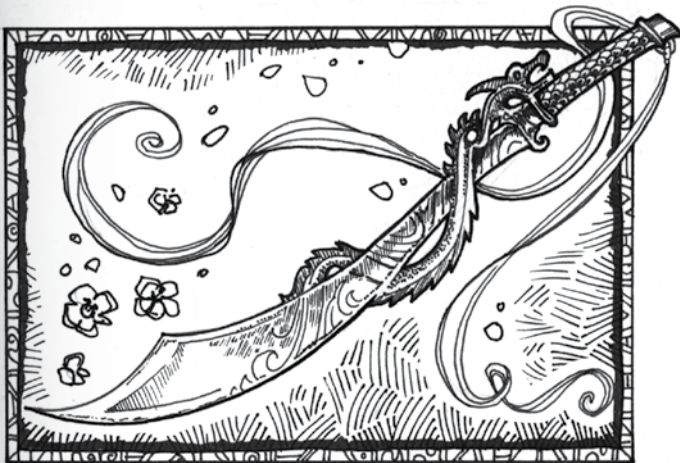
**Effect:** Once per month, the owner can use his own life force to make the Jade Dragon come to life at a cost of 10 Karma Points and 10 Strain per round. When the owner uses this ability, the Jade Statue grows into the size of a real Cathay dragon, becoming fully animate. The Jade Dragon has all powers, abilities, and attributes of a real Cathay dragon. The character controls its actions and may take no other action while doing so. If the owner dies from the strain of fueling the Jade Dragon, the Jade Dragon absorbs his spirit, becoming fully alive and gaining control over its own actions. The dead character cannot be brought back to life through any means.



## JADE SABER OF FENG PO

**Maximum Threads:** 2      **Spell Defense:** 18  
**Legend Point Cost:** Journeyman

The Jade Saber of Feng Po is a beautiful and ornate goose feather saber (*Cathay Player's Guide*, p. 128) carved from one piece of solid jade. It is exceptionally light, weighing only two pounds. The saber once belonged to a Sword Dancer of considerable skill Named Feng Po. Feng Po's exploits carried him across all of Cathay, where he battled many creatures and explored many places. He eventually married a human woman Named Mi Ling, a servant of the great dragon, Luung. With no threads attached, the Jade Saber of Feng Po has the same characteristics as a normal goose feather saber except that a Minimum Strength of 12 is required to wield it.



### Thread Rank One

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn the Name of the sword.  
**Effect:** The saber is now Damage Step 13.

### Thread Rank Two

**Effect:** The wielder gains a +1 Rank Bonus to his Parry and Riposte talents.

### Thread Rank Three

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn the Name of the Weaponsmith who created the sword.  
**Effect:** The wielder adds +1 to his Physical Defense.

### Thread Rank Four

**Effect:** The wielder adds +1 to his Spell Defense.

### Thread Rank Five

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn the Name of the last owner of the sword.  
**Effect:** The saber is now Damage Step 14.

### Thread Rank Six

**Effect:** The wielder gains a +2 Rank Bonus to the Parry and Riposte talents.

### Thread Rank Seven

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn how Feng Po lost the sword.  
**Effect:** The wielder adds +2 to his Physical Defense.

### Thread Rank Eight

**Effect:** The wielder adds +2 to his Spell Defense.

### Thread Rank Nine

**Deed:** The wielder must discover the location of Feng Po's final resting place and erect a monument costing no less than 2,000 silver pieces on the site in his honor. The character must personally help build the memorial. The character must write an inscription declaring the memorial's purpose.

**Effect:** The weapon is now Damage Step 15.

### Thread Rank Ten

**Effect:** The wielder gains a +3 Rank Bonus to his Parry and Riposte talents.

### Thread Rank Eleven

**Deed:** The wielder must incorporate a dragon into his Karma Ritual, for example by performing it in his presence or with his participation.

**Effect:** The saber can now store 10 Karma Points, the wielder stores them in the saber in a separate Karma Ritual. He can spend them like his normal Karma Points.

### Thread Rank Twelve

**Effect:** The wielder may, once per round, spend some or all of the saber's 10 Karma Points on one attack. Before the attack, he announces how many he spends on the Attack Test and how many he spends on the Damage Test. The Karma is spent in addition to other Karma the adept may spend. If the attack does not trigger a Damage Test, the Karma Points announced for the Damage Test are still spent, but the wielder heals an equal number of Damage Points (but no more than his Current Damage). If he should spend all 10 Karma Points in this way, he also heals 1 Wound (if he suffers from a Wound).

## PAL LENG'S SPELLSTAFF

**Maximum Threads:** 1      **Spell Defense:** 15  
**Legend Point Cost:** Journeyman

Pal Leng's Spellstaff is a Moon Staff (*Cathay Player's Guide*, p. 63) created by the aging Scholar, Pal Leng, more than a millennium ago. Although the staff bears Pal Leng's Name, he intended it to be used by a disciple of his, a Scholar who was also an Elementalist, just like Pal Leng himself. Pal Leng's Spellstaff is made from a solid willow branch, but the branch is still green and living, boosting small sprouts and being sticky at the bottom. An astral analysis reveals that the staff contains a Shared Matrix, but it cannot be attuned by any means, as predetermined spells are part of its pattern.

All rules for the Moon Staff apply to Pal Leng's Spellstaff, and it is used in the same fashion by any Scholar, except where otherwise noted.





### Thread Rank One

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn the Name of the staff.

**Deed:** The wielder must know the Secret Weaving talent, and must use Secret Weaving to weave threads to the Moon Staff's Thread Ranks. Other versions of Thread Weaving cannot be used to weave threads to a Moon Staff.

**Effect:** The wielder receives the Thread Rank woven as a bonus to his Moon Ray's Effect Step.

### Thread Rank Two

**Effect:** The Range of the Moon Ray is now 30 hexes (60 yards).

### Thread Rank Three

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn the Name of the first Scholar to wield the staff.

**Effect:** The wielder may cast any of the following spells from the staff's matrix, making a Moon Ray Test in place of the Spellcasting Test: Moonglow, Resist Cold, and Resist Fire.

### Thread Rank Four

**Effect:** The Moon Staff can now store a number of Moon Points equal to the Thread Rank woven.

### Thread Rank Five

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn the Name of the Scholar who crafted the staff.

**Effect:** The wielder may cast any of the following spells from the staff's matrix, making a Moon Ray Test in place of the Spellcasting Test: Air Armor, Lightning Shield, and Hunter's Sense.

### Thread Rank Six

**Effect:** The wielder can now store 2 spells absorbed with Absorb Spell in the Moon Staff. The staff is linked to the wielder as for the Weapon Back spell.

## THE LOTUS FLOWER OF KWAN YIN

**Maximum Threads:** 3

**Spell Defense:** 15

**Legend Point Cost:** Warden

Kwan Yin was an elf Troubadour who lived centuries before the Scourge. The Lotus Flower of Kwan Yin was a gift from her human lover, the Wizard, Lee Kun.

### Thread Rank One

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn the Name of the item.

**Effect:** The owner adds +1 to his Social Defense and +1 to his Spell Defense.

### Thread Rank Two

**Effect:** The owner adds +2 to his Social Defense and +2 to his Spell Defense.

### Thread Rank Three

**Key Knowledge:** The owner must learn how Kwan Yin died.

**Effect:** The owner adds +3 to his Social Defense and +3 to his Spell Defense.

### Thread Rank Four

**Effect:** The owner adds +4 to his Social Defense and +4 to his Spell Defense.

### Thread Rank Five

**Deed:** The owner must discover the location of Kwan Yin's resting place. Once he finds it, he must plant a lotus flower there. This deed is worth 1,300 Legend Points.

**Effect:** The owner adds +5 to his Social Defense and +5 to his Spell Defense. The owner also gains a +1 bonus to Interaction Tests.



## SLIPPERS OF FLIGHT

**Maximum Threads:** 2

**Spell Defense:** 15

**Legend Point Cost:** Journeyman

There are only three pairs of these silk slippers known to exist in Cathay. The Slippers of Flight were created by the triplet Sorceresses, Heng, Lin, and Bai-Ling. No other enchanter was ever able to duplicate them, so the only slippers in existence are Heng's Slippers of Flight, Lin's Slippers of Flight, and Bai-Ling's Slippers of Flight. Legend says that the three sisters were captured by the giant-king, Shan-Chi, and turned into sparrows. Nobody knows what happened to their slippers, but presumably they were discovered by the hero, Xiaolan, and his companions, who slew Shan-Chi.

### Thread Rank One

**Key Knowledge:** The wearer must learn the Name of the slippers.

**Effect:** For 5 Strain, the slippers grant the wearer the ability to fly at a Movement Rate of 8. This ability can only be used once per day. The effects last for 10 rounds.

### Thread Rank Two

**Effect:** Using the slipper's flying ability now only costs 3 Strain.

### Thread Rank Three

**Key Knowledge:** The wearer must learn where the slippers were made.

**Effect:** The slipper's ability can now be used twice per day.



### Thread Rank Four

**Effect:** The Flying Movement Rate for the slippers increases to 9.

### Thread Rank Five

**Key Knowledge:** The wearer must learn the Name of the last owner of the slippers.

**Effect:** Using the slipper's flying ability now only costs 1 Strain.

### Thread Rank Six

**Effect:** The slipper's ability can now be used three times per day.

### Thread Rank Seven

**Effect:** The Flying Movement Rate for the slippers increases to 10.

## STAFF OF OVERWHELMING THUNDER

**Maximum Threads:** 2

**Spell Defense:** 15

**Legend Point Cost:** Journeyman

The Staff of Overwhelming Thunder resembles an old, weathered Rage of Thunder Staff (*Cathay Player's Guide*, p. 130). It was wielded by the mighty ork Warrior, Jiang Li, who fought the Horrors in the years just before the Scourge. Jiang Li lost the staff in a battle with the powerful Horror, Dai'Garkim—the *Great Fang*—and was unable to retrieve it before retreating to a dragon lair. It was believed to have been lost forever until it turned up in the hands of a Merchant by the Name of Zexu after the Scourge. Unfortunately, Zexu was killed by bandits sometime later. It is believed the bandits took the staff, though some others believe Zexu had it safely hidden somewhere, where it remains to this day. With no threads attached, the Staff of Overwhelming Thunder has the same characteristics as a normal rage of thunder staff.

### Thread Rank One

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn the Name of the staff.

**Effect:** The staff is now Damage Step 14.

### Thread Rank Two

**Effect:** The staff is now Damage Step 15.

### Thread Rank Three

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn the Name of the Weaponsmith who created the staff.

**Effect:** If a target struck by the weapon has to make a Knockdown Test, the Thread Rank woven to the staff is added to the Difficulty Number.

### Thread Rank Four

**Effect:** The staff is now Damage Step 16.

### Thread Rank Five

**Key Knowledge:** The wielder must learn where the staff was created.

**Effect:** The staff is now Damage Step 17.

### Thread Rank Six

**Effect:** For 2 Strain, the wielder can slam the base of the staff against the ground, causing a concussive blast in a 10-yard (5-hex) radius. Anyone in the radius, excluding the wielder, must make an immediate Knockdown Test against a Difficulty Number

## THE FIVE IMPERIAL SYMBOLS



The Five Imperial Symbols are legendary treasures assembled by Tai Xi, Cathay's first emperor. Before the Scourge, an emperor would be given the Five Imperial Symbols in a ceremony mimicking Tai Xi's own coronation (see **On the Creation of an Empire**, p. 16) in the order they are presented here. Possession of one of the Five Imperial Symbols indicates that the bearer is the king of the kingdom corresponding to the symbol and has the right to seek advice from the dragon ruling over that kingdom's corresponding element.

While not threaded items, the Five Imperial Symbols bond with their bearers and bestow magical abilities upon them in ways not understood by Namegiver magicians. The bonding to one of the symbols takes one week, in which the character must bear the item, and the abilities bestowed are active only when the item is used in the appropriate fashion. For example, the abilities bestowed by the Golden Crown can be used only when it is worn, while the Imperial Ivory Sword has to be worn at the side or wielded in battle.

All of the Five Imperial Symbols bestow the following abilities and bonuses on the bearer, in addition to the ones unique to the item:

- The bearer adds +1 to his Physical, Social, and Spell Defense.
- He adds +1 to his Physical and Mystic Armor Ratings.
- He receives a +1 Rank Bonus to the Avoid Blow, Resist Taunt, and Steel Thought talents.
- He receives a +1 bonus to all Interaction Tests.

Attempts to take an imperial symbol from a bonded character are made against the symbol's Spell Defense, in addition to any other measures applicable; for example a Disarm Test against the wielder of the Imperial Ivory Sword has to beat the higher of wielder's Physical Defense or the sword's Spell Defense, and can further be resisted by using Avoid Blow and similar abilities.

Each of the Five Imperial Symbols has a Spell Defense of 32 and can never be damaged or destroyed by means known to Namegivers. The bonuses and abilities bestowed by the Five Imperial Symbols are cumulative.

If a character manages to collect all five Imperial Symbols, he ends the War of Wu Xing and becomes Emperor. In addition, he also gains a +5 Rank Bonus to the Leadership talent as long as he possesses all five Imperial Symbols.

## THE IMPERIAL IVORY SWORD

The Imperial Ivory Sword is a dew of the lotus sword (*Cathay Player's Guide*, p. 128) forged from the sun and tempered in the titan's blood. While not made from ivory, it appears and handles that way.

When bonded, the Imperial Ivory Sword has a Damage Step of 14 and can be wielded regardless of the normal Size restriction and Strength Minimum. The bearer has resistance to fire damage, increase the Result Level required to inflict an Armor-Defeating Hit on the bearer by one if the attack is made from a fire-based weapon, power, or spell.

The Imperial Ivory Sword is wielded by the King of the Land of Fire.

## THE IMPERIAL DRAGON SEAL

The Imperial Dragon Seal was given to Tai Xi for his benevolence as a means to save his people by striking a deal with the Spirit of the Land. It is a seal in the form of a dragon, made of True water.



When bonded, the Imperial Dragon Seal allows its bearer to make any Resistance Test with a +6 bonus, be it against poison, spells, or disease. He can spend one of his Recovery Tests to go without food or water for one day. The bearer has resistance to water damage, increase the Result Level required to inflict an Armor-Defeating Hit on the bearer by one if the attack is made from a water-based weapon, power, or spell. The bearer cannot even drown.

The bearer of the Imperial Dragon Seal is the King of the Land of Water.

## THE JADE PENDANT

Shed as a tear by the Spirit of the Land, this piece of Jade was carved into a pendant by Tai Xi as a wedding gift for his wife.

When bonded, the Jade Pendant grants its wearer a +1 bonus to all Attribute-only Tests. It allows the wearer to make a Charisma Test against a target's Spell Defense, if successful the target will be free from any negative emotions for one day. The wearer may also make a Charisma Test against a target's Social Defense; if successful the target will have at least a Neutral Attitude towards the wearer for one day. These Tests can be combined into one; the result of the combined Charisma Test is compared against the target's Social and Spell Defense and the effects are handled separately. Only one Test can be made against any one target each day. The bearer has resistance to earth damage, increase the Result Level required to inflict an Armor-Defeating Hit on the bearer by one if the attack is made from an earth-based weapon, power, or spell.

The wearer of the Jade Pendant is the King of the Land of Earth.

## THE IMPERIAL PHOENIX ROBE

The Imperial Phoenix Robe is a robe spun from the winds and clouds themselves, by two phoenixes whom Tai Xi reunited.

When bonded, the Imperial Phoenix Robe allows the wielder to glide down from any height at his normal Movement Rate, and upwards at half his Movement Rate. It also grants a +6 bonus to Recovery Tests. The bearer has resistance to cold and air damage, increase the Result Level required to inflict an Armor-Defeating Hit on the bearer by one if the attack is made from a cold-based or air-based weapon, power, or spell.

The wearer of the Imperial Phoenix Robe is the King of the Land of Air.

## THE GOLDEN CROWN

The Golden Crown was formed from orichalcum by Cong after Tai Xi drew the precious metal from the earth with the Ivory Sword.

When bonded, the Golden Crown grants its wearer an additional +6 bonus to Interaction Tests (for a +7 total). The bearer has resistance to metal damage, increase the Result Level required to inflict an Armor-Defeating Hit on the bearer by one if the attack is made from a metal-based weapon, power, or spell.

The wearer of the Golden Crown is the King of the Land of Metal.







CHAPTER ELEVEN

# SHIPS OF CATHAY

*You can have the sharpest swords and the most  
finely wrought armor, the most disciplined  
soldiers and the most supremely bred mounts, but  
if your enemy has superior ships, you have lost.*

• GENERAL WU CHOU •



This section describes the various types of ships found throughout Cathay. Cathayan ships are typically made of wood, most often of fir and bamboo. Of all of the ships that course the seas and the skies, the ships of the merchants are the greatest in number, spanning the whole of the land and into the Emerald Sea, traveling in large caravan fleets, spreading their goods far and wide. Merchants have developed a great network of airways crisscrossing the skies above Cathay, traveling at higher altitudes in order to avoid any military activity that may be going on below.

For more information on how ships work in the world of **Earthdawn**, refer to the **Airships and Riverboats** chapter of the *Gamemaster's Companion*.

## SHIP DESCRIPTIONS

The following profiles provide descriptions and game statistics for the most common types of ships that travel the rivers, seas, and skies of Cathay, as well as the mysterious Desert of Swallowed Tears. Most of these ships are available as both airships and riverboats, and sometimes also sandships. For prices of the ships, refer to the **Ship Base Prices** sidebar.

### Air Dock

These large wooden ships are basically enormous flying ports that lower from the floating city of Pe Lin, capital of Shui Dei (see **Lands of Cathay**, p. 47) to land in the Emerald Sea, where waiting ships load and unload their cargo. These great vessels each comprise a cluster of buildings, including a fort, several warehouses, basic crew and staff quarters, and landing areas for airboats, all of which are surrounded by many long, sturdy docks for seafaring vessels. The central fort is approximately 75 to 100 yards to a side, while the docks stretch out much farther in all but one direction, where the structure mates with landing areas on Pe Lin for loading and unloading.

Unique to Pe Lin, these massive docks serve as the airborne city's main port, handling all of the naval trading as well as serving as a base of operations for military expeditions in the ocean. These cumbersome airships are not meant for fighting but, nonetheless, are not defenseless. They have been known to lower down and crash on top of troublesome vessels if the situation truly warrants it, and they have considerable onboard weaponry. As such, these air docks are rarely the targets of pirates.

Speed: 4

Maneuverability: 4

Firepower: 14/14

#### Hull:

Armor: 25

Ramming: 30

Cargo: 3,000

#### Damage:

Derelict: 108

Critical: 29

Destroyed: 114

#### Crew:

Captain: 4

Crew Size: 100

Morale: 58

Crew Rating: 15

### COVERED SWOOPER

Covered swoopers are 13 yards long and 5 yards wide. These ships are covered in armored roofs, typically with thick hides. These armored roofs protect soldiers from projectiles and prevent enemy sailors from boarding. The sides of each ship are lined with oar ports, as well as openings for crossbows and ballistae. This ship is found in the rivers, seas, and skies of Cathay.

## SHIP BASE PRICES

The **Cathay Ship Prices** table lists the Base Price for Cathayan ships presented in this chapter in their airship, riverboat or seafaring vessel, and sandship variants, as appropriate. All prices are in silver pieces, as usual. Note that these ships may differ significantly from their Barsaivian counterparts in design, and that due to the immense area Cathay spans, actual prices may vary widely from region to region, depending on the local availability of True elements and other materials. Some of these ships already have the Military Vessel modification (*Gamemaster's Companion*, p. 68) applied, this is reflected in the listed price.

CATHAY SHIP PRICES TABLE

| Ship                | Riverboat | Airship  | Sandship |
|---------------------|-----------|----------|----------|
| Air Dock            | —         | 150,000  | —        |
| Covered Swooper     | 15,000    | 40,000   | —        |
| Junk, Combat        | 60,000    | 125,000  | 90,000   |
| Junk, Mercantile    | 45,000    | 90,000   | 60,000   |
| Paddle Boat         | 4,000     | —        | —        |
| Patrol Boat         | 20,000    | 45,000   | —        |
| Tower Ship, Average | 85,000    | 180,000  | —        |
| Tower Ship, Huge    | 110,000   | 230,000  | —        |
| Treasure Ship       | 120,000+  | 200,000+ | 135,000+ |
| War Canoe           | 1,000     | —        | —        |
| Warship             | 60,000    | 140,000  | 75,000   |

Speed: 10

Maneuverability: 8

Firepower: 12/12

#### Hull:

Armor: 12

Ramming: 20

Cargo: 15

#### Damage:

Derelict: 44

Critical: 15

Destroyed: 52

#### Crew:

Captain: 4

Crew Size: 15

Morale: 43

Crew Rating: 10

#### Special:

Due to the armored roofs, attacks directly targeting the crew and the Board maneuver need a Result Level one higher to succeed.

## JUNKS

A large ship with between 2 and 5 masts, 55 yards long and 13 yards wide, the Cathayan junk is the most ubiquitous vessel to be found in the seas or in the skies of the Orient. Typically made from fir timber, junks are designed for either combat or mercantile pursuits. The interiors of the seafaring junks have firmly placed bulkheads in case of hull leaks. The sails, made from bamboo matting, are designed to be able to be spun sideways, so the ships can sail into the wind.

The combat junk usually has five masts and is outfitted for war, with fire cannons, catapults, and ballistae; it has the Military Vessel modification (*Gamemaster's Companion*, p. 68) already applied. The mercantile junk, in addition to a considerably large hold, has several cabins and saloons for merchants and passengers.



The junk can be found in the rivers, seas, and the skies of Cathay, as well as the Desert of Swallowed Tears. The sand ships are reinforced specifically to withstand the abrasive sands of the Desert of Swallowed Tears, as reflected by lower Maneuverability and higher Armor ratings below.



### Mercantile Junk

Speed: 7  
Maneuverability: 7 [6]\*      Firepower: 13/13

#### Hull:

Armor: 15 [18]\*      Ramming: 25 [28]\*  
Cargo: 300

#### Damage:

Derelict: 67 [77]\*      Critical: 21 [23]\*  
Destroyed: 74 [84]\*

#### Crew:

Captain: 4      Crew Size: 50  
Morale: 45      Crew Rating: 13

\* Use the statistics in brackets for sand ship modified junks.

### Combat Junk

Speed: 7  
Maneuverability: 7 [6]\*      Firepower: 16/16

#### Hull:

Armor: 17 [20]\*      Ramming: 27 [30]\*  
Cargo: 100

#### Damage:

Derelict: 69 [81]\*      Critical: 22 [24]\*  
Destroyed: 76 [87]\*

#### Crew:

Captain: 6      Crew Size: 100  
Morale: 60      Crew Rating: 16

\* Use the statistics in brackets for sand ship modified junks.

## PADDLEBOAT

The paddleboat, found on the seas and rivers of Cathay, is propelled by two paddlewheels—one on each side—that are operated by 40 sailors. Ramps line the sides and may be dropped for boarding enemy ships. The stern of the boat rises into a tower from where soldiers can fire crossbows at the enemy. The paddleboat is 11 yards long and 6 yards wide.

Speed: 4  
Maneuverability: 6      Firepower: NA (10/10)

#### Hull:

Armor: 9      Ramming: 13  
Cargo: 30

#### Damage:

Derelict: 43      Critical: 14  
Destroyed: 50

#### Crew:

Captain: 3      Crew Size: 30  
Morale: 48      Crew Rating: 15

#### Special:

Firepower in parentheses is for archers and affects only enemy crews. Ramps on the side grant a +1 bonus to the Board maneuver.



## PATROL BOAT

Found on the rivers and seas of Cathay, the patrol boat is a swift reconnaissance vessel, approximately 20 yards long and 5 yards wide, powered by oars.

The purpose of the patrol boat is to get into enemy territory and out again, gaining intelligence on troop movements, ships, or enemy encampments. Small skirmishes between patrol boats—especially along the Jang—are not uncommon. Most patrol boats have aboard at least one Scout adept, who serves as the commanding officer.

Speed: 11  
Maneuverability: 9      Firepower: 11/11

#### Hull:

Armor: 10      Ramming: 18  
Cargo: 20

#### Damage:

Derelict: 44      Critical: 15  
Destroyed: 52

#### Crew:

Captain: 4      Crew Size: 20  
Morale: 55      Crew Rating: 14

## TOWER SHIPS

One hundred feet long and capable of carrying many soldiers, the Cathayan tower ship is designed for war. These ships have three decks of bulwarks from which soldiers can fire bows and crossbows with cover, giving the ships the appearance of floating, multi-storied castles. These ships are often armed with catapults, which sit on the uppermost level.



Though the typical Cathayan tower ship is 30 yards in length, some exist up to 300 yards. Though rare, these monstrous vessels are capable of carrying up to 1,000 men.

These ships are available both as seafaring vessels and as airships, and have the Military Vessel modification (*Gamemaster's Companion*, p. 68) already applied.

### Average Tower Ship

Speed: 8

Maneuverability: 7

Firepower: 17/17 (15/15)

#### Hull:

Armor: 17

Ramming: 27

Cargo: 300

#### Damage:

Derelict: 73

Critical: 23

Destroyed: 80

#### Crew:

Captain: 6

Crew Size: 120

Morale: 70

Crew Rating: 18

#### Special:

Firepower in parentheses is for archers and affects only enemy crews.

### Huge Tower Ship

Speed: 9

Maneuverability: 6

Firepower: 22/22 (18/18)

#### Hull:

Armor: 25

Ramming: 32

Cargo: 450

#### Damage:

Derelict: 106

Critical: 29

Destroyed: 112

#### Crew:

Captain: 8

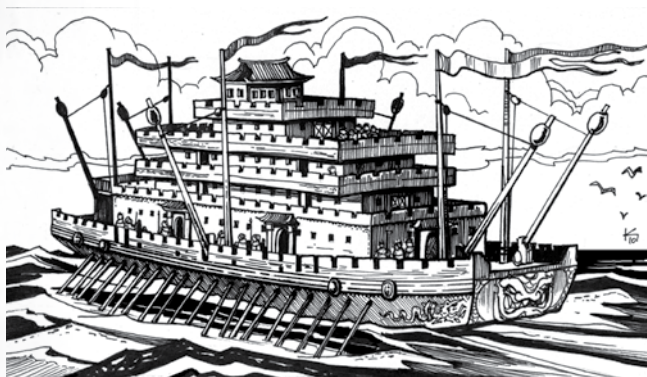
Crew Size: 250

Morale: 80

Crew Rating: 20

#### Special:

Firepower in parentheses is for archers and affects only enemy crews.



## TREASURE SHIP

Treasure ships are 133 yards long and nearly 88 yards wide. These gargantuan merchant ships are owned by only the wealthiest of capitalists. Boasting 9 masts, 4 decks, and an enormous cargo hold, each treasure ship has a crew of 400 and can hold up to 500 additional passengers. Only a few-dozen treasure ships exist in all of the Five Kingdoms, all of which are designed as airships but can be used as sailing vessels as well.



The treasure ships are considered to be luxury boats by many of their owners, who often have large staffs of Troubadours, jugglers, and various other entertainers aboard, as well as prostitutes. The lower holds of many of these ships contain livestock, large stores of fresh water, and elementally controlled gardens, making the ships completely self-sustaining.

Speed: 7

Maneuverability: 6

Cargo: 2,000

Captain: 4

Crew Size: 400

## WAR CANOE

The war canoe, found on the rivers and seas of Cathay, is typically 13 yards long and 2 yards wide. Propelled by rowers, war canoes are generally used to board enemy vessels.

Speed: 3

Maneuverability: 4

Cargo: 20

Captain: 2

Crew Size: 10

## WARSHIP

Similar to the junk in design, only smaller, the Cathayan warship is intended for fast navigation. Thirty yards long and 6 yards wide, the warship is armed with fire cannon ports. Warships are often used as support ships for combat junks or as supply ships for land armies. In this case, warships serve a specific role, such as a troop or mount transport, or carrying fresh food, water, and supplies.

These ships are available as river and seafaring vessels, airships, and as sand ships. The sand ships are reinforced specifically to withstand the abrasive sands of the Desert of Swallowed Tears, as reflected by the lower Maneuverability and higher Armor ratings below. This ship has the Military Vessel modification (*Gamemaster's Companion*, p. 68) already applied.

Speed: 8

Maneuverability: 8 [7]\*

Firepower: 17/17

#### Hull:

Armor: 15 [18]\*

Ramming: 25 [28]\*

Cargo: 200

#### Damage:

Derelict: 67 [77]\*

Critical: 21 [23]\*

Destroyed: 74 [84]\*

#### Crew:

Captain: 5

Crew Size: 80

Morale: 55

Crew Rating: 15

\* Use the statistics in brackets for sand ship modified warships.





CHAPTER TWELVE

# ADVENTURES IN CATHAY

*I will never complain about  
life being dull again.*

• DAYLEN JAGARO,  
UPON HIS RETURN FROM THE EAST •



**C**athay is a land ripe with conflict, from epic wars to political intrigue. It provides many paths for the adventurous individual or group to follow, from exploring the forgotten and unknown to the mundane search for new business opportunities. This chapter explores some of the various themes and campaign ideas at the gamemaster's disposal for running adventures in Cathay.

## CAMPAIGN THEMES

**T**here are a wide variety of themes presented in **Cathay: The Five Kingdoms**, in addition to a large number of antagonists and challenges for gamemasters to choose from for their campaigns. The following entries present a number of these themes in more detail, describing how they might be used.

### THE HORRORS

The Horrors are just as vile and cunning as anywhere else in the **Earthdawn** universe, and their motivations just as sinister, making them suitable villains for any campaign. Though Cathayans do not view Horrors with as much superstitious fear as the typical Barsaivian, they still fear and detest them, destroying them whenever and wherever they can.

Though Horrors exist throughout all of Cathay, there are large concentrations of them in both the area surrounding Mount Tihan and the Realm of Twilight.

### THE TWELVE TERRORS

According to Cathayan legend, the Twelve Terrors were released from Astral Space long ago to purge the world from the tyrannical rule of the Dark Warrior and his Yen'hi'ji minions. After this reckoning, the Passions captured and sealed eleven of the Terrors in the dark places of the world, while the twelfth, a Terror known to the Cathayans as Sik Lung, the *Dragon Eater*, escaped to the West.

Whether or not the other eleven Terrors actually exist is up to individual gamemasters. However, here they are in no particular order: Sum'Jie'Jen, the *Dweller of the Deep*; Fung'Mung'Feng, the *Angry Storm*; Da'Shan'Jen, the *Mountain Crusher*; Sik'Sum'Jen, the *Eater of Souls*; Mien'For'Pah, the *Terror of Twilight*; Dei'Siel'Jen, the *Earth Burner*; Da'Sie'Jie'Jen, the *Destroyer of Worlds*; Rien'Jai, the *Child of Chaos*; Pah'Lai'Jen, the *Bringer of Fear*; Tung'Lai'Jen, the *Giver of Pain*; and finally Hsiao'Hai'Jen, the *Harvester of Children*. Each is nearly (if not equally) as powerful as Sik Lung, known to Barsaivians as Verjigorm.

If gamemasters choose to use the Twelve Terrors as a plot device, there is always the threat of one—or all—of them being awakened.

### THE THERAN EMPIRE

Though they do not have a strong presence in Cathay, the Therans have nonetheless managed to get their foot in the door. The greatest threat by the Therans to Cathay comes from king Bai Guan Zhu, who may allow a large Theran force to occupy Shan Dei. If this happens it could seriously shift the balance of power in the land, and if Guan Zhu should happen to win the Great Trial, the Therans would have a friend who sat upon the Jade Throne; one who might offer assistance in their troubles elsewhere in the world.

### THE DARK WARRIOR

The Yen'hi'ji are not the only ones in Cathay who worship this fallen god. Others work toward the goal of freeing him from his prison, which would bring about a time that they call the Eternal Winter.

Whether or not the Dark Warrior actually exists is up to individual gamemasters; however, his crazed followers certainly do exist, and are just as dangerous even if he is just an idea.

### THE SHADOWED

Gamemasters should decide just how much influence the Shadowed really has in their campaigns. If you like a lot of political intrigue and shadow play, then this secret society may play a more dominant role in your game.

The Shadowed is a highly organized network with agents spread throughout all social classes in Cathay, and even into parts of Jih'Po and Indrisa. Many of these minions do not even know that they are working for the Shadowed, their strings being pulled through a countless series of contacts.

The Shadowed operates out of many small groups, from as few as five to as many as suits your needs. Their ranks are comprised of any and all types of adepts, ranging as high as Fifteenth Circle.

### THE WAR OF WU XING

The Great Trial is the most obvious theme in **Cathay: The Five Kingdoms**. Raids, border skirmishes, and even large-scale battles are common occurrences throughout this land. In addition to the chaos of the war, the gar have been mobilizing in the North, growing more and more aggressive. The characters may easily find themselves swept up in these events, which could ultimately lead to the formation of a new empire.

The characters may also become swept up into the machinations of the various lords, whose ambitions have grown subterfuge into an art form.

### BANDITS, WARLORDS, AND PIRATES

There are those who have exploited the chaos of war to their advantage. They are, most notably, the many gangs of bandits, warlords and their mercenary bands, and pirates along the Emerald Sea. These groups continually rape and pillage weakly defended villages and merchant caravans. With the armies of the Five Kingdoms too busy engaging one another in battle, it falls upon the shoulders of heroes to stop these bandits, warlords, and pirates, and protect the innocent.

## CAMPAIGN IDEAS

**C**ampaigns set in Cathay can be presented in two different ways, each with its own unique challenges. A Native Campaign involves a group composed of characters born in Cathay. Loyalties might conflict, or the characters all might belong to a single faction, or they might be simply caught in the middle of the war. The Foreigner Campaign involves a group composed of travelers, perhaps from Barsaive or the Theran Empire. Characters might find themselves swept up into the war, perhaps even choosing a side, or they might simply be honest explorers who have to deal with the unknown along with hostile natives who resent their presence. Either way, Cathay presents gamemasters with countless adventures to keep players occupied for years. Some ideas for adventures for both approaches to campaigns set in Cathay are presented below.



## MERCANTILE CAMPAIGN

With the door to the West wide open, business is booming, for both natives and foreigners. Local Cathayans are busy carting resources across national lines, dodging bandits, rogue warlords, and tax collectors. This leads to the need for new trade routes to be forged, leading adventurers to explore wild and untamed lands. Foreigners face similar challenges, though with the added complication of having to deal with the locals' prejudices in their attempts to strike trade deals: when reaching towns and cities, the foreign merchant might find that all of the local warehouses are inexplicably "full" or potential buyers are unwilling to budge beyond a price which is crippling to his business. This means the foreign merchant must work harder to secure buyers who just cannot say no to his offers.

Mercantile campaigns can begin in any number of ways. Perhaps the characters are hired as guards, or to explore potential new routes. The characters might be sent as representatives from a notable guild in the West, tasked with negotiating a lucrative deal. Maybe they are attempting to secure a company of their own, in which case they will quickly learn that nobles aren't the only ones skilled in subterfuge.

The characters might also become involved with the pillared cities of the Desert of Swallowed Tears. They may be asked to guard against sand pirates, or to explore the abandoned pillared cities, or engage in the ongoing merchant wars.

## EXPLORATION CAMPAIGN

Despite the protection of the dragons, Cathay suffered greatly at the hands of the Horrors during the Scourge. Much of the once-mighty empire remains unsettled, with countless pre-Scourge towns and cities in the wild, some still crawling with Horrors and their constructs. Characters may be adventurers seeking long-lost treasures and riches in these dangerous ruins, but the various kingdoms, which are always searching for an advantage in the seemingly endless war, hire many such people.

If they are private adventurers, the characters might come into conflict with local governments or local explorer parties filled with adepts. Similarly, if the characters are agents of one of the Five Kingdoms, they might be asked to partake in journeys that take them to ruins in an enemy kingdom. If this is the case, they will not only have to face the regular dangers of exploration but also the threat of discovery, which could carry very severe consequences.

An exploration campaign could also consist of characters made up of Daughters of Heaven and Scholars from the Tower of Secrets. The Scholars are often led into the wilderness searching for knowledge, and the Daughters often travel without aim, simply aiding those who need help.

And finally, the Emerald Sea is home to countless uncharted islands, many of which once held many civilizations—civilizations that haven't been heard from since before the Scourge.

## MILITARY CAMPAIGN

The War of Wu Xing offers a wide variety of adventure opportunities for gamemasters. The characters can begin as enlisted soldiers, working their way up the ranks. Or perhaps they begin as simple peasants who are drafted into a war they don't necessarily believe in. The characters might be swept up into the war when a foreign army attacks their village, leaving them as sole survivors.

However they get involved, once the characters are in the military, adventures can range from the mundane to the terrifying; hours of marching, constructing forts, rebuilding roads, and border guard duty are all examples of the tedium the common soldier must endure. But so are skirmishes, raids, and full-scale battles. Other challenges awaiting an army are dealing with bandits, warlords, and the occasional monstrous Horror that wanders out of the wilderness to attack a city.

Adepts are often chosen to form strike teams to perform special duties, such as international espionage; guard duty of nobles, and maybe even members of the royal family; and, depending on which way the group's moral compass points, assassination. If the characters are too virtuous, being a member of a military might pose interesting moral dilemmas if they find themselves under the command of a draconian general who has no problem giving orders to slaughter entire enemy villages.

A military campaign could also involve the characters being members of one of the many mercenary bands or warlord armies that exist in Cathay.

## POLITICAL CAMPAIGN

Political campaigns focus more on diplomacy and negotiation than battle, though violence certainly is not uncommon in this troubled age. The characters will focus more on social skills, and





learning the fine arts of duplicity and manipulation. A campaign might focus on the characters working for a noble whose enemies are never obvious, or perhaps even for one of the five royal families of Cathay. They might be responsible for guarding family members, or ordered to engage in espionage, such as spying and sabotage. Maybe the characters are caught up in the middle of the current power struggle between the merchant class and nobility.

A political campaign can also be used to introduce the *Shadowed*, which operates through subterfuge and political guile. The characters might uncover the secret society's existence, becoming embroiled in an epic struggle against these powerful antagonists; or perhaps the characters are indoctrinated into the mysterious organization, taking up its agenda as their own.

## FOREIGNER CAMPAIGN

Gamemasters may wish to introduce Cathay to a group of characters who are already established in Barsaive or the Theran Empire, or a group that begins outside of this ancient land. This is an excellent way to introduce Cathay as it gives a group of characters the chance to explore the land at the same time, and it gives the gamemaster complete control over the pace of introducing the new wonders, dangers, and exciting themes.

The foreigner campaign begins with the characters in Barsaive or one of the Theran provinces, or perhaps along the way to Cathay. When they arrive, they will have to deal with being strangers in a strange land, prejudice from the locals, and of course the devastating War of Wu Xing, in which they could very well become swept up.

## ROGUE CAMPAIGN

The War of Wu Xing has left many people across the land homeless and without a means to care for themselves. Due to this, the population of rogues has risen exponentially, from roadside bandits and back-alley thieves to rogue mercenary bands and pirates. The characters could easily find themselves caught up with these shady organizations. A rogue campaign would begin with the characters joining one of these groups of misfits. Gamemasters who wish to run a city campaign could have the characters join a local thieves' guild, while those who want more battle might have them join a group of bandits, pirates, or mercenaries.

A rogue campaign offers considerable opportunity for intrigue, as well, as most often with these groups "might makes right." The characters might try to seize power, or prevent their current leader from being overthrown by a contender who is far from being their friend.

## GAR CAMPAIGN

Originally from Cathay, the gar are now foreign savages, viewed as barbarians by Cathayans. A gar campaign might involve a group of gar, beginning in the harsh steppes in the North. The characters could get caught up in tribal warfare, or simply be busy with day-to-day survival. Perhaps a new khan takes power—one who dislikes the group. If this happens, the characters could soon find themselves banished, searching for a way to survive, or perhaps find a tribe that is willing to accept them as one of its own, all the while avoiding their enemies and the dangerous creatures native to their land.

As gar, the characters might participate in raids into Cathay, or even get caught up in the War of Wu Xing. If exceptionally daring, they might decide to explore Cathay, braving the long-standing imperial decree promising death to any gar caught within Cathay's borders. However, with the land shattered by war, leaders might be willing to overlook this prejudice, as gar on the battlefield would give them a distinct advantage.

# ADVENTURE FRAMEWORKS

The following adventures are presented in an adventure framework format. Adventure frameworks serve as blueprints that outline the basic events of a story line, which the gamemaster can flesh out according to his own tastes. The framework is a middle step between the brief adventure ideas and hooks presented elsewhere in this book and fully dramatized adventures like *Ardanyan's Revenge*. If you like plenty of dialogue and narration prepared in advance, you can create your own detailed notes to supplement an adventure framework. If you prefer to run your game by the seat of your pants, simply glance at these outlines, get the adventurers into trouble, and enjoy the fun.

## ADVENTURE FRAMEWORK FORMAT

No two gamemasters design adventures in the same way. Some prefer to plan for every possibility they can foresee in advance, leaving as little as possible to chance. Others prefer a looser style, where they plan the most significant events in the adventure and improvise the rest. To aid gamemasters in preparing adventures, we have devised the adventure framework format. Gamemasters can use this format to plan out the events of an adventure while maintaining as much flexibility as they like. The four parts of the adventure framework are the **Setup**, **Events**, **Climax**, and **Sequels**.

### Setup

The **Setup** describes how the adventure begins and how the characters become involved in the story. This section may also include events that have led to the adventure and background on other ideas touched on in it. This section is often the longest and most detailed in the framework.

### Events

Each **Event** describes an encounter or event that occurs during the course of the adventure. These events may include situations that pose problems for the characters, actions by the adventure's antagonists, creature encounters, or simply unexpected occurrences. Events are the obstacles or problems the characters must overcome to complete the adventure successfully.

### Climax

The **Climax** is the conclusion or resolution of the adventure. It describes the most likely resolution based on actions that the gamemaster expects the players to take, and so it may differ considerably from the way the adventure actually ends. Because player groups often take unexpected actions, we suggest that the gamemaster plan for more than one possible climax.

### Sequels

**Sequels** are stories that might happen after the adventure or as a result of the adventure. Sequels may be adventures that feature the same gamemaster characters or include a magical item discovered in the first adventure. Sequels help create a sense of continuity in a campaign.

See the **Adventures and Campaigns** chapter, starting on p. 97 of the *Gamemaster's Guide*, for more information about creating **Earthdawn** campaigns and maintaining campaign continuity.



## THE SIEGE OF MIN YAN

Gamemasters may want to familiarize themselves with Min Yan and the Kingdom of Feng Dei (see **Lands of Cathay**, p. 42) before running this adventure.

The characters arrive at the capital city of Min Yan, capital of Feng Dei, just as enemy forces arrive to sack the city. It is soon realized that the city's defenses, which are controlled from the throne in the royal palace, are no longer under the defenders' control. It falls upon the characters to infiltrate the palace and regain control of the throne room in order to save the city from utter destruction.

### Setup

The adventurers arrive at Min Yan one fine afternoon. Not long after they enter the city gates a member of the group catches a pickpocket, a young human boy by the Name of Ying, trying to steal his belt pouch. Catching the boy alerts a nearby group of guards, who rush over to apprehend him. Even if the characters do not wish to press charges, the captain of the city guard, a burly troll Warrior by the Name of Kuan Ti, insists on arresting him, binding his wrists behind his back.

Before the guards can take the frightened boy away, the great horns that rest atop the city walls are sounded, alerting the city of an enemy army. As frightened citizens from nearby villages pour into the city, the characters learn that most of the defenders of the city are several miles away performing training drills, leaving behind a mere 5,000 men. Attempts to learn where the army went come up empty; they can only discover that general Tai Chon had insisted that most of the city's army leave that day for drills, even though such a thing is highly unorthodox. Furthermore, the king of Feng Dei, Sen Ma, is visiting the island nation of Jih' Po, which leaves the highly unqualified Kuan Ti in charge of the defenses.

As the last of the refugees rush behind the walls and the gates slam shut, the banners of the Waylanders appear on the horizon. The warlord known simply as the Blood Orchid heads the Waylanders, a mercenary group numbering at least 15,000 strong.

Kuan Ti orders several soldiers to the palace to take control of the city's defenses. When they get near the palace, however, the enchanted pearls destroy them. Kuan Ti stands speechless as the Waylanders charge the walls with ladders and grappling hooks.

### Event One

Soldiers rush to defend the walls and it is soon clear that, without a proper commander, their disorganized efforts will fail. It is up to the characters to rush to the walls and take command. Gamemasters can run this event using a series of encounters that must be overcome, such as:

- A large group of Waylanders gains a foothold on the wall. The characters must defeat ten of the group to regain control. Use the stats for the Human Veteran Guard on p. 89 of the **Game-master's Companion** for the Waylanders.
- The Waylanders begin pushing a large, armored battering ram toward the city gates. The characters must somehow dismantle or destroy it before they can batter the gate down!
- The Waylanders release several trained Jun (see the **Creatures of Cathay** chapter on p. 95) to attack the defenders.
- After the defeat of the Jun, the Beastmaster who trained them attacks the characters from atop his Jun mount. The Beastmaster's Circle should be chosen to give the characters a challenge.

After the characters help hold off the attackers for a while, the defenders' morale rises. They organize themselves rather quickly. However, it is still obvious to the characters that if something is not done, the city will eventually fall.

### Event Two

The characters learn from Kuan Ti that the city's magical defenses are controlled by the throne in the palace (for more information, see **The Lands of Cathay**, p. 42). He tells them that they must find a way past the defenses to get inside. Overhearing this, the young pickpocket, Ying, tells the characters that he knows a way inside. He tells them the way if they guarantee his safe release after this is all over. Kuan Ti is reluctant to trust the little thief, requiring a successful Interaction Test on the part of the characters.

Once they get Kuan Ti to agree, the boy leads the characters beneath the city, to the sewers. He tells them that there is a secret passage that leads underneath the palace. Several adepts guard the sewers and trained creatures, both magical and mundane, placed there by operatives of the Shadowed, the true culprits behind this plot. The exact composition of the opposition down here is up to the gamemaster.

### Event Three

The palace has many levels and many rooms, and is likewise guarded by several adepts, thugs, and trained creatures. The characters must overcome this opposition to make it to the throne room.

### Climax

The throne room is guarded by no less than half-a-dozen high-Circle adepts, led by the t'skrang Sorceress, Lo Shen, a prominent member of the Shadowed. After the characters defeat the cultists, one of the group must make a successful Thread Weaving (13) Test against the throne's Spell Defense. Once successful, that character is suddenly aware of the entire city, as if the enchanted pearls are an extension to his five senses. He sees that the Waylanders are beginning to overwhelm the defenders. With but a thought, he commands the pearls to hurl lightning bolts into their ranks, scattering and routing their army (Note: The character commanding the throne should not get Legend Points for enemies killed in this way; instead, the group as a whole should receive Legend Points for achieving the Adventure Goal).

### Sequels

Upon his return, Sen Ma may hire the characters to track down any of the attackers who may have escaped, such as the treacherous general, Tai Chon, who has gone into hiding, as well as the elusive warlord, Blood Orchid. In addition, Sen Ma may hire the characters to discover more information regarding the secret society known as the Shadowed.

Once the characters become friends with Sen Ma they may soon find that they have captured the unwanted attention of Lord Chin Zan (see **On the Five Claws of Chin Zan**, p. 43).

## CINDER TOWN

Gamemasters may want to familiarize themselves with Tiet Dei (see **The Lands of Cathay**, p. 29) before running this adventure.

While in Tiet Dei the characters get drawn into a vast web of intrigue and plotting. Their quest to discover the culprits behind an attempted coup leads them to an old, abandoned mine complex deep in the Dragon Throne Mountains.

### Setup

While traveling through the kingdom of Tiet Dei, the characters come upon a merchant caravan being robbed by a small group of bandits. The soldiers guarding the caravan, along with several of the bandits, already lie dead on the dirt road. The merchant of the caravan cowers at the end of a sword. The characters battle the bandits and save the merchant, after which, the merchant, Yue You, expresses his undying gratitude, inviting them to an official ball that a prominent lord of Tiet Dei, Ning Wan, is throwing the next night in the city of Taolin.



## Event One

At the ball, the characters are introduced to many of Tiet Dei's nobles. It soon becomes obvious that the function is intended to negatively sway popular opinion of the king. Ning Wan continuously points out that bandit attacks have increased greatly recently, and yet the king does nothing to stop it. The other nobles grumble in agreement, and though none have the courage to come out and say it, their opinions seem clear: it is time for a new king in Tiet Dei.

Throughout the occasion, Yue You continually drops hints to the characters that he is suspicious of Ning Wan's motives, believing that it is more than discontent that he is trying to inspire. Yue You points out a merchant at the ball, an elf by the Name of Bing Qing, who is unusually good friends with Ning Wan. Bing Qing is one of the only merchants in the area who not only is not suffering from bandit attacks, but has been doing considerably better business lately, though no one can say where he is getting the arms and armor that he supplies. Yue You also tells the group that several prominent Weaponsmiths have been kidnapped recently.

## Event Two

Yue You goes on to hint that Bing Qing's private mansion just outside of the city probably holds some clues. Even though Yue You continuously nudges the characters throughout the entire ball, he never comes out and directly says anything. If suspicious, the characters should be reminded of the tenuous relationship between nobles and merchants in Tiet Dei.

By the time the ball is over, the hour has grown late. After the characters leave, they are attacked by a group of thugs (statistics appropriate for the characters' average Circle) who were sent after them by Bing Qing. The thugs attempt to kill the group when they are separated from one another (perhaps sleeping in their respective rooms at a nearby inn) or at least isolated from any help (such as walking through a dark alley).

If the characters question the thugs, they reveal that Bing Qing sent them.

## Event Three

Provoked by Yue You's hints (and perhaps the attack by the thugs), the characters decide to investigate Bing Qing's mansion. It is a walled complex, three stories high and with several rooms. No less than 20 hired soldiers guard it. The characters must somehow get inside (quietly would be best) to Bing Qing's room. There they find an invoice mentioning an old mining complex in the Dragon Spine Mountains called *Cinder Town*.

## Climax

Cinder Town is a huge complex of mines that was abandoned nearly three decades ago when it ran dry. The surrounding hillside is still covered in blackened slag. The mines are now the base for a large group of bandits who are under the pay of the merchant, Bing Qing. They mainly attack merchant caravans coming from other mines, bringing the unrefined ore to Cinder Town where it is processed and turned into arms and armor by several Weaponsmiths who were kidnapped. Bing Qing sells some of this product on behalf of Lord Ning Wan. With this gold Bing Qing and Ning Wan plan on funding a large, private army right under the king's nose, and with the arms and armor, they plan on equipping that army. Once he has enough men, Lord Ning Wan plans on launching a coup against the king.

The characters discover this information and more at Cinder Town. But first they must overcome the bandits, various adepts set to guard the mines, and finally the true mastermind behind the plan, an agent of the Shadowed: Gan Ku the obsidian Nethermancer, along with his Cathayan Ogre bodyguards (see **Creatures of Cathay**, p. 87).

After the characters defeat Gan Ku and expose the operation in the abandoned mines, they have enough evidence to make certain that both Bing Qing and Lord Ning Wan earn a date with the king's executioner.

## YANLOS TEMPLE

Gamemasters may want to familiarize themselves with Shui Dei (see **The Lands of Cathay**, p. 47) before running this adventure.

The characters are trapped on an island of unspeakable terror. They must confront the ancient evil that resides there and destroy it if they ever hope to escape with their lives.

## Setup

There are numerous islands in the Emerald Sea off of Shui Dei's southern coast, many of which have only recently been rediscovered since the end of the Scourge. One such island is Mei Po, the interior of which is dominated by a verdant jungle. The characters travel to the island for business of their own. Their ship arrives at night and crashes upon the coral reefs. After surviving the wreck, and an attack from hungry selachi (**Gamemaster's Guide**, p. 198), they and the other survivors find the colonists' village abandoned. Though there are clear signs of violence, there are no bodies to be found. The lighthouse's flame has been extinguished, which caused the ship to crash.

## Event One

The characters search the village for evidence and find the governor's estate barred from the inside. Evidence of some sort of clawed beasts trying to break in scars the exterior of the complex. After finding their way inside, the characters discover that the governor and his staff have committed suicide. The governor's suicide note explains that the colonists had begun exploring the jungle, seeking to exploit the island's resources. Recently they came upon an ancient temple of foreign architecture and awakened a "slumbering evil." The "beasts," the letter explains, then descended upon the village.

At that moment, the characters hear the terrified screams of the shipwrecked survivors outside. They discover monstrous, humanoid beings—part man, part reptile—attacking the village. The group fights the beasts off and the creatures flee into the jungle, dragging many victims with them.

## Event Two

The characters travel through the jungle to find the ancient temple, battling creatures and survival hazards along the way. The characters also find evidence of a long-lost civilization hidden beneath the tangled jungle flora.

## Event Three

The characters find the temple, which is a vast stone ziggurat covered in vines. While exploring the interior, they are beset by more of the monstrous creatures that had attacked the village and must overcome several devious traps to reach the deepest bowels of the ancient structure.

## Climax

The characters finally come upon a sealed chamber with pictographs displaying the story of an ancient monster that plagued the island long ago and was sealed away through powerful magic. The characters open the chamber and discover the lair of Yanlo, a Horror that has long been denied freedom. It unleashes more of the humanoid, reptilian monsters on the group (its Horror constructs) while it attempts to flee. If the characters do not stop it, then they will have unwittingly unleashed a terrible evil upon the world...



# BLOOD IN THE SANDS

*People often vanish in the Golden Desert; whether victims of the Kur, freak sandstorms, or something far worse, who can say? But the point is, before I travel through that inhospitable terrain, I always make certain to update my will.*

• LIWEI, CATHAYAN MERCHANT •

Only the air stirred in the age-old ruins of Jo'he.

"A storm is coming," thought Mao Yin, her bones confirming the prediction. She craned her neck, shielded her eyes from the burning afternoon sun, and gazed into the rolling horizon of the Golden Desert, the air quivering with heat. There, in the far distance, dark clouds gathered, piling high. Many travelers would seek shelter this coming night.

She continued along the circuitous path, winding through the crumbled bones of the ruins that rose up all around her. She was just as familiar with the silent, deteriorated walls and towers as she was with her own old and weathered body. Her skin, once silken smooth, was now wrinkled and dry like old leather, hardened from age and all the years spent under this desert sun. She and the ruins, they decayed together slowly, phantoms that not even the harsh desert winds could erase.

The ruins of Jo'he were what remained of a pre-Scourge imperial fort, perched on a tall hill overlooking the western trade route of the Golden Desert, and they were what Mao Yin had called home for nearly three decades. Each afternoon she drank her medicinal tea and then walked among the shattered frontier fort spread out over a half mile across the sandy hilltop.

She walked slowly, taking her time, and finally arrived at a low stone wall, just over six feet in height, surrounding a small compound of buildings—the only spot in the ruins with any activity. Three wooden buildings, much younger than the ruins, hugged the interior of the walls. The main structure, and the largest, rose two stories. As she made her way across the courtyard towards it, she saw Je-Ton, the stable boy, leading a pair of horses into the stables. He smiled meekly at her before quickly looking away. Mao Yin gave an inward laugh; she knew his reticence vanished quickly enough whenever he and Bi Chan, the young waitress whom she had recently hired on, were alone.

Mao Yin reached the building and entered through the single door, finding herself in the common room of the inn. The owners of the two horses she had seen Je-Ton tending were a pair of Kur men, both human. They were giving their orders to Bi Chan, whose coy smile betrayed how much she enjoyed the way their eyes crawled across her body.

The Kur were the scourge of the Golden Desert, but here at the inn, they were just guests like everybody else. While For Dei's military regularly patrolled the trade routes of the Golden Desert, the Kur were able to appear seemingly from nowhere and vanish just as quickly, long before any such patrols could catch up with them. However, Mao Yin had a long-standing agreement with the various tribes: free room and board in exchange for peace. The Kur had always agreed to not attack, finding the comfort of a warm meal and place to sleep a fair deal and of much longer lasting benefit than simply attacking, killing everyone within, and stealing what they could carry off. This meant that Mao Yin's inn was a safe haven for merchants as well, since while within the walls they were off limits to banditry.

Mao Yin weaved through the scattering of long tables to the bar. She stepped behind it, preparing herself for another long night of serving road-weary travelers.

"Mother. I am hungry."

The voice startled her, causing her to jump. She looked at the customers, even though she knew they did not hear.

"There are too many here," she thought, knowing he could hear her, "and more will come."

"It must be tonight," the voice spoke again, calmly but with a subtle insistence that Mao Yin knew all too well. "I will feed tonight."

Mao Yin sighed inwardly. Children could be so stubborn.

"Very well, dear," she conceded.

She pulled out a rag and began wiping down the bar, humming a cheerful folk melody.



**B**lood in the Sands is an adventure scenario designed for three to five Novice adepts of any Discipline. However, the adventure can easily be scaled to accommodate only one or two players or more than five by lowering or raising the attributes of the main villain.

In this adventure, the player characters arrive at a roadside inn while traveling through the Golden Desert—a roadside inn inhabited by a Horror. **Blood in the Sands** begins as a linear adventure but becomes more open ended as it progresses, with the final outcome based on the actions of the player characters. Most of this adventure depends greatly on the characters' actions, so gamemasters must be familiar enough with the events in this shard to be able to be as flexible as required.

Even though this adventure is written to be set in the mystical land of Cathay, by changing certain elements of the back story and the Names of the characters, gamemasters can easily place this adventure in Barsaive, a Theran province, or anywhere else in the **Earthdawn** world.

## RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

**B**lood in the Sands is presented as a series of events. Each is described for the gamemaster, who should use the information given to run each section. Not all locations and events have read-aloud texts, meaning the gamemaster will have to describe many of the scenes to the players as he sees fit. Where possible, the text describes the areas the characters will encounter, but much of the detail is left to the gamemaster to devise.

Each encounter contains four sections: **Setting the Stage** contains a narrative description that the gamemaster reads aloud to the players, **Themes and Images** helps the gamemaster set the mood and pacing



for a particular encounter, and **Behind the Scenes** explains what is really going on in each encounter. The final section of each encounter, **Troubleshooting**, offers suggestions to help the gamemaster get the adventure back on track should things go awry.

## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The Cathayans constructed the fortress of Jo'he several hundred years before the Scourge, in order to facilitate Imperial forces in their mission to suppress the Kur, who, even at that time, had a reputation of being raiders and cutthroats. The compound was built atop a low hill, spreading out over a half-mile radius. The fort was Named after General Jo'he, the first commander stationed there, and served as a testimony of imperial power in the desert until the people fled to their dragon lairs and the world was abandoned to the Horrors.

After the Scourge, the War of Wu Xing began before the empire had a chance to rebuild the ruins. For decades the ruined fort remained largely neglected except for the occasional Kur band that used the ancient stones as a temporary shelter. Then, twenty-five years ago, a merchant Named Kio decided to turn the ruins into an inn after using them as a shelter for one night. Situated as the ruins were on a hill overlooking the western trade route, Kio's entrepreneurial spirit quickly recognized their potential. After striking up a deal with the local Kur tribes for safe passage in exchange for free room and board, Kio chose an optimal space among the ruins for construction and built an inn. Later, after business picked up and Kio was reasonably sure that he was free from danger, he moved his mother, Mao Yin, into the desert.

Mao Yin took to the new life with enthusiasm, though her dreams of her son ever marrying were something that gave her constant worry. But that worry came to an end five years ago, when a desert scorpion stung him. He managed to make it back to the inn before collapsing from the poison. With no help nearby, Mao Yin could only watch as her son suffered a slow, agonizing death.

As Kio drew his last, agonal breath, a Horror Named Tarro stumbled upon the isolated inn. The Horror revealed itself to Mao Yin, expecting a reaction of terror. Instead, Mao Yin mistook the Horror for her dead son's spirit and thanked the Passions. Tarro, amused by the frail human's misconception, played along, telling itself it would kill her later. However, over time, Tarro grew to enjoy its new role too much, and even more, it enjoyed Mao Yin's culpability with its feedings.

Occasionally, Tarro would take a lone traveler for a victim, always getting its "mother" to help in some small way, delighting in the fact that it was using the love for her dead son as a tool in manipulating her into being an accessory to murder. This arrangement has worked well for Tarro, and the Horror does not plan on relinquishing control over the old woman anytime soon. As for Mao Yin, she has always been a firm believer in the ancestor spirits, and she firmly believes that Tarro is in fact the spirit of her dead son. If the occasional traveler must die to keep him in this plane of existence... then so be it.

## PLOT SYNOPSIS

**T**he player characters arrive at the ruins of Jo'he on a night of Tarro's feeding. However, this time Tarro has grown greedy, and he attempts to feed on more than just one stray traveler. After the player characters arrive, Tarro begins picking off the patrons one by one, using existing circumstances to provoke paranoia and mistrust among them.

As the body count rises, the player characters eventually learn the truth about the culprit and the hunt begins, finally culminating in a battle to the death with the Horror and a revelation of Mao Yin's dark secret.

# THE RUINS OF JO'HE

In this encounter, the player characters arrive at the ruins of Jo'he and secure lodgings for the night.

## SETTING THE STAGE

*Night has finally fallen over the Golden Desert, turning the burning sands a ghostly twilight blue. The dark clouds that have been gathering on the horizon all afternoon are now rolling ominously toward you, signaling the imminent approach of a harsh desert storm. You have arrived at the ruins of Jo'he just in time, as the prospect of spending another night in the open desert has become less than appealing. It will feel good to have a warm meal and soft bed, and a solid roof and walls between you and the approaching storm.*

*After climbing the hill, you pass through the crumbled walls into the courtyard, at the moment empty but for the lone well. Beyond it, against the rear wall of the compound, sits the two-story inn, the soft, golden light spilling out of the windows a welcome sight. Inside, several patrons sit at the long tables, enjoying their meals and polite conversations.*

*You find an empty table, and soon a young woman approaches to take your order.*

## THEMES AND IMAGES

The inn is a welcome sight—a small island of safety and comfort surrounded by a vast, inhospitable environment. What brings the player characters here is up to the gamemaster to decide. Perhaps they are foreigners, and they have entered Cathay via the western trade route, or perhaps they are escorting a merchant through the desert. Whatever their reasons, fate has brought them to the inn on this night, and only their wits will get them out.

## BEHIND THE SCENES

A room and meal costs the player characters 3 silver pieces each. When the characters arrive, there are only three rooms available, though characters can share rooms at no extra cost. In the rare times when there are far too many guests to accommodate, Mao Yin allows guests to stay in the stables for 5 copper pieces per night.

Gamemasters should familiarize themselves with the layout of the inn, as most of the action takes place within the small cluster of buildings that constitute it.

### The Compound

When the merchant Kio decided to build an inn amongst the ruins of Jo'he, he chose an enclosure with the sturdiest wall and deepest well. After clearing this area of rubble, he threw up three buildings: the inn, stables, and a warehouse. Though he always talked about expanding the inn to encompass more of the ruins, Kio never did, and the rest of Jo'he remains neglected.

A wall that rises just over six feet surrounds the compound. However, the front gates long ago rotted away, and neither Kio nor Mao Yin has built new ones, so there is no way to seal off the compound from outsiders. There is another hole in the wall between the stables (area 5) and the privy (area 7).



### (1) Courtyard

The courtyard is empty except for the dry, packed earth and a single deep well. The well is nearly 50 yards deep and is surrounded by a pagoda. The well is fed by an underground spring, and the water is cool and clean.

### (2) Inn

Mao Yin's inn is considered Average Lodging (see the **Goods and Services** chapter on p. 141 of the *Cathay Player's Guide*). The main room is filled with long tables and benches. A fireplace rests against the west wall, and a long bar rests against the north. The fireplace, large enough for a grown dwarf to stand in comfortably, always has a fire lit. Doors on the south and west walls lead to the kitchen (area 3) and courtyard (area 1), respectively. Stairs in the northeast corner lead to the second floor, where the guest rooms are located. There are twelve rooms, each with bamboo-framed beds and semi-soft grass mattresses. Three of the rooms are the permanent residences of Mao Yin's three employees: Kwong the cook, Je-Ton the stable boy, and Bi Chan the waitress. Six other rooms are currently occupied by Lao Chi (1 room), Bao De (1 room), Hong Hua (1 room), Dong-Hu (1 room), Weng Pan (1 room), and Weng Pan's guards, Jin'Man and Yong (1 room). For more information, see **Patrons and Residents of Jo'he**, below.

The bar is long and sturdy and lined with stools. Behind the bar, hidden by a rug, is a hatch leading down into the cellar. For more information on the cellar, see **The Shrine**, on p. 154. Also behind the bar is a door leading to Mao Yin's room.

### (3) Mao Yin's Room

Mao Yin's room is located just behind the bar. The room is sparsely decorated, with a simple straw mattress and small shrine to Tswoo, Cathayan Passion of wealth and prosperity (see the *Cathay Player's Guide*, p. 122), before which lies several sticks of incense. Mao Yin cares little for material wealth, so the room is devoid of anything of real monetary worth.

### (4) Kitchen

The kitchen is filled with a large chopping block, counters, garbage pit, and the usual cutlery, pots, dishes, and the like. The pantry has enough ingredients for dozens and dozens of meals. (For the types of meals available, see the **Goods and Services** chapter on p. 141 of the *Cathay Player's Guide*). If the characters raid the kitchen, they can steal enough food for six weeks' worth of trail rations.

The kitchen is the domain of Kwong the cook. Anyone who enters while he is here—besides Mao Yin or Bi Chan—will be assaulted by a furious string of curses and insults.

### (5) Stables

There are currently five mounts in the stables, belonging to Hong Hua, Bao De, Weng Pan, Jin'Man, and Yong. It costs 1 silver for a character to stable his mount for one day. The mounts are cared for by Je-Ton the stable boy.



### (6) Warehouse & Storage

This building was constructed for merchants to have a place to store their goods while staying at the inn. The door has a lock on the outside. The warehouse is currently empty.

### (7) Privy

The privy has a long bench with six holes cut into the top. It is Je-Ton's responsibility to pour lye down the holes everyday.

### (8) Ruins

The ruins of Jo'he spread out behind the inn, covering a half-mile radius, consisting of ruined towers, crumbled buildings, and shattered walls. At the gamemaster's discretion, some of the buildings might prove to be unstable and might collapse if explored.

### Patrons and Residents of Jo'he

When the players first enter the inn, it is already filled with patrons: Lao Chi sits at a table by himself; Hong Hua and Bao De sit with one another at a table; Dong-Hu sits by himself at a table; and Weng Pan and his two mercenary guards, Jin'Man and Yong, sit at a table. The permanent residents of the inn are Mao Yin, who stands behind the bar, where Je-Ton sits eating his dinner; Kwong, who is in the kitchen; and Bi Chan, who is serving the customers. For more information, see **Cast of Characters**, on p. 155.

## TROUBLESHOOTING

Not much can go wrong in this encounter. The goal is to get the player characters to order a meal and relax in the common room. Once they have had a chance to order their meals, skip to **A Time for Murder**, below.



# A TIME FOR MURDER

In this encounter, Tarro makes its move, murdering one of the patrons while framing another.

## SETTING THE STAGE

*You relax in the comfort of the inn while waiting for your meals, washing the trail dust out of your parched mouths with the tea the young waitress has brought you. Suddenly, an argument breaks out between the Kur in the room. The lone male stands and raises his hand as if to strike the female from the second group. Before his hand has a chance to fall, however, the second male Kur tackles him. The other patrons quickly break up the fight, though the two Kur still look like they want to kill one another.*

## THEMES AND IMAGES

The encounter between the Kur should happen and be over before the player characters have a real chance to respond. The fight is broken up by Jin'Man and Yong, the mercenary guards of Weng Pan (for more information, see **Cast of Characters**, on p. 155). If gamemasters wish, they may give the player characters the opportunity to be the ones to break up the fight between the Kur. Simply adjust the read aloud text in Setting the Stage, above.

## BEHIND THE SCENES

The comfort and quiet of the inn is suddenly disrupted when the members of the Kur tribes—Lao Chi of the Red Sands and Hong Hua and Bao De of the Winged Scorpions—begin exchanging barbs (for more information, see **Cast of Characters**, on p. 155). Though the Kur tribes have been at a state of relative peace since the end of the Scourge hostility still exists between many of the tribes. The Red Sands and the Winged Scorpions have a particularly violent history, and, while sitting and enjoying their meals, Bao De grew angry when he saw Lao Chi staring at Hong Hua. A trading of insults ensued, and then Hong Hua said something about Lao Chi's dubious parentage, at which point Lao Chi rose to strike her, and Bao De interceded.

After the fight, things quickly calm down. Lao Chi, still seething, leaves the common room for his room upstairs, and the other two Kur go up to their respective rooms shortly thereafter. The player characters' meals arrive at their table a short while after that; give them some time to eat before moving on to **Tarro Strikes**, below.

## Tarro Strikes

When the characters are finished with their meals, read the following aloud:

*Your meals were refreshing. The warmth of the crackling fire in the fireplace creates a soothing and relaxing atmosphere that you have sorely missed during your travels through the desert.*

*Suddenly, a woman's terrified scream shatters the tranquility of the inn. It came from upstairs.*

*For just a moment, everyone seems to freeze. The hypnotic trance is broken when one of the merchant's guards throws himself to his feet and rushes up the stairs. Soon everyone is following, weapons in hands...*

Through Mao Yin, Tarro became aware of the exchange between the Kur and decides it's the perfect opportunity to strike. Sometime after the Kur go upstairs for the night, Tarro slips into Hong Hua's room and kills her. Unfortunately for him, the first to respond to the screams is Lao Chi, sword in hand. Tarro is already gone and the deed done, so when Bao De arrives a moment later, he believes Lao Chi committed the murder and attacks.

The rest of the patrons (including the player characters, if they go with them) arrive a round later and find the two Kur fighting. Lao Chi, realizing the full severity of the situation in which he finds himself, loudly calls out to anyone who will listen that he is innocent. Give the player characters a chance to break up the fight before it turns deadly. If they make no move to help (or worse, attack Lao Chi), have Lao Chi beseech them directly for mercy and help.

If they still make no move to intercede, Jin'Man and Yong, the mercenary guards of Weng Pan, break up the fight before anyone gets seriously hurt. Bao De calls for Lao Chi's blood, but Mao Yin insists that there will be no vigilante justice in her inn. Instead, she orders that Lao Chi be tied up in the warehouse (area 6), which is then promptly locked up from the outside. She says that they will deal with the matter in the morning, come first light.

## Questioning the Witnesses

Lao Chi insists he is innocent, claiming he heard the scream and by the time he arrived Hong Hua was dead, with no sight of her killer. Bao De, on the other hand, insists that Lao Chi is guilty, having come upon the scene with Lao Chi standing over Hong Hua's body, sword in hand.

If anyone accuses Bao De of murdering Hong Hua, he flies into a rage and needs to be restrained or calmed down with a successful Interaction Test against a Hostile Attitude (see the **Gamemaster's Guide**, p. 93).







*Je-Ton, wearing his bed clothes and carrying a lantern, stumbles sleepily down the stairs and out the front door. A moment later, the door bursts back open and he flies inside, screaming, "The door to the warehouse is open! The door to the warehouse is open!"*

### Examining the Evidence

Searching for evidence of someone breaking into Hong Hua's room proves fruitless, since Tarro entered and exited by slipping through the cracks between the floorboards.

The Evidence Analysis talent (see the *Player's Guide*, p. 68) can reveal that Hong Hua was strangled to death. Player characters might find it unusual that Hong Hua was strangled, and yet when they arrived on scene Lao Chi was armed with his sword. Further, assuming no blood was spilled in the ensuing fight between Lao Chi and Bao De, examination of Lao Chi's sword reveals no blood on the blade.

The Experience Death spell (see the *Player's Guide*, p. 168) does not reveal much since Hong Hua was killed in the dark; all she saw was the silhouette of a humanoid shape, and all she felt were large, cold hands wrapping around her throat.

After examining the evidence, Bao De takes Hong Hua's body to the stables. He intends to take her body back to their people for a proper burial, once he sees that justice has been served.

### TROUBLESHOOTING

It's important to make sure Lao Chi does not get killed in this encounter. If the player characters join in on his assault, be sure to stress how he is calling for mercy and insisting on his own innocence. Player characters may wish to search the compound at this time. If they do, Mao Yin does not allow them to poke around in her room or behind the bar, and only a successful Interaction Test (see the *Gamemaster's Guide*, p. 93; treat Kwong's Attitude as Unfriendly) can get Kwong to allow them to search the kitchen. However, at this point of the adventure, the player characters find nothing of interest.

## A MISSING PRISONER

In this encounter, the imprisoned Kur escapes and another patron falls victim to the Horror.

### SETTING THE STAGE

This encounter occurs a few hours later, possibly after the player characters have gone to bed. At a time you feel is appropriate, read the following aloud, modifying as needed if the player characters are asleep in bed.

### THEMES AND IMAGES

Depending on where the player characters are, this encounter may be immediately startling or take some time to sink in as they drag themselves from a deep sleep. If the characters are awake in the common room, they are the first ones to respond, as the rest of the patrons—with the exception of Bao De (see Behind the Scenes)—are asleep in their rooms. If the characters are asleep, then they are awoken by all of the commotion.

### BEHIND THE SCENES

During the night, Bao De sneaked out of the inn (through a window, if necessary) with the intention of murdering Lao Chi. However, Lao Chi had already managed to escape from his bonds, and all Bao De managed to find was an empty warehouse. Before Bao De had a chance to search for Lao Chi's tracks, Tarro quietly approached from behind and slew him, dispatching him in the same manner as it did Hong Hua. After the deed, Tarro fled the scene, passing through the stables and spooking the horses, which woke Je-Ton, who was asleep in Bi Chan's room. On his way to the stables, lantern in hand, Je-Ton saw the door to the warehouse hanging ajar and so fled back into the common room.

### Searching for a Killer

After the compound is aroused and the evidence is examined, Kwong takes the corpse into the stables with the other one, and Jin'Man and Yong, at the insistence of Weng Pan, decide to go on a manhunt for the missing killer. Mao Yin sends Kwong and Je-Ton with them. If the player characters do not volunteer their services, then Mao Yin asks them to join the hunt.

A successful Tracking (8) Test indicates that Lao Chi fled into the ruins, where he is hiding. Knowing that a storm is coming, Lao Chi did not flee into the desert, hoping instead to be able to wait out the storm in the ruins before escaping. He knows nothing about the death of Bao De, as he made his escape shortly before the Kur came to kill him.

Searching the ruins should be ominous, with the player characters thinking they see movement in every shadow and feeling eyes on them every corner they turn.

Gamemasters who want to introduce a little action at this point of the adventure can throw in an encounter with Bull Scorpions (see p. 86 for game statistics).

If the player characters find Lao Chi, he attempts to flee. If he is attacked, he fights back, to the death if necessary. If Lao Chi is not found, or he escapes and eludes his pursuers, gamemasters may bring him back into the story at an opportune time, or dismiss him entirely, depending on the individual needs of the adventure.

### TROUBLESHOOTING

The most likely problem gamemasters might run into in this encounter is if the players have taken complicated steps to prevent Lao Chi's escape, such as using spells to secure his imprisonment or posting guards outside his door. If the latter, a distraction may be needed to get the guarding characters away from the warehouse long enough for Lao Chi to escape and Bao De to meet his fate.



# A MISFORTUNE OF GREED

In this encounter, the characters return to the inn to find that there has been a third victim.

## SETTING THE STAGE

*You finally return to the inn, and instead of a nice, quiet room, you come upon a gruesome scene: Mao Yin, Bi Chan, and Weng Pan stand around the twisted body of Dong-Hu, the lone ork. The observers' eyes betray their horror, and the way Dong-Hu's eyes stare unblinking at the ceiling while his body lies chest down in the middle of the room leaves no doubt that he is quite dead.*

## THEMES AND IMAGES

The death of Dong-Hu should come as a surprise to the player characters, especially if they killed or captured Lao Chi. The other patrons look just as shocked and dismayed.

## BEHIND THE SCENES

While everyone else went to chase after Lao Chi, Weng Pan, Mao Yin, Bi Chan, and Dong-Hu remained behind, locking themselves in their rooms. Knowing that nearly everyone was gone, Dong-Hu's Thief nature got the better of him, and he stole down to the common room with the intention of breaking into Mao Yin's room, killing her, stealing whatever he could carry, stealing a horse from the stables, and then fleeing into the night with the hopes of staying ahead of the storm. Unfortunately for him, when he reached the common room Tarro rose up from between the floorboards behind him and snapped his neck, nearly twisting his head completely off.

Regardless of whether or not the characters found Lao Chi, it's apparent a killer is on the loose. At this point, the vote is split on what to do. Mao Yin, Jin' Man, and Yong want to search for the killer; Mao Yin only wants them to search to split everyone up. But even though Jin' Man and Yong want to hunt for the killer, Weng Pan insists that they stay to protect him. Convincing Weng Pan to allow them to join them in a hunt requires a successful Interaction Test against an Unfriendly Attitude (see the *Gamemaster's Guide*, p. 93).

The remainder of the group wants to stay indoors until sunrise, at which point the storm will have passed, and everyone can leave in relative safety.

If the player characters attempt to hunt down the killer, skip to **Things that Go Bump**, below. If they decide to leave the inn, skip to **The Storm**, below. If the player characters hunker down in the inn with the rest of the group that wants to stay, skip to **Abra Cadaver**, below.

### Things that Go Bump...

If the player characters attempt to hunt down the killer, Tarro remains elusive, striking when people are alone or in pairs. Be sure to create a mood of apprehension while the hunt is on; have the player characters hear something around the corner only to ultimately find nothing there; have a character see something run behind a wall out of the corner of his eye, but find nothing there when he goes to look; and so on.

Since Tarro can switch between its two-dimensional form and his three-dimensional form at will, it can move about with ease, which means gamemasters should have no problem having the Horror appear at any opportune time.

At some point, Tarro reveals itself to the player characters, either by attacking one or two of them or by snatching up a gamemaster character (e.g. bursting through a window and pulling someone through, sucking a character up the chimney when he goes to investigate a noise, etc.). Once Tarro is revealed as the killer, skip to **A Horror Revealed**, below.

For more information about Tarro, see **Cast of Characters**, on p. 155.

### A Horror Revealed

The killer has been revealed as a Horror. At this point of the adventure, Tarro performs hit-and-run tactics on the patrons, not taking into account how many are grouped together at a time. At some point, Mao Yin sneaks off to the cellar via the hidden hatch behind the bar. Once the player characters discover the cellar, skip to **The Shrine**, on p. 154.

### The Storm

If at any point the player characters attempt to flee the inn, the storm arrives (or at any other point the gamemaster feels is appropriate). The storm clouds are heralded by strong winds and a great sandstorm, which reduces vision to a mere yard. Soon after, a downpour of rain falls from the sky. If this does not dissuade the player characters from fleeing into the night, then Tarro has an easy time picking them off one by one as they stumble about in the vicious wind, stinging sand, and torrential rain.

### Abra Cadaver

At some point, Tarro begins using its Animate Dead power on those it has killed. Ideally, the Horror uses this power if everyone decides to barricade themselves in the inn, animating Hong Hua and Bao De in the barn and then anyone else it has managed to kill up to that point, and sending them against the inhabitants of the inn.

This event should not happen until later in the adventure, during an appropriately cinematic moment.

## CADAVER MEN

### Attributes

|        |        |        |
|--------|--------|--------|
| DEX: 4 | STR: 6 | TOU: 7 |
| PER: 4 | WIL: 6 | CHA: 4 |

### Characteristics

|                          |                     |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Initiative: 4            | Physical Defense: 6 |
| Actions: 1 (4; see text) | Spell Defense: 6    |
| Attack (3): 7            | Social Defense: 11  |
| Damage:                  | Physical Armor: 0   |
| Claws (3): 9             | Mystic Armor: 1     |
| Death: 51                | Recovery Tests: 3   |
| Unconsciousness: NA      | Knockdown: 6        |
| Wound Threshold: 11      | Movement: 5         |

### Powers

Durability (2)

### Legend Award

Third Circle

### Commentary

During the Scourge, some residents of dragon lairs infested by Horrors chose death rather than face such evil beings. From these suicide victims, some of the more intelligent Horrors created the animated corpses known as "cadaver men", undead beings capable of feeling only pain. Although most cadaver men retain their human intelligence, their miserable existences have filled them with hatred of the living and driven most insane. As a result, social contact with cadaver men, though possible, is unsettling for living beings. Cadaver men are also cannibals, but contrary to popular myth do not require sentient flesh for survival.



### Rules

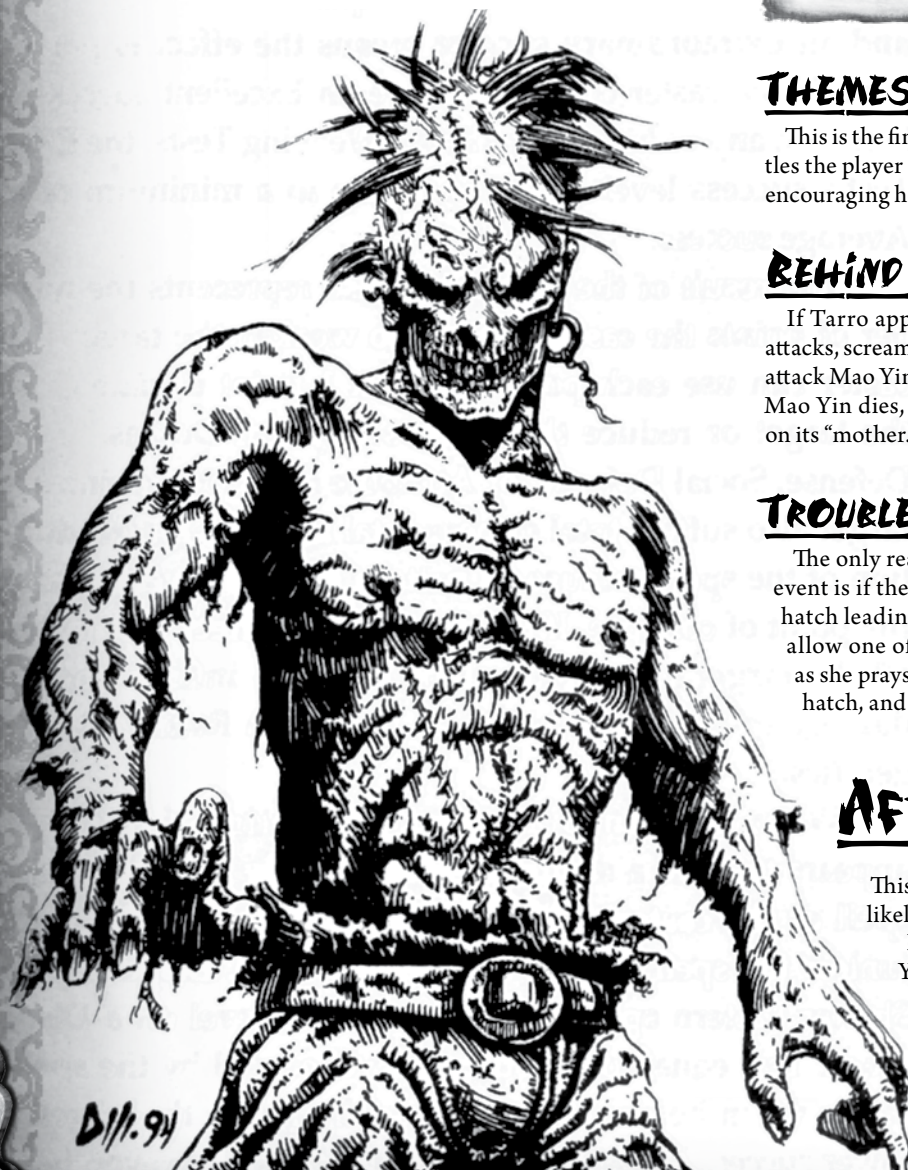
Cadaver men become easily enraged, flying into a manic fury if they experience any significant pain, such as being subjected to a Pain spell or receiving a Wound. Rage: An enraged cadaver man makes 4 attacks per round until it has killed the source of the pain or 10 rounds have passed, whichever comes first. If a cadaver man cannot determine who caused it pain, it attacks and kills the nearest living creature. When enraged, a cadaver man will often use the Aggressive Attack combat option (see *Player's Guide*, p. 222). The effect of the rage overcomes any penalties they may suffer from the pain itself; this means the cadaver man ignores Wound penalties or any Harried or Knocked Down penalties the pain would normally cause.

### Scaling

A Second Circle group faces 1 per 2 PC for a Second Circle Award. A Third Circle group faces one each. A Fourth Circle group faces 3 per 2 PC for a Fourth Circle Award.

## TROUBLESHOOTING

The most important goal of this chapter is to keep the player characters from simply fleeing the inn. If they do flee, introduce the storm, subtly hinting that fleeing blindly into the desert in the middle of a torrential downpour is not the wisest of ideas.



## THE SHRINE

In this encounter, the characters discover Mao Yin's dark secret and finally come face to face with the Horror.

## SETTING THE STAGE

After the player characters discover the secret hatch leading to the cellar, read the following aloud:

*You follow the rickety flight of steps and find yourselves in the inn's cellar. Sitting against the far end of the room, propped up in a simple wooden chair as if it were a throne, is a desiccated corpse. Laid out before it is a scattering of food in various states of decay and several sticks of burning incense. Flickering torches set in the walls light the entire scene.*

*Mao Yin sits prostrate before the gruesome shrine but stands and turns when she hears your approach. "Hello," she says sweetly, "My son has been expecting you."*

*Just then, the shadows seem to swell and fill the room, and suddenly there is a humanoid form composed of deep, never-ending darkness before you.*

## THEMES AND IMAGES

This is the final confrontation with Tarro. While the Horror battles the player characters, Mao Yin grins like a woman gone mad, encouraging her "son," calling him by the Name of Kio.

## BEHIND THE SCENES

If Tarro appears to be losing, Mao Yin pulls out a knife and attacks, screaming in rage. Likewise, if any of the player characters attack Mao Yin, Tarro specifically targets them with its attacks. If Mao Yin dies, Tarro immediately uses its Animate Dead power on its "mother."

## TROUBLESHOOTING

The only real problem gamemasters may encounter with this event is if the player characters have trouble finding the secret hatch leading to the cellar in the first place. If this is the case, allow one of the characters to hear Mao Yin's faint chanting as she prays to her ancestors. A quick search easily reveals the hatch, and from there run the event as normal.

## AFTERMATH

This adventure has several possible outcomes, the most likely of which are described below.

If the characters flee the inn, then Tarro and Mao Yin continue to prey on unsuspecting and innocent travelers for years to come. If Mao Yin is slain but Tarro is not, the Horror wanders away from the site, maybe to hunt down those player characters who managed to escape it. If the Horror is wounded, but escapes, it dedicates itself to finding and destroying the characters.



If both Tarro and Mao Yin are killed, the inn is without an owner. The player characters may step up as the new proprietors. If they do, any surviving employees stay on to serve them (they need jobs, after all). If none of the player characters wish to stay and run the inn, then one of the surviving employees (if any) takes over. If none survived, then the ruins of Jo'he quickly fall back into disrepair, the legend of the Horror and its crazed "mother" quickly circulates, and the place is avoided entirely by travelers and Kur alike.

## AWARDING LEGEND POINTS

As suggested in the **Gamemastering** chapter on p. 97 of the *Gamemaster's Guide*, **Blood in the Sands** awards a number of Legend Awards to the player characters. A single Legend Award should award a number of Legend Points as determined by the character's Circle. For example, a Third Circle character receives from 200 to 500 Legend Points per Legend Award and a total of two to five Legend Awards per game session.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

This section offers descriptions and game statistics for the gamemaster characters in this adventure.

### MAO YIN

#### Attributes

DEX (12): 5      STR (10): 5      TOU (8): 4  
PER (13): 6      WIL (12): 5      CHA (12): 5

#### Characteristics

Initiative: 5      Physical Defense: 7  
Physical Armor: 0      Spell Defense: 7  
Mystic Armor: 1      Social Defense: 7  
Death: 28      Recovery Tests: 2  
Unconsciousness: 19      Knockdown: 5  
Wound Threshold: 7      Movement: 6

#### Skills

Acting <sup>A</sup> (1): 6  
Ancestor Spirit Lore <sup>K</sup> (1): 7  
Animal Handling (3): 8  
Avoid Blow (3): 8  
Conversation (3): 8  
Golden Desert Region <sup>K</sup> (3): 9  
Inn Administration <sup>K</sup> (3): 9  
Jo'he Ruins <sup>K</sup> (3): 9  
Melee Weapons (3): 8  
Read/Write Language (1): 7—(Cathayan)  
Speak Language (1): 7—(Cathayan)  
Storytelling <sup>A</sup> (3): 8  
Throwing Weapons (1): 6  
Unarmed Combat (2): 7  
Wilderness Survival (3): 9  
<sup>A</sup> Artisan Skill; <sup>K</sup> Knowledge Skill

#### Weapons

**Knife** (Damage 6; Range 8–16 yards/4–8 hexes)

#### Equipment

Belt Pouch, Traveler's Garb

#### Loot

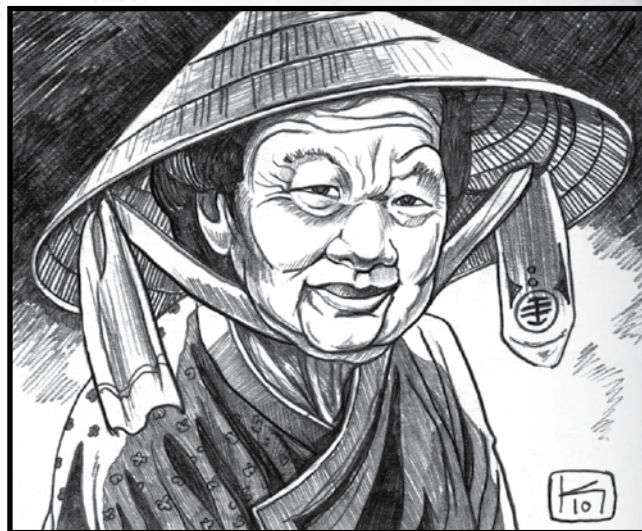
40 gold pieces

#### Legend Award

First Circle

#### Commentary

Walking with a slight hunch, with a head full of curly gray hair, and standing only five feet and four inches tall, Mao Yin looks like an unlikely ally to a Horror. Of course, the old human woman does not know the true nature of Tarro and will do anything to protect 'him'—even kill.



### KWONG

#### Attributes

DEX (11): 5      STR (16): 7      TOU (17): 7  
PER (11): 5      WIL (7): 4      CHA (9): 4

#### Characteristics

Initiative: 5      Physical Defense: 7  
Physical Armor: 2      Spell Defense: 7  
Mystic Armor: 0      Social Defense: 6  
Death: 40      Recovery Tests: 3  
Unconsciousness: 32      Knockdown: 7  
Wound Threshold: 11      Movement: 6

#### Skills

Avoid Blow (3): 8  
Baking <sup>K</sup> (3): 8  
Cooking <sup>A</sup> (3): 7  
Cheng'gang Town <sup>K</sup> (3): 8  
For Dei Region <sup>K</sup> (1): 6  
Golden Desert Region <sup>K</sup> (1): 6  
Melee Weapons (4): 9  
Read/Write Language (1): 6—(Cathayan)  
Speak Language (1): 6—(Cathayan)  
Throwing Weapons (1): 6  
Tiet Dei Region <sup>K</sup> (3): 8  
Unarmed Combat (2): 7  
Wilderness Survival (3): 8  
<sup>A</sup> Artisan Skill; <sup>K</sup> Knowledge Skill

#### Armor

Cloth Apron (Phys 2)

#### Weapons

**Knife** (Damage 8; Range 8–16 yards/4–8 hexes),  
**Meat Cleaver** (Damage 11; Improvised Weapon)

#### Equipment

Baking and Cooking Tools, Belt Pouch, Traveler's Garb

#### Loot

20 gold pieces

#### Legend Award

First Circle

#### Commentary

Kwong was once a cook in the town of Cheng'gang in For Dei, near the border of Tiet Dei. After losing his family in a raid by Tiet Dei soldiers, Kwong wandered the countryside in a daze, trying desperately to find a reason to go on living. After stumbling into the desert, he eventually came upon the inn. Mao Yin took him in, at first as a potential sacrifice to Tarro. However, upon learning that he was a cook, Mao Yin offered the weary traveler a job, which he accepted, believing that a life so far removed from civilization was just what he needed.

Kwong is a thirty-five-year-old human male, stout, and bald but for a strip of hair that runs around the sides of his skull. Once a jovial man, Kwong has since become sullen and quiet, usually only speaking when he needs something or when he loses his temper (something that happens more and more often these days).



## JE-TON

### Attributes

DEX (14): 6      STR (12): 5      TOU (10): 5  
PER (8): 4      WIL (8): 4      CHA (15): 6

### Characteristics

**Initiative:** 6      **Physical Defense:** 8  
**Physical Armor:** 0      **Spell Defense:** 5  
**Mystic Armor:** 0      **Social Defense:** 8  
**Death:** 31      **Recovery Tests:** 2  
**Unconsciousness:** 22      **Knockdown:** 5  
**Wound Threshold:** 8      **Movement:** 6

### Skills

Animal Handling (3): 7  
Avoid Blow (2): 8  
Creature Lore <sup>K</sup> (2): 6  
Melee Weapons (3): 9  
Read/Write Language (1): 5–(Cathayan)  
Speak Language (1): 5–(Cathayan)  
Throwing Weapons (1): 7  
Stable Work <sup>K</sup> (2): 6  
Unarmed Combat (1): 7  
Whistling <sup>A</sup> (2): 8

<sup>A</sup> Artisan Skill; <sup>K</sup> Knowledge Skill

### Weapons

**Knife** (Damage 6; Range 8–16 yards/4–8 hexes),  
**Shovel** (Damage 9; Improvised Weapon)

### Equipment

Belt Pouch, Peasant's Garb

### Loot

5 copper pieces

### Legend Award

First Circle

### Commentary

Je-Ton, a young human of only sixteen years, was orphaned at the age of eleven. He has worked for Mao Yin for the last three years as the stable boy. He has recently fallen in love with Bi Chan, the waitress.

Je-Ton stands five foot eight and weighs a mere one hundred and twenty pounds. He keeps his black hair cut short, since he finds that it's impossible to maintain otherwise.

## BI CHAN

### Attributes

DEX (13): 6      STR (11): 5      TOU (9): 4  
PER (11): 5      WIL (10): 5      CHA (17): 7

### Characteristics

**Initiative:** 6      **Physical Defense:** 7  
**Physical Armor:** 0      **Spell Defense:** 7  
**Mystic Armor:** 0      **Social Defense:** 9  
**Death:** 30      **Recovery Tests:** 2  
**Unconsciousness:** 21      **Knockdown:** 5  
**Wound Threshold:** 7      **Movement:** 6

### Skills

Cleaning <sup>K</sup> (2): 7  
Conversation (2): 9  
Etiquette (2): 9  
First Impression (2): 9  
Flirting (2): 9  
Jo'he Ruins <sup>K</sup> (2): 7  
Melee Weapons (2): 8  
Read/Write Language (1): 6–(Cathayan)  
Seduction (2): 9  
Singing <sup>A</sup> (2): 9  
Speak Language (1): 6–(Cathayan)  
Storytelling <sup>A</sup> (2): 9  
Throwing Weapons (1): 7  
Unarmed Combat (2): 8

<sup>A</sup> Artisan Skill; <sup>K</sup> Knowledge Skill

### Weapons

**Dagger** (Damage 7; Range 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes)



### Equipment

Belt Pouch, Traveler's Garb w/Dress

### Loot

3 silver pieces

### Legend Award

First Circle

### Commentary

At age twenty-three, the lovely human Bi Chan was a laundress to a merchant when she first came to the ruins of Jo'he. Unable to stand her employer's wandering hands any longer, she quit his employ and stayed on as the waitress at the inn. She has recently begun an affair with the stable boy, Je-Ton.



## LAO CHI

### Attributes

DEX (18): 7      STR (13): 6      TOU (14): 6  
PER (13): 6      WIL (8): 4      CHA (11): 5

### Characteristics

**Initiative:** 6      **Physical Defense:** 11  
**Physical Armor:** 6      **Spell Defense:** 7  
**Mystic Armor:** 0      **Social Defense:** 7  
**Death:** 63      **Recovery Tests:** 3  
**Unconsciousness:** 49      **Knockdown:** 6\*  
**Wound Threshold:** 10      **Movement:** 6

### Karma Points: 15/15

\* Lao Chi knows the Wound Balance talent

### Warrior Talents

Acrobatic Strike (3): 10  
Anticipate Blow <sup>D</sup> (3): 9  
Avoid Blow <sup>D</sup> (4): 11  
Durability [9/7] (3): 3  
Karma Ritual <sup>D</sup> (3): 3  
Melee Weapons <sup>D</sup> (4): 11  
Picking Pockets <sup>V</sup> (2): 9  
Silent Walk <sup>V</sup> (2): 9  
Tiger Spring (3): 3  
Unarmed Combat <sup>D</sup> (3): 10  
Versatility (2): 2  
Wood Skin <sup>D</sup> (3): 9  
Wound Balance <sup>D</sup> (3): 9

<sup>D</sup> Discipline Talent (The adept may spend Karma on this Talent)

<sup>V</sup> *Italicized* Talents Require Karma. (Except when also a Discipline Talent)

<sup>V</sup> Learned through Versatility talent



**Skills**

Acting<sup>A</sup> (2): 7  
 Climbing (2): 9  
 Golden Desert Region<sup>K</sup> (2): 8  
 Jo'he Ruins<sup>K</sup> (2): 8  
 Kur Culture<sup>K</sup> (2): 8  
 Read/Write Language (1): 7–(Cathayan)  
 Red Sands Tribe<sup>K</sup> (2): 8  
 Speak Language (1): 7–(Cathayan)  
 Surprise Strike (2): 8  
 Throwing Weapons (2): 9  
 Wilderness Survival (2): 8

<sup>A</sup> Artisan Skill; <sup>K</sup> Knowledge Skill

**Armor**

**Hardened Vest** (Phys 3), **Footman's Shield** (Phys 3; Init 1; Deflect 2/0; Shatter 17)

**Weapons**

**Saber** (Forged +1; Damage 12), **Dagger** (Damage 8; Range 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes),  
**Short Spear** (Damage 10; Range 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes)

**Equipment**

Belt Pouch, Climbing Kit, Favor of the Serpent Potion, Quiet–Fingers Gloves, Silk Slippers of Mi Ji, Traveler's Garb, Vitality of the Boar Potion

**Loot**

50 gold pieces

**Legend Award**

Third Circle

**Notes**

As a human, Lao Chi possesses the Versatility racial ability. Lao Chi has used the Versatility talent to learn the Picking Pockets and Silent Walk talents.

**Warrior Abilities**

Second Circle: +1 Physical Defense

**Commentary**

Lao Chi is a young, hotheaded human Kur from the Red Sands tribe, from which he was banished for a year for stealing. He has been on his own for a little over three months, surviving mainly by his wits. He misses his tribe terribly but has decided to leave the Golden Desert for the remainder of his banishment. The inn amongst the ruins of Jo'he is one of his last stops before leaving via the western trade route.

**HONG HUA****Attributes**

DEX (18): 7      STR (12): 5      TOU (9): 4  
 PER (18): 7      WIL (12): 5      CHA (13): 6

**Characteristics**

Initiative: 6      Physical Defense: 11  
 Physical Armor: 6      Spell Defense: 10  
 Mystic Armor: 1      Social Defense: 7  
 Death: 48      Recovery Tests: 2  
 Unconsciousness: 36      Knockdown: 5  
 Wound Threshold: 7      Movement: 7  
 Karma Points: 12/12

**Scout Talents**

Climbing<sup>D</sup> (3): 10  
 Durability [6/5] (3): 3  
 Karma Ritual<sup>D</sup> (3): 3

Melee Weapons (4): 11  
 Navigation<sup>D</sup> (3): 10  
 Search<sup>D</sup> (3): 10  
 Silent Walk (3): 10  
 Speak Language<sup>D</sup> (3): 10–(Gar)  
 Tracking<sup>D</sup> (4): 11  
 Wilderness Survival<sup>D</sup> (3): 10

<sup>D</sup> Discipline Talent (The adept may spend Karma on this Talent)  
*Italicized Talents Require Karma. (Except when also a Discipline Talent)*

**Skills**

Avoid Blow (2): 9  
 Golden Desert Region<sup>K</sup> (2): 9  
 Kur Culture<sup>K</sup> (2): 9  
 Hunting (2): 9  
 Maneuver (2): 9  
 Read/Write Language (1): 8–(Cathayan)  
 Rune Carving<sup>A</sup> (2): 8  
 Speak Language (1): 8–(Cathayan)  
 Sprint (2): 2  
 Throwing Weapons (2): 9  
 Winged Scorpion Tribe<sup>K</sup> (2): 9

<sup>A</sup> Artisan Skill; <sup>K</sup> Knowledge Skill

**Armor**

**Hardened Vest** (Phys 3), **Footman's Shield** (Phys 3; Init 1; Deflect 2/0; Shatter 17)

**Weapons**

**Saber** (Forged +1; Damage 11), **Dagger** (Damage 7; Range 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes),  
 2 × **Willow Leaf Throwing Darts** (Damage 6; Range 24–48 yards/12–24 hexes)

**Equipment**

Belt Pouch, Carving Tools, Climbing Kit, Favor of the Serpent Potion, Mapmaking Tools, Navigation Charts in Map/Scroll Case, Silk Slippers of Mi Ji, Traveler's Garb, Vitality of the Boar Potion, Writing Kit

**Loot**

30 gold pieces

**Legend Award**

Third Circle

**Notes**

As an elf, Lao Chi possesses the Low–Light Vision racial ability.

**Scout Abilities**

Second Circle: +1 Physical Defense

**Commentary**

Hong Hua is an elfen female Kur of the Winged Scorpion tribe. She, along with her companion, Bao De, is scouting ahead for their tribe, which is about a week behind them. Hong Hua is tall for a Cathayan, standing five feet and eight inches, with braided black hair and brown eyes.  
 Hong Hua is a Third Circle Scout adept.

**BAO DE****Attributes**

DEX (14): 6      STR (16): 7      TOU (15): 6  
 PER (11): 5      WIL (11): 5      CHA (12): 5

**Characteristics**

Initiative: 5      Physical Defense: 9  
 Physical Armor: 6      Spell Defense: 7  
 Mystic Armor: 1      Social Defense: 7  
 Death: 56      Recovery Tests: 3  
 Unconsciousness: 44      Knockdown: 7  
 Wound Threshold: 10      Movement: 6  
 Karma Points: 10/10

**Warrior Talents**

Acrobatic Strike (2): 8  
 Anticipate Blow<sup>D</sup> (2): 7  
 Avoid Blow<sup>D</sup> (2): 8  
 Durability [9/7] (2): 2  
 Karma Ritual<sup>D</sup> (2): 2  
 Melee Weapons<sup>D</sup> (3): 9  
 Silent Walk<sup>V</sup> (1): 7  
 Unarmed Combat<sup>D</sup> (3): 9  
 Versatility (1): 1  
 Wood Skin<sup>D</sup> (2): 8

<sup>D</sup> Discipline Talent (The adept may spend Karma on this Talent)  
*Italicized Talents Require Karma. (Except when also a Discipline Talent)*

<sup>V</sup> Learned through the Versatility talent





#### Skills

Climbing (2): 8  
 Golden Desert Region <sup>K</sup> (2): 7  
 Kur Culture <sup>K</sup> (2): 7  
 Read/Write Language (1): 6–(Cathayan)  
 Speak Language (1): 6–(Cathayan)  
 Throwing Weapons (2): 8  
 Weapon Rune Carving <sup>A</sup> (1): 6  
 Wilderness Survival (2): 7  
 Winged Scorpion Tribe <sup>K</sup> (2): 7  
<sup>A</sup> Artisan Skill; <sup>K</sup> Knowledge Skill

#### Armor

**Hardened Vest** (Phys 3), **Footman's Shield** (Phys 3; Init 1; Deflect 2/0; Shatter 17)

#### Weapons

**Saber** (Forged +1; Damage 13), **Dagger** (Damage 9; Range 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes),  
 2 × **Short Spears** (Damage 11; Range 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes)

#### Equipment

Carving Tools, Climbing Kit, Favor of the Serpent Potion, Silk Slippers of Mi Ji, Traveler's Garb

#### Loot

20 gold pieces

#### Legend Award

Second Circle

#### Notes

As a human, Bao De possesses the Versatility racial ability. Bao De has used the Versatility talent to learn the Silent Walk talent.

#### Warrior Abilities

Second Circle: +1 Physical Defense

#### Commentary

The companion of Hong Hua, Bao De is a young human Kur of the Winged Scorpion tribe. He is in love with Hong Hua but has yet to prove himself worthy of being her husband. Bao De is a Second Circle Warrior adept.

## DONG-HU

#### Attributes

DEX (16): 7      STR (16): 7      TOU (14): 6  
 PER (15): 6      WIL (9): 4      CHA (11): 5

#### Characteristics

**Initiative:** 7      **Physical Defense:** 10  
**Physical Armor:** 3      **Spell Defense:** 8  
**Mystic Armor:** 0      **Social Defense:** 7  
**Death:** 54      **Recovery Tests:** 3  
**Unconsciousness:** 43      **Knockdown:** 7  
**Wound Threshold:** 10      **Movement:** 6  
**Karma Points:** 15/15

#### Thief Talents (Knacks)

Detect Trap <sup>D</sup> (3): 9  
 Disarm Trap <sup>D</sup> (3): 10  
 Durability [6/5] (3): 3  
 Karma Ritual <sup>D</sup> (3): 3

Lock Picking <sup>D</sup> (3): 10  
 Melee Weapons (4): 11  
 Picking Pockets <sup>D</sup> (3): 10  
 Silent Walk <sup>D</sup> (4): 11 (Shadow Hide)  
 Surprise Strike (3): 10

Trap Initiative <sup>D</sup> (3): 10

<sup>D</sup> Discipline Talent (The adept may spend Karma on this Talent)

*Italicized Talents Require Karma. (Except when also a Discipline Talent)*

#### Skills

Acting <sup>A</sup> (2): 7  
 Arcane Mutterings (2): 7  
 Avoid Blow (2): 9  
 Golden Desert Region <sup>K</sup> (2): 8  
 Haggle (2): 7  
 Jo'he Ruins <sup>K</sup> (2): 8  
 Read/Write Language (1): 7–(Cathayan)  
 Speak Language (1): 7–(Cathayan)  
<sup>A</sup> Artisan Skill; <sup>K</sup> Knowledge Skill

#### Armor

**Hardened Vest** (Phys 3)

#### Weapons

**Saber** (Forged +1; Damage 13), **Dagger** (Damage 9; Range 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes)

#### Equipment

Climbing Kit, Favor of the Serpent Potion, Quiet-Fingers Gloves, Quiet Pouch, Silk Slippers of Mi Ji, Traveler's Garb, Vitality of the Boar Potion

#### Loot

90 gold pieces

#### Legend Award

Third Circle

#### Notes

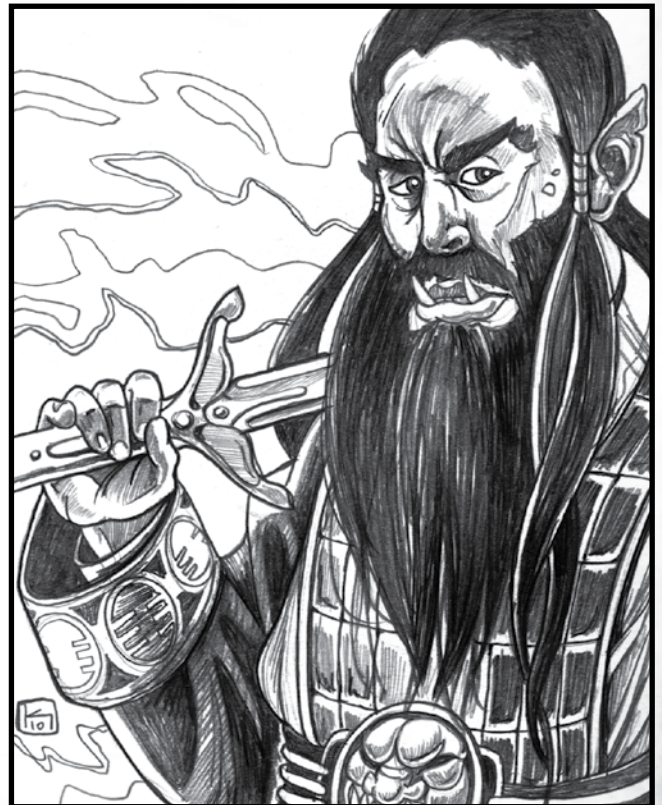
As an ork, Dong Hua possesses the Gahad and Low-Light Vision racial abilities.

#### Thief Abilities

Second Circle: +1 Physical Defense

#### Commentary

Dong-Hu is a male ork, a loner, and a Third Circle Thief. He wears a long beard to help hide his face, and everything about his body language says that he wants to be left alone. Dong-Hu's gahad is triggered when his solitude is interrupted in any way.





## WENG PAN

### Attributes

DEX (15): 6      STR (11): 5      TOU (10): 5  
PER (15): 6      WIL (11): 5      CHA (16): 7

### Characteristics

Initiative: 6      Physical Defense: 8  
Physical Armor: 2      Spell Defense: 8  
Mystic Armor: 1      Social Defense: 9  
Death: 31      Recovery Tests: 2  
Unconsciousness: 22      Knockdown: 5  
Wound Threshold: 8      Movement: 6

### Skills

Cathayan Trade Routes<sup>K</sup> (2): 8  
Conversation (1): 8  
For Dei Region<sup>K</sup> (2): 8  
Golden Desert Region<sup>K</sup> (2): 8  
Haggle (4): 11  
Indrisan Trade Routes<sup>K</sup> (1): 7  
Jo'he Ruins<sup>K</sup> (2): 8  
Melee Weapons (2): 8  
Negotiation<sup>K</sup> (2): 8  
Read/Write Language (1): 7—(Cathayan)  
Shen Xiou's Embrace<sup>K</sup> (2): 8  
Speak Language (3): 9—(Cathayan, Indrisan, Theran)  
Streetwise (2): 8  
Storytelling<sup>A</sup> (1): 8  
Throwing Weapons (1): 7  
Unarmed Combat (2): 8

<sup>A</sup> Artisan Skill; <sup>K</sup> Knowledge Skill

### Armor

Coat of Cloth (Phys 2)

### Weapons

Short Saber (Damage 9), Dagger (Damage 7; Range 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes)

### Equipment

Quiet Pouch, Wealthy Traveler's Garb

### Loot

100 gold pieces

### Legend Award

First Circle

### Commentary

Weng Pan is a human merchant of For Dei. He is on his way back from the Theran province of Indrisa and is heading to Shen Xiou's Embrace (see *Places of Legend and Peril* on p. 62), where he will await his cargo, which is estimated to arrive two weeks after he does. He has very little wealth on him (a mere 100 gold), having spent most of it in Indrisa.

## JIN'MAN

### Attributes

DEX (13): 6      STR (17): 7      TOU (16): 7  
PER (13): 6      WIL (8): 4      CHA (10): 5

### Characteristics

Initiative: 3      Physical Defense: 7  
Physical Armor: 8      Spell Defense: 7  
Mystic Armor: 0      Social Defense: 6  
Death: 39      Recovery Tests: 3  
Unconsciousness: 31      Knockdown: 7\*  
Wound Threshold: 11      Movement: 6

\* Jin'Man knows the Wound Balance skill

### Skills

For Dei Military Organization<sup>K</sup> (2): 8  
Golden Desert Region<sup>K</sup> (2): 8  
Maneuver (2): 8  
Melee Weapons (5): 11  
Parry (2): 8  
Read/Write Language (1): 7—(Cathayan)  
Shen Xiou's Embrace<sup>K</sup> (2): 8  
Speak Language (1): 7—(Cathayan)  
Tactics (2): 8  
Throwing Weapons (2): 8

Unarmed Combat (2): 8  
Weapon Rune Carving<sup>A</sup> (1): 6  
Wound Balance (2): 9

<sup>A</sup> Artisan Skill; <sup>K</sup> Knowledge Skill

### Armor

Plated Vest (Phys 5; Init 2), Footman's Shield (Phys 3; Init 1; Deflect 2/0; Shatter 17)

### Weapons

Saber (Damage 12), 2 × Daggers (Damage 9; Range 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes), 2 × Short Spears (Damage 11; Range 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes)

### Equipment

Belt Pouch, Carving Tools, Traveler's Garb

### Loot

30 gold pieces

### Legend Award

Second Circle

### Commentary

Jin'Man, a human male, is a mercenary guard of Weng Pan. Both Jin'Man and Yong were soldiers in For Dei's army when they deserted just over a year ago. They sold their services as mercenaries and have been under the employ of Weng Pan since.



## YONG

### Attributes

DEX (13): 6      STR (18): 7      TOU (20): 8  
PER (13): 6      WIL (8): 4      CHA (8): 4

### Characteristics

Initiative: 3      Physical Defense: 7  
Physical Armor: 8      Spell Defense: 7  
Mystic Armor: 0      Social Defense: 5  
Death: 44      Recovery Tests: 4  
Unconsciousness: 36      Knockdown: 7\*  
Wound Threshold: 13      Movement: 5

\* Yong knows the Wound Balance skill

### Skills

For Dei Military Organization<sup>K</sup> (2): 8  
Golden Desert Region<sup>K</sup> (2): 8  
Maneuver (2): 8  
Melee Weapons (5): 11  
Parry (2): 8  
Read/Write Language (1): 7—(Cathayan)  
Search (2): 8  
Shen Xiou's Embrace<sup>K</sup> (2): 8  
Speak Language (1): 7—(Cathayan)  
Tactics (2): 8  
Throwing Weapons (2): 8  
Unarmed Combat (2): 8  
Weapon Rune Carving<sup>A</sup> (1): 5  
Wound Balance (2): 9

<sup>A</sup> Artisan Skill; <sup>K</sup> Knowledge Skill



#### Armor

**Plated Vest** (Phys 5; Init 2), **Footman's Shield** (Phys 3; Init 1; Deflect 2/0; Shatter 17)

#### Weapons

**Saber** (Damage 12), 2 × **Daggers** (Damage 9; Range 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes),  
2 × **Short Spears** (Damage 11; Range 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes)

#### Equipment

Belt Pouch, Carving Tools, Traveler's Garb

#### Loot

40 gold pieces

#### Legend Award

Second Circle

#### Notes

As a dwarf, Yong possesses the Heat Sight racial ability.

#### Commentary

Yong, a dwarf male, is a mercenary guard of Weng Pan. Both Yong and Jin'Man were soldiers in For Dei's army when they deserted just over a year ago. They sold their services as mercenaries and have been under the employ of Weng Pan since.

## TARRO (SLIPSHADE HORROR)

#### Attributes

DEX: 11      STR: 8      TOU: 11  
PER: 11      WIL: 12      CHA: 12

#### Characteristics

|                            |                                        |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| <b>Initiative:</b> 13      | <b>Physical Defense:</b> 10 (see text) |
| <b>Actions:</b> 2          | <b>Spell Defense:</b> 11 (see text)    |
| <b>Attack (2):</b> 13      | <b>Social Defense:</b> 13              |
| <b>Damage:</b>             | <b>Physical Armor:</b> 7               |
| Unarmed (2): 10            | <b>Mystic Armor:</b> 8                 |
| <b>Death:</b> 73           | <b>Recovery Tests:</b> 5               |
| <b>Unconsciousness:</b> 64 | <b>Knockdown:</b> 8                    |
| <b>Wound Threshold:</b> 17 | <b>Movement:</b> 8                     |
| <b>Karma Points:</b> 15/15 | <b>Karma Step:</b> 4                   |

#### Powers

**Animate Dead (2):** 14, **Durability (2):** Switch Form, **Terror (2):** 14

#### Legend Award

Fourth Circle (Group)

#### Commentary

Tarro, one of a group of Horrors called slipshades, has long existed in the shadows of the world, dreaming its dark dreams. The Horror has claimed over a dozen victims since first coming to the ruins of Jo'he, always one at a time. However, the night the player characters arrive, Tarro's gluttony finally gets the better of the Horror, and Tarro decides that none of the patrons will be leaving alive.

#### Rules

Because they are dim and shadowy, two-dimensional slipshades gain a +4 bonus, and three-dimensional slipshades gain a +2 bonus, to both their Physical and Spell Defenses while in dim and shadowy conditions. Two-dimensional slipshades are impossible to see when viewed in profile.

**Switch Form:** Slipshades can switch from three- to two-dimensional form or vice versa instantaneously, as often as they wish. In two-dimensional form, the slipshade can elongate itself and pass through a crack of any width whatsoever, as long as the opening is at least six inches long. The slipshade can move normally by sliding along a wall, floor, ceiling or the ground. If moving upright across an open area while in two-dimensional form, the slipshade's speed is reduced by half and its movement acquires an eerie, unsteady, undulating quality. Slipshades cannot attack while in two-dimensional form, but take damage normally. In three-dimensional form, slipshades can move normally across open territory but cannot slide up walls or across ceilings.





# THE FIVE KINGDOMS

For centuries, the lands of the west have been enthralled by tales about the mystical province of Cathay. Far to the East, this mysterious place has always been a symbol of intrigue and wonder. Now, the door to the East is open.

From the lightning-born storm children, to the renowned Xan monks, Cathay's secrets can finally be explored by those brave enough to venture into this troubled, war-torn realm.

The **Cathay: The Five Kingdoms Gamemaster's Guide** is a sourcebook for **Earthdawn Third Edition**, containing everything a gamemaster needs for running adventures in the Five Kingdoms of Cathay— extensive setting material, guidelines for creating adventures and campaigns, information on creatures, dragons, Horrors, spirits, magical treasures, and much more!

Requires use of the **Earthdawn Player's and Gamemaster's Guides**.

**FASA**  
CORPORATION

**FLAMING COBRA**

**RedBrick**

[www.earthdawn.com](http://www.earthdawn.com)

ISBN 978-1-907702-07-5



9 781907 702075

US\$34.99