

WIND FROM THE EAST



A SOURCEBOOK FOR VAMPIRE: THE DARK AGES®



WIND FROM THE EAST



BY JAMES KILEY

EXTRA
2000



Word has come to me that you
have taken our servants under
your protection. Cease harbor-
ing them, or you will make of me
an enemy because of them. They,
who have no houses and dwell in
tents, will find it easy to escape.
But you who dwell in houses within
towns — how can you escape me?

— Batu Khan, in a letter to King
Bela IV of Hungary, 1240

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Dedicated to Jim and Jane Kiley, who probably won't get it.

WIND FROM THE EAST

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Deliberate Encounter

I stand on the shore of the great Volga. Tonight is beautiful and clear, and if I watch the river's surface carefully, I can see bright stars and the full moon reflected back at me. I sniff at the air, hoping the water's clean scent will empty my nose. I do not need the air, of course, but the orifices in one's body become stagnant and clogged over time if they are not occasionally emptied. I am disappointed to find that I inhale only a noseful of Volgar.

The great city - if such a term belongs to a foul blemish on the plain like Volgar - stands to the southwest, a short distance downstream. Its walls are stone, and high; it would take me a fair while to climb them safely, I can tell. I will not need to climb them to get inside, however. I stand, and glance at my horse, a beautiful brown steppe pony who waters herself just downstream. Without a word she trots to me. I mount up, and I direct the mare toward the city's closed gate.

I could not survive as a vampire on the steppe if I craved constant companionship, but for just this moment, I admit to myself that I would prefer it if a few allies were nearby. I sometimes travel with a small group of vampires; all of us are Mongols, and we have remained on good terms for more than a mortal's lifetime. This is because we see each other so infrequently.

My companions and I never tire of the stories of vampires of the Far West; we have set out to Bolgar ahead of the Great Khan's armies in the hopes of encountering one before his city catches fire, as it surely will when the mortal army arrives. I volunteered to enter the city. Unlike the Bulgars, I am no Muslim; I put my faith in Tengri above and Itügen below. But my companions tell me that I look enough like a Bulgar that I might pass through the city unnoticed. And not all Bulgars are devout.

The sun set only a few hours ago; mortals still walk the streets here and there, though street-side merchants have already folded up their carts and headed home. Some bear torches; I keep my distance. The few of my brethren who have entered cities like Bolgar in the past assure me that they are fairly crawling with vampires if one knows where to look. But I *don't* know where to look.

My inability to see the horizon begins to scratch at the back of my mind as an unpleasant need to urinate did when I was alive. I dismount from the horse into moist excrement. Not for the last time do I thank Tengri and Itügen that I no longer breathe reflexively; I do not smell the fetid surroundings unless I choose to. I am a creature of the open plain; I navigate by the sky, the horizon and miles-distant landmarks. It takes me just a short time to get thoroughly lost here.

I trudge down a perilously narrow street; the mare obediently follows. A young man and his choice for the night cross the road ahead of me, no doubt to avoid walking the same side as I. He looks at me and mutters something in his mishmash language to his woman, who glances slyly toward me and giggles at the man's joke. I stop, resignedly. I was hungry anyway. I walk toward the couple; the man turns to face me, putting on a show for the woman. To his credit, he is half a head taller than I am. But he is soft. Even pink.

"I am sorry," I say clearly in the Turkic tongue they use here, "but I did not understand what you said." He mutters something in response. I don't know what, or care. The fact that this man stands his ground against me is impressive enough. I put a hand on the arm of his clean garment, grabbing

his left biceps in my right hand. I have not bathed since my death. We do not, when we can avoid it. I leave a filthy smear across the arm of the man's tunic. "I am sorry," I repeat, "I do not understand."

He says something panicky; his woman whimpers and looks around for someone to help them. The scent of the blood in him scratches the itch that the city's foulness put into me earlier. "I'm sorry, I do not understand," I say for the last time, no doubt seeming every bit the violent, pig-headed barbarian. I complete the image for his girlfriend by planting my foot in the man's midsection and pulling his left arm until I hear the wet pop of it dislocating. He screams; she runs; I feed. I don't stop until he dies; I pull my mouth from his dry left wrist, wipe my mouth on his sleeve, and drop the corpse. I look at the mare — quiet, obedient throughout this — and smile at her. I walk down the street, spying what looks to be a stable ahead. The mare follows.

I give the boy at the stable some money to take the horse for the next few nights. I impress upon him the importance of my horse's tending. I imagine that between my demeanor and the overlarge amount of money I gave him, the horse will get good care. And, of course, I will be back before dawn.

It turns out to be a very near thing, that last. I walk the streets of the city all night, hoping to encounter one of the vampires that I am told infest the place. Nothing. An hour before dawn I trek back in the direction of the stable, and I nearly fail to find it. With the sky lightening to pink and purple I find the stable, leap feet-first into the mare's stall, and enter the earth below.

* * *

I wake up and shake the dirt off. It occurs to me that vampires in walled cities have an advantage of sorts over those on the steppe; it takes the sun longer to rise above the crest of the wall in the morning, giving them a little extra time to find a spot of open soil to sleep on. I imagine that they need it with the lack of undeveloped dirt in the city.

The mare is in good shape so far; the stableboy kept her watered, fed and even brushed during the day. Good that he fed her; with the amount of vampire blood mixed into hers, she's liable to try a bit of stableboy next time she's hungry. I leave, shaking my head to get a few tenacious dirt clods out of my hair.

Tonight I lurk nearer to the city's gates; things were rowdier here last night than they were elsewhere, but I didn't stay. It occurs to me now that a vampire would be likely to lurk in a place where

travelers congregate. I find an inn and slip inside. I am not surprised to find foreigners and outlanders — Qipchaqs and Russians — enjoying alcohol inside, though I have no doubt that such things are illegal for the locals. I sit in the corner, not far from a table full of Qipchaqs. In this way the room writes me off as just another barbarian; I give the man some coin for a drink, which I do not touch. I watch and I wait.

Around midnight a grossly fat, somewhat pale man enters the inn; he looks around with a predator's gaze, and I'm sure I have my target. As he gets closer my hackles rise as a wolf's would; Tengri above only knows how much wolf's blood I've consumed in past years for that trait to appear. This bulbous creature is undoubtedly a western vampire. Hideous. I wonder if they are all that obese. I watch him pick a target, a drunken farmer, no doubt in the city to sell the fat of the land.

The fat one waits for the farmer to leave, then exits after him; he does not realize that I am right behind. If this vampire is hungry, then he will be desperate, and I can extract the information I need that much more quickly. I overtake him and stop in front of an alleyway. I smile.

"Into the alley," I say, clearly. His eyes widen, but he submits, stepping off the street and into shadow.

"You must be new to Bolgar," he says, his voice rich and deep. "I do not recognize you. Who created you?"

"Father Tengri, as he does all living things," I say, trying to sound nonchalant, "and Mother Itügen holds me in her arms every morning."

"In the arms... ah, you must be Gangrel," he says. I do not recognize the word.

"You may think that as you wish. How many creatures like you are in this city now?" I keep my tone blunt; I have no interest in parrying with this tick.

He smiles, though he keeps his fangs hidden. "Ah, that would be a matter for Prince Hasan. I am

but a minor functionary, his favored poet. Surely you have heard of Prince Hasan?"

"I do not care about the mortal ruler of this place. How many blood-drinkers? Where do they meet?"

He pauses a moment, rather deliberately taking a deep breath. "Of course," he says, "the mortal ruler of Bolgar is of no concern to you. You must ride with the nomads that we hear are coming this way from the far east. Have you any influence over them? I myself would pay richly to keep them from sacking Bolgar as they did Samarkand."

I let my anger seethe out slowly, in the form of talons from my fingertips. I make sure my counterpart can see them. "You do not answer my questions, and you twist them to get your own information. You try my patience."

"Surely, in the end, we are creatures cut from the same cloth," the corpulent monster across from me suggests. Clearly he is not going to answer my questions without my revealing too many secrets of the Anda, and he is more talented at extracting information in casual conversation than I am myself. I do not have time for this.

I raise my knee up into his crotch; though surely any flesh there has long since atrophied, he does reflexively curl around the blow. With fingers extended, I drive my left hand into the man's fleshy stomach while grabbing his right ear with my right hand. "Now," I whisper, "you will answer my questions."

* * *

I steal my way out of the city in the hours before dawn, the fire already starting to spread from the stable where I left the fat one. There is much to think about because of his panicked answers. Sons of a murderous farmer? I can only hope that my companions can make more of this knowledge than I can. The steppe calls out to me as I run past a short train of people fleeing the fire.

I sprint through an open gate and am free.







Introduction: 21 Starlit Hemisphere

Solitudinem faciunt, et pacem appellant.
(They make a desolation, and call it peace)
—Tacitus, *Agricola*

Wave after wave of barbarians have struck into Europe's heart from the steppe of western Asia. Ostrogoths sacked the Roman Empire; the Huns crushed the Ostrogoths; the Avars conquered the Huns and so on. But for centuries, Europe has known safety from the hordes of the east: warlords in the Carpathians no longer watch the eastern horizon with a prayer on their lips.

The silent warlords will soon begin to pray once more. The morning dawns; the children of Cain retreat to their daytime lairs, and a breeze picks up, gently gusting in from the steppe. In the distance, far across a barren plain, tribes of nomads coalesce into a great kingdom of barbarians. The wind picks up, and the warlords retreat behind stone walls. The Mongols rise.

A STARLIT HEMISPHERE

HORDES OF THE KHAN

Wind from the East explores the brief, explosive Mongol Empire and its impact across Europe and Asia. In so doing, it uncovers previously hidden elements in the World of Darkness and calls previously assumed facts into question. The suggested timeframe for a chronicle that uses this book is any time from around 1167 (the birth of Temujin, "Genghis Khan") to 1368 (the fall of the Mongols' Yuan Dynasty in China). Certainly the book has use in other time periods; the cultural notes regarding steppe nomads hold true much further back in history than 1167, and remnants of the Mongol Empire cling to life well into the 15th century. Nevertheless, the focus is on the medieval height of the Mongol era, when the nomads of the steppe shook the world.

At its height, the Mongol Empire is the largest single nation that history will ever see; within its borders are humans from most Eurasian cultures. Preying upon those humans, of course, are vampires, the cultural parasites of the World of Darkness, and nearly every Cainite clan has representatives within the Empire. Further east, in the lands of the Wan Kuei (whom Cainites call Cathayans if they even know of their existence), the Mongol Empire initially only takes up land within the domain of the Black Tortoise and White Tiger Courts. By the Empire's end, all of the Five August Courts that rule Asian vampires have territory under Mongol domination.

And that is not all. Clan Gangrel, that collection of nomadic and wandering childer of Caine, has long hidden its face from the Far East — the creatures that lurk there are too dangerous even for that hardened collection of renegades — but during the Mongol era, Clan Gangrel discovers a long-lost offshoot bloodline called the Anda. The temporal power of the Anda rises with the Mongol Empire's power, and, perhaps sadly, the bloodline's fate is tightly tied to the Great Khans. With the fall of the Mongol Yuan Dynasty in China, the Wan Kuei of the Middle Kingdom rise up and destroy the Anda in the Far East.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Wind from the East is a supplement for **Vampire: The Dark Ages**. Some of its contents also rely rather heavily on **Kindred of the East** and its historical supplement, **World of Darkness: Blood & Silk**. Neither of the latter two supplements are strictly

necessary to use **Wind from the East** in a purely European chronicle, but they will add another dimension to it.

Storytellers can use **Wind from the East** as a tool in several different chronicles. Those looking for a clue to the state of the lands of the far north in a **Blood & Silk** chronicle will find it here, as will those, correspondingly, whose **Vampire: The Dark Ages** troupes choose to head east onto the steppe, from Russia or the Islamic kingdoms of southwest Asia. Storytellers may wish to run chronicles focused on Mongol characters, either Cainites or Wan Kuei; the information herein supports either of those options. Many other alternatives exist: **Wind from the East** takes up nearly all of Asia and most of Europe, and contains details on eras from 1197 to 1388.

THEME

The primary theme of **Wind from the East** is the bright candle: that which burns twice as hot burns half as long. The Mongol Empire conquers more land than any other nation in the history of the world, but it only lasts 150 years. The Anda, Mongol Cainites, rise to stratospheric levels of power and influence within this empire, but are exterminated to the last with the fall of the Yuan Dynasty. Storytellers can subtly reinforce this theme in their games by presenting fantastically talented young characters who meet an unexpectedly early demise or the metaphors such as surprisingly hot, brief fires or intense but short thunderstorms.

MOOD

Stories that use elements of **Wind from the East** should be energetic. Even the most sedentary and hedonistic Mongol emperors in distant Shangdu never simply lay about waiting for the world to affect them. The Mongols are a people of action, and Mongol stories should be up-tempo. This doesn't necessarily mean they should be optimistic, however. Indeed, the Mongol Empire kills millions of its subjects and burns great cities as it expands; a chronicle set in western Asia in the Mongol age — laughingly called the *Pax Mongolica* by some — will see wave after wave of destruction. But unlike the aging and stagnant civilizations of Europe, the Mongol culture is vibrant and active even as it sacks and pillages.

CHAPTER BY CHAPTER

Chapter One: Empire of the World-Conqueror provides an account of the rise and ultimate fall of the Mongols, from their humble days around 1197 to the height of the Yuan Dynasty forged by Kublai Khan.

The nomads of the steppe ride through Asia, the Middle-East and Eastern Europe and almost conquer the world. The focus here is on the historical tapestry, but material on the activities of vampires and other night creatures brings you into the World of Darkness.

Chapter Two: Monsters on the Steppe examines the vampires who stalk the Mongol hordes. These include the rare Cainite bloodlines of the Anda and Wu Zao, as well as the Wan Kuei of the Black Tortoise Court.

Chapter Three: Gifts of the Sky and Earth contains all the "game speak" of **Wind from the East**. This includes new Traits for Mongol characters (Merits

and Flaws, Discipline powers and magical rites), guidelines for creating Mongol characters and tips on running Mongol chronicles.

Appendix: Khans of the Night features an array of characters, either Mongols themselves or touched by the nomads' rise. These include ready-to-play templates and more prominent characters for use in your chronicles.

LEXICON

The following is a short list of terms Mongol characters are likely to see and use; it also serves as a glossary for **Wind from the East**. Generally, a lone "q"

A PRIMER ON THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

Storytellers familiar only with the **Vampire: The Dark Ages** setting may be confused by some terms in the subsequent chapters. While the best description of these terms and the culture of the Eastern vampires can be found in **Kindred of the East** and **World of Darkness: Blood & Silk**, this quick overview should help readers without those resources at hand.

Eastern vampires are known as Wan Kuei, the Ten Thousand Demons. They do not Embrace mortals to make new vampires; instead, they are mortals damned to Hell for their actions in life who claw their way back to the physical world and into eternal unlife. They do not descend from Caine, nor do they know generations of separation from any progenitor. They are divided souls, even more than Cainites; while the childer of the First Murderer might fight a Beast, the P'o of a Wan Kuei has a voice and a mind of its own and at times takes over the creature's body.

Each Wan Kuei follows a Dharma, similar in many ways to Cainites' Viae, although Dharmic mastery takes thousands of years. Only the eldest and wisest Wan Kuei, called bodhisattvas, have achieved true enlightenment within their Dharma. There are five Dharmas: The Howl of the Devil-Tiger embraces the wickedness of the demon soul; The Song of the Shadow seeks out the mysteries of death and Yin energy; The Path of a Thousand Whispers reaches enlightenment through unending change; The Way of the Resplendent Crane master their P'o through honor; and The Dance of the Thrashing Dragon holds fast to the Yang energies of fire and life.

The newest, youngest Wan Kuei (those without any Dharma or much control over their actions) are called *chih-mei*; they can only receive sustenance from eating flesh. Those that make it out of the *chih-mei* stage (many do not) are known as disciples and, for the first fifty or sixty years of their unlives, get the tag "Running Monkeys" as they try to complete all the undone tasks of their mortal lives.

Like Cainites, Wan Kuei have Disciplines, but the two breeds cannot learn one another's abilities. The Wan Kuei can also perform magic rituals with a relatively small amount of training (compared to the demands of Cainite blood magic), and can enter the worlds of spirit without using a specific ritual.

The Five August Courts, the shadow kingdoms that rule the vampires of a given region of the Middle Kingdom (a term referring to China and its satellite states among supernatural creatures of the East), dominate the society of the Ten Thousand Demons. The Black Tortoise Court rules the north, including the Mongolian steppe, and is detailed in Chapter Two. The White Tiger Court rules the west, particularly north of the Himalayas. The Scarlet Phoenix Court rules the jungles of Southeast Asia. The Azure Dragon Court rules Nihon, Koryo and some of the eastern Chinese coast. The Yellow Emperor Court, supreme among all, rules the core of China. The courts (and the many local sub-courts) do not always get along and have been known to war.

The Wan Kuei, like Cainites, are monstrous and terrible night predators, but they face graver threats still. The lords of the Asian hells, the Yama Kings, try to corrupt those who have escaped them, and some give in. These creatures, whom Cainites would call infernalists, are known as *akuma* and hide among the courts, serving their hellish masters.

is pronounced much like the English hard-K sound; in this context, “g” generally refers to a full glottal stop, almost a swallowing sound; in a pinch it could use the same hard-K sound. Vowels tend to be somewhat flatter than English vowels.

anda: Literally “blood-brother”; a very strong bond of (supposedly) lifelong friendship and companionship between two Mongol men. For clarity’s sake the text uses “*anda* brother” and “*anda* bond” when referring to the relative and the relationship.

Anda: An offshoot of Clan Gangrel that makes its home among the Mongols and other steppe nomads.

arban: The smallest Mongol fighting force, consisting of ten men.

ayil: Physical camp.

baghatur: Valiant.

ger: Felt tent for a family group.

Golden Horde, the: The army Batu Khan leads into Europe in 1240. Note that this term is used in *Wind from the East* despite its ahistoricity — the armies won’t get that name for another decade or two. This is done purely for descriptive purposes. Characters in the setting should not use this term.

grut: Hardened cheese curd, made into a drink with hot water.

Itügen: Mongol goddess of the Earth.

jagun: Ten *arbans*; an army unit of 100 men.

kam: shaman

khagan: Great king, emperor.

khan: King.

kuriltai: A great gathering of Mongol lords, a war council or electoral gathering. The *Anda* vampires hold *kuriltai* to gather the unliving hidden among a group of Mongols and reach a decision.

kuriyen: Circle of *ger* as an encampment.

maikhan: Pastoral wool tent.

Middle Kingdom, the: Among mortals, China and its satellite states. Among the supernatural creatures of the world, the physical and spiritual realm around China that harbors the *Wan Kuei*.

minghan: Ten *jaguns*; an army unit of 1000 men.

Mongol: Specifically, one of the eight or nine large tribes who live on the steppe north of China. More generally, any member of one of the tribes subsumed by the Mongols after their war of conquest in the early 13th century.

nöker: Associate or comrade; among *Anda* vampires, this is the term commonly used for a neonate or ancilla loyal to an elder vampire.

noyan: Chief.

nutuq: Grazing lands.

oboq: Clan, smaller than *ulus* (*Temujin*’s is the *Borjigin*).

ordu: Camp area or territory; it is from this word that we get the English *horde*.

qasaq-tergen: Wheeled cart which often held the *ger* as the *ulus* moved from place to place.

qumis: Fermented mare’s milk, the Mongol “national drink.”

sechen: Wise.

Tatar: A major tribe of the steppe; the Mongols’ sworn enemies, Genghis Khan exterminates them to a man.

Tartar: A European epithet for the Mongols; a nickname given to the *Anda* bloodline by European vampires.

Tengri: Mongol god of the sky; more properly *Mongke Koke Tengri* (Eternal Blue Heaven).

tumen: Ten *minghans*; an army unit of 10,000 men.

ulus: Tribe or small nation — typically a camp, a subdivision of the greater Mongol tribe. Note that the greater Mongol tribe is separate from the other major tribes such as the *Tatars*.

Wan Kuei: The Ten Thousand Demons. The vampires of Asia, unrelated to *Cainites*; sometimes called “*Cathayans*.”

wu: Corpse family; the smallest group of *Wan Kuei*, typically five of the *Hungry Dead*.

Wu Zao: *Cainites* of the line of *Saulot* (called *Zao-lat*) in the Far East.

Xiong Ren: Literally, “ferocious people”; the shapechangers of the Middle Kingdom.

yasun: Subclan, smaller than *oboq* (*Temujin*’s is the *Kiyat*).

yuan: Origin, original, or primal; the Mongol dynasty in China is called the *Yuan Dynasty* because it is supposedly the beginning of a new era.

zhongren: Go-between. In the Court of the Black Tortoise, a *zhongren* is traditionally used to ask a favor of a fellow vampire. These go-betweens have great social power in the court.

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FILM

Aleksandr Nevsky (1938) While the film does not cover the Mongol invasion of Russia directly, it does give a good idea of what 13th century Russia was like. Aleksandr Nevsky, Prince of Novgorod, was in history a favored subject of Batu Khan's Golden Horde.

Mulan (1998) The World of Darkness fan in you may balk at this Disney animated film, but many elements are useful and evocative. For proper results as they pertain to **Wind from the East**, the viewer must root for the Huns (and forget about singing dragon spirits).

WORLD WIDE WEB

Special mention must be made of Paul Halsall's spectacular *Internet Medieval Sourcebook*, which should be available at <http://www.fordham.edu/phalsall/sbook.html>. Every **Vampire: The Dark Ages** Storyteller should avail himself of the rich set of links and documents available on this site.



A STARLIT HEMISPHERE





Chapter One: Empire of the World-Conqueror

In daylight, watch with the vigilance
of an old wolf, at night with the eyes of
the raven. In battle, fall upon the enemy
like a falcon.

— Genghis Khan, date unknown

EMPIRE OF THE WORLD-CONQUEROR

NOMADS OF THE EAST

The Mongol tribe sprung up along the Onon River, in northeastern Asia on the high, flat Mongolian Plateau. This semi-arid pastureland is good for herding and hunting but not particularly well-suited for farming, and the Mongols share it with at least half a dozen major tribes, and countless small tribes and camps. While their tribe will come to be the greatest of all, it is hardly the first the ride this region. Indeed, the nomadic people of the Asian plain have led straightforward, if bloody, lives since the days when Scythian horsemen harassed Alexander the Great's armies. They have long spread far and wide across the continent; the Mongol tribe and its peers in central Asia roam spaces thousands of miles removed from ancient Scythia (in modern Turkestan). Certain customs remain unchanging, but the nomad adapts to his time and place.

The traditional image of the hunter-horseman riding across the wild plain, hunting food from day to day, is itself inaccurate. The nomad tribes *do* ride the steppe, but mostly as pastoral herders; they keep herds of sheep and horses and travel endlessly to the next good pasture. And they tend to move along well-known paths; random wandering is a sure way for herd animals to start dying, and even if it were not, the human tendency to lay claim to territory is very real among the Mongols and their associated tribes. That rich nearby pasture surely belongs to another *oboq*, and to move into its land is to invite a war.

Not that life is static. The relative level of dominance of minor tribes changes from year to year, as old chieftains die, young ones take over, major tribes splinter, and so on. And no one would dare describe a nomad's daily life as boring. A German serf might spend days plowing a vast field or repairing a manor house; *that* is monotonous and dreary. A barbarian of the steppe rises with the sun and spends the day in the saddle, roaming where herd and hunt take the camp. Dinner depends not on the fertility of a lord's soil, but rather on the stamina of his horse and his own skill with the bow. On a bad day, he might share a small kill with his tribesmen; on a great day, he will kill more than he and his *oboq* can fit in their bellies. This is the proper way of things: The nomads of the east pay fealty and loyalty to a chief, but owe the fruits of their labor to no man.

TRIBES AND CLANS

There are around a dozen *ulus* at any time; these are the great tribes, the nomad nations. The greatest of these in 1197 is the Tatar. By contrast, the Mongol *ulus* is relatively small and has little temporal power. A *khagan*, whose power roughly corresponds to a king's, rules the tribe. Each *ulus* is broken up into several *oboq*, clans or camps. Most often, one *oboq* is the ruling clan of its *ulus*, while the others are subordinate to it. A khan rules an *oboq*; the khan of the greatest *oboq* is *khagan* to his clan's *ulus*. The role of khan is not entirely hereditary. While it is true that great men often have great sons, Mongols support the strongest and best suited to lead. Regardless of his lineage, a weak or timid man cannot be khan.

In simplest terms, clans are organized along kinship lines. But that simple statement does not do justice to the complexity of steppe life. Most nomads take their wives from other clans or other tribes — sometimes by arranged marriage and other times by force. Particularly wealthy steppe riders might have two or more wives, but a man's first wife wields the most power, for it is her children who stand to inherit his possessions and, spirits willing, his title.

An individual man is not forced to remain part of a single *oboq* or even *ulus* throughout his life. Should a particularly strong or honorable leader rise up, a nomad may go to that man and declare his fealty; if the leader will have him, the new follower becomes the leader's *nöker*, a term meaning "associate" or "comrade." Charismatic leaders often attract many *nöker*, and the relationship, while not as strong as the *anda* bond of blood-brotherhood, is beneficial to both parties. The *nöker* attach themselves to a rising star, and the leader gains a circle of trustworthy and strong followers. The *nöker* relationship goes both ways; the leader must be worthy of the trust placed in him or he is sure to lose it. During time of war, the bond is somewhat more autocratic; in a crisis, the khan's word is law, and even a trusted *nöker* can face death for insubordination.

LEGENDARY ROOTS

There is no written alphabet among the steppe nomads nor their near cousins in the taiga to the north. It is only later, with the conquest of the Turkic nations to the west and China to the south, that the Mongols acquire any alphabet. Thus, the oral tradition carries Mongol history from storyteller to listeners.

These legends tell of the most ancient ancestors of the Mongol tribe: a blue-gray wolf and his wife, a fallow deer. They had their first child, the human Batachikhan, near the mouth of the Onon River, in

sight of Mount Burkhan Khaldun. In the ninth generation descended from Batachikhan were two brothers, Duua the Blind and Dobun the Clever.

Dobun's wife, Alan the Fair, was one of the most beautiful women in the Mongol tribe's history. Dobun and Alan had two sons, and after Dobun's death Alan had three more sons. Alan's eldest two sons believed that their younger brothers must be the sons of Alan's servant man, but she told all of them that Tengri, the God of Heaven, had come down and granted her those three strong sons himself from shafts of sunlight. The greatest of Alan's five sons was the youngest, Bodonchar the Fool, but each of those men founded one of the *oboq*, the clans within the Mongol tribe. Bodonchar founded the Borijigin, greatest of the Mongol *oboq*, from which Yesugei the Brave and his son Temujin descend.

VAMPIRIC CLAIMS

The vampires who hunt among the Mongols and other steppe nomads draw parallels between mortal legends and their own. Those of the Anda bloodline astutely note the similarity between the name Dobun and that of their most ancient founder, Dobrul the Brave. They claim that they have been the dark companions of the Mongols from the first days of the tribe. Other vampires note that all the stories describe Duua the Blind as having a third eye in the middle of his forehead — one so sensitive that Duua could see a place three days' hard ride away. To the Wu Zao, the Asian childer of the Saulot, the third eye is a clear sign of their progenitor's passage. Some claim that Duua may even have been Zaozei, one of Saulot's Asian childer and a founder of their line. But the third eye is also present among the Wan Kuei and the ancestors of the Black Tortoise Court claim that they had something to do with the Mongols.

The truth is unclear, but the claims of direct shepherding come about only after the Mongols rise to power across the region and the world. They reflect a desire to control the mortals by co-opting their history. The legends of Dobrul and Duua clearly reflect long contact between the Mongols and the supernatural world, but not long service.

DAYS AND NIGHTS ON THE STEPPE

At its core, the life of the pastoral nomad is a straightforward one. Care for your herd or hunt for

your food. Don't put down roots. Defend your family first, tribe second. Marry outside the clan. Learn to tell a good story. Drink and celebrate in the good times. Raid the farmers' lands in the bad times.

Steppe tribes depend on civilized peoples for many things; they trade with cities, bringing in herds, wool or products from the hunt. They need the cities' production, as well; metal implements, pottery and other fine crafts are difficult to come by in the wild, and they value luxury items such as fine-woven cloth, gold and jewels.

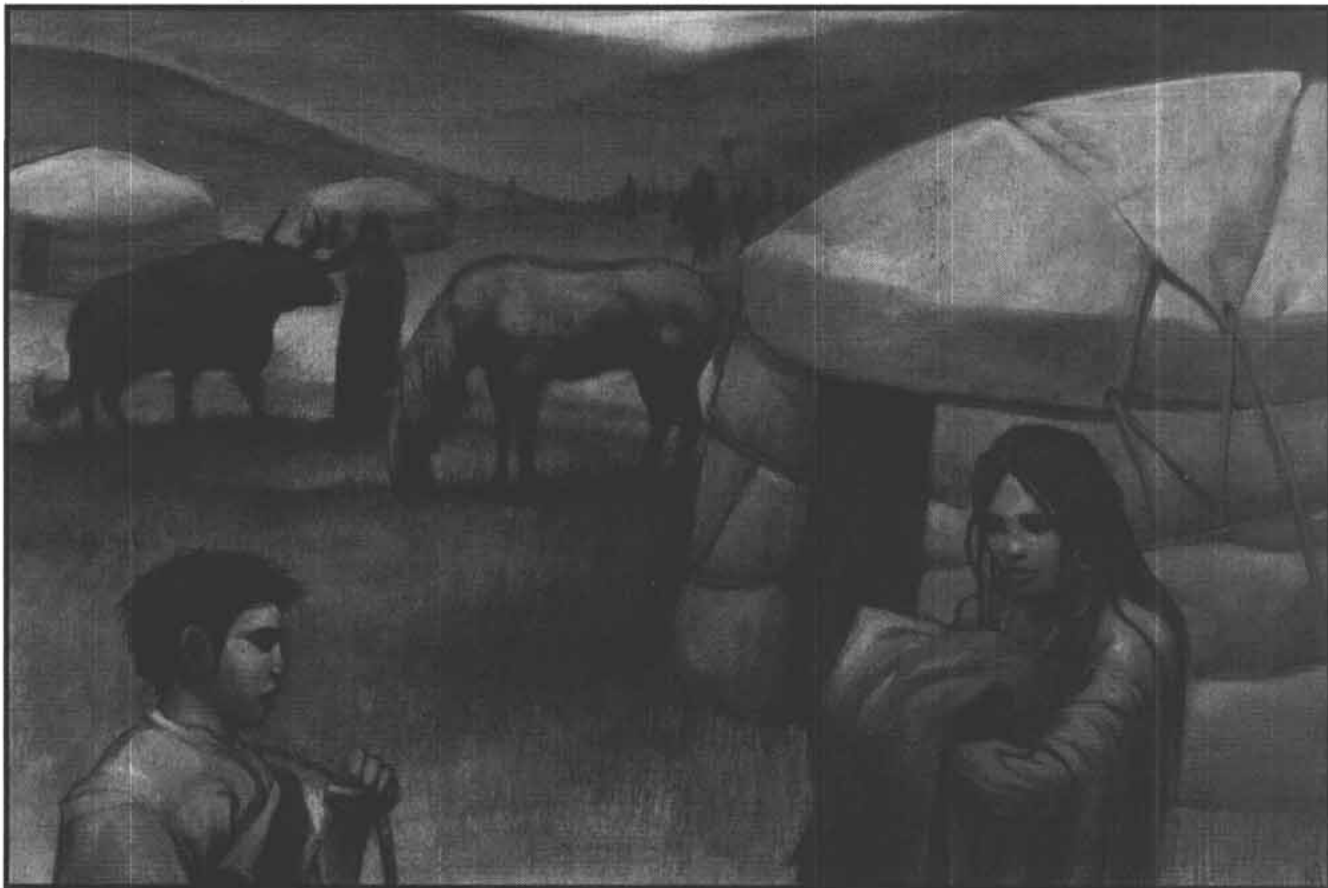
FOOD AND DRINK

The Mongols' diet is not a remarkably varied one; theirs is not the luxury of the farmer, who can grow a few spices or vegetables and include them in his meals as he wishes. The Mongol herder lives from his herd, occasionally supplementing that food with fresh fish or easily-gathered produce and spices when traversing a particularly rich pastureland. When spices such as pepper are available — often from conquered peoples — they swiftly enter into the Mongol diet, but they aren't often present.

Mongol life is strenuous; meals must provide a great deal of energy for hunters. Mutton forms the core of steppe peoples' diet. Those who herd sheep eat their meat regularly — flesh as well as fat, heart and liver. Mongols drink the milk of sheep, goats, horses and cows, and also make it into cheese and yogurt. The nomads eat beef when it is available and horsemeat only when necessary — those who ride the Gobi or Talkimakan Desert similarly butcher their camels for meat when needed. The tribesmen scorn donkeys and pigs as filthy and stupid creatures and have no truck with them.

The steppe yields a great bounty in good years, and hunters encounter quite a few species, from field mice and marmots to deer and antelope. Mongols consider numerous creatures food that most Europeans would not eat: foxes, dogs and wolves among them. Tengri, the sky, also provides ample sustenance like pheasants, ducks and geese. The rivers that flow across the steppe are also home to all variety of fish. In lean years, however, even the boldest hunters might be resigned to scrabbling up roots from the forest floor, crunching a louse or two or raiding more sedentary peoples for food.

The Mongols' tribal drink is known as *qumis*, which consists of fermented mare's milk and is rather bitter. *Qumis* is a badge of station: Drinking wine and *qumis* heavily is the sign of an important chief, and eventually proves to be the death of many of the Great Khans. The first part of any drink — especially *qumis* — is offered to the gods; either it is poured on the



open ground as an offering to Itügen or flicked against idols of the gods within a *ger*.

Milk provides another staple unique to the nomads of the steppe: *grut*. *Grut* is made from the sourest curd of milk (either of cow or mare), dried and hardened over the summer months. When milk is scarce, in the winter, *grut* is added to hot water, and stirred until the hard curd dissolves, leaving a sour, non-alcoholic beverage. Mongols almost never sully pure water by drinking it, so *grut* is the primary drink in winter.

THE ORDU AND GER

To enter a Mongol camp — sometimes called an *ordu*, although the term also refers to that camp's territory — visitors must pass through two fires ceremonially burning at its outskirts. Mongols hold fire holy, ascribing great power to its spirits, and the fires outside the *ordu* will purify those who pass between them. No evil spirits, say the shamans, can pass between those fires. Lacking a plentiful wood supply (and having better things to do with wood when it's available), the tribes tend to use dried ox dung to fuel their fires. A camp is made up of anywhere from a few to several dozen *ger* and the extended families that live within them.

A *ger* (which westerners often incorrectly call a "yurt") is a roughly circular steppe tent. It has upright walls and a roof, and a hole in the top to serve as a chimney. A *ger* builder must first create an extensive wooden frame some thirty feet in diameter, then affix felt and hides to the frame. An extended family might live in a single *ger* and load it onto ox-pulled wagons for movement to the next site along with the rest of the camp. Some *ger* can be disassembled; for migration, larger ones often are.

Many traditions surround the *ger*, the centerpiece of a Mongol family. The opening of a *ger* always faces south; the fire is always in the center. The west side is reserved for the *ger*'s men while the east belongs to the women. The north side is considered to be the most sacred; the family shrine is typically against the north or northwest side of the *ger*. It is the height of rudeness to sit with one's feet directed toward the fire; additionally, it is disrespectful to the fire to chop wood near it — beheading it — or poke it with a stick or knife. Touching the threshold of the *ger* itself — with a foot half-in, half-out or brushing against it with the shoulder — is extremely disrespectful,

WIND FROM THE EAST

VAMPIRES IN A GER

Vampires who are particularly sensitive to religious faith and artifacts (be they Anda, Wu Zao, Wan Kuei or European Cainites) occasionally find that crossing the threshold of a stranger's *ger* is difficult; upon entering such a *ger* they feel extreme discomfort. This is not at all common — for the most part, a *ger* has too much daily traffic for its sacred status to bar the passage of a Cainite. But the *ger* of the especially devout, such as a shaman or old, traditionalist family, might just do that.

Storytellers should consider a *ger* to function much as other holy ground does with respect to vampires; most *ger* will have no inherent True Faith rating, but a few will have a rating of 1, and the most exceptional might have inherent True Faith ratings of 2 or higher.

A wealthy or prestigious vampire might build and transport her own *ger* to support her travels. This has its advantages: a *ger* can be rendered light-proof if the builder is aware of its owner's special needs. However, the more superstitious members of a family group will come to distrust the vampire who spends all of every day in such a contraption, only leaving at night. It may be wiser for an Anda to sleep in the earth during the day and catch up with his "family group" (herd) after sundown.

owing to the *ger*'s status as a sacred space; transgressors against this taboo have faced execution.

The *ger* is generally open to all travelers; nearly every Mongol has on occasion had to take shelter with strangers, and such visitors are welcome within a *ger*. Host and visitor exchange gifts in such a situation and it is terribly rude *not* to partake of a host's generosity; if food or drink is offered, at least a token amount must be consumed. This, admittedly, can be very difficult for Cainites.

MEN AND WOMEN

The Mongols and their cousin tribes have clearly divided gender roles. Certainly exceptional individuals of both sexes exist, but for the most part, women do work for which they traditionally receive training, and men do the same. The sexes do share certain tasks, however: All Mongols ride, tend to the sheep and goats, milk the livestock, know how to shoot and know how to fight. As among most nations in the Dark Medieval world, men have more power than women; men, for instance, can have many wives (either simultaneously or serially), while even a widow takes no new husband, save possibly one of her dead

husband's sons by another woman. The youngest son inherits the father's *ordu* and, often, his other wives while the eldest son is granted the *ordu* furthest from the family's traditional pasturelands.

Men's work has the virtue of being easy to describe. Men hunt, which requires great discipline and skill from participants of all ages (see the description on page 80). That discipline and skill lend themselves well to the other primary occupation of the Mongol male: war. The army of the Great Khan and Mongol fighting techniques are described starting on page 30. Suffice it to say here that the Mongol armies are among the finest the world has ever seen. Men also make the weapons that can be made in a camp, such as bows and arrows, as well as stirrups, carts and *ger*, and they churn the yogurt and *qumis*; they trade or raid for weapons requiring a blacksmith, such as swords.

FEMALE ANDA

The Anda bloodline is a brotherhood of sorts; since *kuriltai* of male Anda gather to select a candidate for the Embrace, it is very rare for a woman to be chosen. It does happen, but it is very unusual. More common is the male Anda who Embraces a woman away from a *kuriltai* and then conveys to her the danger of what he has done, and the laws he has broken. Thankfully, most *kuriltai* will accept female Anda who are "adults" by their standards (i.e. who can merge with the soil during the day) with only a peremptory test of skill. So, once an Anda Embraces a woman, there is only a relatively short period of time when they are both in danger as lawbreakers.

Rumors persist of a small group consisting only of female Anda, but they are never substantiated.

Women are responsible for transporting the homestead; they load the *ger* onto a cart, drive the cart as the herd moves and unload it at the new campsite. They tan hides for leather, stitch together clothing as well as the covering for *ger* and cook most of the family's food. Women do not have to clean; Mongols believe that to clean any part of themselves, their clothing or even dishes or utensils with water will bring down the wrath of the spirits or Tengri the sky-god himself. A rinsing with boiling broth from the family kettle keeps dishes usable; people and clothing only get clean when it rains or when they must ford a deep river.

THE STEPPE PONY

The nomad is nothing without the steed beneath him. The Mongolian steppe pony is a short, stocky, hardy breed. Its neck is thick as are its legs, and its fur is dense. It is tremendously brave, thanks in large to training for the hunt and for war; even explosions from fireworks do not easily startle it. It is vigorous and surefooted, even in the worst terrain, and it is able to graze on the sparse provender of the arid high plain. The steppe pony is no more comfortable with vampires of any stripe than its cousins elsewhere in the world, but they are just as interested in the taste of vitae as any other potential ghoul.

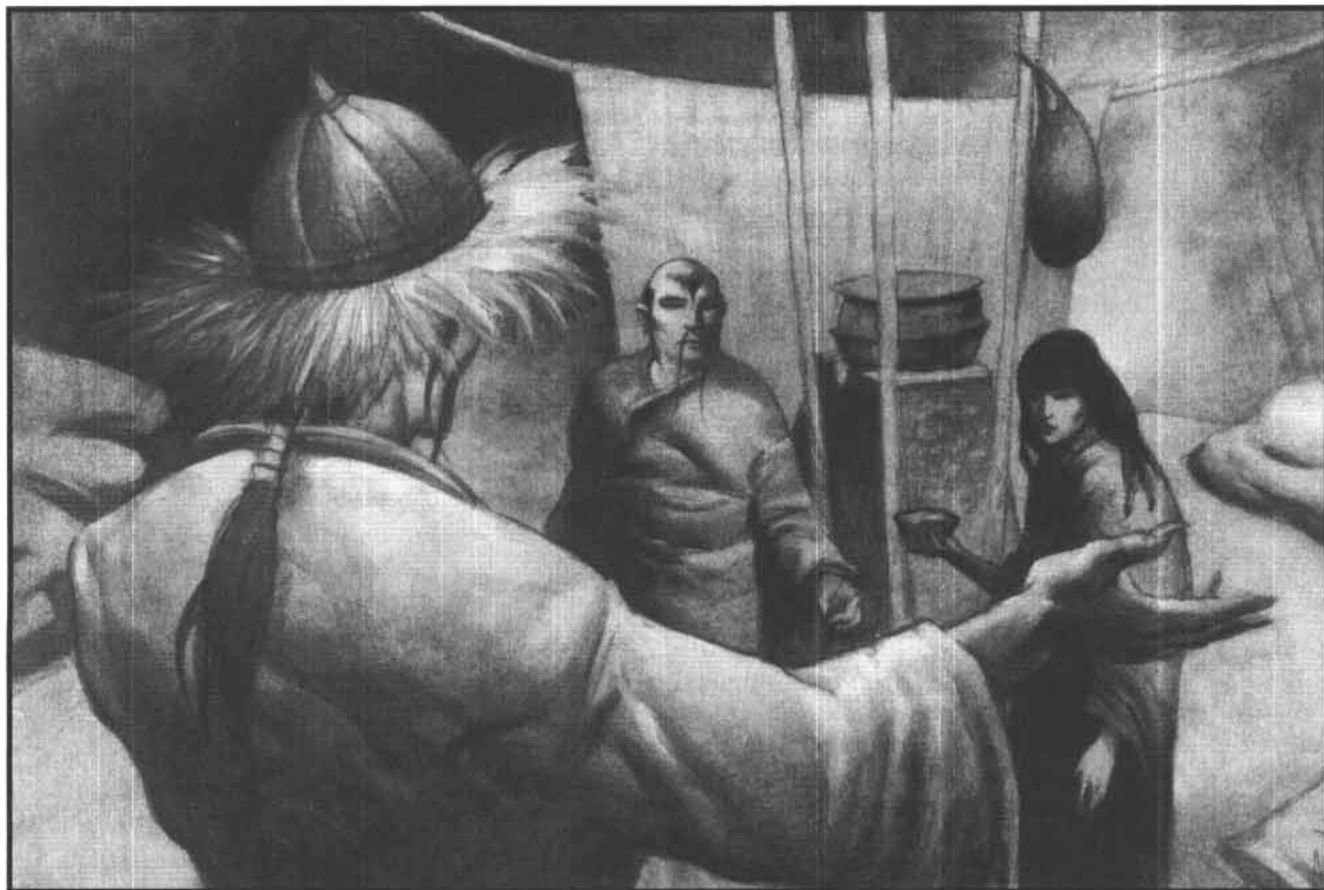
CLOTHING AND WEAPONRY

A Mongol's outfit is, like all parts of his life, a study in pragmatism. It is primarily functional; decoration trails in a distant second. He wears leather or thick felt boots — feet do not often touch ground during battle, and if they do, odds are good that something has gone wrong. Inside the boots, he wears felt stockings to prevent chafing and protect from the cold. Trousers and tunics are made of woven cloth, usually purchased from merchants who got it from city dwellers. Some Mongols acquire silk shirts, which are useful in combat since silk tends to follow an

NESTORIANISM, PRESTER JOHN AND THE APOCALYPSE

Many Nestorian Christians took Latinate names, even if they were Mongols. Thus, one would see Mongols named Marguz (Marcus) and the like. This tradition is one of the many sources for the legend of the Prester John, the Christian King of India. The existence of supposedly Christian names in the Far East verified that those distant lands were in the hands of the solemn and wise Prester John, and therefore Europe's Church needed only to worry about its own lands and the disposition of their inhabitants' souls.

Later, the Church is in for something of a rude awakening. Many priests and scholars are dead certain that the Great Khan's army is the incarnation of Gog or Magog from the Book of Revelation. The Mongols come from the far corner of the earth and have marched across its breadth; they threaten to surround the Lord's favored people, European Christianity. No wonder, then, that the armies of Europe meet the Mongol horde with such trepidation.



WIND FROM THE EAST

arrow into a wound, rather than being torn; using that silk, the arrow can be extracted without much more damage to the injured area. A furred cape down to the knee protects the Mongol's back from the elements, and a fur cap with flaps that fold down over the ears finishes the typical garb. In preparation for combat, the Mongol makes only slight changes in attire: A leather helmet, which covers even the nape of the neck, replaces the fur cap altogether while a leather cuirass or a leather coat covers the chest and abdomen.

While clothes may be relatively simple, every Mongol warrior is a small armory. The typical horseman carries two short bows and around 60 arrows. These weapons are not simple self bows; they are recurved composite bows of laminated horn, sinew and wood, with a range of around 300 yards. Arrows vary in weight to account for both range and the target's size and protection. The Mongol's sword is a curved saber, hanging from the saddle. Alongside the sword are a mace and hatchet for close-in fighting; the warrior also carries a lance and a rope tied in a noose for special occasions.

SPIRITUALITY AND SHAMANS

Two deities dominate the world of the Mongols: Mongke Koke Tengri, "Eternal Blue Heaven," and Itügen, goddess of the Earth. While both gods are revered, their worship lays rather lightly on the shoulders of the typical nomad. The Mongols see religion itself as a necessity but are not dogmatic. Thus, the Mongol Empire, in later days, includes both Nestorian Christians and Lamaistic Buddhists without conflict or outrage. The primary value of religion is its perceived impact on the physical world.

The Mongol spirit world is a rich and lively one. The spirits of the dead wander about, not to haunt their descendants, but rather to keep tabs on them. Nearly everything has a spirit of its own. Animals, plants, fire — all these have invisible spirits that make them up and guard them. Rivers are especially sacred, and their sources and springs are far more so. It is gravely offensive to wash one's clothing or oneself in a river — a taboo that later causes some difficulty when dealing with Muslim nations. The Mongols also revere mountaintops as they are close to Tengri and therefore favored by the god.

The spirits are easily offended, and to make up for a transgression against them typically requires the intercession of a shaman. In the days before the great empire in the later 13th century, shamans handled traffic with the spirit world. This traffic ranges from ritualized sacrifices to ancestors to the worship of Tengri and Itügen and direct communication with spirits of nature. Shamans know which spirits to

SHAMANISM BY THE NUMBERS

Just as the average Byzantine or Roman Catholic priest in 1197 lacks True Faith and miraculous abilities, so does the average shaman. The supernatural world does not call out to everyone who says he speaks to the unseen. However, in the Dark Medieval world, spirits are real, and some shamans do speak to them (as do the Wan Kuei; see Chapter Five). Storytellers or players who wish to portray a magic-wielding shaman can create the characters with True Faith (see p. 78 for a look at this Trait on the steppe). Those who want a more complete system for portraying and quantifying shamans can consult the **Mage: The Ascension** supplement **The Spirit Ways**; additional notes on Mongol shamans also appear in the **Mage** supplement **Dragons of the East**.

Anda and most other Cainites have relatively little traffic with the spirit world, but the Wan Kuei are much closer to the hidden realms. Chapter Three provides details on some of the Ten Thousand Demons' magical rites and game statistics for some steppe spirits.

appease and which to drive away; they also perform blessings over herds and hunts and occasionally perform prophecy. Scapulomancy is common — the shaman casts the shoulder blades of a slaughtered sheep into a fire and examines the cracks that appear on the bones for prophetic meaning. The shaman also divines through astrology; the movements of planets and stars speak to him, and a comet or shooting star often takes on great significance.

The shaman has real political power within the tribe. Though he rarely acts in a direct leadership role — a place left for the tribe's chief — his access to otherworldly realms is a direct sign of the spirits' and gods' favor. Accordingly, his opinion is weighed more heavily than most other members of the tribe. Many shamans position themselves as the power behind the chieftain's position, providing far more than mere advice and counsel.

CAINITES IN THE ANCIENT EAST

Since time immemorial, the Cainites of the Occident have warned their childer to avoid the Far East. Cathay, Nihon, Koryo and the jungle kingdoms of Southeast Asia reek with creatures who have no truck with the scions of Caine. The Gangrel speak in hushed

tones of the Giants of the East; the Ravnos describe a host of demons. And the plain of Asia is barren, practically infertile. No towns dot it. Surely, the night lords of Europe think, no Cainite would live in so unrelentingly hostile a land.

They are quite wrong.

The vampires of the steppe call themselves the Anda, from the Mongol word meaning "blood brother." They feed on the blood of animals and men, recoil from sunlight and display other facets of the Curse of Caine. Most of them know great resistance to pain and injury; they can take on the shapes of beasts and hold sway over the minds of such animals. Some know the secrets of great swiftness, allowing them to traverse a hundred miles in a single night, and others have gleaned other, older secrets from vampiric blood. The vampires of the steppe have lost most of their identity — they do not remember themselves as the damned childer of Caine — but in truth that is what they are; more precisely, they are an offshoot of the Gangrel.

Oaths of fealty and blood bind the Anda together, but the strongest motivator for their apparent unity is fear. Gangrel and Ravnos might whisper tales of the monsters of the East, but the Anda know these lands and face these dangers nightly. The vampires of Khitai (which Westerners call Cathay) as well as the Jin and Song Chinese empires call themselves Wan Kuei, the Ten Thousand Demons. The Wan Kuei spend nights somewhat openly among the mortals of their homelands. They wield great and terrible powers, and they carry hatred for the orphans of Caine as an unsheathed sword. When Wan Kuei hear of an Anda vampire lurking around the edges of nomad tribes, they ride northward into the wild lands on a mad hunt for "foreign" blood.

Therefore the Anda hide their presence among the tribes of the steppe.

MONSTROUS LEGENDRY

According to Anda legend, the steppe vampires are orphans of a great mother goddess, called Itügen in most tellings. Millennia ago, she came east from the Sunset Lands along with a father god named Mongke Tengri and a vast extended family. The family comprised dozens of the gods' offspring — some were children only of Itügen the Earth Goddess while others were only children of Mongke Tengri the Sky God, and still others descended from both, as is fitting.

The family had a large *ger* and many horses; it was fantastically wealthy, for surely if it were any poorer it would have splintered into several smaller camps. Father Tengri and Mother Itügen hunted for them-

OTHER ORPHANS

The Anda are not the only Cainites on the steppe. Only slightly less hidden are the Wu Zao, three-eyed vampires who have lurked in the shadows of Wan Kuei cities for thousands of years, since their master Zao-lat returned west to his homeland. The Wu Zao call themselves scholars and searchers for understanding, but the Wan Kuei know them as temple thieves. Only the northern court of the Ten Thousand Demons tolerates them, largely in exchange for help in finding the Anda hiding among the Mongols. When they can, they present themselves as Wan Kuei, especially when traveling further south.

Observant watchers might occasionally see other Cainites in the Far East as well. Far-roaming Gangrel, brave Ravnos and questing Cappadocians have all visited the outskirts of the Middle Kingdom, but they are few and rarely stay (or survive) long.

selves and taught all their children to hunt, both in daylight and at night. No member of the family wanted for anything as the group traveled from the lands west of the Altai Mountains eastward, through the forest north of the high Mongolian steppe.

Eventually the family encountered bandits — no ordinary bandits, mind you, but rather scions of the demons of the Xia Empire far to the south. The demons saw Mother Itügen, and her great beauty enraptured them. Father Tengri readied a spear and insisted that the demons return to their homes, or surely he would slay them. Several of Mother Itügen's sons, including Dobrul the Brave, stood their ground around their mother, bows at the ready.

Several demon bandits charged Father Tengri, who stood his ground for only a few seconds. When first blooded, Tengri fled to his horse in fear of his life. His own sons and daughters fled with him, as did many of his children by Itügen. Itügen's loyal children stood with their mother and encircled her. They fought the demon bandits on all sides.

The battle raged for days; the Xia Demons sacrificed their unholy lives so that their brethren might taste Mother Itügen's flesh. In the end, the most valiant on both sides died; Dobrul the Brave stood his ground, holding a pass so that his family might escape. The mightiest shaman of the Xia called down the vengeance of the sky upon Dobrul; with a great curse, a huge ball of fire streaked from above the clouds to strike Itügen's greatest son.

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The remaining demons jeered at Itügen and her surviving children. Convinced of Dobrul the Brave's death and terrified by the power of the Xia Demons, Itügen and her children fled west. But Dobrul did not die. The ball of stone and fire drove him deep into the earth, and the Xia shaman's curse changed his blood.

When Dobrul awoke, he craved mortal blood, and found that he could grant his brethren the gift of eternal unlife with his own blood. Dobrul the Brave created many vampires, starting with his closest siblings; but to all of them, he warned: Beware the Xia Demons.

TRIBAL UNLIFE

In the times before the rise of Temujin, most Cainites of the plain survive by adopting a *yasun* — a minor tribe or an extended family within a tribe. The *yasun* serves as herd, servants and shield for the nomadic vampire, and only when her tribe grows large enough to splinter into two or more independent tribes does she consider Embracing a new vampire. After all, this existence is incredibly perilous; the lack of easy shelter combined with scarcity of human population and the apparently undying enmity of the Xia Demons means that few Cainites survive long on the steppe.

The *yasun* stays with the vampire for a number of reasons. The Anda tend to lack subtlety; they have no compunctions about using the threat of violence to keep their herd in line. Unlike some Western Cainites, they are also willing to use the blood oath to keep a mortal in line, despite the behavioral impact such a measure has. In a less domineering vein, the *yasun* sees the vampire as a powerful steppe spirit to which the members owe respect. They receive protection from threats both mortal and supernatural and (through the use of Animalism) blessings on the hunt. Most Mongols are happy to rely on their own skills during summertime, and just as happy to turn to the terrible spirit during harsh winters and droughts. The Anda do not disabuse those nomads of the notion that such abilities reflect special favor with Itügen.

ENEMIES

The Anda have numerous enemies on the steppe, and even more should they chance to move south or west. The Tatar Beast Court, an enormous collection of Xiong Ren animal shapechangers, dominates the northern reach of the Middle Kingdom. These Feroocious People are ravenous and wild; at certain times of the month, they wear the shape of a human while at other times they were the mask of a wolf, raven, rat or tiger. There is no love between the Xiong Ren and the

Anda — the former find the latter useful only as prey, and those few who have any interest in conversation seem to consider the Anda to be servants of a great and evil insect god. The Anda, for their part, have little use for the Xiong Ren. They do consider the half-creatures' blood a great delicacy, but acquiring such a treat risks exposure and destruction. (For more on the shapechangers, see **World of Darkness: Blood & Silk** and the **Werewolf** supplement **Hengeyokai: Shapechangers of the East**.)

The Anda are few on the steppe and the Xiong Ren rarely interfere with the movements of Mongol herds and hunters, so for the most part these monstrous breeds manage to coexist by avoiding one another. By contrast, the Anda compete directly with the Wan Kuei of the Black Tortoise Court for influence and blood. These two groups do not peacefully coexist.

For reasons they do not explain to outsiders but which obviously go beyond simple competition for resources, the Wan Kuei actively hate and harry the Anda. They seem to be able to tell when the Anda are about, and should they sense one's presence they immediately begin a ruthless hunt. They have abilities the Anda do not dream of possessing and truly match their epithet of Ten Thousand Demons. The Wan Kuei are organized into small groups, which they call families or *wu*; few Anda alone can match the strength of one of these unliving families.

The strength, organization and ruthlessness of the Wan Kuei explain why the Anda remain hidden among the Mongols. They do not dare enter the plains of Jin, Xixia or Song, for the Wan Kuei and their minions are too populous there, and there are even more of them in the cities of the southlands. Many Wan Kuei of the Black Tortoise Court (and their sometime allies in the White Tiger Court, further west) roam the north with various tribes. Currently the chief catspaw of the Black Tortoise Wan Kuei is the Tatar tribe, and the animosity between them and the Mongol tribe perpetuates both mortal and immortal hatreds. (More information on the Black Tortoise Court appears in Chapter Two.)

Other supernatural beings do live on the steppe; for the most part, these creatures are neither particularly hostile nor benevolent toward the Anda. Ghosts tend to attach themselves to individual tribesmen rather than to places; strange spirits of nature, by contrast, attach themselves to places and things. Many shamans can perform feats of magic, from summoning storms to communicating with the dead or prophesying the future. And other creatures, great and dark, lurk in the shadows of the night.

THE TRIBES OF THE KHANS

In 1197 two factions divide the Mongol tribe: those who follow Temujin and those who follow Jamugha. The division is especially bitter because the two leaders were once *anda* brothers and fought side by side as Temujin sought to establish himself. As Temujin's star rises, however, Jamugha sees his own as falling — although in truth, it is not so much falling as being overtaken by Temujin's rapid ascent. Toghril Khan's support of Jamugha only makes the bad blood worse. Toghril is lord of the Kerayit tribe and is another jealous former ally of Temujin — in fact, Toghril was *anda* brother to Temujin's father, Yesugei.

Beyond the Mongols themselves, a variety of other tribes exist on the steppe — some as allies, others as enemies. Two generations ago, peace reigned between the Tatar and Mongol tribes. The ruler of the

Mongols, Ambaghai Khan, promised his daughter in marriage to a Tatar chief. The Tatars unexpectedly took him captive while he was escorting her into their lands, and as they took him away, he shouted for his sons never to forget this betrayal. They haven't. The Mongols and Tatars have been enemies from that day forward, fighting thirteen battles in just a few years. The Mongols continue to fight the warlike Tatars even today.

The *Merkid* tribe, by contrast, is dependent on the Mongol tribe for cooperation and defense. Decades ago, Yesugei the Brave, a Mongol, stole the woman Hogelun from the Merkid chief who intended to marry her. Yesugei married Hogelun, and she bore him the son Temujin. Many years later, three Merkid kidnapped Temujin's bride Borte Ujin, supposedly in retribution for Yesugei's long-ago crime. Temujin called upon his ally Toghril, Khan of the Kerayit, and his *anda* brother, Jamugha, to strike at the Merkid and rescue Borte Ujin. In a sign of things to come, once Temujin had seen to his wife's safety, he had all but the smallest Merkid warriors slain and their children and women enslaved. The tribe remains subservient to the Mongols.

The *Naimans* embrace dual religions: shamans retain great social and political power within the nation, but the Naiman Khan, Kuchlug, is a Nestorian Christian, having been raised in that tradition by his mother. The Naimans, like the Tatars, are enemies to the Mongols.

Many members of the *Onggut* tribe are also Nestorian Christian, persuaded to take up Christianity by exiled Nestorian missionaries and their descendants. The Onggut have fought with the Mongols in the past, but are on generally good terms with them as of 1197. For the time being, the Onggut serve the lords of the Jin Empire; they occupy lands north of the decrepit Great Wall and attack any minor tribe that purports to cross into Jin territory. Due to the strength of their southern benefactor, the Onggut tribe has become quite wealthy.

The *Kerayit* are Nestorians like the Onggut; Toghril Khan leads them. Toghril is a mighty war leader and one of the most respected khans of all the tribes. For the time being, he is an ally of Temujin and (more so) Jamugha. The star of the Kerayit tribe is on the rise as Toghril and his allies also have the support of the Jin Empire, to the south, which uses the Kerayit as a weapon to keep the Tatars in line.

The *Qipchaqs* control lands much farther west; their preference is to harass and rob the principalities of Russia. They are a brave people, and many of them join the great army of Genghis Khan in later years.

THE *ANDA* BOND

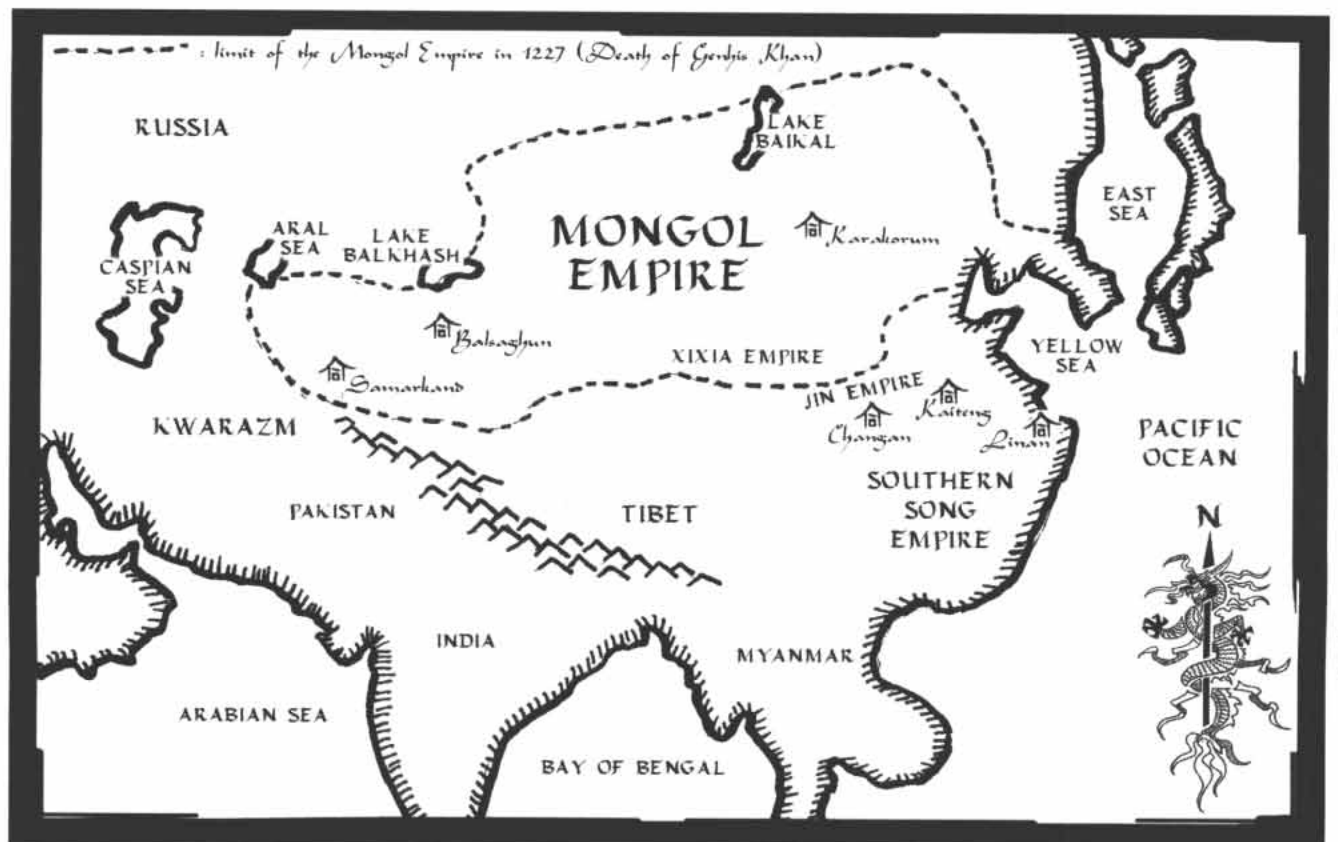
The *anda* relationship between Mongol men is a complicated one with no precise analog in modern Western society. The term can best be translated as "blood brother"; it is a bond of loyalty and affection, and is at least partially a sexual relationship. Two boys usually declare themselves *anda* when relatively young; they exchange simple gifts — Jamugha and Temujin exchanged knucklebone dice — and promise support for one another through good and bad times. In general, a Mongol will have but one *anda*, although he can drift apart from his *anda* and then declare himself *anda* to another. It is a personal bond and, at least as much as modern marriage, is between equals. The *anda* relationship often calls for a renewal; when two *anda* brothers wish to reassert their loyalty to one another they may exchange valuable gifts again. In adolescence or adulthood, these gifts are often quite expensive. At such an age, affirmation of the *anda* relationship often brings sexual gratification as the pair might sleep together under a single blanket and love one another.

The *Anda* bloodline of Cainites has a strong tradition of *anda*-Embrace. Though the bloodline has fairly strict standards for who may receive the Embrace, it is very common for a neonate to push for his *anda* brother in life to be tested and Embraced. Some groups of *Anda* Cainites, usually those from further west, stand staunchly opposed to this position, arguing that it is a reprehensible form of nepotism; in those groups, the new Cainite's first mortal victim will be his former *anda* brother. Such an attack serves to sever the neonate's ties to his old life.

WIND FROM THE EAST



THE KINGDOMS OF THE EAST



EMPIRE OF THE WORLD-CONQUEROR

CAINITES IN THE OLD KINGDOMS OF THE EAST

The Khwarazm nation and Kara-Khitai have their fair share of eastern Cainites; from Assamites, Gangrel and Ravnos to other clans better known for their actions in the West, the scions of Caine lead the same kinds of unives that their cousins do everywhere else. The cities of Samarkand and Bukhara are particular centers of undead activity. Samarkand itself sees enough wealth pass through it in a day to satisfy the greed of several Cainites. The city's vampiric lord, Karim, is an Assamite vizier of great age who has begun to lose his sense of touch through a curse put upon him by an old imam he slew in a frenzy. This loss of sensation affects Karim in strange ways; outsiders to his court whisper that he may be losing his mind.

The Wan Kuei dominate the nights of the Jin, Xixia and Southern Song in 1197. Very few Cainites are to be found in those lands; instead, the Jin is under the influence of the Black Tortoise and Azure Dragon Courts, the Xixia plays host to the White Tiger Court, and the Southern Song contains elements from the Yellow Emperor and Scarlet Phoenix Courts. The layout of the courts of the Wan Kuei is somewhat fluid, of course, and it certainly does not obey boundaries formed by mortal nations. For more information on the Ten Thousand Demons and their machinations, see *Kindred of the East* and *World of Darkness: Blood & Silk*.

Three great nations dominate the Far East: the Jin, Xixia and Song. Collectively, Mongols refer to those three as "Khitai," a term corresponding to "Cathay" or "China" in English. Xixia and Jin press directly against barbarian-held lands, and those two nations' actions strongly impact the welfare of Mongolian nomads. Further distant, the great empires of Kara-Khitai and Khwarazm serve as a western boundary to the tribes' activity.

KARA-KHITAI

Kara-Khitai is a remnant of the old Khitan empire; a perversion of its name leads to the name "Cathay" for China. Until roughly 70 years ago, most of the Khitan lived in the Liao Empire, a land north of Song China. Then the Jurchen peoples, who now rule the Jin Empire, evicted the Khitan forcibly. These refugees made a new kingdom to their northwest. Their capital is at Balasagun, and their king, Yelu Chiluku, uses the title *gurkhan*, "king of the

world." Yelu is a sybarite; though he is capable and energetic, he prefers to spend his days hunting and partaking of the pleasures of the flesh. While he does this, his empire slowly disintegrates.

Kara-Khitai is a vast nation, stretching from Turfan westward to Otrar and containing the great cities of Bukhara and Tashkent. From the southern mountains of Kara-Khitai, one can see the foothills of the world-girdling Himalayan Mountains. The population is divided into two main groups: the Turkic peasants who lived there before the Khitans' arrival, and the landowning Khitans. Most of the peasant population is Muslim, while the Khitans themselves are largely Buddhist. However, some Khitans follow the dictates of Christianity or animistic shamanism; indeed, it seems that they are only prejudiced against Islam, among major faiths. This prejudice has led to some tension with the neighboring Islamic kingdom, Khwarazm; Yelu Chiluku continues to provide support and aid to Sultan-Shah, ruler of Khurasan and exiled King of Khwarazm.

KHWARAZM

Khwarazm is the largest bastion of Islamic culture on the steppe. Khwarazm is nation of Islamic Turks, dominated by a single Shah, Takash. Takash's brother, Sultan-Shah, had taken the empire's throne upon their father's death in 1172. Takash fled to exile in Kara-Khitai and begged that nation's rulers to lend him an army with which he could oust Sultan-Shah. When the king of Kara-Khitai did just that, installing Takash at the price of heavy annual tribute, Takash rebelled and refused to pay the tribute. Sultan-Shah, for himself, has claimed rule of the lands of Khurasan, a minor kingdom adjacent to Khwarazm and ostensibly a client state of the empire.

XIXIA

Xixia — a name meaning simply "Western Kingdom" — is one of three splinters of the old Chinese empire. It is the smallest and the middle child in age. The Tangut people, who descend from Tibetan tribesmen, dominate its population. Hundreds of years ago, the Tanguts roamed the western highlands in much the way that Mongol and similar tribes do today; however, they have since settled down into a sedentary, agricultural lifestyle. Xixia spends a good amount of time and work fighting nomads of the far north, a duty it never fails to remind the bureaucracy of the Southern Song Chinese about. Xixia is ostensibly a satellite state of the Song — the emperor of Xixia is "son emperor" to the Song's "father emperor," but the truth of the matter is that the Song pays the nation of Xixia hundreds of thousands of bolts of silk and other

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riches in tribute every year. The Xixia Emperor in his grand capital at Ningxia knows full well who is father and who is son.

JIN

The Jin Empire of northern China is the greatest of the three fragments of the old Chinese state. Though it is not the largest, its population is greatest and its armies stronger than any other in the area. The Jin Empire was born from the Jurchen conquest of the Kingdom of Liao seven decades ago and stands as Song China's northeastern neighbor. The Jurchens slid effortlessly into the cities and thrones left empty by their conquest of the Liao; they show a remarkable facility for ruling an empire, despite their barbaric roots. Like the nation of Xixia, the Jin Empire now extorts a large amount of tribute from the Song Chinese to the south. The Song do not have the ability to maintain a large garrison to their north, and the payment is ostensibly to compensate the Jin for defending northern China against Mongolian barbarians. However, the Jin waged their own war of conquest against the Song some seventy years ago; without too much difficulty, they stormed across the Kaifeng plain and captured the Song capital. The Jin

proceeded to chase claimants to the Song imperial throne across much of southern China (now the Southern Song Dynasty) until they reached a peace treaty. It is that treaty that stipulates the tribute payments from Song to Jin. The Jin have a fierce warrior ethic, and are a very proud people.

SONG

The Southern Song Dynasty is the direct descendant of thousands of years of Chinese dynastic history. The imperial throne has remained in their hands, although it has moved from Changan to Kaifeng and ultimately to Linan (modern Hangzhou) in 1138; for at least a century after that it is called *Xingjai*, "visiting headquarters," though it is certainly the capital for the long term. The Song culture is an ancient and conservative one, dominated by a vast imperial bureaucracy and centuries of tradition. Buddhist and Confucian thought compete for the minds of the average Song peasant; the two are compatible enough that that he is able to work within the strictures of both, for the most part. The typical peasant can make something greater of himself by taking an imperial civil service examination; if his education is good and he is naturally bright, he can rise quite high within the bureaucracy.

THE RISE OF THE WORLD- CONQUEROR (1206-1227)

Sometime in the 1160s — 1167 is as good a date as any — the Merkid woman Hogelun has her first son by the Mongol Yesugei the Brave. Yesugei calls the boy, who emerges from his mother's womb clutching a black clot of blood, Temujin, for a Tatar chief he had once captured. At this time, the Mongols are simply another tribe of the high east Asian steppe and in fact are among the least of the tribes of the area: the Merkid, Naiman and Tatar compete with them for land and food. The Tatars hold the most power, and the Mongols war with them after the slaying of the Mongols' leader, Ambaghai Khan.

Tatars kill Yesugei the Brave when Temujin is nine years old, when father and son travel north to Hogelun's tribe to find the boy a wife. Temujin vows eternal vengeance against the Tatars (which he will carry out when the Mongols destroy the Tatars almost to a man) and becomes responsible for both Hogelun and his three younger brothers. After Yesugei's death, however, the Mongol leaders ostracize Hogelun and her sons; the five must make their own camp and live in relative solitude. The boys learn, as all Mongols do, to hunt and fish for themselves and provide for the family.

In these harsh circumstances, Temujin learns an equally harsh brand of justice. His only full brother is Khasar; Hogelun's other sons, Begter and Belgutei, are not children of Yesugei. Temujin and Khasar, in early adolescence, come into conflict with their half-brothers. Begter and Belgutei don't perform their share of the boys' daily work, but instead claim Temujin's and Khasar's work as their own. Soon, Yesugei's sons grow frustrated, and kill Begter with arrows at close range, over the cries for mercy their half-brother emits. Hogelun is furious, shouts imprecations at Yesugei's sons and punishes the pair sternly; but she does not cast them out, knowing that her own survival depends on them. The adult Temujin's propensity for brutal retribution emerges when the Merkid tribe kidnaps Borte Ujin, his wife. Temujin gathers together tens of thousands of men from several minor tribes, along with Toghri Khan and Temujin's *anda* brother Jamugha, and hunts down the Merkid, slaying all the adult men and capturing the women and children.

In the aftermath of these great battles, chiefs of the various minor camps come together in a *kuriltai* —
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a great meeting — and decide to ask Temujin to rule them all. Many of these chiefs come from the camps loyal to Jamugha, and Jamugha is a jealous lord. But for the time being, the *kuriltai* has named Temujin Khan of the Mongols: They call him "Genghis Khan," a title meaning "Oceanic Lord" or "Lord of the Nation."

THE ARMY OF THE GREAT KHAN

Genghis Khan is nothing if not pragmatic. He arranges his armies sensibly and, unlike many of his foes, is willing to discard a respected stratagem when it does not work. Managing an army of hundreds of thousands of men across thousands of miles of Asian steppe is a Herculean task; the Great Khan structures his forces to simplify matters as much as possible.

For starters, leaders of distant armies are given simple instructions and *carte blanche* regarding their execution. Of course, in the early days these leaders are men that Genghis Khan trusts implicitly: his brothers, sons and longtime companions such as Subetai the Brave. The armies come from every tribe of the Mongol nation, and the distribution of tribes is worth noting. Tribes like the Onggut, loyal to Genghis Khan from the earliest days, and those who never raised a fist against the Mongols in recent memory, remain largely intact; many large cavalry units (even *minghan* of 1000 men) consist of nothing but Onggut or Qonggirat. By contrast, survivors of subjugated or destroyed tribes like the Kerayit or Tatar are sprinkled throughout the army. In this way, Genghis Khan is sure to have concentrations of those loyal to him while leaving his enemies diffuse and without coordination.

Training these armies is relatively simple: Mongol men learn to ride and shoot arrows from boyhood. Every autumn, in preparation for the harsh steppe winter, the men in a camp ride out to find game in a vast circle, which slowly contracts, driving animals into a tight herd. When the circle has contracted far enough, the khan launches the first arrow, and his men follow suit. The *nerge*, as this is called, serves a second purpose: It teaches discipline. Those allowing game to escape out of the circle or loosing an arrow before the khan face severe punishment.

Every man under the age of 60 who is old enough to fire a bow or carry a spear is part of the army. This helps to explain the apparently vast size of the Mongol armies — the male citizenry of a tribe is its army. The Mongol army is organized along decimal lines; a squad of ten men is its base unit. These squads of ten are gathered in groups of 100 men, which in turn make up a *minghan* of 1000; finally, ten *minghan* make up a *tumen* of 10,000 soldiers. The *tumen* is the

THE GREAT YASA

The *Great Yasa* is the collection of formalized Mongol law and honor codes, as laid down by Temujin in the *kuriltai* that named him Genghis Khan in 1206. It is a written document — rare among the Mongols themselves but quite common among their conquests. The prince of each of the four great *ulus* has a copy of *The Great Yasa* among his greatest treasures.

Under the Great Khan's rule, judgment and administration of the *Yasa* falls to his adopted son, Shigi-Qutuqu. Shigi-Qutuqu, as the first judge, handles disputes among the nobility and keeps careful note of his previous rulings in a blue book; thus, he builds up a body of precedent that he consults as cases grow more complex.

The *Great Yasa* is quite harsh; adultery, black magic, conspiracy, grand theft, murder, sodomy and many other crimes can earn the death penalty. The *Great Yasa* gives no distinction between civilian and military law, as befits the nature of the Mongols' army. The *Yasa* also institutes a code of honorable behavior for Mongol warriors; soldiers are to keep discipline in all circumstances, obey commanding officers, tell the truth in all circumstances and so on.

primary organizational unit. A talented officer leads each of these groups; unlike the European system, in which noble knights lead peasant footmen into battle, Mongol promotions come on the basis of merit.

THE CAMPAIGNS

As a fighting force, the armies of Genghis Khan are a vast, disciplined, and formidable group. In formal terms they number around 120,000 men; were Mongol holdings ever to be attacked in force, however, any man old enough to stay on a saddle could join in the fighting with skill and discipline. That might bring the fighting strength to more than 300,000. In the open field, the early Mongol armies are unstoppable. Swift, tightly organized, capable of stealthy and coordinated large-scale movement, accurate in attack and regimented in retreat, no army in Asia or Europe can match them in a stand-up fight.

When Genghis Khan decides to secure his flank by conquering the northern Chinese kingdoms of Jin and Xixia, however, he must contend with the fact that his superb armies haven't the foggiest idea how to conquer a walled city. Give them an open town and the Mongols know precisely what to do: Sweep in off the plain, kill those you see, take what you can, burn what you can't and return to the steppe to count and

PREDATORS AMONG THE HORDE

Anda (and, later, other Cainites) ride with Genghis Khan's armies. Though it might seem at first glance that such creatures would be in terrible danger, due to the high discipline and combat skill of the typical Mongol soldier, players and Storytellers should remember that most Anda come from this same stock. They know their way around such armies, unless they are so old as to predate the rise of the Great Khan, and even then, they are familiar with the ways of their people. Hiding among the Mongol army is a simple matter for those Anda who wish to do so.

As the empire expands and more peoples come under Mongol subjugation, Cainites of other clans Embrace Mongol soldiers. For nearly any clan, the strong, fast and ruthless Mongol warrior is a good potential child. By the time of the Great Khan's death, Cainites of the Assamite, Gangrel, Ravnos and Ventrue clans can be found in substantial numbers among the Horde.

The horde of the Great Khan does face other supernatural threats during its expansion. From the vengeful ghosts of the slain Tatar tribe to hostile tribes of werewolves and weretigers, the Mongol soldier must be ready to face almost any foe. The average horseman does not see any of the hidden world during the empire's expansion, but rumor and myth of such follow the horde throughout its existence.

distribute booty. But cities are different. Light cavalry is useless against stone walls, for one thing; cities have such great populations that a strike-and-retreat tactic only serves to give the residents time to repair fortifications and tend to their wounded. Many times, Mongol armies pillage towns and destroy crops in the hope of starving cities, for they have no other choice.

When the Mongol armies do breach the walls of cities, they suffer from confusion and chaos. In these early days, the Mongols have so little experience with cities that they don't understand what one is for. When they enter a city, they rape or kidnap its women, kill its other inhabitants, take what treasure they can find and burn everything in sight. This isn't always done just out of cruelty, but rather more often out of bewilderment. Steppe horsemen just do not know how to handle an urban center. Obviously, the motive does not change the result: Mongols destroy dozens of cities in northern China and eastern Islamic lands and kill hundreds of thousands of innocents.



CHINESE CONQUESTS

Genghis Khan first turns his attention toward the kingdom of Xixia, a nation comprised of sedentary former barbarians. The Mongols destroy great swaths of countryside, ruining crops and burning villages, but, due to the difficulties described above, they are unable to mount a formidable attack against Ningxia or Lingzhou. Wisely, the king of Xixia, Li Anchuan, yields his allegiance (and one of his daughters) to Genghis Khan only a few years after the attacks begin.

With Xixia subjugated by 1209, Genghis Khan turns his attention toward the Jin Empire. Like Xixia, the Jin is a land of sedentary former nomads. Unlike Xixia, the Jurchen tribesmen of the Jin Empire retain a warrior spirit and fight valiantly and intelligently against the Mongol armies. It takes years for the Great Khan to completely subjugate their empire. The Song Chinese, who wish to retake territory lost to the Jin 70 years earlier, aid Genghis Khan by a tacit alliance. The Song trouble the Jin's flanks, but the Mongols do the majority of the fighting and the Song do not regain any lost territory, instead ceding it all to the Mongols.

COMMUNICATIONS

An army that exists only to fight and pillage, in a vacuum and cut off from the rest of the world, is doomed. The Great Khans knows this; therefore they makes certain that none of their armies are isolated from the others' intelligence. Communication is the key to coordinating large-scale invasions like those the Mongols perform.

Historical details on Genghis Khan's communication structure are absent save for supposition about hundreds if not thousands of couriers, each wreaking havoc by appropriating horses from those though whose lands they passed. The Yam system created by Ogadei Khan, his successor, builds on Genghis Khan's successes. Way stations are placed roughly every 25 miles along major thoroughfares through the empire; at each way station, a number of rested and watered horses wait, along with a few caretakers, trainers, food, water and supplies. Couriers travel as quickly as they can between these way stations; as he approaches one, a courier sounds his special horn, warning the station of his impending arrival. When he reaches the station, he dismounts, receives supplies, mounts a new horse and continues onward with only a minute's delay. In this fashion, he can cover distances as great as 300 miles in one day.

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THE ANDA AND THE WAN KUEI

Early attacks against the Jin and Xixia Empires immediately to the Mongols' south come swiftly and without great retribution; in quick succession Daidu, Shangdu and Ningxia are pacified. No Anda live in these cities, of course: They are the homes of the Wan Kuei. Daring Anda dash into the cities of the Middle Kingdom for the first time as the Mongol tribe extends itself southward; usually, this is under cover of mortal invasions, but sometimes the Anda even lead the way into cities. And of course the cities are where the Anda discover lurking Wan Kuei, furious at the prospect of invasion and wearing their supernatural hate like a badge. Most Anda who enter Chinese cities at this juncture are destroyed; not until the reign of Kublai Khan do any Anda feel safe walking in the Middle Kingdom.

Despite the danger the Anda face in the cities of the south, their numbers and strength in the far north leads them to bold action when confronted with Black Tortoise Wan Kuei on the steppe. They make examples of many Cathayan vampires — stretching them out in the sun for torture, consuming their blood to the last drop or burning them to ash while they are still conscious. The "barbarian vampires" of the Mongols became the terror of the Black Tortoise Court.

KARA-KHITAI AND KHWARAZM

When the Mongols conquered the Naiman tribe during Temujin's rise to power, its khan, Kuchlug, and a small honor guard escaped. They fled to Kara-Khitai, where Kuchlug took the throne. Kuchlug greatly despised Islam, however, and forbade its practice within his new kingdom — a kingdom which, until his arrival, had been staunchly Muslim. The rampaging armies of Genghis Khan are therefore met with cheers and applause as they attack Kashgar and kill Kuchlug — certainly not a response they are used to. Genghis Khan absorbs Kara-Khitai into his empire, promising its defense.

An Islamic king named Muhammad rules Kara-Khitai's neighbor, the Empire of Khwarazm. Muhammad is predisposed to be suspicious of the steppe nomads; when Genghis Khan, his new neighbor, suggests that the two empires open trading relations, Muhammad is mistrustful. When the Great Khan sends 450 merchants west, to Utrar, Muhammad has them executed as spies. This rouses the ire of the resting tiger. Muhammad has an enormous army — over 400,000 men — but it is a group of limited loyalty and resources. Genghis Khan's army is just over a quarter that size, but of considerably greater

loyalty and skill. Genghis requests that the King of Xixia, his subject, supply more troops but receives a rather disrespectful refusal. Regardless, the Mongol armies plunge onward in 1220. Facing disloyal officers and troops of vastly inferior quality, the horde sweeps through Khwarazm's defenses like a broom through a pile of straw. In quick succession Utrar and Bukhara fall, as does the Khwarazm capital of Balasagun, and finally the golden target, Samarkand. Samarkand opens its gates to welcome the conqueror; the Great Khan repays this hospitality by turning the city over to his men to loot, pillage and rape.

TAXATION

Genghis Khan's advisors urge him to simply slaughter the peasantry of China and turn their lands over to pasture, giving the nomads free rein over the territory. The Great Khan disagrees, pointing out rightly that a Chinese peasant creates far more in taxable revenue than his land is worth as pasture. Many Mongols and their subjects serve as administrators and tax collectors over the empire; *The Great Yasa* causes them to behave with utmost honesty, but the tax burden the Mongols place on their subjects is far too great. Lacking an understanding of agricultural life, the Mongols initially tax the life out of the peasantry in newly conquered lands; many peasants have to turn over so much of their annual harvest that they are unable to feed themselves or their families over the winter. It quite literally takes generations for the empire to make substantive changes to this system, although change comes faster to lands in which the Mongols turned over bureaucratic administration to native Turks or Chinese. The native bureaucrats know far better how much tax can be extracted from a peasant while still allowing him to contribute to the treasury the following autumn.

OTHER TARGETS

After the conquest of Khwarazm, Genghis allows his lieutenants Jebe and Subetai to explore westward with an expeditionary force of about 20,000. They eventually reach the Caspian Sea and cross the Caucasus. On the Russian steppe, they defeat an army comprised mostly of Qipchaqs and trounce an allied force of 80,000 Russian soldiers — more than four times the number of men Jebe and Subetai have — before sweeping through the loosely affiliated city-states of Russia, pillaging and looting. In the end they return to the Great Khan's capital at Karakorum, wealthy, experienced and road-worn.

TIMELINE OF THE MONGOL ERA

The following chart should provide useful detail for Storytellers who wish to run Mongol chronicles or even for those whose players might wish to have their European characters take flight along the Silk Road at the end of the 13th century CE.

Year	Event
c. 1166	Temujin is born.
1175	Yesugei the Brave is poisoned to death by Tatars.
1206	<i>Kuriltai</i> confirms Temujin as Genghis Khan.
1209	Mongols attack Ningxia.
1210	Xixia Emperor tenders his loyalty to Genghis Khan; Xixia becomes a puppet state of the Mongols.
1211	Mongols sweep into Jin Empire and attack Koryo.
1214	Mongols take Zhongdu from Jin; Jin capital moves to Kaifeng.
1218	Mongols take Kashgar.
1218	Mongols take Balasagun, the capital of the Kara-Khitai Empire.
1220	Mongols take Samarkand; 80,000 men defeat 110,000.
1221	Subetai and Jebe maraud through the Caucasus and southern Russia.
1222	Subetai and Jebe sack Kiev.
1223	Subetai and Jebe return to the empire.
1227	Genghis Khan conquers Xixia; destroys Ningxia. In August, Genghis Khan dies. Ogadei Khan becomes Great Khan (khagan) of the Mongols.
1230	Mongols conquer what is now Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia and Turkey.
1231	Maragheh becomes capital of the Ilkhanate.
1233	Mongols drive Jin Emperor from Kaifeng.
1234	Mongols conquer Jin Empire.
1235	Mongol nobles meet in <i>kuriltai</i> and resolve to attack southward and westward.
1236	First refugees from the east swarm into Hungary. Mongols invade across the Volga; conquer Bulgars.
1240	Batu conquers Russian principalities; they remain vassals for centuries.
1241	Batu conquers Hungary and Poland; Mongol scouts reach outskirts of Vienna. Ogadei dies.
1242	Sarai becomes capital of the Golden Horde. Batu's forces leave Europe.
1246	Guyuk becomes khagan.
1248	Guyuk dies.
1251	<i>Kuriltai</i> elects Mongke khagan.
1253	Hulegu Khan is sent west to conquer Baghdad.
1258	Mongol army including Georgians, Armenians and Persians sacks Baghdad.
1259	Egyptian Mamluks defeat Mongols at Ain Jalut in Galilee.
1260	Kublai Khan declares himself khagan; he is countered by his brother Ariq-boke.
1264	After several battles, Ariq-boke's forces are defeated and Kublai Khan becomes khagan in fact. War between Hulegu's Ilkhanate and Berke's Golden Horde, which are largely independent of Kublai at this point.
1265	Tabriz becomes capital of the Ilkhanate.
1267	Daidu founded as Mongol imperial capital.
1273	Kublai conquers Fangcheng and Xiangyang.
1274	Mongols attempt (and fail) to invade Japan.
1276	Hangzhou (Linan), the Song Chinese capital, falls.
1279	Kublai Khan conquers China and founds the Yuan Dynasty.
1281	Mongols attempt (and fail again) to invade Japan.
1294	Kublai Khan dies.
1335	The last of Hulegu's line dies; Timur forges a new empire out of Samarkand.
1368	Chinese overthrow Mongols and found Ming dynasty.
1388	Ming Chinese destroy Karakorum.
1502	Final remnant of the Golden Horde in Russia ceases to be.

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Upon Jebe and Subetai's return, Genghis Khan orders the subjugation of the rebellious Xixia. Peasants in the field are slaughtered, and skilled craftsmen are taken prisoner. When the time comes to sack Ningxia, the capital, the Mongols have a difficult time laying siege; the defenders on the walls manage to repel the nomad raiders. On his deathbed, Genghis Khan orders his men to break a nearby dam and flood Ningxia. They do, and the city is destroyed; today only watery foundations of buildings persist.

AN ENDING

Genghis Khan makes it clear in the closing days of his life that rulership of the Mongol tribe and its possessions should pass to his third son, Ogadei. The eldest, Jochi, is dead, and the second, Chaghatai, is incompetent. The Khan collapses of typhus in 1227 and orders the extermination of the Xixia people as retribution for their insolence, for they did not supply needed troops when he called upon them.

Genghis Khan dies of typhus later that same year. His body is buried within sight of the mountain Burkhan Khaldun, but its final location is a secret: Those whom the funeral procession encounters on the road are put to the sword lest they unknowingly reveal the secret of the khan's tomb. Forty "moonlike" virgins and forty horses are sacrificed as he is buried, for his pleasure in the next life, and a thousand horses trample his burial pasture when all is done so that no trace remains of the khan's final resting site.

THE GREAT KHAN AFTER DEATH

No Cainite gives the Great Khan the Embrace. Whether this is a deliberate conspiracy or simply a combined lack of opportunity is unknown. He keeps no undead advisors, at least not by the end of his life, so no vampire is known to see him die. By the time Genghis Khan has been dead an hour, it is too late for even the swiftest Cainite to grant him unlife. Rumors about the Great Khan's fate spread like wildfire among the undead during Ogadei Khan's reign, however; see page 61 for more details.

More interesting to the Anda are stories that Genghis Khan *was* offered the Embrace and refused it. In one of these tales, Temujin's boyhood *anda* brother Jamugha, his death faked decades earlier, is the one to offer immortality to the Great Khan; in another, the undead Yesugei the Brave, Temujin's father, tries to grant the Blood of Dobrul to his son. Universally, however, the Great Khan rejects the blood and goes quietly into the afterlife.

INTERLUDE: GENGHIS' DEATH AND SUCCESSION (1227-1241)

Upon Ogadei's ascension to the throne, he follows Mongol tradition, granting the furthest-distant grazing lands to the eldest son of the dead khan. Ogadei himself is the third son of the Great Khan. Jochi is the eldest of his brothers, but dies just before Genghis Khan himself. His land is granted to his eldest son, Batu. Chaghatai receives free reign over the lands from Besh-baliq to Utrar and south as far as Kashgar. Tolui contests Ogadei's claim to the throne, delaying his coronation for a year or two, but eventually relents and is granted the lands nearest Karakorum as a birthright for the Khan's youngest son.

One of Ogadei's first acts as Great Khan, with the aid and direction of a great *kuriltai*, is to direct Batu Khan and Subetai the Brave to conquer Jochi's lands in the far west, abandoned after a rampage in the early 1220s. Ogadei grants Batu the lands from the current westernmost pasture of the empire as far west as he can conquer and hold. While Ogadei consolidates and manages power in Mongolia, Batu and Subetai take over 100,000 men marauding westward to seek their fortunes.

THE MONGOLS AND EUROPE

The average person in 13th century Europe sees the Far East ("India," a name which seems to serve as a stand-in for anywhere from Cathay to Ethiopia) as a place of great peace, possibly ruled by the great Christian King Prester John. Tales abound of strange monsters and barbarians, but those are thought to be only a small part of the population.

The first contact the people of Europe have with the tribes of the steppe is with the Qipchaqs and their tormentors, the Mongols. The Mongols are not Christian, though they hardly serve Satan as some Europeans think. They are not the harbingers of the Biblical Armageddon, either, despite the destruction and chaos they bring. They are men, nothing more, with orders to conquer as much land as they can hold.

Batu Khan, Ogadei's nephew and the late Jochi's son, rules the Qipchaq Khanate, later also called the Khanate of the Golden Horde. Batu rules it in name, since he is a descendant of Genghis Khan, but Subetai the Brave, an old companion of Genghis Khan himself, is the army's mastermind. Subetai is a canny old

bastard who directs the Golden Horde's lightning-strike conquest of Russia and, a few years later, the invasion of Europe past the Balkan and Carpathian Mountains.

A PLEA FOR AID

In 1238, missions arrive in France and England imploring the kings of each nation for aid against the Mongol menace. Though reports have trickled even this far west of the "Tartar menace" near the Volga River, courtiers of both nations are shocked to learn that the emissaries come from the Old Man of the Mountain, king of the Assassins of Alamut.

As might be imagined, the Saracens and their troubles do not evoke great sympathy in the courts of Henry III or Louis IX. Both kings accept tribute and welcome the Ismaili ambassadors, but neither is willing to send aid of any kind to the hated Muslims. Instead, they assume that the Mongols and Ismaili will fight one another, and the survivor will be an easy target for Europe's crusaders. In the end, the Mongols sack and pillage Ismaili holdings across Arab lands, but that hardly makes them easy pickings.

EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

Four men dominate the politics of Eastern Europe in the years leading up to the Mongol invasion: Frederick II, the Holy Roman Emperor; Pope Gregory IX, leader of the Roman Catholic Church; Bela IV, King of Hungary; and Henry, Duke of Silesia. Frederick is alleged to be an atheist and greatly resents that Gregory is thought his superior; he is, however, a brilliant man and a skilled strategist. Bela rules a patchwork state, with enemies on all sides and within; he ostensibly owes his allegiance to Frederick. And Henry, while not the legal ruler of the four states that make up Poland (that honor goes to Prince Boleslav V of Krakow), is certainly the most powerful and respected of Polish monarchs.

The situation in Hungary is terribly confused, and conflict between Frederick and Gregory only exacerbates that confusion. When Batu leads the Mongol Horde against Russia starting in 1236, he divides the Qipchaq people (nomads much like the Mongols who are called "Cumans" by Europeans). Some half of the Qipchaqs pledge allegiance to the Great Khan; the remainder (more than 200,000 people) flee for their lives over the Balkans and Carpathians into Hungary. Khan Khoytan leads those

fleeing; he begs Bela IV for sanctuary near Buda and Pest, pledging fealty and the strength of 40,000 warriors.

Bela grants the Cumans sanctuary in 1240; this action enrages and alienates many of his nobles, who mistrust Khoytan's true loyalty and the Cumans' real motives for moving onto the fertile Hungarian plain. Archduke Frederick of Austria (not to be confused with Holy Roman Emperor Frederick) is not one of Bela's vassals but doesn't hesitate to sow the seeds of mistrust among Hungarian nobles whose lands border his own. Archduke Frederick either greatly distrusts the Cumans or sees immense opportunity in their arrival.

EUROPEAN CAINITES

The forces of Batu and Subetai drive hard and fast to deny Europe's leaders a chance to unify their armies, but they do not move so fast as to deny the ancient Cainites of Europe their prescient vision. Elders of many clans hear of the vast horde's approach; farsighted undead lords of the Carpathians easily extrapolate visions of a chaotic invasion into prophecy of a horde to destroy Europe.

The response to this is mixed, of course; the clans in Europe are nothing if not fragmented. Only a few clans naturally possess gifts of prophecy, and only the exceptionally talented have any foresight at all; the events of 1240 catch many Cainites, even those in Eastern Europe, entirely off-guard. Vampires certainly do not mobilize *en masse* to fight off the Mongol horde.

The Tzimisce, arguably the most territorial of all Cainites, attempt to mobilize some forces to defend their lands. The curse of their blood keeps the Fiends from simply pulling up roots to avoid onrushing war, but if refugees like the Qipchaqs are to be believed, the Mongol horde is destroying everything in its path and slaying every person it comes across. Unable to flee and facing the destruction of their herds, the Tzimisce prepare war ghouls and similar monstrosities and arm their revenant minions to fight the horde. This is relatively simple, since the warriors of the Tzimisce are already in fighting trim thanks to constant conflict among the *voivodes* and against the Tremere.

Clan Tremere, whose newly undead wizards stole the gift of foresight from the Salubri, face a slightly different conflict than the Tzimisce, for they are free to move around as they wish. However, their greatest mystic secrets are held in the magical fortress Ceoris. Though the mundane lands of Eastern Europe are generally less important to the Tremere, Ceoris itself is a prize to fight for. The Tremere and Tzimisce are already on a war footing as it is, and the fighting between them truly does not let up until the Mongols are on their doorstep, and sometimes not even then.

WIND FROM THE EAST

The Cappadocians' close ties to the land of the dead let them hear the echoes of the Mongols' hoofbeats well before the horde even crosses the Volga. Thousands of mortals die as the Mongols sack cities across Asia; their death throes ring like soft winter bells in the ears of elder Graverobbers. The Cappadocians do not fear the coming of the horde; some young rebels among their number welcome an invasion for the splendid mass destruction it is sure to bring about. Many of the clan's elders are hoarders of ancient scrolls and artifacts, however; whole caravans of primeval treasures make their way westward in the years from 1236 to 1241. Occupied with this evacuation, the elders of the Cappadocian

THE UNLIKELY RESPONSES

Wind from the East paints the Mongols' invasion of Russia and Eastern Europe in as broad strokes as possible in order to allow Storytellers to follow their own visions of Cainite events around the battles. However, a few events are utterly unlikely.

The first is an armed Cainite response to the invasion. Most vampires just don't get that worked up about war, especially not the medieval kind. It is very easy for a creature of the average Cainite's power to avoid any war it wishes to, and armies generally operate by day. As a general rule, the only vampires who get involved in hostilities are those who have something to gain or lose from that war. Even when that is the case, they are more likely to operate behind the scenes and on the outskirts than form part of any fighting force.

Just as unlikely is a unified Cainite response to the invasion. Vampires are a fractious bunch. Only a few clans act in unison on any matter, and even those few fight amongst themselves most of the time. A broad coalition of clans to repel the Mongol invaders is likely only to occur in order for mischief-makers to stir up trouble in the coalition members' homelands while they are away concocting a battle plan.

The final event is the least likely of all: a response by one or more Antediluvians. Think of all of the invasions of Europe the Antediluvians did *not* stop over the last 8000 years. Why would they care about this one in particular? Unless it is your plan that the Mongols are the harbingers of Gehenna — a fine plan! — the Antediluvians are likely to simply remain in stony torpor, oblivious to the chaos above.

clan keep the onrushing armies' presence a secret from their Ventrue and other allies until the Mongols cross the Volga, by which time it is too late.

Knights, scholars and artists of the Toreador do not receive visions of the horde until far later than their eastern brethren; the Toreador are few in number as far east as Hungary and the Polish principalities.

KNIGHTS OF PROPHECY

And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

— Revelations 6:2

The Cainite Order of the Bitter Ashes (see *The Ashen Knight*) has possession of a severed human head that periodically spouts prophecy. In the autumn of 1206, at precisely the time that Temujin is named Genghis Khan by the *kuriltai* he gathers, the head speaks, in Hebrew, several chapters of the Bible; most notably Revelations 6.

The Order is somewhat stumped by this chanting; several elder members of the group cast out with oracular abilities of their own. They learn of the rise of the Mongol armies in the Far East, but have little ability (or, indeed, desire) to act against them until they come to threaten the order's own holdings. In the meantime, one Grail Knight and his entourage is assigned to quest eastward to discover the true extent and nature of the barbarian menace.

Fortunately, the Artisans tend to prey upon mortals living in Western Europe, and the coming invasion does not immediately threaten most of them. Many Toreador keep good relations with Ventrue and other Cainites of Eastern Europe; it is through those Toreador, third- and fourth-hand, that word of the coming invasion trickles through the Cainite population of Poland and Hungary.

Malkavians have plenty of visions, both through the *Auspex* talent they share with the clans above and through their own madness. Chaos intrudes into Malkavian souls much as death does into the souls of the Cappadocians, and the Mongols bring both westward. The Madmen's visions are often much less comprehensible than those of members of other clans, of course. Even when visions are airily clear, Malkavians have agendas much as any other vampire; the Madmen are as likely to use portents of great

invasion for their own purposes as they are to spread the word. And when the Malkavians do spread the word, they are often ignored. It is no better a time to be a Malkavian than any other.

Lastly, a caste among Clan Assamite senses imminent danger to Alamut itself from the Mongol Horde; though the steppe raiders are only mortal, tens of thousands of them ride across the plain. Ancient plans to improve the magical concealment of the true Alamut go into action; the Mongols' attention is diverted to the mortals' Alamut.

THE GOLDEN HORDE

In 1236 a force of some 60,000 warriors (along with accompanying wives, children, and slaves) sets out westward from Karakorum. It takes a few months to reach the Volga River, the traditional eastern boundary of the Russian principalities. There the Mongols find the capital of the old Bulgar kingdom. Tired and eager from months of travel, the horde sets upon Bolgar like locusts on a wheat field; in only a few days, the city is burned to the ground and its inhabitants killed, enslaved or routed. Batu allows many refugees to escape; this is the same strategy that Genghis Khan used in his campaign against Xixia and the Khwarazm. There, the Great Khan nearly destroyed Utrar but let enough refugees escape to spread the word that Genghis Khan of the Mongols was a monster who would surely destroy your city and kill your families if you did not do precisely as he asked. In this way, the horde conquers many cities without loosing an arrow.

Batu and Subetai use this tactic in Russia with moderate success. Tales of the destruction of Bolgar spread as far as Novgorod in a matter of weeks; while they do so, the horde slides southwest along the Volga. Unlike the nations further west, Russia is a collection of loosely allied principalities; few princes are willing to throw their own armies onto the field to die for another's city. As a result, even those cities that do fight are easily defeated.

Mongol forces ford the Volga south of Ryazan; there it appears that the town's nobility has not learned the lesson of Bolgar and a weeklong siege ensues, punctuated by a frenzy of looting and rape as the city's defenders are slain or flee. Batu and Subetai repeat this theme with slight variations in Moscow, Vladimir, Chernigov and Kiev before pausing for winter. While resting and recuperating, Subetai sends dozens of spies westward; they easily conceal themselves among the refugees fleeing in that direction or pass themselves off as frightened Qipchaqs.

WIND FROM THE EAST

PRINCES OF RUSSIA

Of the cities the Mongols sack, only Novgorod is large enough for Cainites to give real consideration, and its population is under 25,000. Nevertheless, each of the major cities has an aged Cainite prince. Most of them hail from Clan Tzimisce or Clan Ventrue; though Gangrel and Assamites are common in the area, few of either clan wish to stand as prince for long.

The Russian princes of this era are the worst kind of calcified Cainite; each has dozens of schemes in place aimed at stymieing the others' plans against him. Locked in a six-way eternal stalemate, none is willing to take action as the Mongols approach the Volga. Each prince assumes that rumors of invading barbarians are simply the work of one of his counterparts; they all fan the embers of rumor into flames and panic, but none leaves her haven or allocates her resources any differently than she had before. When the Mongols do finally arrive, Cainites react in many ways; some flee, some stand and fight, and others attempt to co-opt the invaders to their own ends. The Russian princes, their minds all but frozen and unable to react to changing events, continue to administer their cities as though there were no invaders. This leads to their swift destruction; several are diablerized by hungry Anda and their allies while others are trapped in burning buildings or otherwise slain by horsemen rampaging through their cities.

The great cities of Russia thereby become grounds for competition among ambitious young vampires....

VAMPIRES AMONG THE HORDE

As mentioned above, the Anda encounter distant relatives in the form of Russian and Islamic Cainites when the Great Khan's empire spreads across Asia early in the 13th century. These Eastern Cainites descend from several great lineages, and many of them Embrace childer from among the conquering Mongols, either out of curiosity, novelty or a desire to infiltrate the horde.

Numerically, the Anda dominate the Cainites of the horde. Their clan weakness (which forces them to remain on the move) keeps them from physically dominating the other Cainites by establishing domain, but they are most familiar with Mongol culture and easily blend in among their herds. At least one of Batu Khan's advisors is an Anda vampire, though Subetai remains independent of vampiric influence

throughout his life. Anda ride with the horde because their camps (that is, their herds) do so or because they wish to see the greater world.

Some Wu Zao also join the Golden Horde as it expands westward in the hopes of using the destruction as cover for unearthing a variety of artifacts. These temple thieves have a hard time using this tactic more than a few times. The Anda with whom they share feeding stock are not anxious to extend aid to those who have helped their Wan Kuei enemies and purge the horde of three-eyed predators whenever they can.

The Gangrel first encounter the Golden Horde as it crosses the Volga into Russia; that great river serves as a legendary gate to Hell for many Gangrel, and most avoid its far bank when they can. The ancient Gangrel warrior Arnulf, who long ago rode with the Xiongnu (whom Rome called the Huns), stands waiting for the Mongols as they approach. Finally, one night Arnulf emerges from the ground to find himself surrounded by an enormous, festive gathering; untold numbers of horses and more than one hundred thousand men make camp within Russia. Over a few months, Arnulf and half a dozen of his clansmen Embrace at least a dozen Mongols.

Clan Ravnos has a few members in the horde as well. Though the Clan's core population is in India, Ravnos survive well in cities further north such as Samarkand. When the horde moves through that great city, then, it picks up a few Ravnos, and at least a few Mongol Ravnos neonates. The Ravnos do not have a set agenda regarding the invasion; they regard the horde itself, a vast moving city, to be sufficiently interesting to keep their attention. Exploration and investigation of the state of affairs in Europe figure into this as well.

Assamites remain among the shattered kingdoms of the Khwarazm and its descendants and allies even after the Mongol hammer falls. A few Assamites latch onto the ever-growing horde when its Mongol masters press Persians into services either as frontline warriors or slave labor. The Assamites are not a large part of the Golden Horde, and, like the Ravnos, they have no interest in conquest.

When the Mongols raid Russia, sacking and burning her cities, they displace a few Ventrue and Tzimisce warlords who lived in the Motherland's borders. For the most part, Russian Tzimisce are stuck in their home principalities, and Raiya Ironhammer, for instance, inflicts the terrible Tzimisce Embrace on a few Mongol chiefs as punishment for the horde's damage to her homeland. Those chiefs are ever after stuck, unable to ride fearlessly for nights on end; they

are trapped in Russia for all their days. And Raiya Ironhammer is not the cruelest Tzimisce sire in Russia. Ventrue have it somewhat easier, though it is certainly the case that in the early days of the sixteenth century, a few Ventrue ancillae enter torpor who were previously only able to feed on mortals from the Golden Horde.

Wan Kuei of the Black Tortoise Court also ride westward with the horde, and these creatures pose the greatest mystery and challenge to Western Cainites who investigate the horde's hidden politics and conflict. The Black Tortoise Court and its denizens are detailed in Chapter Two of this book; the motives and abilities of Wan Kuei of the Fourth Age are described best in **World of Darkness: Blood & Silk**. Three *wu* (the equivalent of coteries) of Black Tortoise Wan Kuei ride westward: the Valiant Archers, the Dragon's Ember and the Silver Blade Horsemen.

INVASION

By the time Batu's army is prepared to invade Hungary, he has over 150,000 warriors. Many of those are recently subjugated Qipchaqs; others are Russian slaves or other conquered peoples, and of course, the

CAINITE AGENDAS

The Gangrel Arnulf rides with the forces of Batu and Subetai as they cross the frozen rivers into Europe. Thousands of years old, Arnulf has one primary goal: to destroy every vestige of sedentary civilization. He truly believes that the nomadic barbarian way of life is the only way for mortals and Cainites to exist; he considers the cities of Europe an insult by their very existence. Arnulf and his brood plan to use the Golden Horde as a tool to accomplish his goal.

Batu and Subetai have different plans, of course: They wish only to subjugate the sedentary peoples of Europe and extract tax revenue. Subetai is aware of the attempts at supernatural manipulation of his nephew's army; though he is no magician, he is a cunning warrior and skilled politician. He subverts Arnulf's plans, reinforcing his own army's motivations for making this trip: not destruction, but conquest.

The Anda who ride with Batu's army have simpler desires than Arnulf's. They want new territory; they are very curious about their western cousins; and, like their mortal brethren, they take pleasure in hunting and war. They are able to find all three as the Golden Horde enters Europe.

(For more information, including game statistics, on Arnulf, see **Transylvania by Night**.)

remainder is comprised of Mongols who made the long trip from Karakorum with their khan. This is typical Mongol behavior: Subjugated people fight on the front lines, both so that they can prove their loyalty and because they are the most expendable in the eyes of the khan. Over the winter of 1240-41, Batu prepares 70,000 soldiers to invade Hungary.

Batu and Subetai divide their forces into three main bodies for the invasion of Western Europe. They have taken plenty of western captives since invading Russia, and their greatest concern is that the Christians will unite under a single banner and rally against them. These fears are unfounded, of course, but in 1241 the Mongols cannot know that. Accordingly, Batu sends a body of 20,000 men northward, around the Carpathians, to engage the Polish armies and keep them from coming to Hungary's aid. The main body of the horde, 40,000 men under Batu himself, passes through the Carpathians to attack Hungary directly. A flanking force of 10,000 led by Ogadei's grandson Qadan is to pass through the Tihuta Pass into Transylvania. Should Baidar and Kaidu, the leaders of the group sent to attack Poland, defeat the Polish princes, they are instructed to ensure that the other forces of the Holy Roman Empire cannot come to Bela's aid. They succeed beyond anyone's expectations.

Batu complicates matters for the Hungarians by using their shelter of the Qipchaqs as his premise for invasion. He demands that Bela stop sheltering his enemies or he will invade. Bela rejects the threat and sends heralds throughout the kingdom carrying bloody swords, the traditional symbol of a national emergency. As Batu expects, however, the nobility of Hungary rises up against the Qipchaqs; Archduke Frederick of Austria has Khan Khoytan assassinated during a riot in Buda, and 200,000 Qipchaq refugees rampage southward along the Danube, distracting the Hungarians from the great horde looming to the east.

EUROPE'S ANSWER

The European response to the "Tartar" invasion is fragmented and without central coordination; despite Emperor Frederick's command that all kings and princes must aid against the coming of the barbarians, panicked or selfish monarchs keep their troops home to defend their lands against the Tartars (apparently called such as a pun on the words Tatar and Tartarus, or Hell).

Some feudal lords do send troops eastward, however. King Wenceslas of Bohemia sends 50,000 men toward Poland; Henry the Pious of Silesia has 30,000 men, variously French Knights Templar, Polish



WIND FROM THE EAST

knights, Teutonic Knights and footmen raised up from Silesia and the German town of Goldberg. And King Louis IX of France makes preparations to travel east, though there is no indication that he ever does so.

The fighting begins in earnest early in March of 1241, as Baidar and Kaidu take 20,000 men north around the Carpathians into Poland while Batu and Subetai wait a day or two and then push the main body, some 50,000 men, into Hungary. Qadan takes 10,000 of those southward toward the Tihuta pass to enter Transylvania. Before any part of the main body enters Hungary, Baidar and Kaidu win a battle at Krakow, routing Polish and Slavic troops there. On March 12, the split parts of the main body cross through the Carpathians; they have yet to see any real resistance to their movements.

On Monday, March 18, Baidar and Kaidu rout another Polish army at Chmelnik, and on Palm Sunday, six days later, they sack and burn Krakow. Baidar and Kaidu have only 20,000 men, but by the end of March, they have defeated a combined total of more than 100,000. The Mongol commanders, however, know they have to find Duke Henry's main force, and quickly, for Wenceslas' 50,000 men are only two days' march away from their current position. Henry, meanwhile, has no idea of Wenceslas' proximity, and begins to worry that the Mongols may be reinforced any day. He chooses to meet them on the plain of Wahlstadt, outside Liegnitz.

Only Polish national pride dignifies the massacre at Wahlstadt with the name "battle." The Mongol force has only 20,000 men, compared to 30,000 European soldiers. Yet roughly 25,000 Europeans — 5 combatants in 6 — die at Wahlstadt. The Teutonic Knights and Knights Templar prefer to fight with lance and sword, not bow and arrow; their cavalry charges against the highly mobile, missile-bearing Mongols meet with little success and often result in a rapid encirclement. Mongol warriors shoot the heavily armored knights' horses out from under them and then assault the knights with arrows until they are no more. The European troops in the battle lack discipline: Overeager knights and footmen swiftly pursue a Mongol withdrawal until it becomes all too obvious that it is a feint. Once again, the European soldiers find themselves cut off, surrounded, and can only hope death comes swiftly.

The Mongols prove to be an unstoppable force. King Bela's armies march out of Buda and Pest the day of the slaughter of Henry's armies, and they face Batu and Subetai's main body around a day and a half later. Bela has roughly 70,000 men, compared to the Mongols' 40,000 or so. They meet at the Sajó River;

the Mongols control the only bridge over it, which Bela's men retake. Subetai directs about half of the Mongol force northward to a ford; they cross it and charge southward, encircling the Hungarian forces in a killing field. With the coordinated efforts of Mongols on both sides of the Sajó, some 50,000 Hungarian soldiers die. Bela himself escapes to Austria.

Not long after the battle of the Sajó River, Qadan's forces meet back up with the main body, having burned and pillaged their way through Moldavia and Transylvania. Baidar and Kaidu return as well, and Batu's force pushes its way still further west. By the end of summer, the Mongol horde is less than 100 miles from Vienna; they camp for the winter on the Hungarian plain, some of them as far west as Dalmatia on the shores of the Adriatic. Everywhere the armies go, the stories are the same: Stunning defeat after stunning defeat strikes the forces of Europe.

WITHDRAWAL

In December of 1241, the Golden Horde receives word that Ogadei Khan has died. Though the horde is camped across Hungary and Austria for the winter at this point, Batu decides that with the spring thaw the army will return to Karakorum so that he might properly lay in his claim to become the next *khagan*. In February 1242, they retreat to the Qipchaq Steppe beyond the Russian frontier.

Ogadei Khan's death in Karakorum proves a godsend for the armies of Europe. No army of substance lay between the Mongol frontier in Dalmatia and the Atlantic Ocean; even if one did, the Mongols had repeatedly bested the strongest armies Hungary and Poland could field. It is possible that the Holy Roman Empire and France might stall Batu's advance if they worked in unison, but they were unlikely to do so. Additionally, their forces were best trained in the kind of tactics that the Hungarian army found so dangerously ineffective at Liegnitz. Without a near-miracle, surely all Europe would have had to pay allegiance to faraway Karakorum. Ogadei's death turns out to be the answer to all Europe's prayers.

SUNSET ON EMPIRE

Ogadei's death punctuates a grand period in Mongol history: Never again will the succession of the empire be simple and uncontested, nor will the four *ulus* ever act as complete allies again. And with the invasion of Europe, the Cainites of the Far East receive incontrovertible proof that they are kin to a greater breed; they cannot quite reconcile their own tales of their origins with those told by those of the West, but that seems a relatively minor point of debate.

THE DEATH OF OGADEI

To the Cainites of Europe, the death of Ogadei Khan is all too convenient. Batu Khan's armies stopped their advance less than a hundred miles from Vienna, already a Tremere stronghold. It is as though the Mongols were conjured up for the sole purpose of rampaging destructively through Tzimisce and eastern Ventrue lands. Few Cainites — especially those of an eastern vintage — believe that Ogadei's death comes by typhus or old age. In fact, many Cainites believe that the story is fabricated to persuade Batu to retreat.

Among the unliving, theories about Ogadei's assassin abound. The Assamites are perennial candidates to commit such a crime. Assassination is certainly a talent of theirs, and their homeland is under siege by the Mongol forces, but the timing of the death seems too linked to affairs in Europe. The Gangrel or their mortal allies could make the trip to Karakorum, but they do not appear to have a motive for killing Ogadei. The Tremere have the motive, and of course they have the mystical means to commit such a deed; the hand of the Usurpers is the favored theory. And although the Ventrue of Hungary and the Tzimisce of Transylvania and Moldavia enact schemes to swiftly evict the new conquerors, even they cannot prove that it was their machinations that struck Ogadei down.

In the end, the vampires of Europe know no solid facts, save that Ogadei Khan is dead, apparently by natural causes, and that too many benefit from his death for a killer to be obvious. In truth, the greatest likelihood is that a fondness for *qumis* killed the *khagan*.

DIVISIONS AND SUCCESSIONS

After Ogadei's death and succession, the empire's split into four "brother khanates" becomes somewhat more pronounced. When Ogadei was alive, it was clear that each khanate was subservient to the greater empire; one of Genghis Khan's four sons (or his heir) ruled each khanate, and all four knew that the royal family itself owned the empire. They saw themselves merely as caretakers. As Genghis Khan's sons die off, this tradition slowly disintegrates.

Immediately after the death of Ogadei, the empire falls into its first period of political uncertainty. Ogadei was Genghis' handpicked successor, and so his ascension to the throne was never in doubt. However, Ogadei's handpicked successor, his grand-

son Shiramon, is not a serious candidate for the throne. The main contender, instead, is Ogadei's son Guyuk, Shiramon's uncle. Guyuk is the son of Ogadei's wife Toragana and in the months between Ogadei's death and the return of the other major rulers of the Empire, Toragana acts as regent.

Toragana is regent for four years, during which time she arranges Guyuk's ascension. The other contenders to the throne are Batu Khan, son of Jochi, fresh from battle across the new Qipchaq Khanate, and Temuge, aged brother of Genghis Khan.

The *kuriltai* is long and contentious. Batu Khan feigns illness rather than attend; he becomes keenly aware that he is not likely to acquire the *khagan*'s throne, but he does wring some concessions out of the *kuriltai*. Guyuk finally becomes *khagan*, accepting the title in order to keep it in his bloodline.

Guyuk is something of a tyrant from the perspective of his fellow princes. He does his best to stamp out the independence that is the birthright of the rulers of the other four main *ulus*. In just two short years, Guyuk's demands for obedience lead him and Batu Khan to harsh words and nearly to war; in fact, Batu and Guyuk march on one another's territories. It is only Guyuk's death from hard drink and exhaustion on the road that keeps an outright civil war from erupting. A bloody coup follows Guyuk's death; his

GIOVANNI DE PLANO CARPINI

In April of 1245, Pope Innocent IV sends the Franciscan friar Giovanni de Plano Carpini from Lyons with letters to the Great Khan, exhorting him and his nation to become Christians and attack civilized people no more. The friar reaches Sarai a year later, where Batu Khan accepts him as a guest and agrees to have him escorted to the presence of the Great Khan himself.

Carpini arrives in Karakorum by July of 1246. The friar got a chance to witness the *kuriltai* that elected Guyuk as *khagan*, and describes Guyuk Khan as being "...of middle height, very wise, astute, serious and most grave in his air and manner."

Although Guyuk and many of his senior advisors are Nestorian Christians — Carpini witnesses at least one Nestorian Mass while in Karakorum — the Great Khan's response to Innocent IV is not what the Pope expects. The *khagan* states that Innocent, along with all the kings and nobles of Europe, should travel to Karakorum and pay him homage, as he, Guyuk, is ruler of the world by the mandate of Eternal Heaven.

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widow wishes to keep Ogadei's line on the throne, but Batu Khan and the descendants of Tolui Khan cooperate to get Tolui's grandson Mongke into place as Emperor. Many eligible men descended from Chaghatai and Ogadei die in this coup — so many in fact that all future Mongol Emperors descend from Tolui's family.

Mongke is a more than capable emperor. After the problems of Guyuk's short reign, Mongke is seen as the savior of the Empire. He rules for about nine years, during which time he returns much of the autonomy previously known by the princes of the four *ulus*. He owes his throne to Batu Khan, and because of that debt, Batu's Qipchaq Khanate is virtually an independent state, though it does nod to the authority of the throne at Karakorum. Mongke Khan is a Nestorian Christian, but he is tolerant of Buddhists and Muslims and has little respect for Papal authority; in one famous letter to King Louis IX of France he writes, "There is but one God in heaven, and on earth one sovereign: Genghis Khan, son of God."

After a 1253 *kuriltai*, Mongke sends his brother Hulegu westward to conquer the Islamic lands of southwest Asia, and his brother Kublai south to conquer Song China. His third brother, Ariq-boke, Mongke keeps close at hand to rule over the *ulus* closest to Karakorum. Batu finally dies in the middle of Mongke's reign; his own son takes over the vast Golden Horde, but no longer is it the independent entity seen under the reign of the great Batu.

PERSIA

The catalyst for Hulegu's army to march westward is the arrival of more than 400 envoys from the Ismailis bent on murdering the Great Khan. That plot is exposed before the murderers can act, but to exacerbate matters, the Great Khan receives a letter from a judge living near the Ismaili bastion of Aluh Amut, begging for aid against the Ismailis. Hulegu sacks Aluh Amut in 1256 and parades the young Grand Master of the Ismaili sect from castle to castle throughout the area, enabling his troops to make several conquests without an arrow shot. Eventually, Hulegu conquers Baghdad in 1258 and even manages to conquer lands as far west as Ain Jalut in Galilee, where the Mamluk armies of Egypt deal out one of the worst defeats of the Mongol Empire. In the end, Hulegu carves out a sizable swath of southwest Asia, and after Mongke's death in 1259, he and his heirs rule that area, calling it the Ilkhanate.

KUBLAI KHAN

Mongke assigns his brother Kublai, always a Sinophile, the unenviable task of conquering Song

ALAMUT AND ALUH AMUT

The Aluh Amut that mortals can conquer is not the Alamut of Children of Haqim. The mountain fortress stormed by the Mongols in 1256 is not, in fact, the home of Clan Assamite. As described in *Libellus Sanguinus III: Wolves at the Door*, the Assamites' mortal brethren in the Ismaili sect live in a mountain fortress called Aluh Amut that is but a shadow of the Assamites' own fortress.

However, many vampires do ride with Hulegu's army as it marches through Persia. Some are heretical Assamites, long since banished from the area. Others come from the Anda, Gangrel or Ravnos clans. Many of these have a piercing curiosity as to the location of the true Alamut, and for years after the conquest of Baghdad, a Ravnos named Jalal makes a good deal of money selling the true location of Alamut to any who can afford his price. And, centuries after this, when the founders of the Camarilla send coterie after coterie out in search of Alamut, several of those groups contain Gangrel who were along when the Mongols sacked the mortal Aluh Amut.

China. This is no sinecure: Since the Mongols' conquests of the Jin and Xixia during the life of Genghis Khan, the front with Song China has been more or less drawn at the Yangtze River. Although the warriors of the Song are no match for the Mongols, the lands south of the Yangtze are more heavily overgrown, and so much harder on cavalry, than the northern reaches of the Middle Kingdom. Therefore a stalemate reigns until the *kuriltai* of 1253, wherein Kublai receives the mandate to conquer the ancient empire of the south.

Mongke himself runs this invasion in name, but it is Kublai who draws up the battle plans, administers conquered territories and truly desires to take the Chinese Emperor's throne for himself. Mongke and Kublai are both skilled generals: the Mongols lay siege to Chinese cities and attack with artillery and rocket fire, in many cases cowing the sedentary and flabby Chinese into submission. The campaign against the Song comes to a halt with the death of Mongke in 1259; at that point the Mongol Empire degenerates into two primary warring factions. It is only the great damage the Mongols have already done and the incompetence of the Song leadership that prevent the Chinese from launching a great counterattack against Mongol holdings during this period.

The two Mongol factions — one led by Mongke's brother Ariq-boke and the other by Kublai — repre-

EMPIRE OF THE WORLD-CONQUEROR

sent a philosophical divide among the conquerors as much as they do a political one. Ariq-Boke's faction, centered on Karakorum, is comprised mostly of Mongols who wish to retain a nomadic steppe lifestyle; they believe a fierce, stern warrior like the Genghis Khan of old should rule the empire. Ariq-boke and his allies believe that sedentary softness will inevitably lead to the destruction of the empire Genghis forged. Kublai's faction, by contrast, believes that there is something to be said for settled civilization; the Mongols themselves had not made most of the technological advances that they took advantage of in warfare, and they did not have a written language until they conquered a people, the Uighurs, who had one already.

Ariq-boke and Kublai each declare their own *kuriltai*; though Ariq-boke does so first, both rulers are in violation of the laws of Genghis Khan, which state that any *kuriltai* must wait for the hereditary rulers of each of the four *ulus* of the empire to arrive. Each *kuriltai* declares its own sponsor the true and proper ruler of the Mongol Empire; thus armed with hypocrisy, the two factions march onto the field of battle against each other.

Kublai emerges victorious; though Ariq-boke has the support of more Mongol nobles, Kublai has battle-hardened troops fresh from the fighting in China. The civil war lasts four years, and when it is over, Kublai has his brother imprisoned until his death. Kublai is then able to turn his attention back to Song China.

Song China, however, is a tough nut to crack, even for the Mongol armies. The Mongols spend thirteen years (from 1227 to 1240) conquering the Sichuan region alone; China herself is simply not conducive to invading cavalry. After Kublai defeats Ariq-boke, his armies need thirty-six years more to conquer the remainder of China proper. In the end, the terrain of southern China stymies them, but the subversion of the Chinese imperial navy, most of which throws its support Kublai's way at the last minute, insures their success. The turncoats help defeat the last vestige of the Song Dynasty, and the imperial throne is Kublai's. Not until 1276 does Kublai conquer the Song "visiting capital" at Linan, and resistance to his rule persists in the hinterlands for a few years after that.

Kublai is ambitious; even while subjugating Song China, he stages attacks against Nihon, Koryo, Yunnan, Java and other satellite nations of the Far East. The attacks against Nihon both fail disastrously, due to storms and high wind that the Nihonjin refer to as *kamikaze*, the divine wind. Some Mongols do make it to the shores of Nihon in both these attacks, but due to heavy casualties in the storm, they cannot

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muster up the slightest defense, and the Nihonjin swiftly dispatch them. Naval assaults against Java fail similarly; Mongols are not cut out for fighting from the sea. Kublai's armies also find failure in the jungle kingdoms of the south; between the foreign terrain and the elephant-mounted troops of Khmer and Annam, they are swiftly repulsed and make few inroads southward.

Kublai is a strong, talented emperor of China. However, that skill does not translate to retaining the loyalty of rebellious nomads in the north. Qaidu, spiritual successor to Ariq-boke, leads the rebellion against Kublai's rule, and though Kublai remains Great Khan in name, by his death it is obvious that his true authority lies only within the border of the Middle Kingdom. He names his new dynasty Yuan, a name meaning "origin" in Chinese (as Kublai's reign was to be the origin of a new and long-lived dynasty in China). While he is obviously a barbarian conqueror, and therefore unpopular among his new subjects, for the most part Kublai leaves his subjects' daily lives alone. Landowners retain their holdings, for the most part; to them, the only difference is the name of the emperor whose taxes they complain about.

CONFLICT BEHIND THE SCENES

The battles between Ariq-boke and Kublai conceal Wan Kuei conflict. First, in 1260, ostensibly under cover of the mortal battlefield, four *wu* of Yellow Emperor Wan Kuei from the Song lands strike at Black Tortoise holdings in Daidu (modern Beijing). When captured, the Yellow Emperor Wan Kuei insist that they were only hunting rumored *akuma* (Wan Kuei infernalists) in the city. The Black Tortoise Court responds violently to this violation of its territory — no doubt urged onward by the true *akuma* among its members — and for more than a year, a vicious Shadow War rages between those two August Courts.

As if this wasn't bad enough for the Court of the Black Tortoise, a pack of Cainites, led by Anda but consisting of several different clans, descends upon one of the twice-monthly meetings of the court in late spring of 1261. While the western vampires do precious little damage to the elders of the court, several *wu* suffer losses during the assault. This leads the Black Tortoise to a comprehensive search-and-destroy sweep through Daidu and several other northern cities, and causes vampires across the north to carry themselves with considerably more care and wariness for a time.

Kublai erects two new capitals to move the court northward and out of Linan: the town at Daidu is expanded and built up to support a formal capital, which will one day be called Beijing, and Shangdu, Kublai's base of power in Mongolia, becomes the empire's "summer capital". Marco Polo, a European, visits Kublai at his capital in Daidu, and brings Europeans wondrous tales of his travels.

THE SUN SETS

Kublai is truly the last of the Great Khans; none of his successors is particularly memorable or gifted. When he dies in 1294, his grandson Temur takes the throne, and rules competently and peacefully — even if not brilliantly — for thirty years. However, after Temur's death, succession gets fast and furious, with

around half a dozen different emperors ruling in a span of only a few years.

Toghon Temur takes the throne in 1333, at the age of 13. Like his immediate predecessors, he is not terribly competent in the face of the great task before him. Unlike them, he holds onto the throne for some thirty years. But by the end years of Toghon Temur's reign, it is obvious that the Mandate of Heaven has passed from him. The Yellow River floods more than once, causing widespread famine and eventually bringing about one of the worst plagues in recent memory. When the Ming Chinese rise up in Nanking and march on the imperial Mongol capital, all is lost; Toghon Temur is killed in 1368, and the Mongol Empire lies in ashes. Karakorum stands for a short time longer, but it is sacked and nothing but a few stones are left stacked by the end of 1388.







Chapter Two: Monsters on the Steppe

During the fighting Genghis Khan was hit in the neck vein by an arrow, and unable to stop the bleeding, he began to lose strength. At sunset he had to make his bed where he'd fallen, so close to the enemy that they slept side by side. Jelme watched over him, sucking and sucking the blood from his wound until Jelme's mouth and chin were stained with Genghis's blood.

-from The Secret History of the Mongols

ON MONGOLS AND VAMPIRES

The precipitous rise of the Mongol Empire is among the best examples of the distance that separates vampires — Cainite and Cathayan — from the affairs of mortals. To the ancient unliving, the entire Mongol era seems like a mere moment, a blink to their torporous eyes. Yet in this mere moment, empires topple, cities burn, countless die or are displaced, and a small tribe of steppe nomads quite literally conquers the world. To say that the elders and ancestors are taken by surprise is an understatement. This instance of mortal dynamism — already alien to the powers of the night — is all the more astonishing because it comes from an area and a people very much unsuited for vampiric infestation.

In Europe and China, the kings and emperors rule from cities and castles. They are sedentary, open to influence and entreaties, and surround themselves with a convenient food supply of courtiers and peasants. All very useful to the vampiric manipulator. The Mongols are nomads inhabiting a semi-arid steppe area with a very low density of convenient human snacks. Until they conquer everyone before them, they make extremely unattractive vampiric feeding stock.

Only small groups of night-dwellers make their homes on the steppe from the beginning, existing largely hidden from each other. The most prominent are the Wan Kuei of the Black Tortoise Court, but even they have relatively little presence in the true Mongol homeland. Only a rare offshoot of the Gangrel, known as the Anda, see the Mongols as their stock. Other rare vampiric visitors do frequent the steppe, however, including the lost orphans of Saulot, the so-called Wu Zao.

Of course, once the Mongols become a world-shaking power, the number of vampires interested in them soars. Like flies to a corpse, ambitious Cainites and Cathayans stream toward a new center of power. And as the Mongol Empire stretches further and further, it unknowingly swallows up more and more blood-drinkers.

THE SCIONS OF CAINE

As the Mongol Empire expands under the rule of Genghis Khan and his children and grandchildren, it intrudes into territory inhabited by the descendants of Caine. Nearly every Cainite clan grants the curse to at least one Mongol; some clans end up with a large presence in the empire, while others keep their distance from the khanates.

ASSAMITES

The traditional homelands of the Children of Haqim become part of the empire fairly early on; Genghis Khan's conquest of the Khwarazm certainly impacts the eastern reaches of Saracen territory. The warrior caste of the clan refuses to embrace Mongol outsiders just as it refuses to select Christians, but the other two sects feel no such prohibition. Mongol and Qipchaq Assamites who are made viziers or sorcerers are among the fiercest fighters in their respective castes. Most retain a preference for their homeland and the steppe and drift out of Assamite clan politics, which proves to be a boon in coming centuries.

BAALI

Although the Baali have spread out to lands all around the Mediterranean, their heartland lies between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, in the Abbasid Caliphate and Persia; it is these lands that are conquered and become part of the Ilkhanate in the 13th century. Much of the fighting between the Mamluk Sultanate and Mongol Ilkhanate takes place on battlefields subtly corrupted by Baali vampires. However, the Baali do not venture much farther east; they speak fearfully of great, long-sleeping beasts in the earth of the far steppe. Many Baali — especially those Embraced within the last century or so — believe that Genghis Khan and his tribes are incarnation of Gog or Magog from the Book of Revelations. Many of those Baali seek out the Mongol armies in the hopes of participating in the coming apocalypse (and often come to a bad end), while others fervently invoke the forces of darkness, hoping to learn whether their role is to ride with the horde or to subvert mortal civilization from within.

BRUIAH

Some Zealot elders see the Mongol Empire as their chance to rebuild European society and create a new Carthage; they travel to Hungary, Poland and Russia in the wake of the invasions there in the hopes of setting down a new order. In doing so, they come into conflict with the Slavic and Magyar Cainites already present in such areas, as well as the many Mongols who remain on the Russian steppe after the empire withdraws from Europe. The clan's elders approve of the pragmatism of the Mongols and the Cainites associated with them, and those who seek out fierce warriors to serve as bodyguard ghouls or neonates may well find what they search for here.

CAPPADOCIANS

The Graverobbers make up only a miniscule fraction of the Mongol population; no more than a handful of Cappadocians grant the Embrace to the nomads of the steppe. Those few that spend their unlives within the empire travel into the great cities of Persia, there to study pre-Islamic magics and tales of the underworld. However, some Cappadocians travel through Mongol territory in the late days of Genghis Khan's life. The Great Khan and his armies are responsible for some of the greatest scenes of mass death in the history of the world; such locations are naturally appealing to the death-obsessed Cappadocians. And in later years, the Giovanni bloodline of the Cappadocians will make an appearance at Kublai Khan's capital in Shangdu.

FOLLOWERS OF SET

In ancient days the Setites deliberately chose to ignore the Far East and the Asian plain. The area was too vast, too sparsely populated and too far under the sway of mysterious Asian vampires for them to weave their web of corruption and secret hatred in that direction just yet. As the Mongol Empire arises, however, it becomes clear to the clan's elders that their time to expand into Asia may have come sooner than expected. For the time being, they concentrate on retaining hold of their traditional homeland. The Setites will later claim that they were instrumental in the battle of Ain Jalut, in which the Mamluk Sultanate hands the Mongol Empire its first substantive loss. The Mamluks' heavy cavalry decisively outfights Mongol light and medium cavalry at that battle, and

the Followers of Set claim that they alone knew the battle was coming, and placed the right people where they needed to be in order to preserve Jerusalem. The Lasombra, among others, refute this claim.

GANGREL

Clan Gangrel is known for its territoriality and its desire to remain on the fringes of mortal society. This gives two general responses to the rise of the empire. Many Animals quite rightly see the Mongol armies as unwelcome invaders and act as best they can to stall the horde's advance and get the nomads off their territory. By contrast, others choose to travel alongside the army, feeding from it and enjoying the chaos its passage creates. This duality leads to a fracturing of the clan for a few decades, until the Mongol Empire and its khanates settle down into predictability.

Gangrel are the first western vampires to meet the Anda, and the kinship between the two groups is obvious from the outset. The two groups treat each other much as long-lost relatives do — there is brief celebration, and then, for the most part, the groups go back to their nightly unlives. Most Anda are unwilling to "join" Clan Gangrel, and none of them can claim territory in the typical Gangrel fashion due to their bloodline's curse of constant mobility.

LASOMBRA

The Magisters of Europe are creatures of cities and parasites on the Church of Rome. The Mongol invasion primarily impacts them through its effect on the Church — Pope Gregory IX marshals the forces of Christianity to attempt to drive off the unbelievers, but in large part fails. Despite this failure and Gregory's death after the Mongols retreat to the steppe, the papacy emerges from the conflict with a stronger position vis-à-vis the Holy Roman Emperor than it had previously. The Lasombra similarly emerge on better grounds than the Ventrue of the empire. Even given that, for the most part, the Christian Lasombra avoid the great Mongol khanates of Asia, preferring to remain where their influence serves them better. Many Muslim Lasombra have little choice but to face the oncoming horde, which they see as a grave threat to their power. In later years, the Magisters will claim credit for the Mamluk's success in repelling the Mongols, dismissing similar claims from the Followers of Set.

MALKAVIANS

Generalizing the activity of Clan Malkavian across Eastern Europe and Asia is a fool's errand. Some Madmen with fears of the city find the nighttime steppe bracing and glorious. Others find beauty in the chaos the Mongol army brings, much as a child revels in watching a nest of ants after kicking over their hill. Few Malkavians move out onto the steppe itself, but many move into the grand cities of the empire and Embrace childer of all stripes.

NOSFERATU

As is the case with several other clans, the Nosferatu have been present in the great cities of the Near East and various Islamic nations for most of recorded history. Their activity in most of these cities does not change as the Mongols conquer them — only the nature of their prey is different. A surprisingly large number of eastern Nosferatu were hunters themselves in life, echoing the legends of their clan's founder. The only time the Nosferatu have real cause to worry is when the Mongols actually destroy cities, as they do with Kiev. In such cases, fire may force the monsters from their hiding places during daylight, leading to Final Death. Thankfully, the Nosferatu often get a night or two of forewarning from their many contacts in the human and animal kingdoms and are able to make an escape.

RAVNOS

The Ravnos embrace plenty of Mongols, Qipchaqs and other nomadic peoples, but usually they select those cast out by their own tribes. Upon joining Clan Ravnos these outcasts find a welcome family, eager teachers and pleasant times most unlike those they experienced on the steppe. The open hospitality of the *ger* draws Ravnos like a magnet; most of them have no respect for the traditions or sanctity of the *ger* and are prone to the most impolite actions while there. Heaven help the family that leaves a Ravnos alone in its *ger* during predawn hours.

SALUBRI

A Mongol Cainite who meets a vampire with three eyes is far more likely to run for cover than stay and try to discern whether he's a Cathayan or Cainite. A Cathayan means trouble, while a Cainite only *probably* means trouble. There is a long-separated contingent of Salubri in the Far East. Called the Wu Zao, they are Saulot's or-

phans. At this point the Wu Zao have no interest in rejoining the remainder of the western clan. (For more on the Wu-Zao, see p. 54.) As far as the western Salubri, some few of them do quest eastward during the height of the empire; many are lost forever on the Silk Road while others learn of eastern philosophies that bring them closer to restful enlightenment.

TOREADOR

Mongol art is generally very purposeful; it serves to ornament everyday tools or is used to exalt an honored guest or a noble of high station. Nevertheless, it is very attractive to many Toreador, simply because it is *different* from art seen in Europe or the Near East. It comes from different impulses and takes different forms, and for the jaded Toreador of Europe, that difference is often enough to spur a move east. European and Middle-Eastern Toreador settle in major cities along the Silk Road as far as Kashgar; at that point they are turned back or attacked by the vampires of Cathay.

TREMERE

The Arab kingdoms of the Near East are a source of many mystical secrets; grand Baghdad, mysterious Persia and golden Samarkand hide magics never dreamed of by western wizards. Until the horde shakes things up by invading southwest Asia, Assamite sorcerers hold most of the magical secrets of Araby. When the Mongols do begin to topple sultanates and caliphates, however, the Tremere are able to make their move; experienced Usurpers with small cabals of suitably circumspect Arab neonates enter the cities of Islam and carefully plumb their depths for wizardly artifacts and mystic books. For the most part, the Tremere avoid the rest of the Mongol Empire — Cathay is far too dangerous for them at this juncture — but do occasionally hire muscle to destroy errant Salubri who flee eastward.

TZIMISCE

Tzimisce vampires are not able to integrate themselves into Mongol society until that society calms down and forms itself into an empire and, later, the four khanates. Before that time it is extremely difficult for a Fiend to join any of the roving tribes of the steppe; if she should live on the steppe herself, she must hope that mortals make their way into her domain so that she may feed off them, or she risks Final Death through starvation. The shapeless undead lords suffer enormous losses

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at the Mongols' hands as the horde rampages across Slavic lands. Few Tzimisce grant the Embrace to Mongols; far more of them wage campaigns of terror against the invading armies that settle in their lands. Hundreds of Mongols in the Qipchaq Khanate die horribly at the hands of the Tzimisce; hundreds more end up as misshapen war slaves. The Tzimisce are badly shaken by the Mongols' invasion; in the past, they truly had little to fear from mortals and their armies, but the *voivodes'* focus on the war with the Tremere leaves them and their lands wide open to the hordes, and the Mongols sack many ancient castles inhabited by the fleshcrafters and their broods.

VENTRUE

Some Ventrue neonates, sent to the front by their elders, die at the hands of the invading horde, and a few Russian Ventrue Princes die or enter torpor as their cities are sacked. Other young Patricians forge vampiric estates of their own in the western parts of the Mongol nation. This is difficult for the clan's elders to do — none of them have a taste for Mongol blood in particular, and many have specific needs for blood that no Mongol could provide (such as the elder who needs blood from blond, blue-eyed young boys). But Ventrue Embraced within the Empire can usually find sustenance there. Many enter leadership roles among the Cainites of their cities or camps, as befits their heritage.

MINOR BLOODLINES

Enslaved Gargoyles only show interest in the Mongol Empire insofar as their Tremere masters do. However, the invasion of Eastern Europe causes enough chaos about the chantry of Ceoris that some Gargoyles manage to escape their slavery and head for freedom in the high mountains. Gargoyles are remarkably well-suited to the nomadic life of the Mongol warrior, but few join them. Rumors persist that small clutches of free Gargoyles make their homes in the Hindu Kush and the Urals, but if such do exist, they leave so little evidence of their passing that they may as well not be there.

The other minor bloodlines have even less to do with the Mongols. The Laibon are largely content to remain in the great hidden kingdoms of the south, although some wandering individuals doubtlessly feel aftershocks of the great invasions. And though the Lamia, the Cappadocians' warrior allies, might find more general acceptance on the steppe — for gender roles are less rigidly defined there — few, if any, get the chance. The Lamia are far too occupied protecting their undead scholar-brethren from their own missteps to jaunt into Asia on their own. The only Lamia to cross the steppe are those who travel with questing Cappadocians. The Lhiannan have little to do with the Mongol Empire; their bloodline is on its way to destruction by the time the Golden Horde enters Russia, and the Mongols' arrival forestalls that destiny only by a few years.



ANDA

Long-lost cousins to the Gangrel, the Anda descend from a single Methuselah whom their legends call Dobrul the Brave. The bloodline suffers a curse that forces them to wander the steppe, which makes them excellent companions to their mortal herds among the Mongol, Tatar and Merkid tribes. The Anda consider themselves to be spirit warriors of the steppe; they obviously need not obey mortal laws, and they lack most knowledge of the Traditions of Caine. Accordingly, they have created a culture in unlife that is a reflection of their mortal past. The Anda feed parasitically on camps they ride with; some adopt a protective stance regarding their herd while others feed opportunistically and abandon their mortal companions whenever they wish.

The culture of the Anda is harsh to the point of brutality, as befits its steppe heritage. When an Anda finds a suitable candidate for the Embrace, he calls a gathering, or *kuriltai*, of the dead; nearby members of the bloodline come together to discuss the candidate's strengths and weaknesses. Should they deem her worthy, a small group of Anda rip the mortal from her ger and take her miles from her home camp; this last is done so that the sounds of her screaming do not reach back to her family. The Anda give the prospective vampire no choice in the matter of the Embrace; the group kills her without ever asking. They ritually bathe her in water carried from the nearest river — the Mongols do not sully their waterways with the filth of corpses, but they do clean the bodies after death. From there, the "child" vampire is largely on her own. She must succeed at a variety of tests in order to be considered an adult; only the Anda who watch her generally know the nature of these tests, and quite often, the neonate does not even know that her brethren test her. The tests may go on for as long as a year; the final test is always the new vampire's ability to merge with Itügen the Earth Mother. Her watchers hound her away from safety, out onto a particularly barren patch of steppe. They prevent her from leaving this area, and, a few seconds before sunrise, they enter the earth's embrace. If the young Cainite is talented enough, she can become one with the soil and save her unlife.

An adult Anda has status among his peers and usually a camp of mortal nomads who serve as his herd (and his moveable "territory"). The Anda often continues to associate with the vampires who oversaw his

Embrace, but the individual sire is no more important than any other member of the group. Status is very loosely defined beyond the concept of adulthood and the *nöker* relationship. A *nöker* is an Anda who has declared himself loyal to another vampire he considers his better. This elder is either called the *noyan* (chief) or *khan* (king); the distinction between the two titles is very flexible and depends largely on the claims of power by the individual Anda. The bond between *nöker* and *noyan* is hardly a binding, master-servant relationship; it is more akin to a pledge of loyalty contingent on good leadership. Anda attached to mortal camps and tribes at the forefront of the rise of the Mongol Empire tend to be the most powerful on the steppe, with networks of *nöker* spreading far and wide. Even such unliving khans, however, can hardly claim to rule the bloodline.

This independent spirit means that Anda have little respect for the domains of other vampires. Anda have been in conflict with the Wan Kuei, whom they call Xia Demons, for centuries. Few even remember what the root of the conflict is — both claim the steppe and neither tolerates the other. When the Mongol hordes ride out and conquer the world, the Anda who go with them run into other Cainites time and again. Powerful individuals garner respect, but the "soft" blood-drinkers who hide in cities are the subject of much Mongol scorn.

Sobriquet: Tartars

Appearance: The Anda are drawn almost exclusively from Mongol stock. They are short, heavyset with faces Europeans would call flattened, and bowlegged from a life in the saddle. Their skin has a leathery consistency from years in the sun and wind; in unlife it fades to a washed-out brown.

Havens & Prey: Few Anda bother with havens in the traditional Cainite sense; their curse (see below) keeps them moving when not in torpor. Those who travel with a camp might on occasion spend the day in that camp's ger, but most simply sleep in the earth. Anda feed from animals when the opportunity presents itself, but most of them either watch over a *yasun* (a Mongol subclan that serves as their feeding stock) or live alone on the steppe and feed from herders who pass by. Given the scarcity of human population on the steppe, only fools, monsters or the desperate look to the second option.

Background: The Tartars grant the Embrace to Mongol warriors whose prowess they respect; most Anda

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can tell stories of great bravery and cunning in life. In later years, promising members of other tribes — the Qipchaqs or Tanguts — receive the Embrace. Russians and Chinese do not. A few women do, but male Anda far outnumber them.

Character Creation: Anda Demeanors often coincide with their Natures; though they are as cunning as any other Cainite, they do not delude themselves about their true natures. Physical Attributes are almost always primary since they most often draw childer from warrior stock. Similarly, Skills tend to be primary, mostly due to the Mongols' reliance on Archery and Ride.

Bloodline Disciplines: Animalism, Fortitude, Protean (see pages 70-72 for unique Animalism and Protean abilities for the Anda)

Weaknesses: As an offshoot of Clan Gangrel, the Anda suffer from a mild version of that group's tendency to develop animal features upon frenzy. Unlike Gangrel, Anda only develop animalistic features and lose Appearance points after 10 frenzies, rather than after five. The bloodline has its own curse, however. Anda cannot sleep more than three days within the same one-mile area; they must remain on the move whenever possible. Should an Anda vampire sleep in the same place a fourth day, the player's dice pools are halved until the vampire can move. Successive days

in the same place lead to successive halvings, to a minimum dice pool of 1. To the character, this causes an ever-increasing sense of agitation; while it does not cause Röttschreck, at the Storyteller's discretion, the character might go into a frenzy and attack a captor who forces her to stay in one place against her will. The curse does not affect Anda in torpor.

Organization: Though the Anda are generally free to roam as they wish across the steppe, on nights of the new moon they travel to the highest point in the immediate vicinity; should two or more Anda encounter one another there, a meeting and party called a *kuriltai* takes place. The eldest and most respected Anda at a *kuriltai* is named khan and leads the events after a ritual prayer to Itügen the Earth Mother.

Destiny: The power and influence of the Anda reaches its peak with the reign of Kublai Khan in China, during which they are actually seen acting openly in China itself; after Kublai's death, they begin a steep decline. During the violent end of the Mongols' Yuan Dynasty in China and the destruction of Karakorum in the 1360s, the Wan Kuei of China systematically hunt down and destroy the Anda; by 1388 none remain.

STEREOTYPES

- Gangrel — Distant cousins. Grant them respect but know that they have fangs as sharp as our own.
- Wu Zao — Soft and deceitful, they skulk about their temples and monasteries and try to lure us in. They serve the demons and deserve our ire.
- Other Cainites — Fat and weak on the blood of cities. Ripe for the picking.
- Black Tortoise Wan Kuei — The Demons of Xia, savage and unforgiving. They wish our destruction, and we return the favor.
- Other Wan Kuei — A demon is a demon, regardless of whether or not it rides the steppe.

QUOTE:

I am sent here by your God as a punishment for all your sins.



MONSTERS ON THE STEPPE

WU ZAO

The Wan Kuei hold that Zao-lat, a barbarian from the West, came to the Middle Kingdom to steal enlightenment from Xue, their greatest teacher. A trickster, he studied with the Grand Arhat for a time before being expelled (as was proper). The Wu Zao tell a different tale. Zao-lat came East because he foresaw the turning of the Great Wheel and the coming Ages of Sorrow and Darkness. The scions of the Yama Kings would rule the earth and sky lest he journeyed to the farthest lands to uncover their secrets. He hoped to share understanding with the Ten Thousand Demons but was greeted only by distrust and hatred, which eventually drove him back West.

But he left a legacy. Unlike the Wan Kuei, Zao-lat could sire childer, and he did so in the Middle Kingdom. He chose two locals to carry his blood: Zao-zei, a thief and explorer who could obtain the secrets of the hells, and Zao-xue, a scholar and monk who could decipher them. The two became the ancient's companions, helping him uncover the hidden lairs of the *akuma* and other servants of darkness, steal their secrets and interpret their plans. They did so for many years until the night Zao-zei returned from an expedition to a dark temple in far-off Nihon. She found the haven of Zao-lat shattered and occupied by the Ten Thousand Demons. Stealthy and quick, she made her way inside and freed her brother Zao-xue, who was being questioned. After they made their escape, he told of how the Wan Kuei had betrayed Zao-lat and attacked the ancient, driving him toward the sunset.

Since that long-ago night, the family of Zao-lat — the Wu Zao — has remained a subtle but constant presence in the Middle Kingdom. Zao-zei and Zao-xue believed that the slide toward a final apocalypse began with the expulsion of their sire and set about trying to find a way to reverse or survive the process, siring a small number of childer to help them. These younger Wu Zao follow the model of one of the two elders, becoming either temple thieves or scholars and cooperating to uncover the arcane knowledge needed to deal with the coming storm. This apocalypse, what the Wan Kuei call the Age of Darkness, is centuries away, but it is coming.

The scholars haunt dusty libraries and monasteries while the thieves stalk ancient temples. Generally, one thief and one scholar cooperate in emulation of their ancestors: The scholar maintains a hidden temple and safe house for research, while the thief goes out to

acquire new items for their collection. There are perhaps a few score of these vampiric pairs scattered across the Middle Kingdom, although they sometimes compete for desirable acquisitions. Scholars maintain some contact between temples, but rivalries are not uncommon. The thief-scholar pair also typically gathers a group of helpers, ghouls and other allies; these cabals sometimes include vampires or other creatures, although most are mortals or childer.

The Five August Courts of the Wan Kuei officially call Zao-lat a debased barbarian thief and those claiming descent from him are hardly welcome in their halls. By staying away from the most traditional courts — like that of the Yellow Emperor — and masquerading as Wan Kuei themselves, most Wu Zao can avoid the brunt of Cathayan hatred. Many of the Demons are willing to overlook Wu Zao presence in exchange for services or information, however. The Court of the Black Tortoise, with its sparse population and less traditional rules, is the most welcoming to the bloodline; as a result, many of the scholars have moved their temples to the area of the modern Jin Empire.

The Wu Zao do not tell their Wan Kuei hosts, but many have also uncovered evidence of a great darkness growing on the steppe, which attracts their attention. They believe the rising tide of Mongolian nomads is the sign of this great darkness and so they cooperate in Black Tortoise efforts to hunt the Mongol Anda vampires. It is only later that they will discover that the darkness runs deeper still.

Sobriquet: Orphans

Appearance: The Wu Zao select childer based on individual ability, not culture. In the Jin Empire, most Orphans are either of Chinese or Jurchen extraction, but there are Wu Zao of many other cultural types. After learning the second level of the Valeren Discipline, they develop a third eye in the middle of their forehead. This eye is not impossible to conceal, but it is unmistakable when it is open and uncovered.

Havens & Prey: Wu Zao scholars maintain elaborate but well-hidden havens where they hoard the products of their research as well as items obtained from clanmates and others. Thieves sometimes have their own havens but more frequently share space with their scholar brethren. Both lines feed carefully from the mortal populations near these havens — usually located near cities. They often maintain mortal herds to better

hide their feeding from the Ten Thousand Demons.

Background: Wu Zao prefer to give the Embrace to those who share their curiosity regarding lost and hidden artifacts: historians, treasure-hunters and scholars. They have no particular bias toward men or women, and both genders are evenly represented within the bloodline.

Character Creation: The player should choose a caste for the character; although this is generally the same as the Wu Zao's sire, changing castes is possible. Wu Zao tend to have Natures such as Caretaker, Celebrant, Fanatic or sometimes Loner, but only mindlessly destructive Natures like Barbarian are really out of the question for them. Scholars tend toward Mental attributes as their primaries and focus on Knowledges rather than Skills or Talents. Thieves are more physical and have high Skills. Those of either caste usually have Herd and Retainers to reflect their entourage. Like their Western brethren, most Wu Zao are of 10th or lower generation and so have the Generation Background. Storytellers with access to **Kindred of the East** may also allow Wu Zao to take the Magic Artifact background from that book.

Bloodline Disciplines: Auspex, Fortitude, Valeren (scholars use healer abilities; thieves use warrior abilities)

Weaknesses: Zao-lat's ancient imperative to uncover and gather secret knowledge runs through the Wu Zao's blood. Every player must choose an area of arcane lore with which her character is obsessed; this is the focus of her unlife. A Willpower roll (difficulty 6) is required to resist pursuing this area of research when presented with an op-

portunity — regardless of the risk. Possible areas of research include the teachings of the Ten Thousand Demons, the lands of the dead, the secrets of a specific mortal culture or a group of texts.

Organization: The Wu Zao are not organized into a collective whole, but most maintain some contact with at least one other clan-member. The two-caste system and resulting pairing of vampires is the only overall organization they have. Individual Wu Zao also gather followers and servants about them, some of whom become childer.

Destiny: Some Wu Zao take the news of Zao-lat's demise as an omen of hard times ahead and prepare. They move some of their havens away from the Black Tortoise Court and thus escape the series of vampiric purges that accompanies the end of the Mongol era. A handful survive into the modern nights.



STEREOTYPES

- Anda — Dangerous. They ride with the heralds of the coming darkness.
- Other Cainites — Largely uncouth and saddled with skewed outlooks. Some have wisdom worth extracting, however.
- Black Tortoise Wan Kuei — Strong and individualistic, they tolerate our presence and so we support them. Never forget they are demons, however.
- Other Wan Kuei — Haughty and violent, they are best avoided, save for the valuable items and insights they own.

QUOTE:

A dagger owned by the first Scarlet Phoenix Empress? What is the fastest way to the Khmer Empire, then?

MONSTERS ON THE STEPPE

DEMONS OF XIA: THE BLACK TORTOISE COURT

If the Anda and Wu Zao are the scattered orphans of Caine on the Mongolian steppe, they are hardly the only vampires in the region. Indeed, the Wan Kuei of the Middle Kingdom claim the Asian night as their own and have little love for the displaced western blood-drinkers. The Cathayan vampires who stalk the steppe belong to the Black Tortoise Court. These are the same vampires the Anda know as the Demons of Xia, their ancient and implacable enemies.

Like the Anda whom they hunt, the Wan Kuei of the northern court have a strong tie to the steppe nomads from whom they feed. They ride among the Tatars and Ongguts most of all, but individual Wan Kuei can be found among other tribes as well. Unlike the Anda, they are also present among the settled nomads of the Jin Empire and Xixia Kingdom. In fact, these more densely populated areas are home to most of the court's members.

To those mortals of the steppe aware of their existence, Black Tortoise Wan Kuei are simply one more complication in an already demanding life. Shamans who have met them see the Ten Thousand Demons as malignant spirits of the earth or night sky. Some groups of Wan Kuei choose to ride with nomad camps. Other groups tend to view such camps with distrust, for although Wan Kuei allies can lend a group of nomads great power, laying down one's *ger* with such creatures is akin to sleeping in the tiger's den: It is never clear when it will wake up hungry.

The Black Tortoise Court would do well to listen to that same advice. Ancient prophecies say that the Fifth Age of the World, the Age of Sorrow that heralds the rise of the Demon Emperor, will sweep in from the north. The Wan Kuei of the court see the debased vampires who stalk among the Mongols — who call themselves Anda — as instigators of this transformation. They tolerate the temple thieves and obsessed scholars of the Wu Zao because they trade away information about the coming storm and the activities of the Anda.

But the external threat of the Mongols and Anda, although real, pales before the danger from within and below. Corrupt Chi sites pepper the steppe; they pose a physical danger to the creatures of the area through the demons and demon-servants they tend to attract. They also pose a spiritual danger to the Wan Kuei of the area as the corrupt Chi they provide can lure the vampires into serving the Yama Kings as *akuma*. The court that seeks to guard against the corruption may well end up propagating it.

HISTORY

Since the first days of this, the Fourth Age of Creation, the Wan Kuei of the far north have organized themselves as the August Court of the Black Tortoise. The court was originally formed in the aftermath of the Celestial Emperor's great curse upon the Wan Xian; three *wu* of Yin-aspected Wan Kuei in the far north escaped the wars and madness of their fellow demons.

One of those *wu* was the Regretful Hunters; most of them were Resplendent Crane warriors who felt it was their duty to pursue Wan Kuei who, unable to accept one of Xue's five Dharmas, went mad and fled into the wilderness. Another *wu*, the Riders on Ashen Plain, were Bone Dancers with a northern aspect; they wished to learn the laws of death and the dead and gained power through the symbolic travel northward. The third *wu* was already on the northern steppe at the time of the curse; they called themselves Sons of Tengri, the barbarians' god of the sky, and they were themselves all barbarians.

The three *wu* were hardly of one mind, despite their overall predilection toward the north direction and Yin energies. The Regretful Hunters did not wish for any bureaucracy of the accursed to interfere with their battles and training while the Ashen Plain Riders desired solitude and peace for their meditations on death and Yin. The Sons of Tengri required open land to move around and few limits on their freedom.

The Court of the North thus formed not as a restrictive and binding hierarchy, as was the case for the Court of the Yellow Emperor further south, but rather as an open and free environment, one in which each individual's ability to move about unmolested was considered paramount. Some Wan Kuei of the north suggest that the Celestial Emperor's curse frees them of any obligation to fight the servants of the Yama Kings, and though the Regretful Hunters and their protégés argue passionately against this proposal, they are unable to persuade all of their brethren of the righteousness of their cause. Indeed, to this very day there is little coordinated action by the Wan Kuei of the Black Tortoise to hunt *akuma* and other fearsome Yomi creatures of the northlands.

The only exception to that unconcerned attitude is the Anda, whom the Black Tortoises see as a degenerate breed of half-vampires of the steppe, perhaps the descendants of the mad, Dharma-less Wan Xian once hunted by the Regretful Hunters. The Sons of Tengri and their heirs say the Anda are monsters from the far west who have corrupted certain mortal tribes like the *akuma* corrupt some of the southern courts. Either way, they are creatures who deserve to be hunted and destroyed. In the early nights of the Fourth Age, the barely united Black Tortoise first came to blows with the Anda. When a Black Tortoise *wu* met a

few Anda on the steppe, they gave chase, assuming that these were renegades or *akuma*. They swept down on the strange vampires and slew most of them. In those days, the Court of the North met in a great wooden hall called *Qaragha*, in the southernmost parts of the Siberian forest. The court as a whole met twice a month, as it does now; the surviving Anda and their mortal slaves attacked *Qaragha* during the next gathering and burned it to the ground. The fire killed more than half the Wan Kuei within, and the survivors vowed undying war upon the orphans of the west. The grudge lasts to this very night.

Black Tortoise Wan Kuei have periodically collided with the Beast Courts of the far north; the shapechangers of the steppe seem to truly be the greatest power of that distant place, even with *akuma*, Black Tortoise Wan Kuei, Anda and many other creatures competing for Chi and land. Up to the time of the Han Dynasty, the Black Tortoise Court and the Xiong Ren cooperated more often than they fought; during the reign of Qin Shihuangdi, some 1400 years ago, both groups aided mortals who wished to fight against the insane, corrupt Chinese emperor. During the Han, the two groups drifted apart as the Xiong Ren increasingly realized that even the Black Tortoise Wan Kuei did not share their dedication to the war against the dark things of the world. Their differences first exploded into violence during the Later Han and have periodically renewed themselves in the intervening centuries.

THE SUPERNATURAL LANDSCAPE

Emperor Qin Shihuangdi built the Great Wall during his reign over a thousand years ago. Though the wall has at times fallen into disrepair and at others been a strong defensive edifice, its presence disturbs the flow of Chi through the region. A great dragon line crosses the Great Wall, and the death and corruption associated with the fortification's construction mean that the wall interrupts the Chi flow through that line. That dragon track runs from Nihon to Lake Tianchi; vampires who choose to travel along it must be cognizant of the dangers of the trail. The near-severing of the dragon line has several effects in the spirit world. First, several trails along the Nihon-Tianchi line lead into Yomi Wan, rather than the traveler's preferred destination; this an echo of the murder and rape that the Yama Kings fed from during the wall's construction. Similarly, the deaths of so many workers have forced several Chi currents to lead into a Yin Realm rather than the material world, a destination that Wan Kuei would often prefer to avoid almost as much as Yomi. Lastly, and more subtly, redirected Chi bubbles and pools near the

Wall itself, in Yin, Yang, Yomi and the physical realm. These eddies come and go over time; they are not reliable sources of Chi. They vary between Yin Chi, the most common variety near the wall, Demon Chi and Yang Chi, the least common.

Ghosts run the empty plain of the north, that is certain. Wan Kuei of the Black Tortoise walk (or more often, ride) the nighttime steppe, and those attuned to the Yin Realm have no difficulty piercing the nighttime Wall to see and hear the dead of the northern tribes. They ride ghost horses, hunting misshapen ghost animals; they drink *qumis* brewed from dreams and joy, and they do their best to meddle in the affairs of the living to gain an advantage against the Ghost Emperor of the Middle Kingdom.

Black Tortoises live in the major cities of the Jin and Xixia Empires, though in both of those lands they compete for territory with *wu* of the Court of the Yellow Emperor. Wan Kuei helped the nomadic Jurchens conquer the Liao and the city of Kaifeng this century, when it became obvious that the mortal emperors of the Middle Kingdom had lost the Mandate of Heaven. But since that time, the Jurchens have distanced themselves from their immortal allies.

Other than the taint brought about by the Great Wall, only the most arid sections of the steppe are home to corrupt Chi. There are as many theories as to the origin of these dark dragon nests — called pits, by some — as there are Wan Kuei to put them forth. The bodhisattvas suggest that most of the nests predate the Fourth Age, and those that do not can be traced back to a particular conflict with creatures of the far west. A great purge took place in prehistoric times, and one of its aftereffects is the presence of these eddies of corrupt Chi, much as a large rock thrown into a swift river will create rivulets and small whirlpools many yards from the rock. Perhaps the eldest pits were the source of conflict in the Third Age? It is sure that we will never know with certainty.

The pits are only found in the most arid parts of the steppe for two main reasons. First, the most arid areas — like the Gobi and Taklamakan Deserts — are largely bereft of human population. Certainly nomads pass through, but in large part, elder Wan Kuei (who can feed through osmosis or through the poisoned air), demons and *akuma* are left alone in the deep empty lands. Secondly, on the high steppe, Mongols treat rivers and streams as holy places; their shamans claim to communicate with the waters' spirits. Northern tribesmen do not even bathe in free flowing water for fear of polluting or giving offense to spirits. Such infusion of faith by mortals does seem to bolster the area's defense against the forces of Yomi Wan.

THE YAMA KING DOKHOR AND THE HELL OF SPIKED CHAINS

The privacy and freedom of the Black Tortoise Court have given birth to a far greater proportion of *akuma* than are present in any other court, and many serve the Yama King Dokhor-Khan, who rules the Hell of Spiked Chains. Grossly fat, he guzzles acidic blood *qumis* from bags stitched from mortals' stomach linings. Dokhor thrives on agony and hatred, and his preferred victim is the cursed soul of the steppe. Mortal souls — nearly always from the steppe, though from which tribe is immaterial — find themselves at the center of a vast plain so flat that the ground almost seems to curve up to the horizon. Dokhor divides the population into tribes, seemingly at random. One of these tribes, the Favored Ones, receive free rein, while all the others have a sense stricken away from them, or their hands or legs chopped off. Each tribe gets its own deformity or blindness, and all must obey the Favored Ones or face the torment of the Spiked Chains.

Any of the Favored Ones can declare the Spiked Chains on any of the Deformed Ones at any time and for no reason at all if they so choose. Victims of this torment are bound tightly in thorned Yomi-iron chains and hung from the stalactites in a great, windy cave for years at a time. Struggle to escape only makes the agony worse, feeding Dokhor-Khan's great hunger; sometimes the Yama King places small files and lock picks just out of reach of his charges for the delicious combination of sensations he receives.

Dokhor is the Yama King primarily responsible for the corruption of the Black Tortoise Court; the corruption of the dragon nests of the steppe is his doing, the culmination of a process he started in the days of the Xiongnu, whom Europe knew as the Huns. Each corrupted dragon nest is "keyed" to servants of Dokhor, giving them an advantage in tapping the corrupt Chi and allowing them to transfer that Chi more easily to other creatures, such as prospective *akuma*. This keying process takes years (part of the reason for the great length of Dokhor's scheme), but it has the benefit of excluding other Yama Kings from freely using the corrupt Chi the nests generate — servants of the other lords of Yomi can use the Chi but absorbing it takes longer and is far less efficient. (The exact effects of this are left to the Storyteller's discretion.)

Other Yama Kings do still work on the steppe, and most of them vow retaliation against Dokhor for his outfoxing them there. Tou Mu and Rangda find many of their schemes against the Mongols and allied tribes stymied by the actions of Dokhor and his *akuma* as well as the uncorrupted Black Tortoise Court; Mikaboshi, by contrast, finds it to be child's play to corrupt those Black Tortoises who settle in the cities of the south.

In about 1190, Dokhor-Khan began to experiment with granting Anda Cainites his "blessings," creating a previously unheard of type of *akuma*. By 1197 the Yama King has only a handful of these creatures, some others having been destroyed by the tainted Chi necessary to create the gifts. (Storytellers can use the rules for *akuma* found in **The Thousand Hells** or rules for demonic investment from the **Dark Ages Companion** to create Cainite *akuma*.)

Destiny: Dokhor-Khan proves a rare triumph for the Wan Kuei of the Middle Kingdom. After many of the Black Tortoise vampires are destroyed or driven to the wild north in the 14th century, several *wu* that go on to sign the Treaty of the Quincunx strike at Dokhor's *akuma* and corrupt Chi sites in the barbaric northlands. They are met with a series of stunning victories, and in the end they so weaken Dokhor's corner of Yomi that the demon king's rivals destroy him.

TRADITIONS AND CULTURE

While the Black Tortoise Court does include many cities, and many minor courts (such as that at Daidu) are important to the court's continuing prosperity and influence, the Court of the North is primarily a holding of nomads. As such, the court lacks a permanent home, even though its nightly business does not lack for tradition and exacting etiquette. Few of its greatest histories are kept on paper, instead living only in the minds of the eldest ancestors of the court for recitation on special occasions.

The court gathers twice monthly on the half moon; no Wan Kuei must attend every gathering, but all are welcome. However, a sophisticated astronomical calculation

dictates the location of the next gathering; on the nights of the full and new moon, a skilled astrologer can discern the next gathering place of the court after half an hour of scanning the sky. Such a wandering court often calls for some hard riding, but due to some great astrological conspiracy, the court's meeting place is never more than seven days' hard ride from the last meeting place. For a character to determine the location, the player rolls Perception + Portents (difficulty 8, or 7 if the astrologer is a member of the Black Tortoise Court).

Gatherings of the court nearly always take place outside: Unless the stars explicitly dictate that the meeting be held under a cave roof or forest canopy, darkened Tengri is always visible while the court is in session. This includes

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times of terrible weather: Thunderstorms, blizzards and tornadoes cannot keep the Ten Thousand Demons from gathering in their tradition. In fact, it is a point of honor among Black Tortoise Wan Kuei to ignore the weather while they meet; to do so much as acknowledge the howling wind or freezing sleet is to invite scorn as a "southerner." And a Wan Kuei bowing to the elements is a clear sign that too much mortal blood runs within him still; such a thing might be accepted in a Running Monkey but not in an elder Wan Kuei. Visitors to the Black Tortoise Court should keep this in mind.

PROMINENT CORPSE FAMILIES

For the time being, the *wu* known as the Barren Wind has the greatest influence in the Black Tortoise Court. Five in number, this *wu* is oriented toward the south, metaphorically facing the other courts and in practice serving as a force for change within the court. Its leader is a proud nomad Thousand Whispers Wan Kuei calling himself Tarugha. In these years of great change, it is the Barren Wind that the other corpse families look to for guidance. For its part, the *wu* has embraced the successive barbarian armies that have swept down over northern China in the past century. The Barren Wind Wan Kuei feel that it is high time that the Court of the Yellow Emperor feel some of the depredations that the Black Tortoise experience with such regularity.

The Barren Wind's opposite number is the Black Hoof Riders *wu*. This north-oriented corpse family fights against the chaos and change that the Barren Wind attempts to sow. The Black Hoof Riders are traditionalists, each member emerging from tribes that now make up the Jin Empire. Resolving arguments through physical conflict is by no means rare among Black Tortoise Wan Kuei, and the Black Hoof Riders and Barren Wind have tested each other repeatedly through the ritualized combat of Twilight War over the past fifty years on matters ranging from the hunting of *akuma* to the guardianship of dragon nests in the northlands. The one-eyed Jurchen shaman Tan Banshi leads the Barren Wind.

The Storm of Fire *wu* spends most of its time away from the conflict between the Barren Wind and the Black Hoof Riders; the Storm of Fire searches for the mystical heart of the Gobi Desert. Fiery Yang spirits patrol the sands of the Gobi on a regular basis; the Gobi spirit world is a rich and dangerous place. The Storm of Fire *wu* braves this spirit world as it can in order to steal the desert's greatest mystical treasures. Members of the *wu* have a keen sense for the best recipient for a given artifact; even when an ancestor in Daidu demands a fiery glass sword be turned over to him, the Storm of Fire will offer rights of first purchase to a statusless *him* if that youth's nature better fits that of the sword. The Storm of Fire is a center-directed *wu*, but without the ties to others that usually characterize such a group; its



From the writings of Qasar Al-Jadin, a wizard of Kashgar, 1187:

In recent years I have begun to notice a change in the pattern of Chi-flow on the Mongolian steppe. I believe that something must be influencing the motion of this magical energy, but I cannot determine precisely what. It is as though someone, or something, has begun to trace a vast sigil across the steppe itself. To what end such a thing would be done, I can scarcely imagine. Nor do I know any wizards with the patience required to perform such a task over the decades or centuries it would take.

members have a good head for commerce and mercantile traffic, but not much of a bond with the members of any *wu* save their own. A dour Mongol woman, Xiang Li, handles much of the commerce between the Storm of Fire and the Black Tortoise Court, though she is quick to point out that she does not lead the *wu*.

There are more than a score of other *wu* associated with the Black Tortoise Court; while the three listed are currently the most dominant, such corpse families as the Paper

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Dragon (scholars), the Excellent Forest Whispers (scouts with allies in the Tatar Beast Court) and the Bloodriver Serpents (who dominate some of the mortal farm settlements along the Orkhon River) have power of their own.

PROTOCOL

When introducing oneself to any of the courts within the Black Tortoise's domain, one must use precise etiquette and rather exacting protocol to make the best possible impression. To properly introduce himself, the newcomer Wan Kuei must seek out the ancestors of the court, but must do so indirectly, for in the Court of the Black Tortoise no favor may be asked of another Wan Kuei without a go-between.

This tradition — the *zhongren*, or go-between — is a holdover from the ancient days of the Wan Xian, or so it is said, when no mortal dared ask a favor directly from one of the Immortals. In the Black Tortoise Court, to properly ask a favor, one must find a suitable go-between — one familiar with both requester and recipient, and of roughly equal social station and enlightenment — and request that he ask the favor on your behalf. Once the favor has been asked, the requester and recipient may speak to one another, but if at all possible, conversations with the *zhongren* must take place out of earshot of the third party.

For example: Wu Jiang, a Running Monkey, wishes to learn the rite Commune with Tengri from Fa Ping, another

GENGHIS KHAN IN THE AFTERLIFE

The Wan Kuei differ from their western counterparts in numerous ways, but the most important distinction is that no Wan Kuei has to escort a new vampire into unlife; indeed, only one brutal enough to fight his way from Hell into the mortal world will join the Ten Thousand Demons. There are only two requirements: great strength of will and a vast depth of cruelty.

Therefore, less than a year after the Great Khan's death, rumors begin to circulate that Temujin has returned from Yomi Wan as one of the Wan Kuei. Despite their persistence for more than a century, these rumors are never verified. One vampire presents herself to the Black Tortoise Ancestor as Temujin, but she clearly bears little resemblance to the Oceanic Lord. She explains that her true body was destroyed in Genghis Khan's funeral pyre, and she was forced to take another. For reasons of his own, the ancestor does not use any supernatural abilities to test this woman's truthfulness, and she passes herself off as Temujin until the death of the Great Khan Mongke. Around that time, Bortai the Fair, a Wan Kuei who knew the Oceanic Lord in life, discovers "Temujin's" ruse and forces her to reveal herself before the court. She does, and then flees south; she is not seen again in the northlands. Many other *chih-mei* claim to be the Great Khan immediately after taking the Second Breath, but a simple use of the Obligation Discipline gives the lie to each of those claims.

Darker rumors suggest that Temujin is surely banished to Hell for his crimes, and that he may serve the dark purposes of the Yama Kings in the afterlife, or in the physical world, as a hidden *akuma*.... Whatever the truth, the rumors of an undead Great Khan dry up after the fall of the Yuan Dynasty, and they are not heard again.

Running Monkey. Jiang must find a third Wan Kuei — such as her many-times-removed cousin Xiao Bin — to ask Fa Ping if he would be so kind as to teach Wu Jiang that ritual. Until Ping agrees to teach the ritual, however, Wu Jiang's conversations with Xiao Bin must take place somewhere that Fa Ping cannot hear, and Fa Ping's conversations with Xiao Bin must take place where Wu Jiang cannot hear.

The astute student quickly learns of two ways this system can be turned to his favor. First, it is trivially easy for members of the Black Tortoise Court to use the tradition of the *zhongren* to snub an outsider, for the act of asking a Wan Kuei to act as your go-between is itself a favor, and a Wan Kuei is within his rights to insist that the outsider use a *zhongren* to ask that favor. This can easily progress, with utmost politeness, until the outsider is unable to ask anything of anyone in the court. Second, since conversations with the *zhongren* are always held away from the third party, only the intermediary knows what was truly asked and what was truly offered. In this fashion, the *zhongren* can easily manipulate a situation to her benefit.

From the Journal of Takeshiro Kagade

*In retrospect, it is easy to see how fertile a ground for *akuma* the Black Tortoise Court must have been. Their culture venerated secrets. Certainly discretion is always appropriate in certain situations, but when we hold more secrets from each other than they share, the fabric of society begins to shake apart. In the final days, Wan Kuei used *akuma* as *zhongren* to entreat the Yama Kings themselves for aid — as though this ritual should somehow be upheld before the very forces of Hell!*

A few north- or center-oriented *wu* of the Black Tortoise Court specialize in acting as *zhongren*. Most of these corpse families — such as the Distant Glade *wu* — are treated with great respect because they hold the threads that bind together the entire court. For one of them to twist a bargain or negotiation is unthinkable, of course.

RELATIONS WITH OTHERS

The final relationship between the Court of the Black Tortoise and the other four August Courts of the Middle Kingdom is well known to modern readers: The courts combine to sign the Treaty of the Quincunx and destroy the *akuma* of the newly forged Jade Court at Changan. Less well-known is the action taken by the other four August Courts against the *akuma*-corrupted parts of the Black Tortoise Court; to the modern reader, that chapter has been hidden from view, until now. But it takes time to reach that state of total war, given the relative peace the five courts enjoy in 1197.

WEST: THE WHITE TIGER

Emperor Da of the Court of the White Tiger embraces the Wan Kuei of the Black Tortoise Court with open arms; while the elder *wu* in the Black Tortoise are not as expressive in their affection, they find much to like in Da as a

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vampire, and his claims of noninterference with Black Tortoise ways have won him more than one friend on the steppe.

For the most part, White Tiger and Black Tortoise only cross one another's paths in the great Taklamakan Desert, a land neither court traverses except as necessary — when hunting enemies, finding Chi sources or faced with a strong need to reach a point on its far side, for instance. Therefore, as a whole the two groups stay out of one another's way.

CENTRAL: THE YELLOW EMPEROR

The Courts of the Black Tortoise and the Yellow Emperor might once have been allies; certainly in the earliest days of the Fourth Age all five of the August Courts had a joint vision of their tasks and goals. But for 3,000 years or more, the allies and pawns of the Black Tortoise — mortal nomads, raiders and barbarians — have made war upon the allies and pawns of the Yellow Emperor — that is, the sedentary laborers of the successive Chinese Empires. Over such a long time, even the most jaded of the unliving comes to hold a grudge against his counterpart; too many haven-burnings under the guise of barbarian pillaging and too many herd-slaughters in the name of imperial defense eventually lead to outright war.

The Yellow Emperor and Black Tortoise Courts have fought against one another as often as they have allied against darker forces. For the time being, they are carefully neutral, with overtones of hostility just barely laid behind an unconcerned façade. No Black Tortoise investigation ensues after the destruction of a Yellow Emperor Wan Kuei on the steppe; few Yellow Emperor Wan Kuei leap to the defense of a Black Tortoise when that vampire is attacked by Xiong Ren. Slowly the threads of allegiance unravel; surely war is not far off.

EAST: THE AZURE DRAGON

The Black Tortoises only interact with half of the Azure Dragon Court. That court is split into two branches, one on the mainland and one on the islands of Nihon. The Black Tortoises are on moderately good terms with mainland Azure Dragons, although the allegiance is not strong. Ancestors of the island courts and the Black Tortoise are on considerably worse terms; this may date back to ancient times when the centers of two *wu* competed for the love of a mortal; one of those *wu* founded the Azure Dragon Court, and another was an early member of the Black Tortoise. Tales from each court differ as to the identity of the mortal and to which vampire earned the mortal's love, but both are clear that the other court's representative acted dishonorably. The attempted Mongol invasions of Nihon ordered by Kublai Khan only worsen relations between the courts as the Nihonjin feel the Black Tortoises must surely be behind the invaders.

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Only the northern lands of the Jin are in any way contested between the mainland Dragons and the eastern Tortoises; the Kingdom of Koryo is the territory of the Azure Dragon per ancient treaty. The same treaty gives Azure Dragon vampires the authority to destroy *chih-mei* or other mad vampires who flee the Black Tortoise eastward; the Dragons may instead deliver them to Black Tortoise authorities but do not always bother doing so.

SOUTH: THE SCARLET PHOENIX

The Scarlet Phoenix Court engages in a practical neutrality with the Black Tortoise. Situated as they are, with at least one August Court between their lands no matter which path is taken from one to the other, there is precious little for the two groups to argue about. Or at least, there is little to argue about in terms of physical resources; philosophically and ethically speaking, the two Courts couldn't be further apart. The Scarlet Phoenix is a place of Yang energies and carnal powers, but distance makes it an exotic curiosity rather than a threat to the Black Tortoises. Indeed, couriers and scribes regularly traverse the great distance between Annam or Khmer and Karakorum, and when the north-directed Black Tortoise receive messages from the Scarlet Phoenix, even long-dormant hearts warm somewhat.

When the Mongol Empire conquers Linan and thereby China, it does not cease to move troops southward; indeed, Mongol armies march into the southern jungles not long after Kublai Khan takes the throne. Elephant cavalry, as well as reports of other things lurking in the jungles of the far south, repulse the invaders. This rampage infuriates the leadership of the Scarlet Phoenix Court, which sends missives to Yellow Emperor and Black Tortoise Wan Kuei insisting that they put a halt to their mortal charges' attacks. The Wan Kuei cannot simply stop an invasion, of course, but they do subtly arrange to transfer the most skilled officers north and replace them with novices, leaving the Mongols' armies to defeat in the jungle.

THE BEAST COURTS OF THE NORTH

There are several Beast Courts — kingdoms of shapechangers — in the far northlands, but the greatest of these, to which most others owe their allegiance, is the Tatar Beast Court. The court itself surrounds a vast and powerful dragon nest, hidden on the northern reaches of the steppe. Xiong Ren (literally "ferocious people" — the Chinese name for the Lupines and other were-creatures of the area) of every breed heed the dictates of the Beast King of the Tatars; his authority is unquestioned in the northern Middle Kingdom.

The current Beast King is a crafty Khan weretiger called Bogabo; like most of the Ferocious People, he does not age gracefully, instead growing more gnarled and scarred with each passing winter. Bogabo's fifth son, Tian, is a Khan like his father; unfortunately, Tian is also metis (a

child of two shapechangers), and as such has no claim to the throne. Instead, two factions contest for the succession: The Victorious Strike camp, led by a Hakken werewolf called Thunderpaw, wishes to act swiftly to destroy or cleanse the many corrupt Chi sites of the northern plateau, regardless of the cost in lives. By contrast, the Autumn Snow camp, led by an albino Khan calling herself Winter Fang, believes that the corrupt nests should be purified carefully, risking the death of as few Xiong Ren as possible.

For the time being, however, Bogabo rules the court with a combination of cunning and strength. He has instructed packs of werefolk to attack any demon-servants they should discover, but wishes to investigate the nature of the Chi sites before planning an all-out assault. Bogabo's primary advisors include Golonat, a Zhong Lung were dragon who serves as the First Spirit Chainer of the Court and, as is his breed's wont, counsels caution and analysis before action; and Amrat Atansas, a wererat spy who provides his master with continuing intelligence regarding the activity of the Wan Kuei in the cities of the south.

The Black Tortoise and Tatar Courts are on reasonably good terms, at least insofar as Wan Kuei and Xiong Ren are willing to communicate. There is no open warfare between them; should either court find subjects of the other too close to its territory, it will certainly give fair warning before forcibly ejecting or destroying them. However, there are no fixed ambassadors between the two courts; messages between them are sent via spirit courier. Enemies of one court may well find succor in the other, but will not be welcome for an extended period.

HSIEN

The Court of the Black Tortoise has very little traffic with any of the *hsien*; the bureaucrats-turned-warrior-rebels have no love for the vampires of the Middle Kingdom, and there's little the two groups can do for one another. Several factions of one *hsien* court, the Daityas, compete to influence mortal bureaucracies and thrones. Some Daitya subtly urge the Emperor of the Jin to strike hard at Linan and destroy the Song Chinese once and for all, while others side with Mongolian raiders to destroy the Jin Empire.

DESTINY

The Court of the Black Tortoise does not have a long future ahead of it. It will join with some of the other courts to form the Quincunx, and not long afterwards, the end of the Yuan Dynasty will see the remnants and rebels of the court overrun with *akuma* and destroyed. Several factors that contribute to this destiny are listed below. Storytellers should not feel constrained to end the Black Tortoise story as described here, of course; a continuing chronicle can and should subvert the static plot lines seen in game source material.

WAN KUEI IN THE WEST

When the Mongol Empire first expands, no Wan Kuei are born in the distant west; the Muslim lands of Khwarazm do not offer up the Middle Kingdom's unliving demons. The Wan Kuei only seem to arise within the boundaries of Chinese and Indian cultural influence.

However, this changes over time. During the reign of Mongke Khan, there are verifiable reports of *chih-mei* taking the Second Breath as far west as the Aral Sea, and even rumors of those taking the Road Back into New Sarai. These half-foreign Wan Kuei are referred to as *kānbujān*. To traditional Wan Kuei, such as those in the Court of the Yellow Emperor, these creatures are strange, ugly and unnatural. Those who dare journey to the court in Changan find that swift destruction awaits them; soon, the only ones who remain are those who wisely avoid concentrations of Wan Kuei and instead lurk in the shadowed streets of Kashgar, Urumqi or Samarkand.

As the ideals of nations outside the Middle Kingdom and religions such as Christianity and Islam corrupt the Mongol Empire, its khanates become less likely to produce Wan Kuei. By the time of Timur the Lame, few new *chih-mei* come as far west as the Khanate of the Golden Horde or even Samarkand. Of course, the Wan Kuei of such places are largely unaffected by those changes, but as the khanates collapse one by one, the Hungry Dead find themselves outnumbered by Cainites. Many retreat eastward; many more meet their destruction. Those who follow the Song of the Shadow Dharma continue to be fascinated by the apparent expansion and contraction of the Middle Kingdom and spend many years traveling the Yin Realms in search of an explanation.

After the permanent establishment of the Qipchaq Khanate (the Khanate of the Golden Horde) by Batu Khan, the Scarlet Night Daggers (a North-aspected *wu* based in Sarai) show a particular fascination with the scions of Caine. They capture any western vampires they can find and proceed to experiment on and interrogate them. By 1250, these coldly logical Wan Kuei are particularly curious about the Embrace and the blood oath. They do not understand how either one takes place, and they intend to force any new captives to reveal those secrets. They *do* know the vulnerability of western vampires to a well-placed wooden stake (which Yin-imbalanced Wan Kuei also suffer from), and they use that to their advantage when attempting to take new captives. News of this interest drives many of the cautious Wu Zao Cainites further underground.

AKUMA

The Beast Courts count the corrupted Chi sites of the northern steppe and the southern parts of the taiga at more than twenty. These sites are openings to the energies of Yomi Wan, some large and some small. Some are relatively young — they come about due to the machinations of

akuma and wicked shapechanger folk. Others are older than human civilization; one site in particular, near a village called Mache, nearly cries out with hatred and the desire for revenge. Those sensations are palpable to any supernatural creature who might pass within a few miles of it.

THE POLITICS OF SCARCITY

The lack of human population in the northlands leads the Black Tortoise Wan Kuei to tap corrupt Chi sites far more readily than Hungry Dead from the rest of the Middle Kingdom might. Many, if pressed, would insist that they have no choice: If they want to keep living where they do, they'll have to tap these sites on occasion just to remain active. Many Wan Kuei go for decades or even centuries only tapping a corrupt Chi site on rare occasions and avoiding the touch of Yomi otherwise, but this course of action does tend to forestall enlightenment and Dharmic progress. While most of the Ten Thousand Demons tap corrupt Chi only when they have no choice, for some even the smallest sip is enough to turn irrevocably to darkness.

The tainted Chi sites can provide simple, quick power to any Wan Kuei who chooses to tap them, but over time those vampires increasingly depend on the corrupted Chi to fuel their waking nights. By that point, only the strongest Wan Kuei can resist the call of the Yama Kings, who offer great power at a seemingly small cost: fealty. By 1197, the Lords of Yomi Wan control dozens of Wan Kuei agents in the Black Tortoise Court, and they use those agents to subvert and manipulate the traditions of the Black Tortoise and bring still more influence to the Yama Kings. In 1197, perhaps one Wan Kuei in twelve is *akuma*; this number increases quickly over the next two centuries, and by the time of the Quincunx, perhaps one Wan Kuei in two is *akuma*. The Yama King Dokhon-Khan is primarily responsible for the corruption of the northern dragon nests, and it is at his behest that most northern *akuma* act, but Mikaboshi and Rangda play small parts as well.

DESTRUCTION OF THE ANDA

The Anda do not survive the Fourth Age; in the minds of some nostalgic Wan Kuei, their destruction is the broken arrow denoting the start of the Age of Sorrow (the modern period said to be a prelude to the apocalyptic Sixth Age). As the Mongol Empire grows larger and conquers even Song Dynasty China, the Anda begin to grow bold. Where before they were comfortable to remain in their arid northern homes, scavenging from hunters and herders of the steppe, after Kublai Khan's death, the Anda spend more and more time traveling south, within the boundaries

of the Middle Kingdom itself. Anda with ties to Mongol mortals elevated to positions of power in the Chinese bureaucracy visit cities under the firm hand of the Wan Kuei, and incredibly, some of these Anda are able to use the bureaucracy against Wan Kuei holdings.

This situation is intolerable. The Wan Kuei will not serve the mongrels of the north, even if their mortal herds do kneel before an outlander emperor. Record keepers in Changan consult the very oldest records available; they analyze scrolls and pottery from the early days of the Fourth Age in search of ways to strike at the barbarian vampires. Ultimately the solution comes from another Mongrel, one of the Wu Zao. Believing that the Anda will bring destruction on them all, this orphaned Cainite betrays some of the secrets of his blood: The Wan Kuei must discover the resting place of the eldest Anda vampire, the progenitor of all others. The courts secretly assign several *wu* to this task, and even so, it takes decades for them to find the creature.

The creature — called Dobrul — is well-defended by other barbarian vampires. The *wu* who discover its whereabouts engage in several nights of continuous running combat with those vampires and with insane, oversized, twisted animals apparently in Dobrul's service. Two villages are wiped from the face of the map simply to feed vampiric hungers. Five full *wu* converge on the site, and only five Wan Kuei emerge. Forming a new *wu*, these five bring the unconscious, immobile creature to Changan, where some of the oldest Wan Kuei mystics analyze it in search of a ritual that will enable them to destroy its descendants.

In the end, the ancestors succeed: They use the creature to summon its children to Karakorum, even as the Ming Chinese topple the Yuan Dynasty and march on the Mongols' old capital to take back their empire from the outlanders. By this time, Karakorum is little more than a symbol to the Mongols, but it is a powerful one. As the Ming armies attack Karakorum, dozens of *wu* from all of the August Courts descend on the city. Some *wu* use this attack as a staging ground to march on the *akuma* of the Black Tortoise Court, but nearly all of the Wan Kuei who travel to Karakorum hunt Anda. Though some few western vampires of Mongol or Chinese heritage remain within the Middle Kingdom, by the end of 1388, the Anda bloodline is no more.

THE FIFTH AGE

Wan Kuei are a fractious lot; few *wu* can agree on a single moment (or even a year) that signals the turning of the Age. In 1200, most Wan Kuei agree that it is the Fourth Age; by 1400, nearly all agree that it is the Fifth. A Changan *wu* calling itself the Harbingers of the Eternal Wheel point to a succession of events and suggest that, when taken in total, they represent the end of the Fourth Age and beginning of the Fifth. The Harbingers do not believe that any one event can be said to be the trigger any more than any

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single leaf's fall can be said to be autumn. From the conquest of Kaifeng by the Jin through the reconquest of China by the Ming Dynasty, the Harbingers see a smooth progression from Fourth Age to Fifth.

By contrast, many factions — especially including those who sign the Treaty of the Quincunx — believe firmly that the corruption of the Jade Court and the Ancestor of Changan at the end of the Ming Dynasty is the precise turning point. Before the ancestor turned *akuma*, they say, the Middle Kingdom was firmly in the grasp of the Fourth Age, and might have lasted there for centuries more. But a being of the ancestor's power turning to the Yama Kings assured the downfall of the Middle Kingdom. Particularly morose young Bone Dancers suggest that the Wan Kuei may as well start to hunt for the Demon Emperor on their own, to hasten the wheel along its path.

But Mongol Wan Kuei, those of the Black Tortoise Court in particular, and of the White Tiger Court to a lesser degree, feel a curious sense of destiny vanquished as the Age turns. They had a great opportunity, or so they say, to turn back the Eternal Wheel itself — or at least, in the words of one irreverent Running Monkey, to stick a rock in the spokes — and they missed it.

In the last few decades of the Yuan Dynasty, the *nushi* guardian spirits of several *wu* of Mongol Wan Kuei pass their vampiric charges messages from the Celestial Bureaucracy. These messages pertain to the turning of the Great Wheel and the many corrupt dragon nests on the northern steppe. Some refer to the many *akuma* who draw power from the nests, while others suggest that twisted Xiong Ren shapechangers whose homes have become these corrupted nests might prove to be the shock troops of the Demon Emperor. And so it goes: There are too many tales for any court to be absolutely sure that any given message truly comes from Heaven. One or two *wu* of the Black Tortoise make their way northward to the great Tatar Beast Court in the hope of soliciting assistance from their shamans; others contact friendly *hsien* to the same end. But neither of those groups receive any messages from Heaven.

However, in the end perhaps the messages' source makes no difference. As a variety of *wu* descend upon the corrupt dragon nests of the northern steppe without any real coordination, either engorgement on demonic Chi or being captured and tortured by the forces of Yomi Wan twists most into *akuma*. The light of Hell shines brightly on the nighttime steppe in these days.

Faced with the prior defection of at least a score of *wu* over the past two centuries and most of their brethren in a decade, the remaining loyal members of the Wandering Court are trapped. They have no desire to serve the Yama Kings, but it is obvious that the Bureaucrats of the Celestial Emperor have struck at them deviously and without just cause. Those who do not turn toward Hell split into two factions. One group flees to the Courts of the West and Center, and it they who sign the Treaty of the Quincunx on behalf of the Black Tortoise in 1304. In a rigorously guarded *kuriltai* of sorts, the remaining true Black Tortoise Wan Kuei renounce both the light of Heaven and the darkness of Yomi. In a scroll sent to Emperor Da of the White Tiger Court in 1301, these renunciates declare themselves exempt from the laws of both Heaven and Hell. Ironically, this letter confirms the former faction's legitimacy in the eyes of the White Tiger and Yellow Emperor Courts, setting the stage for the Treaty of the Quincunx.

Obviously, the renunciates are renegades, and it is at least as much to exterminate them as to destroy the *akuma* of the Black Tortoise that the other August Courts march on the northlands. The armies of the Ming Dynasty do not attack Karakorum, the old Mongol capital, alone. As Karakorum burns, and as building stones are cast down, vampires of the southern four courts ruthlessly destroy Wan Kuei turned to service of the Yama Kings. The Ming destroy Karakorum quickly and with little pain; the nighttime battle among the Wan Kuei lasts weeks. In the end, the Black Tortoise Court is no more; most have joined the Quincunx. The *akuma* are destroyed or routed, and the renunciates flee into the dark wilderness, presumably to be devoured by Xiong Ren or their former allies who turned to Yomi.





Chapter Three: Gifts of the Sky and Earth

We should have known better than to stir up
Temujin's anger. We should have known better
than to provoke him to war. Now we have
brought this punishment on ourselves...

*-Orghhan Toghril of the Kerait, quoted in
The Secret History of the Mongols.*

CREATING MONGOL CHARACTERS

There are no fundamental differences in the processes for creating Mongol characters and other types; the same game systems apply. There are, however, some special considerations that reflect the harsh life on the steppe and the unique position on vampires upon it. The following advice applies most directly to Anda characters, the truest of Mongol vampires, but may also be of use for other Cainites and even for Wan Kuei of the Black Tortoise Court. (Full information for creating Wan Kuei of this era appears in **World of Darkness: Blood & Silk**.) Players may also wish to look at the basic game statistics for a Mongol horseman, on page 77, to see what their character's abilities might have been before the Embrace or Second Breath.

ABILITIES

On the steppe, Skills are more important than either Talents or Knowledges. Nearly every ability in the Skills column of a **Vampire: The Dark Ages** character sheet will come in handy regularly. By contrast, not every Talent is needed; few characters get much use out of Larceny on the high plain, for instance. Even fewer Knowledges are useful; Hearth Wisdom (perhaps "Ger Wisdom" would be more accurate on the steppe) takes the roles that Academics, Law, Medicine and even Occult might occupy in a European chronicle. Not that such Knowledges are bad or out of character for a Mongol Cainite: It is simply the case that traditional learning is neither common nor valued at least until Ogadei's reign. In the early days, Storytellers may wish to discourage the acquisition of such Abilities in favor of Hearth Wisdom by letting characters make Hearth Wisdom rolls at a slight penalty in place of those Knowledges. Wu Zao and Wan Kuei of a more scholarly bent should use the standard Knowledges, however, to reflect their more formal education.

DISCIPLINES

A few Cainite Disciplines are invaluable to the nomadic vampire, and it is no coincidence that they are Clan Gangrel's inherent gifts: Animalism, Fortitude and Protean. Animalism helps ensure a continuing food supply, bland and distasteful though it may be; it can also give the plains hunter eyes to survey a great distance for prey and allows an Anda to ride a pony without spooking it. Not every sleep is restful, and not every quest for a dark cave to sleep in ends at dawn; therefore Fortitude's

protection is called for more often than the Mongol Cainite might wish. And the darksight and earth-sleeping abilities Protean grants make it well worth the time spent learning it. It thus becomes immediately obvious why the Gangrel (and their Anda relatives) thrive and why they are so unwilling to teach Protean to other clans; on the steppe, Protean can mean the difference between survival and destruction.

By contrast, among nomadic Mongols, certain Disciplines are largely unknown. Various forms of vampiric sorcery are chief among these; although certain Paths could be very useful, the Anda have no teachers. Most rituals waste too much time and energy in their casting, and they often require heavy or esoteric materials to pull off properly. Dominate is not as useful as Animalism unless the Cainite plans to spend much of his time travelling with a clan rather than living off the land.

Storytellers may wish to restrict starting Mongol characters to their clan Disciplines unless setting a chronicle after 1220, when the Anda and Wu Zao come into contact with vampires of the West. Even as play continues, without a foreign teacher, the characters should only develop these inherent Disciplines and the remaining "physical" ones, Potence and Celerity. Older characters might also be able to learn Disciplines such as Presence, Dominate and Obfuscate without a teacher, but this should take a long time or cost extra experience (increase the experience point multiplier by 1 for such abilities, so that they cost Current Rating x 8 to raise). It is highly unlikely that Mongol characters could learn proprietary Disciplines such as Obtenebration or Thaumaturgy without exposure to a Cainite who already knows them.

Wan Kuei of the Black Tortoise Court have access to the full range of Disciplines available to Cathayans of their era. The Godbodies of Earth and Fire (detailed in **World of Darkness: Blood & Silk**) are very appropriate because they reflect an attachment to Itügen and Tengri, respectively.

BACKGROUNDS

Backgrounds have the same basic functions as they do in any other chronicle. The following notes serve only to address special cases and provide examples of specific applications in the social environment of the steppe.

Allies: Use the Allies Background to represent a mortal *anda* brother; surely such an individual is worthy of two dots in that Background if she was roughly the character's equal in life. This number could increase to three dots if the *anda* brother retains substantial influence.

Contacts: Contacts can come from nearly any tribe or culture, as Mongols move around a great deal; at the

Storyteller's option, they may even be foreign vampires or Xiong Ren shapechangers.

Generation: No Anda character may be lower than 5th generation, and most are 9th or higher. Wu Zao are all of 10th or lower generation, just like Western Salubri.

Herd: As discussed elsewhere, Anda (and some Wan Kuei) typically draw their herds from the camps they rode with as mortals, but this is by no means universal. Vampires who lay claim to a particular territory might feed on particular mortals in that territory, or a flexible Storyteller might allow an Anda who spends much of his time near a busy trade route to use the Herd Background to represent his ability to hunt that trade route skillfully.

Influence: The Influence Background rarely extends beyond a single camp (one dot); in the rare occasion that it does, it almost never extends beyond two full tribes, such as the Mongol and Naiman (who together would be worth four dots). In Kublai Khan's day, some Anda gain further Influence over areas of China although their bloodline's curse of mobility makes maintaining such power difficult. Wan Kuei operating in the Jin and Xixia areas can have a great deal of Influence indeed.

Mentor: The *nöker* relationship among the Anda provides a perfect vehicle for the Mentor Background. A relatively young *noyan* is worth only one dot while an elder khan with plenty of other *nöker* is worth at least three. A Mentor does not have to come from within Mongol society, however; an enterprising Cainite of Europe might see the value in a Mongol ally and student and agree to teach her the ways of the west in return for unspecified services. A Wu Zao also makes a good mentor, especially a learned scholar of that line. Wu Zao characters often have another of their bloodline as Mentor, often their own sire. Wan Kuei have mentors of their own kind, but rarely serve as one for a Cainite.

Nushi: Wan Kuei (and only Wan Kuei) can have a guardian spirit known as a *nushi*. Among the nomads of the Black Tortoise Court, this is usually a Yang-aspected nature or *ger* spirit.

Resources: Mongols do not measure wealth in terms of either gold or land ownership as Europeans tend to. Instead, a Mongol's Resources Background represents a fine *ger*, several wives, fine horses or trade goods. Many Mongol vampires survive well enough with no Resources dots, but to have a horse and hunting gear, a single dot is necessary. Additional dots would go to support a *yasun* to build and carry a *ger*, and otherwise participate in society as a wealthy Mongol. Successful Wu Zao — with a stockpile of lore and pilfered treasures — have several dots in this Background.

Retainers: Anda, used to self-reliance, only occasionally have this Background, usually representing a shaman or chieftain of the vampire's *yasun* herd. Mongol Wan Kuei follow the same model. Wu Zao, on the other hand, often have several mortal or ghoul retainers who serve as aids, researchers and guards as well as other functions.

Status: Storytellers and players should keep in mind that Status comes into play both during lone meetings and at *kuriltai*; among Anda, it is largely a function of age. Wan Kuei do not use this Background.

MERITS AND FLAWS

Storytellers who allow Merits and Flaws have to keep a certain amount of control over them. The following ones are particularly inappropriate for nomadic characters: Church Rank, Institutional Control, Manse, Unskilled, Territorial (for Anda, that is, due to their bloodline weakness) and True Faith (even rarer among Mongols than Europeans). Church Rank, Institutional Control and Manse can be found more often after the establishment of the empire around the time of Genghis Khan's death. On the other hand, the following Merits and Flaws are very appropriate: Celestial Attunement, Enemy or Hunted (especially by Wan Kuei), Second Class Citizen (if the chronicle takes place in China or for certain tribes) and Uneducated. A few unique Merits and Flaws appear on page 75.

ROADS

Many Anda follow the unique Road of the Yasa (see p. 75), but that does not mean the other Cainites *Via* aren't open to Mongol characters. Some are more appropriate than others, however.

The Road of Heaven stands out as being inappropriate for most Mongol Cainites. A very few Mongols and associated tribes are Nestorian Christian, of course, and so the Road isn't unheard of, but, as is mentioned in many other places, religion just doesn't matter that much to the average Mongol. They are unlikely to adhere too closely to the Judeo-Christian mindset without a very good reason. The Anda put little weight on the diablerie taboo; this renders the Road of Blood less of an attraction. Like the Road of Heaven, the Roads of Paradox and Typhon are tightly tied to a mindset that the Mongols just don't follow. This doesn't mean that characters who take them are wrong for doing so; it simply means that the player should justify the choice in terms of the character's background.

The Road of Humanity is very common, as in most vampiric cultures; on it, Mongol Cainites try simply to live by the same moral imperatives they followed in life. The Roads of the Beast and Chivalry both have some

appeal for a Mongol vampire. Each requires some modification, of course: the Via Bestiae does not allow for as much cleverness and cunning as some players might prefer; and the Via Equitum would need a significant overhaul. Players interested in running an "honorable" Mongol must remember that the Mongol philosophy was rather pragmatic and focused around the need to win battles at all cost, rather than the need to look useful in front of the peasantry. The Road of the Yasa is, in some ways, a Mongol synthesis of the Roads of the Beast and Chivalry.

The Wu Zao most commonly follow the Road of Humanity. Those who see their quest for enlightenment in a reverential light may well walk the Road of Heaven, although which vision of paradise they seek to emulate depends on their mortal background. More pragmatic temple thieves may follow a version of the Road of Chivalry.

The Wan Kuei do not follow Roads but the more complex Dharmas at the center of their beliefs. All five of the orthodox Dharmas are open to Black Tortoise Cathayans and several also follow one of the heretical paths (which are tolerated in so open a court). Full details appear in **World of Darkness: Blood & Silk**.

NEW TRAITS

The following Traits reflect the unique circumstances and nomadic lifestyle of the Mongols. Some are available only to Cainites, others only to Wan Kuei, and some to both. The Storyteller is, as always, the final judge as to what Traits are available in her chronicle.

ANDA DISCIPLINE POWERS (MA)

Owing to the unique nature of unlife on the steppe, the Anda use the their Disciplines in ways few western Cainites do. They refer to their unique abilities collectively as "Ma," a word for horse stolen from the Chinese; they tend to see all those powers as just an extension of the Animalism Discipline. Animalism works as it does in the West, but many Anda know techniques to enhance and specialize their use of this power.

All Anda can learn one Ma power for free as soon as they have the necessary Disciplines at the appropriate level; for all others, they must spend the experience point cost listed with the ability. Only a very short window of opportunity exists for non-Anda Cainites to learn the Anda's special techniques with Animalism. There is only one way that a Mongol vampire not of the Anda lineage can learn Ma: She must have an Anda Mentor (Mentor •• or greater) who is willing to teach it to her. As well, she must spend the experience point

cost and have the prerequisite abilities listed with the power.

STEAL THE TERRIBLE SWIFTNESS (ANIMALISM LEVEL TWO, FORTITUDE LEVEL ONE)

At times an Anda must cross enormous distance at great speed. Mongol riders are *fast*, covering more than a hundred miles a day under good conditions by riding three or four horses. (Even vast Mongol armies comprising 100,000 riders can cover fifty or sixty miles in a day, more than four times what comparable European armies can cross.) Steal the Terrible Swiftness allows the Anda to use the strength and speed of the Mongolian steppe pony when none are to be found. He can cover 100 miles or more in a night, running across the steppe at what sounds to those nearby to be a full horse's gallop. However, he cannot stop for rest, blood or conversation; once he has taken to running, he must keep moving or lose the benefits of this technique for the night.

System: Spend one blood point and roll Stamina + Athletics, difficulty 6. Should the player achieve at least one success, the character can move overland at a rate of 20 miles per hour until he stops or slows to less than half his full speed for any reason. Additional successes add 5 miles per hour to the character's rate of travel. The player can spend Willpower to allow the Anda to stop or slow without losing the effects of Steal the Terrible Swiftness; one Willpower point must be spent for each turn the character does not return to his normal speed. If this Willpower is not spent, the character loses the great speed and may not use Steal the Terrible Swiftness again that night.

This power costs 5 experience points to learn.

SHARED STRENGTH (ANIMALISM LEVEL THREE, PROTEAN LEVEL TWO)

Most Cainites frighten sensitive animals such as dogs, cats and horses. The Anda, however, depend on the steppe pony to survive and learn to create a supernatural bond with their steeds. Like many Mongols on long journeys or in times of hardship, the Anda might drink the blood of a horse; those who know this Ma sometimes return the favor. They can not only speak with their mount (as per Feral Speech), but may grant it other benefits by feeding it some blood.

System: The Anda feeds one point of his blood to his steed and the player rolls Charisma + Animal Ken, difficulty 7. Each success can be spent on one of the following abilities (each ability lasts for a number of days equal to the vampire's rating in Animalism):

- Double the mount's maximum movement rate over long distances — extra successes spent here increase

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the multiplier by 1, so an Anda who spends two successes on long distance movement enables his horse to move at triple normal speed. The creature will need only the normal amount of food and rest during this time.

- Double the mount's galloping speed — as with long distance movement, extra successes spent on gallop speed increase the multiplier by 1, so an Anda who spends four successes on galloping speed increases the pony's gallop to five times its normal speed.

- Increase any of the mount's Physical Attributes by 1 (to a maximum of double its natural level).

- Adhere the Anda to his mount; he cannot be unhorsed unless he chooses to leave the horse's back. This grants +1 to the Ride dice pool and +1 to the Melee dice pool when the Anda is fighting from horseback. Spectacularly successful attempts to unhorse the vampire (5 or more successes) may, at the Storyteller's option, damage the horse or rider rather than forcing the rider from the horse's back.

For Example: *Tarmakhan, an Anda with Shared Strength and Animalism •••, needs to ride from Sarai to Karakorum as quickly as he can. His Charisma + Animal Ken dice pool is 6, and he rolls 4 successes. He spends two of his successes to raise the creature's Stamina by 2 to 5. The other two successes are spent to increase the creature's distance movement rate. The pony will move*

three times as quickly over a long distance, though it will only need the normal amount of food and rest. These effects will last for three days.

Blood fed to a mount for the purposes of Shared Strength do not count toward the blood oath or making the animal a ghoul. This power is not incompatible with those states, however. Shared Strength costs 12 experience points to learn.

ITÜGEN'S EMBRACE (ANIMALISM LEVEL ONE; PROTEAN LEVEL THREE)

The Anda feel a deep connection to the loose earth of the steppe they must wander night after night. For them, this earth is the body of Itügen, their Mother Goddess, and it is she who protects them from the harsh rays of the day. They believe that the favor of Itügen allows them to extend this protection to their close followers such as childer and ghouls so that these lessers may slumber alongside them. Most commonly, Anda horsemen use this power to inter their ponies with them. Unlucky is the mortal who sees a mounted Mongol charge out of the very earth at dusk!

System: The effects of this power are indistinguishable from Interred in the Earth (Protean Level Three), save that the vampire must expend additional blood to bring another under the earth with her. The player

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spends an extra blood point and the vampire can inter a ghou, childe (or other vampiric descendant) or another vampire bound to her through the blood oath. An interred ghou can be human or animal, but no larger than a horse. Only a vampire who traces her ancestry through the character or is under the blood oath can be so interred. Both creatures must enter the earth at the same time, both feel the same effects, and both leave the earth when the elder who possesses this ability wills it to be so. More feral vampires find using this power on childer to be rather distasteful — a whelp who can't dig or find its own holes until learning Interred in the Earth isn't worth keeping. But more pragmatic Cainites, especially after the rise of the Mongol Empire, put less stock in the barbarian mystique.

This power costs 10 experience points to learn.

BLACK TORTOISE RITES

Wan Kuei of every era use rituals unique to their time. The Mongol era lasts less than two centuries, but many of the rituals listed below are quite appropriate throughout that time. They may be available to modern characters at the Storyteller's discretion, though many of them will be difficult to enact or pointless to bother with: Using a messenger-spirit in the days of telephone service is just a waste of Chi. These rituals are primarily available to Black Tortoise Wan Kuei; vampires of other courts may know them, at the Storyteller's discretion, though it is suggested that the character have a good reason for knowing them, such as a Mentor from Black Tortoise lands. Cainites cannot use these rites.

SPEAK THROUGH THE TONGUE OF THE DRAGON (LEVEL ONE RITE)

As a Wan Kuei travels hundreds or thousands of miles from his home, he may wish to send messages back to a distant court. Speaking Through the Tongue of the Dragon allows the Wan Kuei to do precisely that. The Wan Kuei finds a minor spirit in keeping with his direction and gives it a small item, generally handmade, valuable to that spirit (a spirit of the north wind might require a small sculpture in ice, while a spirit of the center may demand five lotus petals). He may then whisper a simple message to the spirit and name a Wan Kuei and dragon nest as the destination. When the spirit reaches that nest, it will politely inquire as to whether the Wan Kuei named is present; should any Wan Kuei successfully present herself as that message's recipient, the spirit will whisper the message in her ear and depart, its task complete. If no one steps forward to claim the message, the spirit will wait until the dawn and then vanish.

System: The Wan Kuei must invest his gift to the spirit with one point of Chi. The player rolls Wits +

Crafts (difficulty 6) to represent the skill with which the gift was made; spending more than two hours on the gift gives the player an extra two dice on this roll. Successes on this roll give the spirit a dice pool to detect those falsely presenting themselves as the recipient of the message (roll this dice pool against a difficulty equal to the liar's Manipulation + Subterfuge; even one success means that the façade is pierced). The message should be no longer than about a hundred words. There is no need for the Storyteller to count each word, of course; she may decide a message is "long enough" at her discretion.

SENSE OF THE GER (LEVEL ONE RITE)

Wan Kuei of the Black Tortoise Court often pay visits to the mortals of the steppe north of the Great Wall. Steppe hospitality being what it is, a stranger might well be invited into a nomad family's *ger* for rest and conversation; she is likely to receive offers of food and small gifts as part of that hospitality. A *ger* is a sacred space; the very presence of a properly maintained *ger* subtly disturbs the Chi flow in a small area. A Wan Kuei can use Sense of the Ger to locate any *ger* she has entered in the past five nights. Doing so requires a minor enchantment of any of the food or gifts she received at that *ger*. The Wan Kuei must take the gift or food received and burn incense around it for two hours; the gift itself burns as the surrounding incense does, and at the end of the two hours, the gift is wholly consumed. The fine ash of the gift need only be sprinkled on a virgin piece of parchment.

System: The player should roll the Wan Kuei's Intelligence + Occult, with a difficulty equal to the local Wall. If the roll succeeds the ash forms itself into a line clearly pointing out the current direction of the *ger*. The line is longer and thinner the further away the *ger* is; one within a few miles appears wide as the Wan Kuei's thumb, while one more than a hundred miles distant provides a thin, almost ghostly line. A failure gives a meaningless sprinkle pattern, while a botch gives disastrously inaccurate information (pointing the character at the nearest Xiong Ren court, for instance).

ENCIRCLE (LEVEL THREE RITE)

Enemies of the Mongols often speak of the barbarians' arrows as seeking them or their horses from all directions. A Mongol Wan Kuei who knows the Encircle rite can enchant her arrows so that they home in on a target even if she faces directly away from her target. The arrows used for this rite cannot have any other form of enchantment on them; they must be dedicated for the Encircle rite only. The Wan Kuei takes a small amount of her own blood and mixes it with a bit of steppe soil and ground ginger root; she dips the arrows to be enchanted in this mixture while speaking sacred words.

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System: The Wan Kuei must expend one point of either Yin or Yang Chi through lost blood for every nine arrows to be enchanted. The player should roll Intelligence + Archery, with no more Archery dice rolled than the character has dots in the Rituals Knowledge. Each success gives the player an additional die in his Archery dice pool when firing one of these enchanted arrows. Additionally, the target of such an arrow gets no defensive bonus for cover or being at an odd angle to the shooter; enchanted arrows will home their way to the target, dodging around obstacles as necessary. The shooter can still miss (if his roll to hit fails or the target dodges), but only through such a contest of skill will he do so.

The arrows can be transferred to another Wan Kuei; a set of nine should be considered to be a level two artifact for purposes of Backgrounds.

STRENGTH OF THE HERD (LEVEL THREE RITE)

In times of extreme danger, the Wan Kuei must sometimes call on vast reserves of strength. This rite provides that power, but at a cost. To perform the rite, the vampire first spends an hour in ritual purification, through prayer or meditation on his Dharma. When that hour is complete, the Wan Kuei consumes all the blood of a steppe pony. Note that no other kind of horse suffices here — the captured destrier of a Hungarian knight has no effect. This consumption is a disgusting and bloody thing: The Wan Kuei's body becomes bloated almost beyond recognition with the vast intake of blood, and a sheen of blood covers her skin as the fluid attempts to escape through every available pore and orifice. With the consumption of the vital essence of the horse, however, the Wan Kuei becomes immensely strong, easily able to heft one of the ponies she just devoured.

System: The Wan Kuei receives no Chi sustenance through the consumption of the pony's blood for the Strength of the Herd rite (Wan Kuei cannot draw Chi from animal blood); her unliving form does convert the blood's energy into raw strength, however. The player rolls Stamina + Rituals (difficulty 6) to enact this rite; a failure means the vampire simply cannot consume the huge volume of blood she needs. On a botch the character vomits up huge, humiliating gouts of blood and is unable to use this rite again for at least 24 hours. If she succeeds, however, the Wan Kuei's Strength is increased by one per success (to a maximum of twice her normal maximum Strength). This strength lasts a base of four hours, during which time the character's Appearance trait is halved. The character may spend successes to extend the duration of the ritual, rather than to increase the character's strength; each success so spent adds one hour to the ritual's duration.

COMMUNE WITH TENGRI (LEVEL FOUR RITE)

This rite is typically performed at the highest point in the surrounding landscape, such that no higher point is visible from that promontory. If the surrounding landscape is all equally flat, the rite is much less likely to succeed; ancestors suggest that the Wan Kuei search for a suitably high promontory before beginning the ritual.

The vampiric supplicant to Mongke Koke Tengri must shed all clothing and allow herself to be wrapped in the night sky while kneeling in one position for at least four hours and praying to the sky god. The supplicant may move and speak, but may not rise for any reason, lest she spoil the rite. During this time, the vampire feels a great, shining presence come to her; the great spirit of the endless sky touches the supplicant's soul, and for a moment she can see the shining, sunlit blue sky of the daytime steppe and the clarity that it brings. When the necessary time has elapsed, the Wan Kuei receives insight regarding the greatest problem she currently faces. Whether this insight truly comes from Tengri is the subject of great debate among Black Tortoise Wan Kuei.

System: Spend 1 Yang Chi. At the end of the four-hour period, roll Stamina + Rituals (difficulty 7, or up to 9 in severe weather or if the character performs the rite in the middle of a plain). The player lets the Storyteller know the character's primary concern during the communion period. The Storyteller counts successes and consults the following table to give the character information about his communion:

Successes	Information
Botch	Outright lies provided by a servant of the Yama Kings.
0	No information.
1	Vague hints, poetic commentary.
2	Indirect clues that hint at a resolution of the problem.
3	A name, a face or a place. Often rather impressionistic, as a painting.
4	Flashes of future or distant events; a single scene or recognizable image.
5+	Extended glimpses of specific scenes yet to occur, or which the character would have no way of having witnessed (a murder with no witnesses, for instance).

Additionally, these successes act as additional dice to the player's dice pool when the character confronts the source of his problem. They can only be used once for this purpose — they might add to a Perception + Inves-

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tigation total at the scene of a murder or a Dexterity + Melee roll during a long-awaited combat. The dice must be used for this purpose within ten days of enacting the rite.

THE GREAT KHAN'S COMMUNION WITH TENGRI

Note that Genghis Khan himself performed a ritual similar to Commune with Tengri during his life; however, there are open differences between the two. Did the Great Khan learn secrets from the Wan Kuei? That prospect is unlikely, for the Black Tortoise had no contact with him or his camp before his rise to power. The mortal shaman's ritual to contact Tengri comes from the same root as the Wan Kuei ritual to do the same thing, and likely neither one is more correct; it is simply the case that the Wan Kuei can fuel their communion using Chi while most mortals cannot.

COMMUNE WITH ITÜGEN (LEVEL FOUR RITE)

Unlike Commune with Tengri, above, this rite is performed in hiding. The Wan Kuei who wishes communion with the Earth Mother must surrender himself to her completely, and travel deep into a cave until no moonlight or starlight is visible. Such caves are well

known to the Wan Kuei, of course, who must hide from the sun each day; caves which bear the marks of heavy traffic are inappropriate for this rite as the ritualist must sanctify the cave he wishes to use before beginning.

A Wan Kuei chooses to commune with Mother Itügen for one of two main purposes: to gain her gift of fertility or to gain her gift of strength. The performance of the rite is similar in each case: The vampire burns incense and carefully writes a long prayer onto a pristine scroll. He then burns the scroll—by this time, the cave may be too smoky for a mortal to breathe or for the scroll to burn properly, so care must be taken—and meditates for several hours. When this time has ended, if his meditations have been true, the Wan Kuei will receive the gift asked for.

System: The character must perform the rituals described above; the player then rolls Stamina + Occult (difficulty 7).

If the character seeks Itügen's gift of fertility and achieves four or more successes, any or all Chi in her system is converted to Yang Chi, at the character's discretion; if she becomes Yang-imbalanced at this point she may be able to sire or bear a dhampyr (as appropriate). If the character seeks Itügen's gift of strength, each success temporarily adds one die to the character's Strength-based dice pools for a duration equal to one full night.



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THE ROAD OF THE YASA

The Road of the Yasa (the "Via Yasaq" to those who insist on the Latinate form; Yasaq is the adjectival form of Yasa) has similarities to both the Road of the Beast and the Road of Chivalry but has elements found in neither. The guiding philosophy of the Road of the Yasa is that the settled, sedentary residents of cities are weak, and if they cannot fight adequately to defend their lives and their property, they deserve to lose both. Those who follow the Road of the Yasa receive the sobriquet "Barbarians" from their more settled brethren, but it is a badge they wear with pride.

The Barbarians are ferociously protective of their mortal and Cainite families, as well as their *anda* brothers, regardless of whether their blood brother has received the Embrace. Any threat to one of them is a threat to the vampire who follows this Road. Personal honor is also tremendously important to Cainites on the Via Yasaq; honesty and discipline are paramount. However, the traditional European concept of honor on the battlefield is lost on them: The Barbarian fights to win at all costs. Feints, spies, smoke, loud noise and gunpowder explosives are all acceptable weapons. The labors of civilization are anathema to the Barbarian, but the fruits of that labor are not.

The virtues of the Road of the Yasa are Conviction and Self-Control.

MERITS AND FLAWS

The following Merits and Flaws are specially designed for a Mongol chronicle; they can be used in other settings only as the Storyteller permits. They are available to Anda and other Mongol Cainites as well as Wan Kuei of the Black Tortoise Court.

INOFFENSIVE TO ANIMALS (1 OR 2 PT. MERIT)

With this Merit, the vampire character does not cause hostile or even unsettled reactions in animals she encounters; instead, the animals simply treat her like an ordinary human. For one point, the character can avoid upsetting a particular species; for two points she can be inoffensive to all ordinary natural creatures (though those that are renowned for their affinity to the supernatural, such as black cats or owls, might still react unusually to the character's presence, at the Storyteller's discretion). Characters with this Merit cannot take Repulsive to Animals.

SENSE OF THE STOCK (3 PT. MERIT)

The vampire with Sense of the Stock receives much the same unconscious feelings of mistrust as animals do when they are confronted by vampires and other creatures of the night. She reacts in animalistic fashion: Hackles rise, nostrils flare and so on. An experienced

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Rating	Transgression	Rationale
10	Spending more than three nights in one place	Only weaklings and mortals need rest.
9	Disobeying the order of your <i>noyan</i>	The hunt fails if all do not act as one
8	Lying to one who has proved himself honest	Honesty is a pasture; let it grow freely
7	Ignoring an insult	Insist upon respect from the first night after death
6	Abusing your herd	The herd belongs to the family, not the vampire
5	Performing "civilized" labor	Sedentary weaklings spend their days scrabbling at the dirt; we are warriors
4	Losing a battle due to pride	Defeat the enemy, ignore the rest
3	Lying to your family or <i>anda</i>	Such a liar lies to himself
2	Betraying your family	The bond of blood is all that matters
1	Betraying your <i>anda</i>	The deliberate bond of blood is the most important

character can repress the obvious reaction but still realizes instinctually that something strange is going on. A vampire — either Cainite or Wan Kuei — with this Merit notices the inhuman nature of a vampire, manifested ghost or demon-possessed mortal if the player succeeds on a roll of Perception + Animal Ken (difficulty 8); while the character cannot differentiate between different kinds of monsters, she does know that the person is not an ordinary mortal. This Merit does not trigger in response to Xiong Ren or *hsien* as both of those breeds have a closer affinity to nature than vampires do. At the Storyteller's discretion, Cainites on the Via Bestiae or Yang-imbalanced Wan Kuei may not trigger this Merit.

REPULSIVE TO ANIMALS (2 PT. FLAW)

With this Flaw, every natural animal the vampire encounters is automatically and severely upset by her presence. Creatures tend to panic and flee; some rare few might instead attack. The character cannot calm the creatures down with Animal Ken rolls; it requires either use of Animalism or a taste of vampire blood (which ghouls the creature) to settle the beast down. Characters with this Flaw cannot take Inoffensive to Animals.

SPIRITS OF NATURE

Despite the Mongols' relatively light religious sentiment, their spirit world is quite rich. Anda and mortals have little or no direct contact with spirits but respect and honor them in their daily (and nightly) activities. Shamans, Wan Kuei and Cainites with special gifts can interact much more actively with the spirit world. The following section provides a few guidelines for portraying the spirits of the steppe in play.

As described elsewhere, in the Mongol world-view, spirits inhabit most natural things and have many of the characteristics of the animal, plant or terrain they embody. They typically have some magical powers, and can often learn secret information by communing with their brethren, who might have witnessed an otherwise hidden event. Their behaviors are as varied as humans' might be; some are flighty while others are quite serious. Though there is some correspondence between their inner natures and their demeanors, there doesn't have to be — a mountain's spirit might well be imposing, solid and slow to change, but it might just as well have a sense of humor and speak quickly.

Storytellers with access to *Kindred of the East* should use the information in the section entitled "The Ten Thousand Spirits," starting on page 209 of that book, to describe nature spirits in game terms when necessary. Those without can use the sample spirits listed below as templates, or steal spirit templates from

any one of a dozen or so other *World of Darkness* books that have them. In general, spirits have only three traits: Willpower, Rage (which is used as an attack dice pool) and Gnosis (which is used to power charms much as blood points are used to power vampiric Disciplines). Storytellers who wish to use *Kindred of the East* to define spirits are free to do so, of course.

DARA, THE UPPER ONON RIVER

When she appears to those who summon her (or, more rarely, when she chooses to embody herself before a potential ally or enemy), Dara appears as a translucent woman carved of flowing water. Her hips and legs trail off into a waterspout that runs back to the Onon. She is quick to take offense at those who might sully her purity by bathing or washing in the Onon's depths, though she freely allows crossing at the few fords on the upper Onon.

Rage 4, Gnosis 7, Willpower 6

Charms: Appear (allows her to be seen at her choice); Cleanse the Blight (allows her to remove spiritual corruption from an area); Shapeshift (allows her to change her visage and form, though not her traits).

TZAKOK, A GER FIRE SPIRIT

Tzakok is quick to take offense, but loyal to the family that resides in his *ger* and to their welcomed guests. He appears as a short, yappy dog with sharp teeth in a small mouth. He does not have much to say, though he does have a fairly good memory for events that have happened within his *ger*. Unfortunately, he has a fairly bad memory for conversations in that *ger*, so an emergency interrogation may not go so well.

Rage 5, Gnosis 3, Willpower 4

Charms: Blast Flame (expend power to do 2 dice of aggravated damage), Create Fires (ordinary, untargeted fires that must catch on something flammable or go out in one turn).

TENGRI AND ITÜGEN, GODS OF THE STEPPE

Father Tengri, god of the sky and creator of the world, is the most revered of all Mongol gods and spirits, and it is not hard to see why; on the steppe, the hemisphere of the blue sky above dominates all other things. In few other places is the sky as grand. Tengri is not typically perceived as having a physical incarnation (there are no statues or pictures of him), for he is literally the embodiment of the sky. However, Tengri does have at least two sons that he may have created whole. Humans draw energy from Tengri through the crown of the head.

The weather is seen as manifestation of Tengri's mood. When the great god is calm or happy, the sky is clear and the wind is just enough to keep a rider cool.

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When he is angry, however, thunderstorms sweep across the plain at a rapid pace, with lightning bolts marking places, things and people that have earned Tengri's displeasure. The god has purified stones and trees struck by lightning, and the shards of those things are quite valuable to shamans, who can use them in alchemical mixtures of all kinds. Tengri is also directly invoked in rainmaking rituals, which are often a necessity on the dry steppe.

A NOTE ON VERACITY

Certain aspects of Tengri and Itügen are fictionalized here for gameplay purposes and to better reflect these spirits' place in the World of Darkness. This section is not intended to be a primer on real-world shamanism or real-world Mongolian shamanic beliefs; the reader who is interested in such is encouraged to seek out his or her local library or bookstore, which is sure to be a more reliable source of information.

Itügen, like Tengri, is not personified; there are no icons of her image, for she is the earth itself. More women than men revere Itügen as she is seen as the mother goddess and the mistress of fertility — indeed, Itügen's daughter is thought to be the goddess of the womb itself, and sacrifices to both goddesses are appropriate for a woman who wishes to bear a child.

Trees are a representation of Itügen's power, and they make the best sites for worship of, sacrifice to and communion with the earth goddess — though caves and underground sites are also appropriate. Through her relation to the tree, Itügen also has influence over fire, and many fire spirits pay her heed.

Game statistics are entirely up to the Storyteller should they (for some unexpected reason) actually be needed. In general, these gods should remain distant forces of nature and destiny, not personified spirits character can interact with directly.

STEPPE SYSTEMS

Mongol life on the steppe is far removed from the agrarian or urban lifestyles of Europe and China. To help you in telling stories in this environment, this section provides a few additional game mechanics to cover some unique circumstances. Creative Storytellers can of course adapt these systems to other uses and import mechanics from **World of Darkness: Blood & Silk** and other appropriate sources.

BASIC PROFILES

The following simple game profiles can be useful when faced with portraying mortal Mongols, either as allies or enemies. Players of Mongol characters can also use these statistics as a basis when choosing their Traits.

MONGOL HORSEMAN

Many different men ride with the Mongol horde, from teenagers to the elderly. The following profile represents an experienced horseman.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Talents: Alertness 1, Athletics 1, Brawl 1, Dodge 1, Intimidation 1

Skills: Animal Ken 3, Archery 4 (mounted), Ride 3, Survival 3

Knowledges: Hearth Wisdom 1, Medicine 1

Backgrounds: Allies 1

Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 3, Courage 4

Road of Humanity: 6

Willpower: 4

Health Levels: OK/-1/-1/-2/-2/-5/Incapacitated/Dead

Equipment: Short composite bow, 60 arrows (light arrows are Damage 3, Range 300 yards; heavier arrows are Damage 4, Range 150 yards), lance, mace, short sword, horsehair rope, leather coat or cuirass (as light or composite armor), three or four hardy steppe ponies and all the *qumis* he can drink.

MONGOL WARHORSES

The Mongol warhorse — by some standards, simply a steppe pony — is the vehicle by which the Mongol war machine conquers the world. It is hardy, brave and capable of thriving on even the relatively sparse vegetation of the steppe. It is swifter than the massive European destrier, but cannot take the punishment that such larger horses can. Numbers in parenthesis indicate a typical ghoulish horse.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4 (5)

Willpower: 4, **Health Levels:** OK/OK/-1/-1/-2/-2/-5/Incapacitated/Dead

Attack: Trample or kick for 6 dice; bite for 3 (4)

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 1 (2)

Disciplines: (Potence 1)

Blood Pool: 5 (6+)

TRUE FAITH

Other than occasional problems with a *ger* (see p. 21), Mongol vampires rarely encounter a strength of True Faith sufficient to stymie them. Religion just doesn't affix itself too strongly to the typical Mongol until the later days of the empire (Guyuk or Kublai's reign, perhaps). In the early days, the only real exception to this is the Mongol animist shaman, and shamans do not wield their faith as weapons against Anda except in dire situations. Only one *ger* in 100 has a True Faith rating of 1; perhaps one in 10,000 of those might have a rating of 2.

When Mongol Cainites first encounter Islamic shaykhs and Nestorian Christian priests with True Faith, they are stricken dumb with confusion. Some see these people as proof that the Anda should not travel so far West; others begin campaigns of terror against religious holdings, claiming to be certain that these messengers of Tengri will bring their eventual destruction.

The shaykhs' and priests' families are usually the first targets of such attacks. They do not survive long. If the churches the priests use are not bastions of True Faith themselves, the Anda also strike at those, trying to burn them down or simply knock stone from stone. Local vampiric authority usually intervenes after a church fire, as fire in a medieval city is never something that a Cainite prince wants to condone. But the result is usually the same: The religious figure backs away from the vampire he was previously harassing, so the Anda tend to think of this as a good tactic to keep using.

WARFARE

The Mongol war machine brings destruction, horror and conquest from Eastern Europe to Southern China and beyond. Supremely skilled horsemen, the Mongols defeat almost all comers until the Mamluks in Galilee.

COMBAT FROM HORSEBACK

Due to their extensive training, Mongol warriors nearly all have the "Mounted" specialization to their Archery skill. In a traditional battle — using a Mongolian short bow and riding a steppe pony — they suffer no penalty for launching arrows from horseback at anything less than a full gallop. Firing at a full gallop imposes +1 difficulty penalty while doing very difficult things like firing backwards at a full gallop causes a +2 or higher penalty — at the Storyteller's discretion.

As described in Chapter One, Mongols faced with a heavily armored opponent such as the traditional European knight are prone to shoot his horse out from under him. Game statistics for the traditional European warhorse can be found in the *Dark Ages Companion* or *The Ashen Knight*.

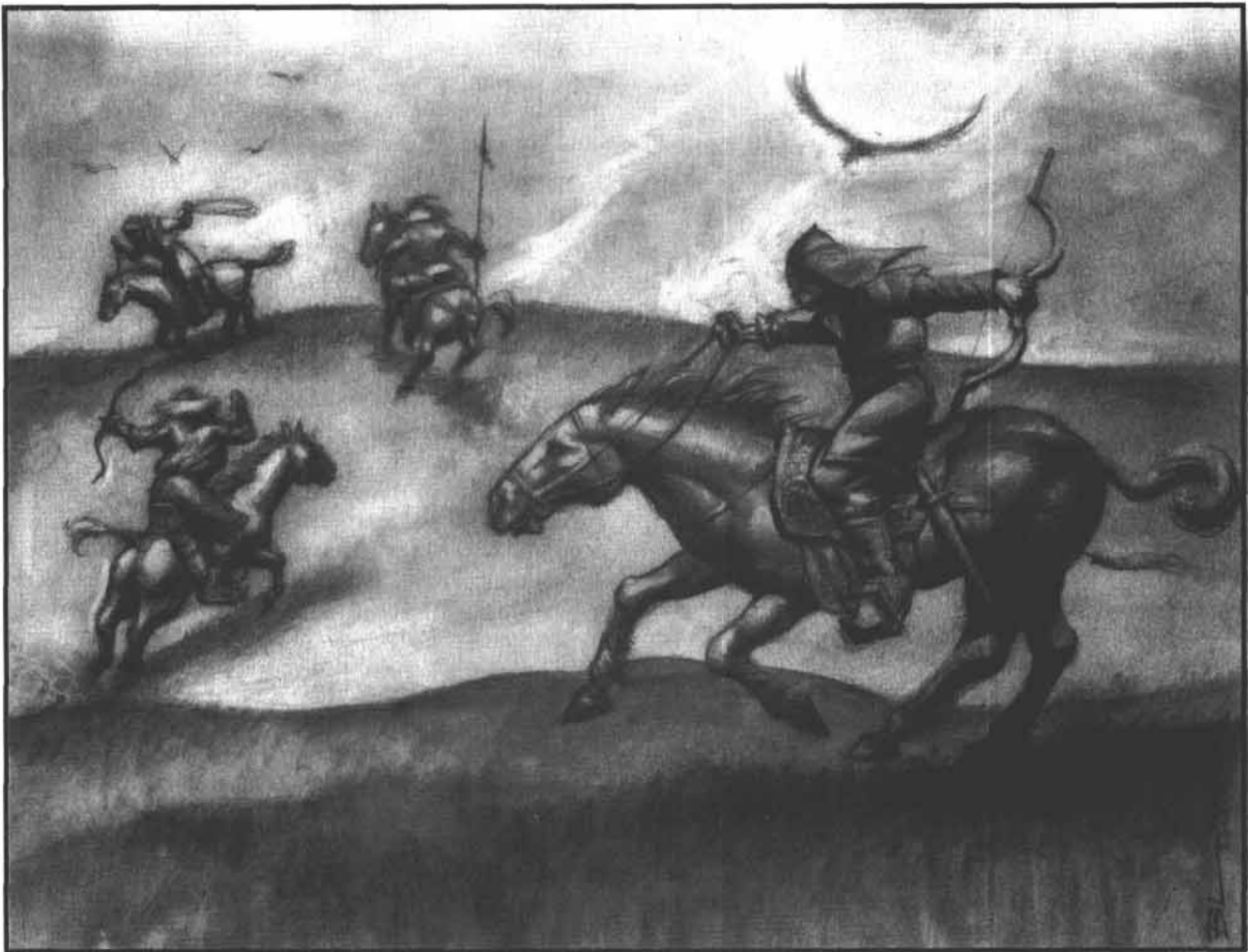
Mongols are very skilled horsemen; when faced with a cavalry charge they scatter, outdistancing and outmaneuvering enemy horses. Should the Storyteller wish to play such a contest out — a Mongol warrior attempting to keep out of the reach of an onrushing Ventrue knight, for instance — contests of Dexterity + Ride (target 6) should be made between the two riders. Do not forget to apply Dexterity dice pool penalties due to armor encumbrance in this scenario. Keep track of net successes; the side to rack up 5 net successes first gets its desire (either closing to melee range or escape). Should the two riders tie in any turn, the relative situation does not change although both riders obviously continue moving in relation to the surrounding terrain.

BASIC HORSEPLAY

Rules for mounted combat appear in several products and are summarized here for your convenience:

- The mounted character's Ride Skill serves as a maximum for any combat Ability used on horseback. If the rider has a higher Melee than Ride, for example, use Ride instead.
- On a real battlefield, rather than a hunt or a one-on-one combat, horses may get out of their rider's control. To avoid this, players should split their characters' dice pools to allow for a Wits + Ride roll to keep in control of the mount.
- Trained horses can trample foes; use the rider's Manipulation + Ride to hit and apply 6 dice (for a Mongolian warhorse and its ilk) or 7 dice (for a knight's destrier and similarly sized beasts) of damage to the target. A failure or botch on this roll to hit leaves the horse wide open to attack from the intended target.
- A lance may be used from horseback; it requires Ride 3 and Melee 3, and does 8 dice of damage on a successful hit; those struck must also roll Strength + Athletics with a difficulty of (4 + attacker's successes) to avoid being knocked down. Very small characters cannot use a lance at all; very large ones (with the Huge Size Merit) do 2 extra dice of damage.
- Bows fired from horseback suffer a +2 difficulty penalty at a walk or canter and a +4 difficulty penalty at a trot or faster, unless the rider has the "Mounted" specialization to his Archery skill.

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SACKING A CITY

The siege and sack of a city is a complex and chaotic process and the following systems are intended only to sketch out the broad strokes. Those interested in more detail should consult the texts listed in the Introduction's bibliography.

When dealing with the attack on a city, consider the approach to the community. Some defending generals may choose to place some of their armies outside the city itself to keep the barbarians from doing too much damage to it. This is almost always the wrong choice, incidentally — the Mongols are far less skilled at sieges than they are at fighting in the open, and if the enemy presents them with the opportunity to fight on the field, they are almost certain to win. The fight outside the city can be resolved using the mass combat rules in the **Dark Ages Companion**; the general outcome is most easily decided with contested Intelligence + Leadership rolls (difficulty of the opposing general's Perception + Leadership) by those portraying the generals of each side,

modified for unusual circumstances such as battlefield smoke, favorable terrain and so on.

If there is no force waiting outside the city, the Mongol army is likely to just ride up to the gates and demand entry. A Manipulation + Intimidation roll by the invading *noyan*'s player (difficulty 8) may suffice to allow just that. Gaining entry in this way generally requires 3 successes — more if the defenders are secure and outnumber the Mongols, fewer if the defenders are already panicked by rumor or by seeing their allies defeated in the field. Storytellers may prefer to roleplay the interaction out and decide on the results based on that.

If the city is unwilling to just let the barbarians in, the Mongols will have to lay siege. Sieges themselves are too complicated to whip together a simple die roll system to manage them; they are a volatile mix of starvation tactics and intimidation with a good dose of infiltration, spying and occasional suicide charges by attacker or defender. Remember that Mongol armies used siege weapons, especially artillery and explosives, very early

on; these things can prove disastrous to Cainites within a besieged city.

If history is any guide, the armies of the Great Khan eventually enter the city. This leads to a few days (and nights) of sacking, looting, rape, burning and murder. Times like this are both great opportunities and challenges for Cainites in the city. Most vampires will lose one or more of their havens. If a city is burning, the Storyteller may wish to roll a die every two or three game hours, with a "1" indicating that a character's haven is in danger. Characters with extensive holdings in a sacked city are likely to lose one or more dots of the Resources Background unless they have sufficient warning of the coming sack and can spirit away their valuables or just relocate. Such Cainites are equally likely to lose dots in the Influence Background if their political power is great in a targeted city, and Influence is much harder to relocate.

Feeding in a city under siege is not easy; residents are scared, hoarding resources and on the lookout. In a city being sacked, on the other hand, there is so much chaos and death that a vampire practically has his choice of targets. Storytellers using a dice-based system for feeding should increase the difficulty number for feeding by 1 during a siege and reduce it by 1 while the city is being sacked. Of course, during a sack, a botched feeding roll will certainly lead to a frenzy between the fighting, fire and blood all around.

In general, once a Mongol siege begins, the wise vampiric resident of the besieged city does her immortal best to leave town with her most important valuables. The Obfuscate and Dominate Disciplines are especially useful in this regard. Attempting to survive a sack calls heavily on Obfuscate, Presence and Fortitude — with no guarantee of success.

TRAVEL

The typical moving pace for a horseman on the Mongol steppe is 25 miles per day. Experienced riders can extend this distance somewhat without harming their mounts too badly if they have multiple horses at their disposal — a 25-mile day is liable to exhaust a single horse while those with many horses at their disposal (so that only one bears the rider's weight at a time) can travel more than 50 miles a day. Assume that a Mongol rider needs one horse for every 12-15 miles traveled. Mongol armies typically traveled with three or four extra horses per rider and could cover 50 miles a day.

A "simple" 25 mile trip in a day requires a Stamina + Ride roll (target 6); even a single success means that neither rider nor mount has serious problems with the trip (a botch means the horse is hurt, per the Storyteller's discretion). Additional successes on this roll increase

the character's speed by 5 miles per day to a maximum of 60 miles per day. A faster pace than that requires that many horses be ready, watered and rested, as was the case with the Yam courier system set up in the later days of the Empire.

FORDING A RIVER

The best thing about having a horse when crossing a river is that horses can swim with riders on their backs. Even so, for a large group or a wide river, a shallow ford is worth hunting for. Characters familiar with a given area know where to find fords over local rivers without a die roll; elsewhere, a Perception + Survival roll (target 7) suffices to find a decent ford within a few hours. Crossing a river at a good ford requires a Dexterity + Ride roll (target 4); failure means that one or more possessions float downstream. Crossing at a worse ford simply increases this target number: Trying to get across a wide, deep, fast river may require a target number of 9 and multiple successes. Should a character fall under attack while fording a river, he must split his dice pool in order to take actions not related to the river crossing.

FINDING FOOD ON THE STEPPE

When the Mongols first conquer much of northern Asia, under the command of Genghis Khan, they number no more than three million men, women and children, including all affiliated tribes and subjugated peoples of the steppe. Before Genghis Khan's rise to power, the total population of all tribes of the steppe might have been slightly larger than this, for he was ruthless and destructive in the extermination of the Tatars and their allies. Regardless, the steppe is not a crowded place. It cannot be; it is not particularly fertile ground, and its population of humans and animals is constrained.

To a vampire, this emptiness is dangerous. A neonate of the Anda can, if she is lucky, survive eight or nine nights without feeding if she has shelter; after that point she may well enter into a frenzy from hunger. And should she lack shelter and need to enter the embrace of Itügen every night, the time she can spend away from humans is even shorter.

Given the extremely low population density, Anda and Wan Kuei survive by tying themselves to family units on the steppe (the Herd Background). Storytellers who do not wish to play out each night's hunt for every player in a Mongol chronicle should allow players to roll one die for every hour the character hunts in an evening. The Storyteller should keep in mind that the base difficulty to find human prey at a random spot on the steppe is 9, possibly even 10 if such is appropriate to the story. In locations closer to civilization, that number could drop to 8, lower if the characters enter a city, but

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that is not always easy. A botch while hunting for humans to feed from on the steppe may force the character into a confrontation with battle-hardened Mongol warriors or supernatural interference from *akuma*, *hsien*, Xiong Ren shapechangers or hostile vampires.

FINDING GAME

Mortals, ghouls and Cainites who hunt animals for food face a daily (or nightly) challenge on the steppe. Game is not overabundant there, although the land is not as barren as some might believe. The most verdant lands obviously support the greatest amount of livestock or game; those areas far from a regular water source or to the lee of a mountain range are drier and therefore less bountiful. Forests support more animals per square mile but fewer large creatures.

Storytellers who wish to abstract the hunt for game can roll a die for inspiration — a 1 means not even field mice may be found while a 5 or 6 implies small or hard-to-catch game, and a 10 could suggest a small herd of deer sufficient to sustain even a coterie of vampires for a few nights. Those who want a more detailed hunt can use the following system:

The player rolls Perception + Survival to find nearby game. The base difficulty is 7, modified by the factors in the table below. The number of successes indicates how much game the character finds; a single success would mean finding fresh tracks or a small animal. Once the character has found prey, the Storyteller may choose to run the "hunt" as an ordinary combat or abstract it into a roll of Dexterity + Animal Ken (target 7) and describe the results from there.

VAMPIRES AND ANIMAL BLOOD

Cainites on the steppe may have little choice but to feed from animals. There are times when there just won't be any kine around. This is a fine strategy for survival when journeying from one human herd to another, but it poses some grave problems over the medium and long term. Those trying to survive on animal blood alone face some very serious challenges. (Wan Kuei cannot feed from animals and face starvation long before any other problems.)

For one thing, animals do not provide very nourishing blood. In game terms, this means that they do not have blood points at a level corresponding to their size; though a horse is far more massive than a human, it provides only 5 or 6 blood points. (The bestiary in the *Dark Ages Companion* provides blood point levels for various creatures.) Consuming animal blood thus causes problems due to its lack of nourishment: A vampire must ingest an enormous volume of cow's blood before getting one blood point worth of sustenance. Those who do so might sweat blood, easily cry blood tears or even expel the excess fluid through the orifices traditionally meant for such purpose in a mortal — an event sure to shock those who long ago discarded their humanity. Anytime the vampire consumes three or more points of animal blood at one time, the player should roll Stamina against a difficulty of 4 + the points consumed. A failure means the vampire experiences one of the above symptoms or a similar effect dreamed up by the Storyteller or player.

More serious is the predatory Beast within each Cainite, which is not satisfied with base animal blood. The longer a Cainite goes without human blood, the

Terrain	Difficulty Modifier	Situation	Modifier
Rich, verdant land	-2	Familiar area (hunter's usual stalking ground)	-1
Choice pastureland	-1	Unfamiliar area, but generally recognizable terrain (steppe or taiga)	+1
Typical steppe area	0	Alien environment (jungle or mountain)	+2
Poor pastureland	+1	Land has been hunted within the past 7 days	+1
Arid steppe	+2	Land has not been hunted within the past 30 days (not likely)	+1
Desert	+3	Hunter reeks strongly of death or the supernatural (Storyteller's discretion)	+2



stronger the urge for it becomes. Every vampire feels the hunger for kine blood scratch at them once they refrain from it (or are deprived of it), but it takes time before it reaches a level that affects behavior in a quantifiable way. For those on a Road that teaches Self-Control, it takes the vampire's Road rating in months before an overriding hunger takes place. For those whose Road teaches Instinct, it takes only a number of weeks equal to their Road rating. These times assume that the vampire remains well-nourished on animal blood throughout this time. If the vampire ever becomes *hungry* (three or fewer blood points), he immediately craves human blood and is subject to the system below. No amount of animal blood will stave off these cravings once they begin.

Once a vampire suffers from an overriding hunger for human blood, she is subject to frenzy much more often. Regardless of current blood points, the vampire is subject to frenzy when exposed to human blood (difficulty 7). She is also subject to frenzy if she tastes animal blood when a source — *any* source — of human or Cainite blood is nearby (difficulty 5). Vampires whose Roads teach Instinct are especially vulnerable to these frenzies: Their players cannot roll to resist the frenzy and must spend a Willpower point instead. A frenzy results in maddened feeding on the source of human blood.

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Consuming human blood sates the hunger. The time before another period of craving is reset by a number of months or weeks (depending on the vampire's Road) equal to the blood points consumed or the character's Road rating (whichever is lower).

STORYTELLING AND THE MONGOL HORDE

No matter the style of a chronicle featuring the Mongols, the Storyteller is sure to have her hands full. This book cannot recommend strongly enough the usefulness of the source materials listed in the Introduction; they give an excellent feel of what life was really like in *Wind from the East's* time period. But certain issues will crop up in the game that need special attention.

THE PROBLEM OF INEVITABILITY

Historicity is a major concern in any game set hundreds of years ago. Many players of *Vampire: The*

Dark Ages do so in part because they want to be transported to another time and place: They want a reasonably truthful portrayal of that time and the great events that shaped it. But sticking rigidly to historical fact can also make players feel as if their characters are powerless — after all, they *know* Kiev is to be sacked whether or not they make it there in time. As a Storyteller, you need to find ways to make sure the characters are more than spectators while still giving the players the enjoyment of experiencing the sweep of history. The following techniques can help:

DEVIATE

Don't be afraid to jump off the train of history if your players are reaching for the *Timelines of History* or its equivalent every time you try to lure them to a new city for an interesting story. Imagine, for instance, that December of 1241 comes and goes with no messenger arriving in Hungary to announce the death of Ogadei Khan. Jaded players will be shocked and curious by this, and they are sure to investigate, even if it is only for out-of-character reasons.

If your players are not nuts for historicity, you shouldn't have to resort to this; simply ask your troupe not to over-research their roles in the game, and they should be happy to experience the story as it happens. You may run into problems doing this with players who are history buffs, but it should only be necessary to remind offended players that your game takes place in the World of Darkness, not the real world, since after all, there are no such things as vampires. That said, it is only polite to warn players up front that you may deviate from history; this is considerate and saves you from complaints later on.

The critical thing to remember when choosing to deviate from recorded history is that incautious choices of this sort can lead to great changes in your chronicle's future. You may be comfortable with this, improvising "what would've happened" as you go. If you are not, however, we recommend that history return to its proper course as soon as is feasible after the deviating event, rather than allowing changes to compound and steer you far away from your preferred story. But if you want to see Mongols reaching the Atlantic coast, go ahead.

OBFUSCATE

Easier, perhaps, than introducing alternate timelines into your game, is to hide historical events from your players until the *characters* are right on top of them. That is to say, keep the characters too busy with the machinations and horror of the unliving lords of the night to realize that they've chosen to visit Krakow on Palm Sunday, 1241. This is a difficult technique to get right; obviously it is important to refer to the time of year in your game, but concealing the actual date is not terribly

difficult. It is hard to sneak up on players like this more than once or twice, however, so save this technique for a key juncture.

DISTRACT

Along the same lines as obfuscation, distraction keeps characters' interest in historical events but prevents them from mucking them up too seriously by keeping them out of the flow of action. The Wan Kuei of Ningxia are urgently summoned before Emperor Da of the White Tiger Court in mid-1227; they receive messages that their city has been flooded to the point of destruction, but are unable to stop it. What matters most in this case is that the characters' actions are, to them, more important than the scurrying about of mortal ants. If the Anda vampire learns that her dead mortal brother has returned as a Wan Kuei, and she must enter the dreaded Middle Kingdom to confront him, does the *kamikaze's* destruction of the Mongol fleet matter?

COOPERATE

For all three of the above techniques, the Storyteller must know what the troupe's desires and expectations are. Does the group want to play at being Anda who give Genghis Khan Cainite blood on his deathbed? Or do they prefer to run the Cainite population of Samarkand, who must weather the Mongol hurricane while thousands of miles from its eye? The former group wants to muck about with history and be in the limelight; the latter wants a more standard game with a crisis overlaid. Neither option is better, but your game must suit your players' interests. That first group is going to be frustrated (or even furious) if Genghis Khan has an infinite army of protectors who keep them from their goal; the second group will be confused and even a little bit bored if the Storyteller wants to present a radically changed setting wherein Samarkand isn't even invaded.

Another way to present events with players' cooperation is to use their knowledge to create tension. If a player knows that the Mongols will sack Kiev in 1236, the Storyteller may wish to offer that player's character a great opportunity dependent on traveling to Kiev. The character does not know the danger in Kiev, so he must go; the player knows that trouble awaits, and that dichotomy, if played carefully, can lead to some great roleplaying.

CHRONICLE OPTIONS

Storytellers have many options when it comes to integrating the Mongols into a **Vampire: The Dark Ages** or **World of Darkness: Blood & Silk** chronicle. Below is just a small sampling of such options; Storytellers are encouraged to take one or more of them, mash them together or rip them apart and come up with a chronicle that is truly their own.

GIFTS OF THE SKY AND EARTH

MONGOL COTERIES AND *Wu*

Any roleplaying scenario depends in large part on the relationships among the troupe's characters. Storytellers and players must cooperate to keep a Cainite coterie or a Wan Kuei *wu* (most advice in this section applies equally to both) together over the long haul. There are two key ways to do that.

First, Storytellers can create an elaborate plot or political situation that forces characters to cooperate and stick together regardless of their nature or political outlook. This has some advantages: Players can run nearly any character they choose without worrying about the rest of the troupe's plans, and the tension of a group of relative strangers in a tough situation can provide great roleplaying. On the other hand, a group like this one can easily spiral out of control; characters with few common interests eventually run out of reasons to stick together.

Alternatively, a troupe and Storyteller can work together to forge common bonds between the characters before play begins. Characters friendly in life are more likely to stick together in unlife, and even those with testy relationships before play begins have a better chance of maintaining a relationship than complete strangers. Some players may feel that in-game interactions are too scripted by pre-game decisions, however.

Wan Kuei *wu* are often created by the ancestors of their courts; once a *wu* comes together, its members may take any path they collectively see fit to walk. The group's bond to its court — and to each other — is difficult to break.

By contrast, Anda and other Mongol Cainites are often loners by nature. To stick to a group is not always the easiest thing for them to do; they need reasons to spend long periods of time with others. Those reasons might include:

- **War.** Mortal war causes Anda herds to congregate, which in turn forces those vampires to interact in some fashion; close quarters can lead to alliances or feuds. War in the shadows — against the Wan Kuei, European Cainites or the Xiong Ren — is also likely to bring Anda together for mutual defense.

- **The Hunt.** This motive is not likely to keep any Anda together for very long, but for a particularly lucrative prey (a well-guarded merchant caravan in times of drought or a supernatural monster), two or more Anda may work together. Usually the Anda in this case are already acquaintances, but for the right target, strangers could certainly cooperate.

- **Camaraderie.** It gets lonely on the nighttime steppe. Despite the Anda predilection for solitude and their reputations as lone hunters, vampires are created out of human stock, and humans are social creatures. It

is often refreshing to spend a few months with a group of like-minded creatures, if only to stem the boredom that immortality can bring. And *kuriltai* tend to bring Anda together from at least a few dozen miles in all directions, quite possibly more if something important looms on the horizon.

- **Embrace.** A group of Anda must collectively approve a new vampire's creation in a long and often contentious *kuriltai*. By agreeing to the Embrace, they also commit to teaching the new childe the ways of the steppe's night creatures. This process can take as long as a year, and while individual vampires might come and go from the group, for the most part it does stick together, centered on the new vampire's instruction.

- **Nöker.** A group of young Anda can declare their loyalty and allegiance to a charismatic and strong elder vampire; while doing so does not commit them to spending all their time together, it is quite often the case that the elder (the *noyan* or *khan*) directs his *nöker* to a particular task as a group. The *noyan* does not have to be an Anda, either — in the early days, the occasional Wu Zao attracts this sort of service, and after 1220, powerful vampires like Arnulf (see page 39) gather many Anda into their broods.

THE WESTERN CHRONICLE

In a western-oriented game, the player characters represent those taking a more passive role during the Mongol age. They are the Cainites of a city in Eastern Europe or Western Asia, and they must deal with the influx of the Mongol armies and associated vampiric predators. Common clans include Assamite, Nosferatu, Ravnos and Tzimisce, though it is not much of a stretch to insert almost any clan or bloodline in an eastern city. One of the focuses of such a chronicle could well be resource scarcity; just because a city is under siege, its Cainites are not likely to leap into one another's arms for protection. In such a game, players' characters may struggle against one another, hoping for safety from their rivals and the city's invaders until the horde finally breaks off the siege or destroys the city.

Another type of western chronicle duplicates the travels of William of Rubruck or Giovanni de Plano Carpini; a questing scholar-Cainite (perhaps a Tremere, Cappadocian, Lasombra or Toreador) might endeavor to cross the steppe with a coterie of trusted allies or childe after the Mongols' invasion ends to learn what lies beyond. Such a game could stay relatively historical (*Mission to Asia*, from the bibliography, or any translation of the stories within would be great source material for this) or could venture deep into the wilds of the Dark Medieval world. Perhaps the stories of dog-headed men and similar freaks are true. The Wan Kuei vampires of the Far East would likely prove to be the final antagonists in such a quest.

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THE EASTERN CHRONICLE

The ideal eastern chronicle is a punctuated story that runs from Temujin's birth to the end of the Mongol Empire. It features Mongol vampires as the players' characters — whether Anda, Wu Zao, foreign travelers or Black Tortoise Wan Kuei is for the Storyteller and players to decide as a group. Depending on the characters' actions, their stars are likely to rise as the might of the empire does; humble plains hunters in life will face a titanic struggle for the fate of nations as filtered through the night's bloody haze. Both Anda and Black Tortoise Wan Kuei must face the growing problem of *akuma* among the Court of the Black Tortoise from as early as 1197, and a satisfying resolution at or around the destruction of Karakorum seems a good climax for such a game.

THE CROSSOVER CHRONICLE

In a crossover chronicle, the characters are all Mongols, but some are Cainites and others are Wan Kuei. This works best on the high plain; that way characters are neither in firmly Cainite territory (Europe) nor in the Wan Kuei heartland (China) but rather in Mongol lands. Many stories can emerge from the dynamic tension between the two groups: Why do they not simply go at each other's throats? Were they relatives or friends in life? Further story lines emerge as the tribes the characters use as herds compete with one another for

resources and face the horrors of things that go bump in the night even more loudly than the characters. Such a chronicle does have to be considered and run carefully; if the Storyteller does not pay careful attention, she could lose the similarity and contrast between Anda and Black Tortoise Wan Kuei and end up either with a disintegrated coterie/*wu*, or a big non-differentiated pile of Mongol vampirism.

THE WORLD OF DARKNESS CHRONICLE

The World of Darkness Chronicle lets the floodgates open; not only do players run Mongol Cainites and Mongol Wan Kuei, but also Mongol Shadow Lords (see **Werewolf: The Dark Ages**), Dreamspeakers (see **Mage: The Sorcerers Crusade** and the **Mage** supplement **Dragons of the East**) and even Mongol ghosts and *hsien*. This sort of game could go all over the place, from facing the Cainites in besieged Samarkand to questing deep into the Umbra at Tengri's behest. The Storyteller must be especially cautious in such a romp: She can expect to lose any kind of theme that differentiates one of the source games from the others and lose a lot of the impact of the individual games in the search for the perfect "World of Darkness: Looting and Pillaging" chronicle. There isn't necessarily anything wrong with such a game, but if participants are not careful, it can quickly degenerate from personal horror into laughable farce — a result that players might not desire.







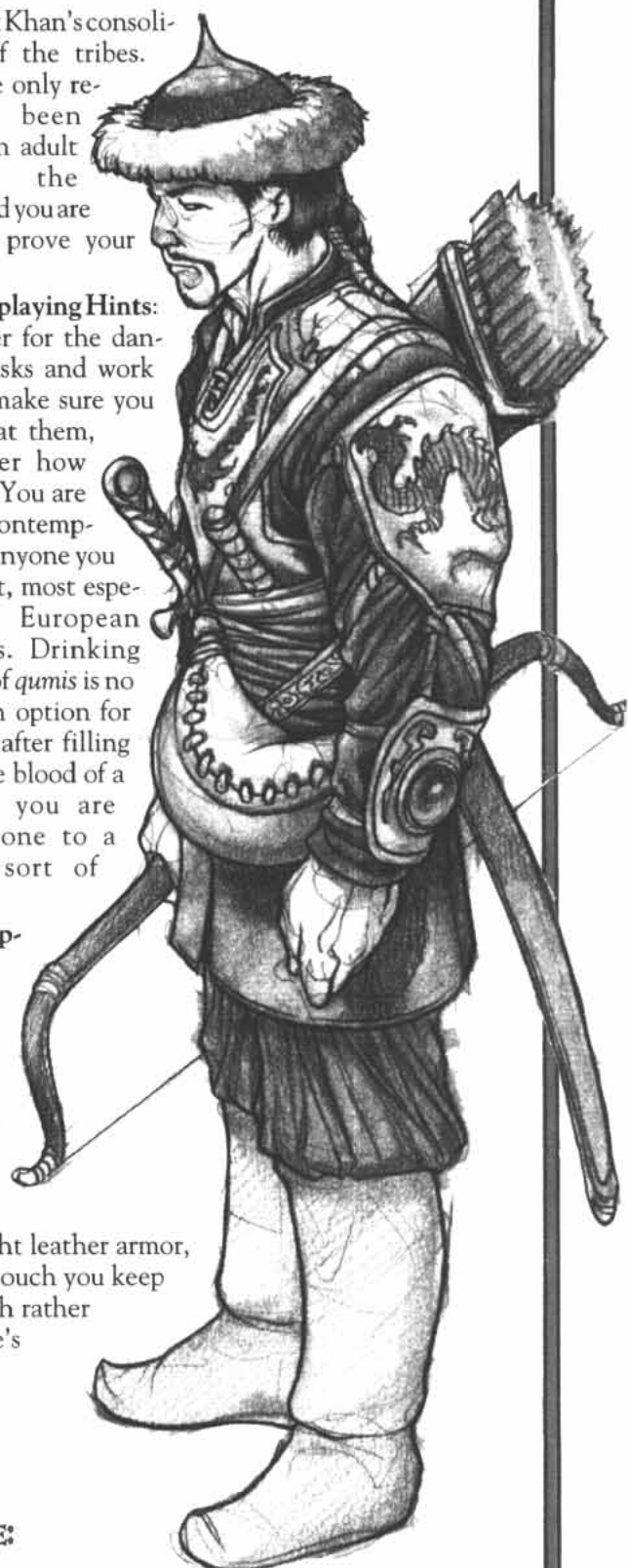
Appendix: Kahns of the Night

To kill men, to invade the countries of other people, to take the property of others in any unlawful way, to commit fornication, to revile other men, to act contrary to the prohibitions and commandments of God is considered no sin by them

—Friar Giovanni de Plano Carpini

Concept: In life, you were one of the finest warriors in your *ulus*; to your disappointment, in unlife you are just one of the crowd. While never the most skilled hunter, your ability to think quickly on horseback while engaged with the enemy won many minor battles during

'We have fallen back far enough; look how they pursue us. Now is the time to strike!'

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TEMPLE THIEF

Prelude: You grew up in Harbin, in northern China during the late days of the so-called Northern Song Dynasty; as a little boy you saw your hometown torn by war as the barbarians fought the emperor's armies. When your parents died in the fighting, you took to the streets and lived as an urchin. You graduated quickly from begging to purse snatching and then from petty theft to robbery. You were an accomplished thief by the time you reached 16.

By 18, you'd gotten a big score or two and lived in some comfort. You ceased to rob homes purely for the money; they had to have something extra, something to bait your curiosity. Perhaps an ancient Buddhist relic, a scroll from the Han Dynasty or a painting you'd never seen before.

One night, around age 19, you picked the wrong house. This one was inhabited, crowded, and the residents were all awake. Furthermore, they were waiting for you. The home's owner, a woman named Xing Tai, opened a third eye in the middle of her forehead and explained that you would no longer be working freelance. You could find no compelling argument to contradict her, so you soon started scouting out sites for her. Some places were in the city; others were further south in the woods, on old farmland or even in other cities.

Xing Tai was a talented collector, and she had very good people working for her. She kept most of them happy through the promise of immortality; you lived as a ghoulish servant for more than forty years. Finally, in reward for the theft of an old *kaja* scroll from



WIND FROM THE EAST		
FOR VAMPIRE THE DARK AGES		
NAME: _____	NATURE: <i>Tamable</i>	GENERATION: <i>10th</i>
PLAYER: _____	DEMEANOR: <i>Innovator</i>	HAVEN: _____
CHRONICLE: _____	CLAN: <i>Salubri</i> ("Wu Zao")	CONCEPT: <i>Temple Thief</i>
ATTRIBUTES		
PHYSICAL	SOCIAL	MENTAL
Strength: ●●●●●●●●	Charisma: ●●●●●●●●	Perception: ●●●●●●●●
Dexterity: ●●●●●●●●	Manipulation: ●●●●●●●●	Intelligence: ●●●●●●●●
Stamina: ●●●●●●●●	Appearance: ●●●●●●●●	Wits: ●●●●●●●●
ABILITIES		
TALENTS	SKILLS	KNOWLEDGES
Acting: ●●●●●●●●	Animal Ken: ●●●●●●●●	Academics: ●●●●●●●●
Alertness: ●●●●●●●●	Archery: ●●●●●●●●	Hearth Wisdom: ●●●●●●●●
Athletics: ●●●●●●●●	Crafts: ●●●●●●●●	Investigation: ●●●●●●●●
Brawl: ●●●●●●●●	Etiquette: ●●●●●●●●	Law: ●●●●●●●●
Dodge: ●●●●●●●●	Herbalism: ●●●●●●●●	Linguistics: ●●●●●●●●
Empathy: ●●●●●●●●	Melee: ●●●●●●●●	Medicine: ●●●●●●●●
Intimidation: ●●●●●●●●	Music: ●●●●●●●●	Occult: ●●●●●●●●
Larceny: ●●●●●●●●	Ride: ●●●●●●●●	Politics: ●●●●●●●●
Leadership: ●●●●●●●●	Swim: ●●●●●●●●	Science: ●●●●●●●●
Subterfuge: ●●●●●●●●	Survival: ●●●●●●●●	Sensichal: ●●●●●●●●
ADVANTAGES		
DISCIPLINES	BACKGROUNDS	VIRTUES
Amnesia: ●●●●●●●●	Contacts: ●●●●●●●●	Conscience/Conviction: ●●●●●●●●
Fortitude: ●●●●●●●●	Generation: ●●●●●●●●	Self-Control/Hunger: ●●●●●●●●
Teleken: ●●●●●●●●	Glitch: ●●●●●●●●	Courage: ●●●●●●●●
_____	Mentor: ●●●●●●●●	
_____	Resonance: ●●●●●●●●	

OTHER TRAITS		
Betrayals: ●●●●●●●●	ROAD: _____	HEALTH: _____
_____	Humanity: ●●●●●●●●	Bruised: <input type="checkbox"/>
_____	Willpower: ●●●●●●●●	Hurt: <input type="checkbox"/>
_____	Blood Pool: ●●●●●●●●	Injured: <input type="checkbox"/>
_____		Wounded: <input type="checkbox"/>
_____		Mauled: <input type="checkbox"/>
_____		Crippled: <input type="checkbox"/>
_____		Incapacitated: <input type="checkbox"/>
_____		WEAKNESS: _____

under the noses of a few Wan Kuei, Xing Tai granted you the Embrace. Now, she has announced that the time has come to move further north. There are secrets to be had on the steppe, apparently.

Concept: Unlike first as Xing Tai's servant and now as her partner have been quite satisfying. She is always ready to support another journey into the furthest corners of Wan Kuei territory in search of dark secrets. She has told you the stories of Zao-lat, and you are sure the Ten Thousand Demons hide the truth of the apocalypse to come. You'll do anything to find those secrets. Anything.

Roleplaying Hints: You are almost cocky in your self-assuredness; an easy smile comes to your face, and it only gets wider as you propose more dangerous trips to the rest of your coterie. To date you have not faced any dangers that really threatened your existence; you worry that your easygoing façade will crumble before serious opposition.

Equipment: Traveling clothes, ropes and other climbing equipment, ancient scrolls.

QUOTE:

No. I've never been that far into the jungles of Koryo. What could possibly trouble us there?

KAHNS OF THE NIGHT

WISE WOMAN

Prelude: The wise woman of your camp always had her eye on you. From the time you were a young girl, she took you aside, away from your mother and your chores, and taught you the names of the spirits and how to please them and how to get what you want from them. At first you just humored her; it took until your first blood before you truly saw the spirits yourself.

Your status apart from the rest of the tribe kept men away from you much of the time, even when they were good and drunk, but you did give birth to a son and daughter, and raised them with the rest of the camp's children. After your mentor Gera died, you served as mother figure to the entire camp.

A few years after Gera's death, a man you did not know began to visit your *ger* at night. He could not cross its threshold, but invited you out onto the steppe each evening for nine nights. You could see that the spirits were not right with this man, but he was intriguing and spoke intelligently of a greater world than the one your tribe knew.

He was your sire, of course; he killed you and gave you his blood almost as casually as another man might kill a sheep and give the first part of its blood to Itügen. As you were a woman, the Anda who brought you into unlife did not demand the same trials as they would of a warrior. They did not need a warrior, however; they needed wisdom and guidance. The Great Khan had driven his people into a new world, one populated by unfamiliar monsters. You do not

QUOTE:

It is as Itügen wills.



know that you are any more ready to deal with strange new monsters — you are barely sure you know what kind of monster you are — but these ancient men have begun to ask you questions nevertheless, and “I do not know” is not an acceptable answer.

Concept: You were a shaman; you entreated the spirits of sky, earth and fire, and you knew best how to appease them. You stood apart from the other women of your camp because of your nearness to the unseen world, but all of them came to you for advice. After death you lost that connection to the spirit world, but you retain the hard-won wisdom from your life. You appear to be somewhat older than the other Anda you know, and you like to play the role of wise mother figure to vampires two or three times your age. You wonder if there might not be a way to regain a connection with the spirits in your monstrous state.

Roleplaying Hints: Despite your relative youth, you have a keen insight into human (and vampiric) motivation. Although you usually keep your observations to yourself, you are willing to call out a vampire who is about to get himself into serious trouble. You have several mortal children, and you try to take time to watch out for them when they are in the area.

Equipment: Stitched square felt bag with idols and herbs; flint and steel for fire; a sturdy steppe horse; a ger to call your own, and a cart and ox to pull it.

WIND FROM THE EAST		
FOR VAMPIRE: THE DARK AGES		
NAME: _____	NATURE: <i>Caretaker</i>	GENERATION: <i>11th</i>
PLAYER: _____	DEMEANOR: <i>Defender</i>	HAVEN: _____
CHRONICLE: _____	CLAN: <i>Gargrel (Anda)</i>	CONCEPT: <i>Wise Woman</i>
ATTRIBUTES		
PHYSICAL	SOCIAL	MENTAL
Strength: ●●●●●●●●	Charisma: ●●●●●●●●	Perception: ●●●●●●●●
Dexterity: ●●●●●●●●	Manipulation: ●●●●●●●●	Intelligence: ●●●●●●●●
Stamina: ●●●●●●●●	Appearance: ●●●●●●●●	Will: ●●●●●●●●
ABILITIES		
TALENTS	SKILLS	KNOWLEDGES
Acting: ●●●●●●●●	Animal Ken: ●●●●●●●●	Academics: ●●●●●●●●
Alertness: ●●●●●●●●	Archery: ●●●●●●●●	Heath Wisdom: ●●●●●●●●
Athletics: ●●●●●●●●	Crafts: ●●●●●●●●	Investigation: ●●●●●●●●
Brawl: ●●●●●●●●	Etiquette: ●●●●●●●●	Law: ●●●●●●●●
Dodge: ●●●●●●●●	Herbalism: ●●●●●●●●	Linguistics: ●●●●●●●●
Empathy: ●●●●●●●●	Melee: ●●●●●●●●	Medicine: ●●●●●●●●
Intimidation: ●●●●●●●●	Music: ●●●●●●●●	Occult: ●●●●●●●●
Larceny: ●●●●●●●●	Ride: ●●●●●●●●	Politics: ●●●●●●●●
Leadership: ●●●●●●●●	Stealth: ●●●●●●●●	Science: ●●●●●●●●
Subterfuge: ●●●●●●●●	Survival: ●●●●●●●●	Senseschal: ●●●●●●●●
ADVANTAGES		
DISCIPLINES	BACKGROUNDS	VIRTUES
Animalism: ●●●●●●●●	Generation: ●●●●●●●●	Conscience/Emotion: ●●●●●●●●
Fortitude: ●●●●●●●●	Influence: ●●●●●●●●	Self-Control/Primer: ●●●●●●●●
Tranquility: ●●●●●●●●	Minor: ●●●●●●●●	Courage: ●●●●●●●●
_____	Resources: ●●●●●●●●	
_____	Retainer: ●●●●●●●●	

OTHER TRAITS		
_____	ROAD	HEALTH
_____	Humanity: ●●●●●●●●	Bruised: <input type="checkbox"/>
_____	Willpower: ●●●●●●●●	Hurt: -1 <input type="checkbox"/>
_____	_____	Injured: -1 <input type="checkbox"/>
_____	_____	Wounded: -2 <input type="checkbox"/>
_____	_____	Mauled: -2 <input type="checkbox"/>
_____	_____	Crippled: -5 <input type="checkbox"/>
_____	_____	Incapacitated: <input type="checkbox"/>
_____	BLOOD POOL: <input type="checkbox"/>	WEAKNESS: _____
_____	_____	
_____	_____	

KAHNS OF THE NIGHT

YAM COURIER

Prelude: Before you died, you had the best job in the world. You took important messages from one end of the empire to another at breakneck speed. Your movements took priority over just about everything else for more than a thousand miles in all directions. You never had to fight a tired horse — you got a fresh one every 20 miles — and you never had to ask anyone else for help. You were self-reliant and didn't have to go to war, and that was for the best because you couldn't stand other people and were a terrible coward.

The unlikeliest of events killed you. A scorpion crossed a well-worn track in front of your horse somewhere on the western steppe. You were nearly in a trance, as you tended to get when riding great distances; you didn't notice the horse's panic until it reared and threw you. You hit the ground, a horrible popping sound in your back resonated through your entire body and you lost all sensation below your navel. The horse, once it calmed down, returned to you, whinnying and nervous, but it could not do anything to help you.

You crawled on your arms for two days through the arid steppe, trying to reach the next courier station. You figure you got a couple of miles in that time. When the sun went down the second day you were sure you wouldn't see the third. That was when the vampire came. The creature drank your blood and gave you some of his. Something in his blood straightened your back: You could feel your legs! There was some wobbling, but you could even stand. Your loyal horse was your first victim; the attendant at the nearby courier station — just around the bend, just out of sight — was your second.

Your sire explained that he was one of the Anda, and explained what that meant to you. The other Anda, nearby, taught you and

QUOTE:

Yes, I'm sure I can get there in time.

WIND FROM THE EAST



WIND FROM THE EAST

FOR VAMPIRE THE DARK AGES

NAME:
PLAYER:
CHRONICLE:

NATURE: *Loner*
DEMEANOR: *Loner*
CLAN: *Gangrel (Anda)*

GENERATION: *10th*
HAVEN:
CONCEPT: *Yam Courier*

ATTRIBUTES

PHYSICAL	SOCIAL	MENTAL
Strength: ●●●●●●●●	Charisma: ●●●●●●●●	Perception: ●●●●●●●●
Dexterity: ●●●●●●●●	Manipulation: ●●●●●●●●	Intelligence: ●●●●●●●●
Stamina: ●●●●●●●●	Appearance: ●●●●●●●●	Wits: ●●●●●●●●

ABILITIES

TALENTS	SKILLS	KNOWLEDGES
Acting: ●●●●●●●●	Animal Ken: ●●●●●●●●	Academics: ●●●●●●●●
Alertness: ●●●●●●●●	Archery: ●●●●●●●●	Hearth Wisdom: ●●●●●●●●
Athletics: ●●●●●●●●	Crafts: ●●●●●●●●	Investigation: ●●●●●●●●
Brawl: ●●●●●●●●	Etiquette: ●●●●●●●●	Law: ●●●●●●●●
Dodge: ●●●●●●●●	Herbology: ●●●●●●●●	Linguistics: ●●●●●●●●
Empathy: ●●●●●●●●	Medicine: ●●●●●●●●	Medicine: ●●●●●●●●
Intimidation: ●●●●●●●●	Music: ●●●●●●●●	Occult: ●●●●●●●●
Larceny: ●●●●●●●●	Ride: ●●●●●●●●	Politics: ●●●●●●●●
Leadership: ●●●●●●●●	Stealth: ●●●●●●●●	Science: ●●●●●●●●
Scholarship: ●●●●●●●●	Survival: ●●●●●●●●	Seneschal: ●●●●●●●●

ADVANTAGES

DISCIPLINES	BACKGROUNDS	VIRTUES
Animalism: ●●●●●●●●	Contacts: ●●●●●●●●	Compassion: ●●●●●●●●
Fortitude: ●●●●●●●●	Generation: ●●●●●●●●	Self-Control/Reverence: ●●●●●●●●
Tranquility: ●●●●●●●●	Idol: ●●●●●●●●	Courage: ●●●●●●●●
●●●●●●●●	Resources: ●●●●●●●●	
●●●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●	

OTHER TRAITS	ROAD	HEALTH
●●●●●●●●	Yam	Bruised: <input type="checkbox"/>
●●●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●	Hurt: -1 <input type="checkbox"/>
●●●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●	Injured: -1 <input type="checkbox"/>
●●●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●	Wounded: -2 <input type="checkbox"/>
●●●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●	Mauled: -2 <input type="checkbox"/>
●●●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●	Crippled: -5 <input type="checkbox"/>
●●●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●	Incubated: <input type="checkbox"/>
●●●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●	WEAKNESS
●●●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●	
●●●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●	

toughened you up; you still don't like to fight, but at least you don't flee in terror when the possibility of a fight rears its head. You still work as a courier some evenings, when something urgent comes through and no one else is around to handle it.

Concept: As a courier, you never had to trouble yourself with fighting and war, and although you carry a bow like any other man, you would prefer to flee from an enemy rather than fight. You're just not that good a shot. You do take pride in your skill with a horse; despite the absurd distances you must ride them, your mounts are never permanently injured after you've ridden them.

Roleplaying Hints: You have a stronger bond with your favored horses than you do with most humans and vampires. You like your job very much; you do not have to interact with people much. You receive a simple payment, and you are free to work at night if you wish. You are loyal to the Anda *kuriltai* that helped teach you and bring you to unlife, but you would not risk destruction for them.

Equipment: Felt pouch for messages; a travel pass; a recurved composite bow and 60 arrows; light leather armor; a few daggers.

FAVORED OF THE SPIRITS

The rise and fall of the Mongol Empire marks the unives of many different vampires. Some are born into the Empire while others merely feel its passing. Not all survive it. The following characters are all part of the sweep of the horde across the known world, but few are closely associated with a particular time period. This way the Storyteller can fit these characters into a **Wind from the East** chronicle at just about any point she sees fit.



JELME THE DAMNED, GUARDIAN OF THE KHAN

Jelme loved the Great Khan from the moment he met the man, some ten years before his own death. Jelme was the son of a blacksmith of the Uriangkhai clan, given to Temujin as one of his earliest retainers — one of Jelme's younger brothers is Subetai the Brave, one of the Empire's greatest generals. The Great Khan, and most of his other retainers, do not know that Jelme is a vampire; he received the Embrace from a group of Anda who wished to have one of their own close to the Great Khan.

Jelme rides with the Great Khan's personal guard, although his damned nature prevents him from actually serving as a member. He stays at their side at night and uses his unliving skills to catch up with their daytime travels. He is taciturn, not willing to engage in conversation with those he does not know well. He watches the

warriors drink *qumis*, dance and woo the womenfolk each night with a wistful near-smile or a bitter grimace across his face. He greatly misses life.

Jelme gives his own healing blood to Genghis Khan when the great lord falls in a battle against the Naiman during his consolidation of the steppe tribes. He only did this once, and, knowing the power of the blood oath, is wracked with guilt for months afterwards. He knows that he has sullied his own honor by twisting the Oceanic Lord's affections toward him, and it is a full year before he returns to Genghis Khan's side.

Jelme is greatly respected by most other Anda; he is a grandchilde of their legendary progenitor Dobrul, and has the strength to prove it. On the battlefield he is truly a terror, though he takes care never to enter battle in the lands of the Middle Kingdom; a conflict with a *wu* of Wan Kuei in his first year as an Anda taught him the error of that.

Jelme is of average height, with dark hair and a low, gravelly voice; his chest is broad and his legs are thick. He is every inch the prototypical Mongol warrior; scars cross his face and arms, and he wears old leather armor as though he expects to enter battle at any moment.



AJAV, THE YOUNG WOLF

In 1225, Aajav is a relatively young vampire of fantastic fighting skill and a strong code of honor. In life, he rode as part of Batu Khan's rampage across Russia and had the great fortune to meet Genghis Khan himself.

Aajav so distinguished himself in that Russian campaign that he caught the eye of a wandering Gangrel elder. This elder—Oderic—pursued Batu and Subetai's armies as they retreated across the steppe, and there the elder encountered a small group of Anda, who until that time had been only a myth to Oderic. The Anda had also intended to Embrace Aajav, and this, of course, posed a problem; neither was willing to yield the claim.

Ultimately, Oderic challenged the khan of this group to honorable single combat. The battle took almost twelve hours, but in the end, the Anda's corpse was food for the sun, and the next evening Oderic Embraced Aajav. Aajav took his new, cursed state of being in stride, and was an earnest, demanding student of Oderic's, once that elder showed himself to the childe. Aajav has earned the grudging respect of his fellow Mongol vampires and participates in occasional *kuriltai* as a disinterested observer — by general agreement, he has no real voice in most matters, but in practice he is quite willing to contribute his opinion to any discussion.

Aajav has begun to pressure the Anda he knows for permission to Embrace his lifetime *anda* brother, Qarakh. Oderic is certainly in favor of such, and has encouraged his childe to create a new vampire of his own regardless of the opinions of the "Tartars." The Anda do not know of Oderic's feelings, and those that Aajav has spoken to are against it since it is not clear whether Qarakh would receive the Embrace from one of them or from the Gangrel Aajav, who is a Mongol yet does not share their blood.

Destiny: Aajav is slain and diablerized by his childe Qarakh by 1236; the youth leaves his sire's ashes on the shore of the Onon River and flees westward, toward Turkish lands.

PROFILE

Clan: Gangrel

Generation: 7th

Nature: Barbarian

Demeanor: Survivor

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

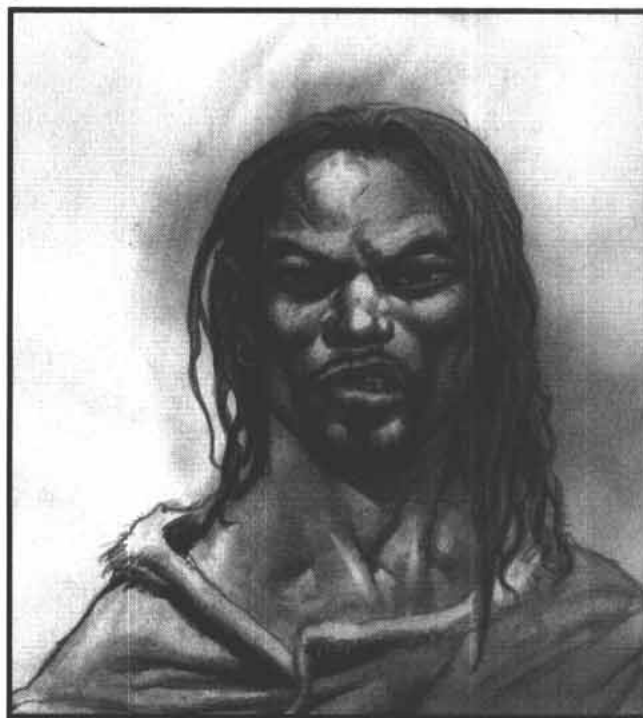
Abilities: Alertness 3, Animal Ken 2, Archery 4 (mounted), Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Hearth Wisdom 1, Intimidation 4, Melee 3, Ride 3, Survival 3

Disciplines: Animalism 2, Fortitude 2, Protean 3

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 2, Herd 2, Retainers 1

Road: Beast 6

Conviction: 4, **Instinct:** 3, **Courage:** 4, **Willpower:** 7



CHINKHAI THE FIERCE, JUDGE OF THE STEPPE

In power and age, Chinkhai is almost unrivaled on the steppe. He is a grandson of Dobrul the man and a childe of Dobrul the vampire. He has watched over his sire's tomb for centuries, since the old one dropped into torpor, and he is responsible for its defense against rampaging Wan Kuei and other monsters of the night. Chinkhai's sister in unlife, his mortal mother Yesira, directs the twisted and gargantuan ghouls that prowl the lands around the tomb of their sire.

Chinkhai is not physically tied to the tomb of Dobrul; indeed, his grandfather's curse affects him even more strongly than the other members of his bloodline. Chinkhai wanders the steppe aimlessly, occasionally joining *kuriltai* of Anda, at other times attacking *wu* of Wan Kuei he encounters in his travels. Some say the elder has a death wish, but that is not entirely true. He does not wish to die but for his ceaseless wandering to come to an end. He wants to put down roots, as his sire has done, but fears his demise too greatly to drop into torpor.

Since that ending has become impossible, Chinkhai has dedicated himself to dispensing justice when *kuriltai* approach him for his judgment. Like the steppe in which he spends so much time, Chinkhai is neither kind nor forgiving; more than once he has slain the vampire who petitioned him for aid when it became obvious that he was a criminal.



SILAT IBN ISA, VIZIER OF KHWARAZM

Silat ibn Isa received the Embrace from a member of the Assamite vizier caste late in the 12th century; since that time, he has spent his waking nights in and around the city of Bukhara in the Khwarazm Empire. Silat is as devout a Muslim as a vampire can be in this day and age.

Silat built a sizeable network of contacts, fellow scholars, allies and pawns throughout Bukhara in his first few decades there. He was almost happy; he had books of history and philosophy, and bright souls, both mortal and immortal, to discuss and debate them with. He did not want for food; Bukhara is an important trading city and receives hundreds of transient visitors each day. All that came to an end when the armies of Genghis Khan laid siege to Bukhara and then sacked and burned it.

The fire and destruction drove Silat ibn Isa into torpor deep within the only one of his havens not burned to the ground. When he came out of it, a year later, he found that Bukhara was a subject state of the Mongol Empire. Embittered by his city's subjugation and the personal injury he took, Silat ibn Isa began a one-Cainite campaign against the Mongols in home city.

He was surprised to find Mongol vampires prowling the city like tigers in the night; though he had no proof, he strongly suspected that these vampires might be

quietly directing the Mongols' armies to strike at Assamite strongholds in the east, just as (he had been told) the Ventrue and Lasombra directed the European crusaders.

As far as Silat ibn Isa can see it, vampires of the East and West are conspiring against Clan Assamite and the Muslim faith. He knows that he cannot personally do much against such a vast machination, but he has decided that the time for books and scholarship is at an end. He started his night war by murdering one of the youngest of the Mongol vampires in his city and drinking that creature's blood. It tasted *good* — perhaps even better than he expected, better than he wanted it to taste. He has dug in, and even now awaits reprisals.

PROFILE

Clan: Assamite (vizier caste)

Generation: 11th

Nature: Tyrant

Demeanor: Judge

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Abilities: Academics 4, Alertness 2, Brawl 1, Dodge 2, Etiquette 3, Investigation 2, Law 2, Leadership 3, Linguistics 2, Melee 2, Occult 2, Politics 3, Seneschal 3, Stealth 2, Subterfuge 4

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Celerity 1, Quietus 2

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 4, Influence 2, Resources 3

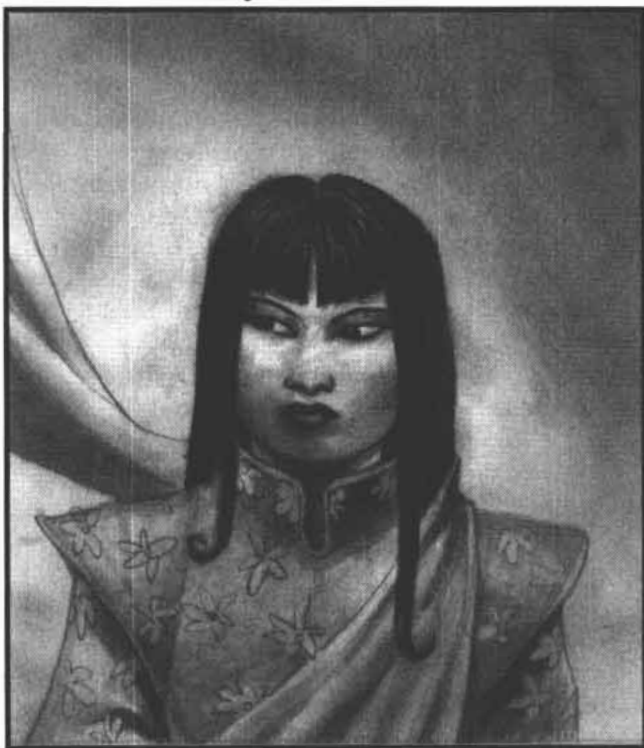
Road: Humanity 5

Conscience: 3, **Self-Control:** 2, **Courage:** 3, **Willpower:** 5

BORTAI THE FAIR, BONE DANCER

In the year of his death, 1227, Genghis Khan declared war on the Tangut people of Xixia, who, he said, were disloyal. The Great Khan had conquered Xixia years earlier, and its emperor pledged eternal loyalty. When Genghis Khan called to the Tangut for aid in his war against the Saracens of the west, however, they refused to help him, saying that if the great ruler needed their troops so badly, perhaps he was not such a great ruler after all.

On his deathbed, Burkhan, the leader of the Tanguts, came to Genghis Khan, bringing nine young boys and nine maidens, nine camels and nine horses, and many other fine gifts, to beg the Great Khan's forgiveness. Genghis Khan accepted the gifts, gave Burkhan a new name, and then had him slain and ordered that Xixia be laid waste.



Genghis Khan kept one of those nine maidens, Bortai the Fair; all the rest were slain. Bortai, a wealthy and beautiful landowner's daughter from Xixia and entirely unwilling prisoner, struggled against her Mongol captors. She was never alone with the Great Khan — indeed, she barely saw him, instead being kept in a large ger with many other beautiful young women for more than a month. During this time she poisoned a few of her captors in an attempt to make an escape, but each time, she was caught by a Mongol horseman or group of them, and brought back. Each time they returned her, she expected to be punished — beaten, at the least, or raped by one of the savages holding her captive, but she never was.

She learned the reason for her imprisonment the day the Great Khan died. Thirty-nine other maidens and Bortai the Fair were escorted as part of a great procession

to the burial place of the Great Khan. There they were ceremonially slaughtered and buried with him, along with treasures both mystical and mundane.

Bortai remembers precious little of the next few weeks, but it did seem natural for her to return to her body and dig her way out of the tomb and into the wintry nighttime steppe, so she did not question the reason why such a thing might happen. Mad with hunger, she began to wander the steppe in search of human prey.

A *wu* of outriders from the Black Tortoise Court followed the portents to find Bortai the Fair a few nights later. She did not reveal her history or her identity; she had lost enough of her sanity to the vampiric hunger inside that she could not speak her own name for weeks after the Black Tortoise Court took her in.

Bortai has regained her mind. She is still young, only a disciple of the Song of the Shadow Dharma, but she has a keen mind and a good memory. Alone of beings left on Earth, Bortai the Fair knows the location of Genghis Khan's tomb. And she believes that she could find it again.

PROFILE

Hun Nature: Survivor

P'o Nature: The Eunuch

Demeanor: Innovator

Direction: South

Dharma: The Song of the Shadow 1

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 4, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Abilities: Animal Ken 2, Crafts 3, Dodge 2, Etiquette 2, Expression 2, Hearth Wisdom 4, Melee 2, Politics 2, Ride 3, Subterfuge 1, Survival 2

Disciplines: Godbody of the Demon 1, Godbody of Metal 2, Iron Mountain 1, Yin Prana 1

Backgrounds: Nushi 3

Yin: 5, **Yang:** 3, **Hun:** 3, **P'o:** 1, **Willpower:** 5

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