

Basic Roleplaying

DRAGON LINES

GUARDIANS OF THE FORBIDDEN CITY



ALEPHTA'S
GAMES

A BRP Martial Arts Fantasy

DRAGON LINES

GUARDIANS OF THE FORBIDDEN CITY

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1. INTRODUCTION



FEW CHARACTER archetypes capture the imagination quite like Martial Artists. They are people who can, through a mixture of talent, skill and single-minded dedication, push their bodies to the very limits of human capability. In movies, books and video games, Martial Artists can do even more; their skills allow them to entirely transcend human limitations, to see and perform past what the laws of physics say is possible.

It is easy to see the draw to such a figure. Unbound as they are to the facets of real life that can make it tedious, Martial Artists often come to represent what we wish we could do, if only we had the time, inclination, and the right teachers. They are also often heroes of the people; the regular folk who till the fields and plant crops so that the wealthy and intellectual can do what they do. Martial Artists can also serve as a nearly supernatural force, sent to Earth to enact Heaven's will. They plumb secrets, perform daring feats of skill and bravery, and, in many ways, serve as the Eastern counterpart to the Western idea of the comic book superhero.

In Dragon Lines, your group of role-playing

participants will take the roles of such beings. You will portray people (and, sometimes, non-human people) who can draw on ambient magical energy called Chi and use it to fuel astounding, mystical martial arts styles that can only work in high-energy environments. You'll study under great masters to unlock your hidden potential, and learn secrets about yourself, the Earth, and the Heavens above and below. Will you use your power to curry favour of the Jade Emperor, ruler of All that Is, or perhaps to lay to rest hungry ghosts and dreaded hopping vampires? Or will you defeat decadent Lords and corrupting Foreign Devils to keep the regular folk, the small and weak, from exploitation and degradation?

Generations from now, will you be remembered fondly, as a monster, or even remembered at all?

The rest of the Dragon Lines text is broken down into chapters. These deal with specific details of the game and its setting. If you are going to play the game, consider looking at Chapters 2, Characters, and 3, Martial Arts, to get an overview of what facets of your character will be most at play.

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

What you are currently reading.

CHAPTER 2. CHARACTERS

Covers how to create a Martial Artist using the Basic Roleplaying rules. There are also professions, distinctive features, and other elements specific to the setting.

CHAPTER 3. MARTIAL ARTS

While some of the Martial Art styles found here will work in any other BRP game, many are only appropriate to the Dragon Lines setting. It should be clear, but if in doubt, ask your GM about which styles he or she allows when creating a character.

Details how to expand on the existing Martial Arts skill to allow for increased detail in games where Martial Arts will play a larger role than in most games. It contains a number of Martial Arts styles, from relatively mundane to impossibly fanciful.

CHAPTER 4. DRAGON LINES

Deals with the mystical energies that criss-cross the world, and how this energy influenced, and is influenced by, the world it envelopes.

CHAPTER 5. KUNG FU MAYHEM

Discusses how combat works in dealing with Martial Artists, including simple tools to keep a fight between two Master Martial Artists fluid, exciting and dynamic. This section builds upon combat in the core BRP rules, and many of the small changes can be ported over to other BRP games without dramatically disrupting how the game works.

CHAPTER 6. PHILOSOPHY

Is a discussion on using BRP's Allegiance rules to measure a character's level of belief in one or more of Dragon Lines' belief systems. Characters are not required to believe anything, but not being versed in the precepts of a philosophy means missing out on a potential source of aid and power. Philosophies included are:

- 1. The Celestial Bureaucracy** A complex system of bureaucratic governance that has a place for everyone, from the lowest farmer to the very King of Heaven.
- 2. The Path to Enlightenment** A simple set of principles that purport to allow for the enlightenment and eventual immortality of those

who can follow its seemingly easy path. It encourages its adherents to practice non-attachment and various forms of aestheticism.

3. The Way A series of riddle-like poems that suggest that the way to achieve everything is to do nothing. This philosophy places great emphasis on individuality and freedom.

4. The Yama Kings Many believe that, while some souls may ascend to the Court of the Jade Emperor when they die, the majority of those who die must spend some time in the dark underworld ruled by the Yama Kings.

5. Corruption Characters who give themselves over to Corruption become hardened to the suffering of others, and can call upon twisted spirits for aid.

CHAPTER 7. THE FORBIDDEN CITY

The core of the Dragon Lines setting. The Forbidden City is a giant fortress-city set near the Obido Mountains. From here, the White Lotus Emperor oversees the rule of the Third Lotus Dynasty in the name of the King of Heaven. The city and its environs teem with life, as beings of all sorts, from all over the Empire, come to live, work, draw Chi and seek audience with the Emperor.

CHAPTER 8.

THE TEN THOUSAND THINGS

Provides game statistics for a variety of friends and foes that a group of characters might encounter, from spirits and ghosts, to hostile bandit kings and other mundane, but still threatening, encounters.

CHAPTER 9.

MATERIAL ATTACHMENTS

Is a discussion about the various weapons and other items used by Martial Artists and other characters in the game. This chapter includes game rules for a variety of weapons designed for use with specific Martial Arts styles. There will also be rules for Artefacts, ancient items that supposedly grant their owners fabulous cosmic power.

CHAPTER 10.

DRAGON LINE ADVENTURES

This chapter is for the Game Master's eyes only. Here, there is an opening adventure to get the Martial Artists started adventuring together. Once this is accomplished, the GM can use the other adventure seeds, campaign ideas, and story arcs to flesh out into a number of sessions worth of Martial Arts action.





2. CHARACTERS

CREATING MARTIAL ARTISTS

MAKING A GOOD, interesting character is an important task. A good character creates its own drama, drawing it (and the player) into the ongoing story. Less than good characters expect the story to come to them, waiting for events to occur in order to have something to do. Doing Nothing is great for Taoists, but it can make for boring adventures when roleplaying.

This chapter will take the normal character creation process from the BRP rulebook and tweak it slightly. Hopefully, the end result will be a character that is interesting, fascinating, and the sort of person that is either always getting into trouble, or helping others get out of it.

STEP ONE: CONCEPT & CHARACTERISTICS

Traditionally, the first step in BRP character creation is the rolling of characteristics, which provides a bare-bones framework for the character. We will get to that in a second, but before we do, let us discuss the idea of a Character Concept.

A concept is a short sentence that describes the character's outlooks, goals or motivations. It can be tricky to come up with one, but it is important enough that we will need to give it a bit of extra attention. It is possible to get further into the creation process without having a concept, and hopefully one will coalesce before the end. If you have even a glimmer of a concept before getting too far into the process, this is much more likely to happen.

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Circumstances of Birth

- 1. Reincarnation:** You are supposed to be the reincarnated spirit of a beloved spiritual leader and teacher. Whether you really are or not is a matter of conjecture. Choose a Philosophy from Chapter 6; people who have at least 10 Allegiance points in that philosophy will recognize you for who you are. This may not be a good thing, depending on their other Allegiance scores.
- 2. Ill-Omened Birth:** You were born at a particularly inauspicious time. Whether you believe it or not, others who know of your birth think you bring bad luck, or distrust you unless you can prove your worth. You may opt to have this be real; if it is, you may gain a single minor Chi Augmentation. In compensation, once per game, your Game Master may declare any single roll at the table (not always your own) as a spectacularly disastrous fumble.
- 3. Born out of Wedlock:** For whatever reason, your parents were not married at the time of your birth. This is considered bad form in almost all parts of the Empire, and anyone who knows this about you will place some of the stigma on you, to varying degrees of influence.
- 4. Blessed:** When you were born, spirits gathered and gave you a blessing. This rare gift gives you access to the Spirit Boon Chi power, and you may always take a set of spirits as contacts, even if your profession does not normally provide contact with them.
- 5. Runt:** You are the youngest child of a large family. You have many siblings to call on for aid, and who may

do the same with you. However, this may also be a drawback, as siblings often compete against each other for attention.

6. Problematic Birth: Your birth was hard on you and your mother. You both nearly died, and it is possible that your mother actually did. If this has happened, it is also possible that your father resents you for taking her from him. Alternatively, your mother's close call or death may have made you very close with one or both of your parents as a result.

7. Beloved: You are one of the lucky few whose parents really love them. They will do anything for you, even give their lives if that would save yours.

8. Unknown: You may have just appeared one day, as if by magic. Even if you have an entirely mundane birth, no one knows who your parents really are. How and when the fallout from this manifests is a matter of discussion between you and your Game Master.

9. Stillborn: When you were born, everyone thought you had died during the delivery, only to discover the truth later, perhaps much later. Some may see you as a miracle child, while others assume you are some sort of undead monster masquerading as a normal member of your race and species.

10. Foundling: For whatever reason, your parents left you out in the woods to die. Luckily, you were discovered by someone and raised as their own child. Your foster parents may be normal people, spirits, or even wild animals. How this affects your view of human society is up to you and your Game Master.

Naming Conventions

Characters in Dragon Lines have names that come in one of two usual formats. Traditionalists tend to have a three-part name, typically their family name, followed by a two-word phrase that is supposed to indicate something about the nature of the character. For example, for someone named Huang Tai-Wei, their name means "The Huang Family member known as Great Power." Sometimes the person's given name is used ironically, or as an in-joke amongst the family.

Others adopt nicknames that are colourful, evocative, or in some way more interesting than a traditional name. Sometimes these nicknames incorporate the family name, along with a personal descriptor. The above character might be known as "Great Huang", or "Sagacious Huang."

Nicknames also often incorporate animal names, as well as numbers. It is not unusual to find someone known as Seven Fighting Eagles, or Flame-Haired Demon. Character may also have multiple names, for use in different social situation. Someone may go by an outlandish nickname when with their friends, but use their traditional name when dealing with family or other authorities.

If you are coming to the table with no idea what sort of character you want to play, consider using the Random Background Generator table for ideas. This will not necessarily give you any overt direction to how to make your character, but it may help make it a multi-dimensional person rather than a collection of numbers on a page.

If you have got a concept already, or want to see if one develops, go ahead and start rolling the dice.

RANDOM BACKGROUND GENERATOR

For each of the sections below, roll 1D10 or choose an entry from the list. You may also roll a D10 for each list, all at once, and select the dice you wish to apply to a specific list. Some list entries suggest characteristics, skill or powers. These are only suggestions, not mandates.

ROLLING CHARACTERISTICS

Dragon Lines does not use the Education characteristic, since there is very little formal education for Martial Artists in the Empire. Otherwise, all other characteristics are used. Roll 2D6+6 for each of them, in any order. Once you have done so for each of the characteristics, look at them. If you have not rolled a 16 or higher, you may replace

one of your rolls with a 16. Bear in mind that some Martial Arts styles require a 16 or higher in a specific characteristic. Normally, you would get to trade up to 3 characteristic points around, but in this game, the free 16 replaces that.

STEP TWO: RACE AND CULTURE

Normally, in BRP, Step 2 is where you determine if you are going to use any of the Powers system. Instead, Dragon Lines characters all use powers. Step 2 is to determine whether you want to play as a regular human, or as one of the myriad spirit and half-spirit beings that live in the Empire. Non-human beings gain access to a different power set than pure humans, but gain less power from their initial Martial Art to balance.

If you plan on playing a human character, continue from here. If you wish to play something not entirely human, choose one of the options below. In any case, consider the Culture of your character as well.



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Unless the entry says otherwise, assume that your birth parents are your guardians for the list below.

1. Adopted: For some reason, you were raised by foster parents instead of your birth parents. You may or may not know who your real parents are.

2. Monastic Life: You spent your formative years in an isolated monastery. You learned much from the monks who lived near you, as well as from the collection of ancient scrolls kept in the library.

3. Time Abroad: You spent a number of years living in places other than your homelands. You may pick up a few Language (Other) and Knowledge (Region) skills to reflect your diverse upbringing.

4. Isolated: You grew up someplace far away from civilization, and have only just recently travelled beyond the limits of your childhood. You gain a +10% bonus to a specific Knowledge (Region) skill reflecting your homeland, but take a -10% to social skills when dealing with people outside of your comfort zone.

5. Kidnapped: At some point during your childhood, you were taken by bandits and sold into slavery. You eventually manage to escape, but your experiences at the hands of the slavers colours your view of the outside world.

6. Mystical: One or more of the people who raised

you has a reputation as a powerful sorcerer. Anyone who knows of your background may (perhaps erroneously) assume you have some sort of magical power as well.

7. Abused: One or more of the people who raised you had a problem with children and treated you very poorly. You are out of that situation now. In what ways, if any, does this still affect you as an adult?

8. On Holy Ground: You spent a great deal of time growing up on the sacred grounds of a temple. Your near-constant contact with the divine has made you much more sensitive than your peers. You gain access to the Sensitivity Chi Power, regardless of your Martial Art or profession selection.

9. Haunted

Roll several until you feel you have enough. These took place a long time ago.

1. Raiders: Your home was raided by bandits. People have been hurt, killed, or kidnapped.

2. Made a Life-Long Friend: You have developed a life-long friend, who will stick by you no matter what. Consider taking the Sidekick power, or apply this to another player character.

3. Death: Someone close and important to you died, possibly in conjunction with other rolls on this table.

4. Taken as an apprentice: Someone of renown thought you had great potential, and took you on as an apprentice, hoping to pass down a wealth of knowledge before he or she died.

5. Fell in love: You fall madly in love with someone. This can be another player character, or an important non-player character. How this works out is up to you. Childhood loves rarely last long, although there are exceptions.

6. Lost in the Woods. You and possibly others get lost in the wilderness. At least you eventually make it back to safety, but there is no telling what occurred while you were lost.

7. Reliquary. You discover that you have been appointed the guardian of some important artefact, at

least when you are old enough to handle it. You gain access to the Artefact Chi Augmentation, though you need not select it during character creation. If not, it is assumed that the artefact in question is in safe keeping until such time as you claim it as your own.

8. Illness. You fall prey to a serious illness and nearly die. Your body and mind are altered during the illness. You may take an adverse Chi Augmentation to reflect the lingering effects of the disease, in exchange for a minor positive Augmentation to reflect the time spent indoors studying, or some supernatural effects from the disease.

9. Scrutinized. You gain the attention of a powerful human or spirit, who may or may not share the reasons for their study of you. The particulars of how this manifests are up to you and your Game Master.

10. Amongst the Wild Things. You have an encounter with animals that can speak your native tongue. They teach you their ways, and adopt you as a member of the pack. You agree to support each other, and may call upon each other for aid when in danger.

CHARACTERS

Significant Events of Adulthood-Normal

Roll or choose from the following list until you feel you have enough of them. Most of these events, if selected, will have happened fairly recently, sometime within the last 5 years.

1. Drafted. There was a large-scale military operation going on, and you were conscripted into the fighting, whether you wanted to be involved or not. You may have seen and done things you would rather not recall. You probably made a few friends, though. If you are not still in the military, what circumstances led to your discharge?

2. Crime. Crime is rampant in some parts of the Empire, despite the Prefecture's attempts at eradicating it. You were involved in a criminal operation in some manner. You might have fallen in with a gang of thieves, or been made to infiltrate a smuggling operation as a Prefecture informant, or something else entirely. How did this operation end up? Have you made friends or enemies because of your involvement?

3. The Hunt. You were instrumental in the pursuit of some person or thing of value. It may have been a famous Artefact from a bygone age, a fugitive from justice, or a secret thought long-lost. Thanks to your involvement, your fame in certain circles is greatly increased, granting access to a set of contacts beyond what you would normally have access to.

4. The Strange Inheritance. Your fortune is greatly increased by the sudden death of a long-lost relative, who has left the entirety of his or her estate to you. You are now Wealthy, and have a sprawling estate somewhere in the Empire. You get the idea that your dead relative was into some very odd things; the estate is filled with strange objects of art, and it may or may not be haunted. Every so often, you come into contact with bizarre people who ask you very strange questions.

5. Death. Someone very close to you has died, perhaps under mysterious circumstances. It may have been an accident, or it might have been your fault.

6. Incarceration. You were accused of a crime and sent to trial. If you are found innocent, you are freed, but your reputation is sullied. If you are found guilty, you spend a few years being held prisoner, performing demeaning, back-breaking labour. You may have picked up a few less than legal skills, and contacts in the criminal underworld that you might not gain otherwise. Due to corruption in the system, actual guilt or innocence has no bearing on your punishment.

7. Love. You fall in love with someone you never thought you would meet. This relationship may be ongoing, or it may have ended in tragedy. Work with your Game Master to determine the nature of your lover and of your relationship.

8. Spiritual Encounter. You have a run-in with some sort of spirit that has left a mark on you, either mentally or an actual, physical mark. You may have gained a beneficial ally, or found an implacable foe. Depending on your reaction to this encounter, you may develop a few extra points of Allegiance to one of the Philosophies.

9. Conspiracy. Your life is somehow touched by a cabal of conspirators working towards a common goal. They may be benefactors, or secretly working against you or someone important to you. Have they achieved their goals? Have you unmasked any of them?

10. Hoodwinked. Someone has taken advantage of you, and wound up possessing something rightfully yours. Who is this person, and what do they have?

GIANT

Giants are mortal beings whose bloodlines contain trace amounts of spirit blood. They tend to be much larger and tougher than humans. Due to their prodigious size, many giants think of themselves as being above other mortals. A popular myth is that the giants alive today are survivors of an ancient empire, and will, some day, return to their former glory.

1. Giant characters have access to Chi Augmentations, regardless of what Martial Art they practice. Their first three powers are always Increased CON, Increased SIZ, and Increased STR.

2. Giants may select adverse transformations to gain beneficial ones. They typically have poor social skills, so Decreased CHA is a common feature, as is Decreased INT.

3. Giant Characters have several Distinctive Features. They are often covered in fur, which is usually a bizarre colour, like cornflower, crimson, or bone white.

OGRE

Like giants, ogres are mortal beings who have spiritual blood, although in this case, the spirits are very often dark ones of hunger or greed. Ogres tend to be taller, broad and ugly, and are prone to violent outbursts. They are well known to be greedy, and many hide a keen intellect under the appearance of a brutal savage. Not all Ogres fill this niche, though; many attempt to overcome their baser nature and live life as civilized folks. However, even the "civilized" ogres make deadly combatants, which those who anger them do not live long to regret.

1. Ogres have access to Chi augmentations. Their first two powers are always Increased SIZ and Hardy: Steel Weapons.

2. They may take adverse transformations to gain extra beneficial ones. They often develop an Allergy to silver or jade.

3. An ogre with a POW of 16 or higher gains access to, but does not necessarily begin play with,

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Significant Events of Adulthood-Strange

Where the previous list was filled with relatively normal events, the list below includes entries that are a little stranger than usual. Everyone should at least consider rolling once on this table, and characters with magical, occult, or other mystical backgrounds should consider rolling on it several times.

1. Heroics. Your actions lead directly to someone being saved.

2. Vision of the Afterlife. Due to an accident, injury to illness, your body dies, and your soul briefly goes to the next world. You have an amazing adventure before you are revived, and when you awaken, you can only remember snatches of what you saw while technically dead.

3. Plagued by Mischievous Spirits. Without warning, you have started being harassed by a multitude of tiny spirits, who do their best to irritate and frustrate you. A sage told you that you must have angered them somehow, but you do not recall doing so, and they will not tell you what is going on.

4. Past Life Memory. After a blow to the head, you begin having memories of lives that are not yours. You do not have any control over when these memories manifest, though you have picked up a handful of useful tricks and old jokes because of them. In times of great need, you may ask your Game Master for an Idea roll to gain assistance from your former lives.

5. Mysterious Patron. One day, you start getting letters from a mysterious benefactor, who gives you strangely specific advice regarding your current situation. You have learned to listen, especially since it has saved you life more than once. You do not know the identity of your Patron, nor do you ever see how the letters get to you.

6. Famous. Something in your past has made it so that the whole Empire knows about you and the incident that made you famous. Unfortunately, it is not something very flattering. You might be the person who got caught in a well, or who burned a city down by dropping a lit torch. You know you are in for trouble when someone

stops and says, "Hey, don't I know you?"

7. Former Cultist. Once, during a particularly bad time in your life, you got mixed up with a philosophical club that was supposed to help you get your head on straight. Instead, they wanted you to wear a black robe and make sacrifices to the Seven Kings of Torment. You got out before the prefects raided the cult temple. To this day, though, you get the urge to chant and dance when you need to think about something.

8. Apparently Immortal. For some reason, you can not seem to die. You have been dead a few times, and each time, you awaken a few minutes after death and begin recovering, even from seemingly mortal wounds and incurable illnesses. Even though you do not remember anything about dying, you always awaken screaming and terrified. A few days after your resurrection, someone nearby will die in your place of a freak accident. Your first two powers are always the Major Regeneration power, with the note that it can expressly bring you back to life. This is unnatural, and every time you return, you gain a point of Allegiance to Corruption. There may be some way to end your cursed existence.

9. Mistaken Identity. Ever since you can recall, people have mistaken you for someone named Tong Shu-Shi or some other complete stranger. This person seems to constantly anger the wrong people, who come looking to you to set things straight. This is usually more annoying than dangerous, although there have been attempts on your life because of it. If you actually try to find this person, you discover that he or she is always one step ahead of you.

10. The Missing Step. You are approached by a cabal of sorcerers and alchemists, who apparently need something fairly private from you in order to complete a formula. Or was it a spell? You are not certain, and they were pretty vague about the whole thing. Ever since, mystical characters act as though they know you, or have at least heard of you, but no one will tell you why.

Chi Manipulations.

4. When choosing Distinctive Features, select at least one that describes the ogre's bestial or ugly appearance.

KITSUNE

These tricky fox spirits are imports from the Nipponese Protectorate, who have been brought to the Forbidden City by the Nipponese Diplomatic Core. Though they are spirits, and not spirit-blooded mortals, kitsune are able to manifest flesh-and-blood bodies when in the high-Chi environment of the Dragon Empire. It is impossible to tell exactly how many kitsune are in the Empire, for their shape-shifting and illusion abilities make them extremely hard to discover if they do not wish to be found.

1. Kitsune have access to both Chi Augmentations and Manipulations, regardless of what Art they practice. Their first powers are always Hybrid (Fox, which comes with Natural Weapons as both claws [1D6] and bite [1D4]), Liken Shape, and Illusion.

2. Their Liken Shape ability is of singular potency; once activated, it remains in place indefinitely. Only being touched by a true member of the copied species can undo it. The Chi invested in the shape does not regenerate until the copied shape has lapsed.

3. They may take adverse transformations to gain new beneficial ones. They tend to be smaller than normal people, so Decreased Characteristic, SIZ, is a common choice.

4. Even when in human form, there is often something about a Kitsune that would betray their true form to a canny observer. When choosing

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Distinctive Features, select at least one that calls to mind a fox; red hair, slightly pointed nose, a bushy tail only just hidden by a robe.

GHOST

When someone dies, their soul is normally drawn into the Dragon Lines, and then from there into the realm of the Yama Kings for judgement. However, there are many reasons why a soul might choose to linger on in the realm of mortals instead of moving to the afterlife. These ghosts face a number of problems, but many brave the threat of becoming Hungry to make sure their unfinished business is accomplished, hopefully to face a better fate in the afterworld.

- Ghosts have access to Chi Augmentations, and to Manipulations if they had them in life. A ghost's first powers are always Intangibility, Immaterial Strength, and Drain.

- A Ghost's Intangibility works opposite to how it is described for other characters; a ghost is always considered Intangible, and can spend Chi as per the power to become temporarily tangible enough to interact with the world.

- Lingering in the world as a Ghost is an unnatural state. As such, a ghost character begins with 3 points of Allegiance to Corruption. During play, using the Drain power on unwilling humans also warrants a 1 point Corruption gain.

- When reduced to zero Chi, instead of becoming unconscious, the ghost becomes a hungry ghost. It will attack anyone present and, should they render someone unconscious, begin to drain Chi at a rate of 1 per round. When the ghost has enough Chi to use the Drain power, he will switch to it instead. Once the victim has been drained of Chi, the ghost returns to his normal

state, and gains 3 Corruption.

- Ghosts who are eligible to become allies to Corruption (see the Philosophy chapter) must pass a Luck roll each game session. If they fail, the character has Fallen to Corruption, and will automatically become an NPC hungry ghost.

- All ghost characters have a servant of the Yama Kings dispatched to pursue them, in order to force them into their proper fate in the afterlife.

- Ghosts can be bound like spirits.

- When reduced to zero Hit Points, instead of dying a ghost becomes quiet, and vanishes from their location, only to reform some time later in a nearby place with abundant Chi. What happens to them in the intervening time is up to the Game Master.

- All ghosts are bound to this world for a reason. Fulfilling that reason means the ghost is freed from the potential danger of becoming a Hungry Ghost, and retires from the party.

- At the Game Master's option, characters who die while in pursuit of a deeply held objective may return to the game as ghost character. They gain the three Chi powers, but also face the danger of becoming Hungry.

- When choosing distinctive features, select at least one that betrays the character's true nature. Ghosts that have died by violence often bear the marks of their fatal injuries.

SPIRIT-BLOODED

Due to the abundant Chi, spirits often live along side, and sometimes with, human beings. When manifested in the physical world, many spirits are capable of siring children with mortals. The result of these unions often appear mostly human, with a few changes to reflect their spiritual heritage. The most common spirit-blooded are those with dragon parentage. These half-bloods are elemental in nature, depending on the alignment of their dragon parent. Other types of spirit-bloods exist, although they are much less common than their dragon counterparts.

- Spirit-blooded gain access to Chi Augmentations, and may select any or all of their initial powers from that list. The augmentations chosen should reflect the spiritual nature of the character's heritage.

- Spirits with a POW of 16 or higher may also gain access to, but not necessarily begin play with, Chi Manipulations as well.

- Characters with Dragon parentage often practice the Martial Art style of their element, and often have their supernatural parent as their first Master.

- When in the presence of a strong Chi flow aligned with their element, spirit-blooded gain 1 extra point of Chi when meditating. Spirit-blooded with non-elemental parents also gain extra Chi from being in the presence of humans performing the activity for which their spirit part is associated.

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For example, a spirit-blooded son of the god of warfare would gain Chi by being in the heat of battle.

- When selecting Distinctive Features, select at least one obviously supernatural feature to reflect the character's divine heritage.

CULTURE

There are three primary cultures present in the Dragon Lines setting. Characters are expected to hail from one of them, though others may be acceptable with the Game Master's permission.

DYNASTIC CHIN

This is the primary culture of the Dragon Empire. It is by far the most likely culture that player characters will belong to, as it makes up the vast bulk of the folks who live in the Empire. There is some variation between rural and urban Chin, but even the most primitive tribe has made some effort to become part of the dominant culture, which is not to say that there are not those who resist.

Leader: The White Lotus Emperor and the Dragon Court. Supported by the Royal Families, and the Imperial Legion.

Culture: A mix of human traditions that revolve around the passing of the seasons, and propitiation of spirits.

Appearance: It varies, depending on which part of the Empire someone hails from. Skin tones tend to dusky and dark, never pale, with lustrous black hair and a variety of eye colours. Some tribes tend to be taller or shorter than average, and many have a fair degree of obvious spirit blood in them.

Demeanour: The culture places a heavy emphasis on keeping a calm, polite attitude when in public, and remaining affectionate with one's family. Expressing anger, sadness or frustration is a social faux pas. Speaking ill of the dead is also frowned upon, as ancestors are likely to take offence.

Languages: Chin is used in most cases, although Ancient Chin is sometimes used for ritual or other official purposes.

Occupations: Occupations that are seen as contributing to the Empire are favoured, while those that are benefit from illegality or charity are seen as abhorrent. Work with the government is highly praised; even an entry level clerk position offers a great deal of prestige.

Philosophies: The Celestial Bureaucracy is the most common and well-accepted philosophy in the Empire. The Way has a larger number of adherents, including the White Lotus Emperor himself. The Path of Enlightenment is also popular, although it does not have the sheer numbers that the preceding two philosophies support. Those who follow the Yama Kings are seen as people to be avoided, and those who fall to Corruption are persecuted whenever they are discovered.

Cultural Weapons: Non-Martial Artists warriors are trained in the spear, and how to fight in units. This weapon is seen as emblematic of both the army, and the Empire as a whole. Martial Artists are also encouraged, and fighting unarmed is seen as a heroic way of solving problems.

Armour: Soldiers and other fighters wear a suit of lamellar, including a helm. Usually, Martial Artists either wear similar armour, or none at all.

Cultural Skills: Martial Arts are encouraged, and many children dream of learning to study with a great Master and serving the Empire. Most people also learn a Craft skill and practice it extensively. There are regular trade fairs where people show off their crafts and trade them with each other.

Items: Most people carry a memento that reminds them of a favoured ancestor, and use it as a focus when praying to that ancestor.

GAO-LI

The people at the Northeast corner of the Empire were once a sovereign nation. They have been a part of the Empire for centuries, and, while they have adopted the Chin culture, it is tempered with a deliberate attempt to keep their traditional ways alive in some fashion.

Leader: Technically, they see the White Lotus Emperor as their sovereign, but the territory has a locally-elected governor who oversees the maintenance and protection of Gao-Li. Currently, this person is Kim-Mih Ah, a popular figure who grew to power from an impoverished background.

Culture: Mostly human. The Gao-Li people tend to see spirits as something to avoid, though they do participate in ancestor worship.

Appearance: Gao-Li people tend to stand out from their Chin neighbours by having flatter faces and distinctive skin tone that no native Chin bloodline can replicate.

Demeanour: The Gao-Li living in the Empire tend to be quiet, unobtrusive folks who keep to themselves. They have a strong sense of loyalty and, if one can prove oneself to them, they make enduring friends and spouses.

Languages: They speak their own language, and use it amongst themselves and in public media.

Occupations: Entertainers are seen as valuable, though most Gao-Li think only certain, special people can train hard enough to become them. Soldiers are also respected, especially those who protect the weak.

Philosophies: The Way is the most commonly held philosophy, although most Gao-Li see it as the only alternative to the Celestial Bureaucracy, which they do not adopt mostly because it supports the Imperial State as an extension of Heaven.

Cultural Weapons: The long staff is seen as emblematic of the Gao-Li people, as it was the weapon of a folk hero from their history. It is a weapon that is not always a weapon, and this dual-purpose appeals to the Gao-Li sense of utility.

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Armour: None normally. Soldiers and prefects wear armour similar to that worn in by the Chin, but armour itself does not have the cultural weight needed to make it an inherent part of how the people see themselves.

Cultural Skills: Perform (any) is a skill that most people are encouraged to pick up. When people come to visit, children are expected to entertain by singing, playing an instrument, or doing something else related to the Perform skills. They also place emphasis on the various Knowledge skills, suggesting that it is better to work smart than work hard.

Items: Family is very important to Gao-Li people. Nearly everyone has a scroll with their family tree on it, and most people can count their ancestors back to nearly mythological times. The wealthiest individuals are supposedly descended from the first family ever created.

NIPPON

Like the Gao-Li people, the island nation of Nippon was once a sovereign country. In fact, they had been an Empire, and their expansion brought them into conflict with the Chin people. The resulting war has only just wound down, and the Nipponese lost, having been subsumed into the Dragon Empire. Those Nipponese in the Forbidden City are part of the Diplomatic Corps, who work hard to keep their nation's interests when dealing with Royal Families.

Leader: Technically, the White Lotus, though most Nipponese do not really see him as their leader. The former Shogun, Akimana Jube, has had most of his power stripped, and is largely only a figurehead in his own country. However, many Nipponese still see him as their leader, though those in the Empire will not admit it to anyone.

Culture: Human, with some spirits accepted into society. While not quite as spirit-phobic as the Gao-Li, the Nipponese do not accept the supernatural as part of their society. They tolerate their presence in the Empire because they have to tolerate so much anyway.

Appearance: Shorter and stockier than their mainland cousins, Nipponese stand out in a crowd. Those in the Empire as part of the Diplomatic Corps tend to be in good physical shape, though those at home vary as much as any human population does.

Demeanour: Humans from Nippon tend to be grim and dour. They also possess a strong sense of duty to their homeland, and can push past their own personal feelings if they interfere with their duty. Nipponese spirits, by comparison, tend to be mischievous and fun-loving. They especially love tormenting Nipponese humans whom they see as entirely too serious.

Languages: They speak their own tongue, although most in the Empire have picked up enough Chin to communicate easily with the locals, albeit with rather thick accents.

Occupations: Much of Nipponese culture revolves around the sword. Its creation, use, and symbolism are central to the national culture. Craftsmen that deal with metalworking are highly regarded, as are soldiers and Martial Artists who train to use the sword.

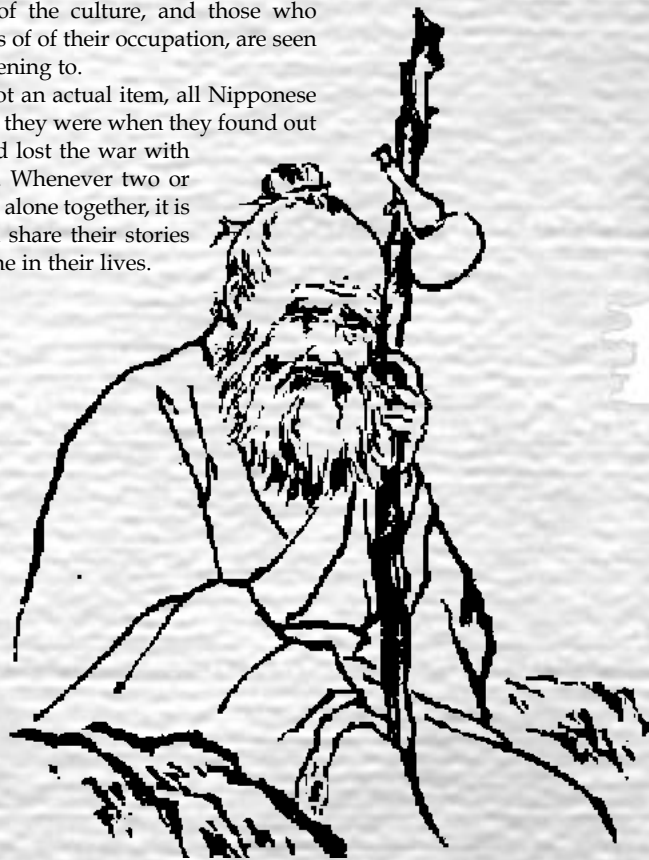
Philosophies: Many Nipponese walk the Path to Enlightenment, mostly as a means of coping with the staggering defeat at the hands of the Empire. Like the Gao-Li, they balk at the Celestial Bureaucracy since it supports the State. Their resentment leads many to fall to Corruption, though some stave off this by following the Yama Kings, leading the souls of their oppressors to the Underworld.

Cultural Weapons: Without a doubt, the sword, in its various forms and styles. Even those who are not warriors sometimes study the arts related to the Sword as a form of meditation. Archery is also respected, but not to the same intense degree.

Armour: Nipponese noblemen and other high-born warriors wear a complicated suit made of laminated strips of lacquered wood, laid over each other in criss-crossing layers. These suits count as half plate for rules purposes. Each suit is crafted for the individual who owns it. Non-Nipponese bearing either Nipponese swords or armour will receive a great deal of negative attention from any Nipponese who see them.

Cultural Skills: Any Craft skill dealing with metalworking, as well as Art skills. The Nipponese see themselves as a highly civilized society. Strategy is also a big part of the culture, and those who possess it, regardless of their occupation, are seen as people worth listening to.

Items: While not an actual item, all Nipponese know exactly where they were when they found out that their nation had lost the war with the Dragon Empire. Whenever two or more Nipponese are alone together, it is likely that they will share their stories about this trying time in their lives.



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STEP THREE: AGE AND EXPERIENCE

These rules work as described in the BRP rulebook. However, for non-human characters, especially spirits, it makes little sense to lose characteristic points based on age, given that the numbers used in the BRP rulebook are based upon purely human characters.

The Game Master may opt to do away with the rules for gaining extra skill points based on age when dealing with characters who will not age or who do so differently than normal humans.

STEP FOUR: CHARACTERISTIC ROLLS

This step works exactly like the one in the BRP rulebook.

STEP FIVE: DERIVED CHARACTERISTICS

This step works mostly as described, save that Hit Points are based on CON+SIZ, without dividing by two. Major Wounds are $\frac{1}{4}$ this number. Dragon Lines does not use the Optional derived characteristics listed in the box for Step Five.

Also, you may wish to save this step for later in the process, as Martial Artists with Chi Augmentations will likely alter their rolled Characteristics, which will in turn alter their derived characteristics.

STEP SIX: MARTIAL ARTS STYLE

Selecting a Martial Arts style from Chapter 3 takes the place of the Personality Type Step Six from the BRP rulebook. The Martial Arts selections offer a bonus to fewer skills, but also grant access to Powers. Character may select up to six powers total during character creation.

Players who wish to play foreigners to the Dragon Empire may elect to take a personality type from step six instead of a Martial Art.



STEP SEVEN: SKILL POINT ALLOCATION

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

Each character should select a profession from the list later on in this chapter. Note the skills granted by this profession, and put the following skill points towards them, based upon game level:

Normal	Put 25% to each of your ten skills. Skills generally should not go over 75%
Heroic	(Default level for Dragon Lines) Put 33% to each of the skills, with a cap of 90%
Epic	Put 40%, with a cap of 101%
Superhuman	50%, with no skill cap

The percentages for each game level are an average, and assume you put an equal amount towards each of your ten professional skills. Players are free to adjust these numbers if needed; adding 30% to one skill so that you can add 36% to another is fine, so long as the total points spent does not go over the total amount for each level.

Note also that, if you have a profession that offers Chi Powers on its own, you may spend professional points on any skill-based Manipulations you have selected. Points spent towards augmenting powers are gone, and cannot be used to further enhance skills.

PERSONAL POOL

In this stage, you may put percentile points equal to your character's INT to any ten skills, including those you have not already taken. You do not need to put these points in 10 different skills; you may put them to as many or as few skills as you like, up to the cap for skills bases on game level.

As with Professional points, these numbers are not hard and fast. Players wishing to spend their personal pool as per the BRP rulebook may do so.

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STEP EIGHT: DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

Even though it is technically an optional rule in the BRP book, we strongly encourage Distinctive Features to be used for Dragon Lines characters. A handful of easily identified traits can really help flesh out characters, and they are entirely within genre. Martial Art characters with names like "The Bride with White Hair," or "Silver-Tongued Devil" are very common, and the Distinctive Features rules are a good way to bring out character.

See the **Distinctive Features** Table for some genre-appropriate features.

STEPS NINE AND TEN

These steps work exactly as written in the BRP rulebook. Note what characters select as their personal item that links them to their families. Often, these items can be worked into the ongoing story as a convenient hook for the Game Master to hang an adventure on.

PROFESSIONS

Below is a list of professions common to the people in the Dragon Empire who practice Martial Arts. It does not represent the relative number of professions held by regular people, but is instead focused on the sorts of background that promote the study and training player characters are likely to have. In some cases, the profession listed is more accurately described as something the character used to do, perhaps even years ago.

For the Game Master, professions are more than just a handful of skills to help flesh out a character. They are also ties that link the characters to the world at large. With each profession, there are other characters in the world who would know, or know of, the player character who selects them. You can use these connections when planning adventures, since, in this genre at least, the player characters are really the centre of the world, and it is not uncommon for them to draw elements of their past into their present.

PROFESSIONS AND MARTIAL ARTS

Some professions offer training in Martial Arts styles. When selecting such a profession, the player may elect to either put profession points towards the style learned in Step 6, or to learn a second Martial Arts style. Regardless of how many styles a character knows, they may only begin play with a number of powers as determined by the level of the game.

OPTIONAL RULE: CONTACTS

Each character has a number of contacts equal to half of his or her CHA characteristic. These are selected from the list for the character's profession, although characters may have contacts in other places at the Game Master's approval.

During the game, a player may declare that they are using one of their Contacts, indicating which type of contact is being used, and what they might know or be able to do for that character. Once a contact is established in this way, they become NPCs, and can be used again at a later date.

Every time a contact is used, the contacts will consider themselves owed a favour, and will likely come calling at some point to collect. This gives the Game Master a handy supply of NPCs to use to spur on adventures.

ACROBAT

At an early age, you began training with a circus troupe, learning to contort your body and develop balancing skills that are the rival of many. Your nimbleness and dexterity make certain tasks very easy, and give you an edge when fighting. You may have also attracted attention from some unsavoury types who want to use your skills for their own gain.

<i>Wealth</i>	Poor through Wealthy, usually Average or Affluent.
<i>Skills</i>	Acrobatics, Climb, Dodge, Jump, Throw, and choose five of the following as appropriate: Punch, Kick, First Aid, Grapple, Insight, Listen, Martial Arts (any), Spot, Ride, or Swim.
<i>Contacts</i>	Other circus performers, criminals, friends and lovers made while travelling, members of rival circus troupes.

ALCHEMIST

You have developed an impressive body of knowledge regarding how Chi infuses things in the natural world. When in your lab, you can prepare plants, animal parts and minerals to create potions, philtres and powders to heal the sick, burn away metal, even conquer death itself. You may be an honest sage, dispensing health and wisdom to those who seek it, or an unscrupulous grifter, who dupes impressionable nobles with promises of eternal life and power.

<i>Wealth</i>	Average to Wealthy, usually Affluent.
<i>Skills</i>	Craft (any), Knowledge (Alchemy), Persuade, Research, Status, and any five Knowledge skills.
<i>Contacts</i>	Other alchemists, component vendors, nobles, scholars.

Distinctive Features

- Hair on Head:** Long and braided, front half shaved (called a *que*), worn in a top-knot, highly stylized, always changing to match local style, brightly coloured, always moving as though underwater or in a breeze, cursed to always look like you have just rolled out of bed.
- Facial Hair:** Long, tendril-like eyebrows, Fu Manchu style moustache, elaborate goatee, long, braided sideburns.
- Facial Features:** Cat's eyes, strangely coloured eyes, eyes that glow or flash when angered, an eye-patch, facial piercings or tattoos.
- Expression:** Meditative, calm, joyous, exuberant.
- Clothes:** Expensive silk gowns, outdated, simple, practical, revealing, hidden pockets, tabi boots, wooden sandals, practice uniform, rice paper hats, always clean, bizarre formal attire, clothing all of the same colour
- Bearing:** Haughty, determined, eager, serene, aesthetic, unconcerned.
- Speech:** Commanding, sharp, barking, peppers speech with philosophical sayings, precise, formal, pedantic, grammatically perfect, unwaveringly polite, never raises voice.
- Arms and Hands:** Burn scars, rough hands from hardening training, manicured nails, covered in silky hair, claw-like fingers.
- Torso:** Covered in extensive dragon tattoos, beer-gut, furry, feathered.
- Legs and Feet:** No shoes, calloused feet, digitigrade legs (like a satyr), no legs or feet, tattoos on the soles of your feet.

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ASSASSINS

Trained to deal in murder, assassins are a surprisingly mixed lot. While the desire to kill motivates many, as does money, some are motivated by a desire for revenge, justice, or other relatively noble goals. More than one petty tyrant has been toppled by a dagger in the dark, much to the pleasure of those oppressed.

- Wealth* Average to Affluent. You possess any weapons for which you have a skill, instead of needing a skill of at least 50%. You also possess several false identities. See page 22 for more details.
- Skills* Dodge, Hide, Listen, Spot, Stealth, and five from the following list: Kick, Punch, Disguise, Grapple, Fine Manipulation, Knowledge (poisons), Martial Arts, Melee Weapon (any), Missile Weapon (any), Ride, Throw Target, Thrown Weapons, Track.
- Contacts* Jealous nobles, criminal leaders, bandit kings, prefects (corrupt or otherwise), employers.

BEGGAR

Life is hard when you do not have a profession or a place to live. Many who get by on the charity of others feel as though they have no place in society. This can be as much blessing as it is a curse; beggars are often overlooked by the authorities, which makes hiding amongst them easy. This is a profession for which you may have left behind to become a Martial Artist.

- Wealth* Destitute, though some beggars are actually Poor and only pretend to be worse off.
- Skills* Bargain, Fast Talk, Hide, Insight, Knowledge (Region: Local Area), Listen, Persuade, Sleight of Hand, Stealth.
- Contacts* Other beggars, criminals, prefects, urban spirits.

CAPTAIN

Travel by water is a very common mode of transport in the Dragon Empire. You are a captain of a water-going vessel, and you make your living by ferrying goods and passengers through the various water ways of the Yellow River. You may instead be a Naval Officer or privateer, paid to hunt down pirates. You may even be something of a pirate yourself.

- Wealth* Affluent. It is assumed that you own, or at least have consistent access to, a ship of some sort that is considered "yours."
- Skills* Listen, Navigate, Pilot (Row Boat), Pilot (Sailing Vessel), Spot, and any five from this list: Bargain, Climb, Command, Craft (any), Etiquette, Knowledge (Water-Ways),

Repair (Ships), Language (Other), Persuade.

- Contacts* Retired captains, port authorities, innkeepers, teahouse staff, waterway spirits.

CLERK

Given the size of the bureaucracy needed to oversee and maintain the Dragon Empire, there is always a need for clerks. Your character was, at some point, an official within the system, someone for whom law and rules were of paramount importance. Do you still hold an official position? If so, how do your duties allow for the time away from your office needed to seek adventure out in the wider world?

- Wealth* Average to Affluent, depending on the nature of your position and your level of corruption.
- Skills* Bargain, Etiquette, Knowledge (Accounting), Knowledge (Law), one other Knowledge, Language (Other), Persuade, Research, Status, and one other skill as a personal speciality
- Contacts* Other clerks in various positions, political officials, certain spirits, jealous nobles.
- Allegiance* Clerks begin the game with 3 points of Allegiance to the Celestial Bureaucracy.

COURTIER

In any political system, there are those who use the system for their own ends. You are such a person. Even if you do not possess an official position, you make yourself well-known by those who possess power, hoping to influence them to use it on your behalf. Your personal goals are likely power and influence.

- Wealth* Affluent to Wealthy. Usually Affluent.
- Skills* Bargain, Etiquette, Fast Talk, Insight, Knowledge (Law), Persuade, Status, plus any three other skills, chosen from this list: Knowledge (Accounting, Group, History, or Region), Listen, Language (Other), or Research.
- Contacts* Hangers-on and sycophants, noble families, ambitious clerks, criminals.

CRAFTSFOLK

Many people of low birth become craftsfolk in hopes of gaining a wealthy patron in the Forbidden City. You may have come to win a patronage, or to seek final instruction to perfect your craft. Perhaps you are also a budding merchant, carrying a wagon-load of your wares in hopes of earning enough money to buy off a ransom for a beloved relative.

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Wealth Poor to Affluent, usually Average.
Skills Appraise, any one Art, Bargain, any two Craft skills, Spot, Research, Status, and two of the following: Fine Manipulation, Repair (Mechanical), Teach, one Knowledge skill related to your craft.
Contacts Merchants, wealthy noblemen, rival craftsfolk, spirits of Knowledge.

CRIMINAL

There are always people who seek to take advantage of others for their own gain. Whether or not you possess a code of honour regarding who you will fleece or not, you make a living by being willing to do things no one else has the stomach for. You might be in the employ of a more powerful boss, operating freelance, or, more rarely, seeking to flee the life of crime. Maybe you know too much, and your former employer's men are after you.

Wealth Poor to Affluent, sometimes Wealthy, usually Average.
Skills Bargain, Hide, Stealth, Ride, and any six from the following list: Appraise, Punch, Kick, Fast Talk, Fine Manipulation, Grapple, Insight, Jump, Knowledge (Law), Listen, Martial Arts (any), Melee Weapon (any, usually knives or clubs), Persuade, Ranged Weapons (any), Spot, Throw Target, Thrown Weapon.
Contacts Informants, other criminals, thieves, corrupt prefects.
Allegiance Given their willingness to benefit from suffering, Criminal characters begin the game with 3 points of Allegiance to Corruption.

DEDICATED MARTIAL ARTIST

You have completely given yourself over to the study of Martial Arts, making learning the warrior ways your primary goal in life. Few can match your skill and dedication, although your training does not leave much time for a "normal" life, whatever that is. You most likely have a tragic background, some accident or misstep that has led you to turn away from the world.

Wealth Destitute to Average, usually Poor.
Skills Dodge, Grapple, Kick, Melee Weapon (any), Missile Weapon (any), Punch, and any five skills from the following list: Climb, Hide, Listen, Jump, Language (Other), Martial Arts (may be taken multiple times), Meditation, Ride, Spot, Stealth, Swim, Throw Target, Thrown Weapons, Track, any other Weapon skill.
Contacts Martial Arts instructors, fellow students, prefects, comrades-in-arms.

ENGINEER

You are a member of the Bei Tan clan, a family of temple builders. Your family is responsible for nearly every temple constructed in the Empire for 1000 years. You have a family tree that goes so far back that the early branches include heroes, saints, and more than one person who has since become a god. Have you given up the family business, or are you out in the world to procure a lucrative contract? How does your family feel about your dedication to the Martial Arts?

Wealth Average to Wealthy, usually Affluent.
Skills Craft (any), Repair (Mechanical), Repair (Structural), Spot, Status, and five of the following: Art (usually Drafting), Command, Fine Manipulation, Language (Other), Knowledge (any), Pilot (Rowboat or Ship), Persuade, Ride, Technical (Construction).
Contacts Other family members, priests, small gods and guardian spirits.

ENTERTAINER

You have come to the Forbidden City hoping to make a fortune as an Entertainer. Your village leader has told you about the money to be made in the City, and you know you are talented enough to make it in the big City.

Wealth Destitute to Wealthy, usually Average.
Skills Art (any), Disguise, Fast Talk, Fine Manipulation, Insight, Language (Other), Language (Own), Listen, Perform (Any), and Persuade.
Contacts Friends and family from back home, talent agents, teahouse owners, jaded nobles.
Powers Depending on the nature of your skills, you may possess some minor Chi Manipulation. Ask your Game Master for advice when selecting it.

EXORCIST

You are the first line of defence when a spirit gets out of hand. Part priest, part exterminator, you deal with hungry ghosts, angry ancestors, and corrupted gods with equal ease. Your job may not be glamorous, but it is a religious duty that must be performed. In some ways, it is a thankless job.

Wealth Destitute to Affluent, usually Average.
Skills Command, Dodge, Fast Talk, Language (Other), Perform (Rituals), Art (Calligraphy), Knowledge (Spirits), Martial Arts (any), Listen, any one Weapon skill.
Contacts Local spirits, priests, former patrons, builders, servants of the Yama Kings.

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EXPLORER

There are places that are technically within the Empire that no human being has ever set eyes on, at least not in modern times. Your job is to find these places, see what is there, and report back to ministers for the Emperor. You are paid handsomely for your discoveries, and your personal fame grows each time a new one is made. You also pad your income by leading travellers to places you have been. Babysitting tourists is not fun, but it is much less dangerous than scaling impossibly high mountains or discovering the secret entrance to the Lost Valley of Ching Sang.

Wealth Affluent or Wealthy.
Skills Climb, Language (Other), Language (Own), Persuade, Spot, and four of the following: Knowledge (Anthropology, Chi, Group, History, Natural World, or Region), Fast Talk, Navigate, Pilot (Rowboat or Ship), Ride, Swim, Track, any Weapon skill.
Contacts The minister to whom you report, trustworthy guides, various experts in many fields, former team-mates.

GAMBLER

You have discovered that, rather than working to make money, it is much easier to take it from people. You are not necessarily a cheat or swindler, but you do know the games well enough that you are a terror on the table. Of course, a too-long winning streak does not endear you to those with which you play, so there might be people after you, regardless of your level of honesty. The gambling dens of the Forbidden City are something out of legend. Maybe you can finally earn enough here to retire and live out your days in peace.

Wealth Poor to Affluent, usually Average.
Skills Bargain, Dodge, Fast Talk, Gaming, Insight, Knowledge (Accounting), Sleight of Hand, Persuade, Spot, and either Punch or Kick.
Contacts Gambling Den proprietors, jaded nobles, people who owe you money, people to whom you owe money.

GEOMANCERS

You are a metaphysical technician. Because of your skill and expertise, you are able to manipulate flows of Chi with nothing more than a few handy objects and your keen senses. Skilled geomancers are in very high demand, and work with temple builders, garden designers, and spirits to maximize the flow of Chi in and around buildings and places.

Wealth Average or Affluent.
Skills Craft (any), Fine Manipulation,

Geomancy, Knowledge (Chi, Occult, or Spirits), Meditation, Repair (any), Research, Ride, Sense, Spot.

Contacts Grateful former clients, contented spirits, anxious builders, government officials.

Martial Arts Geomancers often practice the Sagacious Scholar Style, since it deals so heavily with the flow of Chi through the Dragon Lines.

HEALER

Either due to inborn talent, personal drive or just plain circumstances, you have a knack for aiding the sick and helping the injured. Using a combination of medical knowledge, alchemy and Chi power, you have become a central figure in your society. Now you are away from home, seeing how the sick and injured are often ignored and left to die. Why did you ever leave home, and what are you looking for in the wider world?

Wealth Average to Affluent.
Skills First Aid, Insight, Knowledge (Alchemy), Language (Other), Language (Own), Medicine, Meditation, Research, Spot, Status.

Contacts Worried parents, nobles seeking cures or new drugs, crime bosses seeking cures or drugs, other healers.

Allegiance Your history of acting selflessly for the benefit of others grants you 3 Allegiance points to either the Path of Enlightenment or The Way.

INQUISITOR

You may work for a local Prefecture, or privately as a set of eyes and ears. In any case, your ability to ferret out the truth, to ask probing questions, and see justice served makes you a valued asset for those who employ you. You have been all over the Empire, and into many lands beyond, seeking what was lost or stolen. Why are you here, now?

Wealth Average or Affluent.
Skills Knowledge (Law), Martial Arts, Listen, Persuade, Spot, Research, one Weapon skill, and 3 from the following list: Art, Disguise, Dodge, Fast Talk, Grapple, Hide, Insight, Kick, Knowledge (Any), Language (Other), Language (Own), Medicine, Punch, Ride, Stealth, or Track.

Contacts Former Colleagues, informants, wealthy benefactors, criminals.

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LEGALIST

You have spent long years studying the Celestial Bureaucracy, and have developed a great understanding of the system by which the world and the cosmos operate. You may not have any real power, but your ability to know what papers to file, and who to give them to, means that, given time, there is not much you cannot accomplish.

Wealth Any, often Affluent.
Skills Bargain, Fast Talk, Insight, Knowledge (Law), one other Knowledge Skill (usually Celestial Bureaucracy), Language (Own), Perform (Oratory), Persuade, Research, and Status.
Contacts Jaded nobles, angry spirits or humans seeking your assistance, clerks in the Bureaucracy, fellow Legalists.

LOCAL HERO

Ever since you can remember, it was up to you to protect you friends. You were stronger, faster, and hardier, and everyone came to you with their problems. As an adult, this has continued, until you had become something of a local champion for your village. Now, though, you are away from home, possibly for the first time. What wonders have you experienced? Is the Forbidden City everything the stories said it would be?

Wealth Poor to Affluent, usually Average.
Skills Bargain, Craft (any), Knowledge (Natural History), Listen, Spot, and five from the following list: First Aid, Kick, Knowledge (Chi, History, Region, or Spirits), Martial Arts, Punch, Repair (Mechanical), Ride, Science (Biology or Botany).
Contacts Former villagers, travelling merchants, criminal underworld figures, those who you have helped in the past.
Allegiance Due to a history of selfless acts, you may begin play with 3 Allegiance points to The Celestial Bureaucracy, The Path to Enlightenment, or The Way.

MASTER

Every Martial Artist dreams of settling down and opening their own school. You are such a person. You feel called to teach young people the secrets of the Arts and how walking the Martial path can lend them strength, character, and discipline. You have an opportunity to open a school in the Forbidden City, but you never considered there would be so much competition for both students and noble patronage. What will you do to keep your school open?

Wealth Average or Affluent, usually Average.
Skills Language (Own), Martial Arts, Persuade, Research, Status, Teach, and choose four

from the following list: Art (any), Craft (any), First Aid, Grapple, Insight, Kick, Knowledge (Any), Language (Other), Listen, Medicine, Repair (any), Perform, Persuade, Punch.

Contacts Your students, their parents, fellow masters, an agent from the local prefecture.

MERCHANT

You make a living ferrying goods from one place to another, selling at the destination and hopefully turning a tidy profit. You probably are a part of, or own, a wealthy cartel, doing what you can to protect your business interests in the face of bandits, greedy customs officials, and rival merchants. With your martial talents, you may also be cartel's enforcer, sent to make sure business deals go in an acceptable fashion.

Wealth Average to Wealthy, Usually Affluent. The Game Master and the player should determine whether the character owns their own shop or trade vessel.
Skills Appraise, Bargain, Fast Talk, Knowledge (Accounting), Knowledge (Business), Persuade, Research, Status, and any two other skills as specialities
Contacts Other merchants, vendors, suppliers, customs officials.

MONK

You have spent years in a monastery, studying some esoteric subjects and training your body to perform feats of strength, dexterity and endurance. Now, you are out in the wider world, perhaps spreading your unique world-view, or seeking a place in it now that your monastery is gone. As time passes, you come to realize exactly how much you do not know about the world and the people who live in it. You see the most shameful behaviour, but also acts of true kindness. Why have you left the safety and security you once know for the dubious freedoms of the outside world?

Wealth Destitute or Poor, usually Destitute. If you have taken a vow of poverty, you feel an urge to give away any moneys earned during play.
Skills Craft(any), Dodge, First Aid, Kick, Knowledge (any), Martial Arts, Punch, Teach, any one Weapons skill, and one other skill as a personal speciality
Contacts Traveling traders, other monks, nearby villagers.

DRAGON LINES

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MONSTER HUNTER

Any woodsman worthy of the title can track and kill natural animals. It takes a special sort of person to actively pursue animals infused with Chi, and you are just that sort of person. You find no hunt as thrilling as when the prey is as smart, if not smarter, than you, and able to manipulate Chi like a Master. You may hunt for glory, or to protect the innocent from dangers they cannot see or even comprehend. You probably have stories to tell, like the one that got away, or one of the times you almost died.

- Wealth* Poor or Average, unless you have become famous for taking down something big. In this case, you are Wealthy.
- Skills* Climb, Hide, Listen, Navigate, Spot, Stealth, Track, and Three of the following as personal specialities: Knowledge (Chi, Natural History, Spirits, or Region), Melee Weapon (any), Missile Weapon (any), Language (Other), Ride.
- Contacts* Other hunters, woodsmen, village elders and shamans, scholars and sages of the natural and supernatural world.
- Allegiance* Your willingness to deal in death grants you 3 points of Allegiance to the Yama Kings.



Your knack for endurance is legendary; when you are not at work, you can usually be found at a local house of spirits, taking wagers to see who can drink the most jui wine without passing out.

- Wealth* Poor or Average.
- Skills* Climb, Craft (any), Grapple, Kick, Punch, Ride, and 3 others from the following list: Appraise, Fine Manipulation, Language (Other), Repair (Mechanical), Repair (Structural), Literacy.
- Contacts* Other Ox-Men, engineers, grateful farmers.

NOBLE

In many ways, your birth and early life have been something almost miraculous. You have never wanted for anything, and your family's station meant being invited to the right parties, and knowing the right people. Wealth and Status have their privileges, but few commoners recognize the more onerous aspects of a title, responsibilities you neither want nor care for. Are you a member of the Royal Families? If so, how do you feel about the treasonous rumblings regarding the White Lotus's fitness to rule?

- Wealth* Affluent to Wealthy. Usually Wealthy.
- Skills* Bargain, Etiquette, Language (Own), Language (Other), Literacy, Status, and any other three skills as hobbies or personal interests.
- Contacts* A veritable sea of people related to your hobby skills seek your patronage, other nobles with status and influence, merchants who deal in the finest wares, couriers, concubines, and sycophants.

OX-MAN

While not afforded a great deal of attention or status, you are very important to just about any endeavour that calls for physical prowess and strength. When a new temple is being built, it is you who hauls beams on the site. When a field needs ploughing, you can pull the plough as well as an ox.

PHILOSOPHER

Your dogged adherence to your world-view is seen as either dedication and discipline or stubbornness, depending on who is doing the talking. You know your philosophy backwards and forwards, and derive great comfort from knowing more than most about the workings of the Heavens. Some come to you for advice, and you do your best to assist them, perhaps subtly suggesting they adopt your philosophy as their own to avoid problems in the future.

- Wealth* Any, usually Average. With your Game Master's permission, you could have a sizeable body of followers, in which case you are Wealthy.
- Skills* Fast Talk, Insight, Knowledge (History), Knowledge (Philosophy), Knowledge (Religion), Language (Own), Perform (Rituals), Persuade, and two from the following list: Knowledge (Chi, History, Occult, Spirits), Language (Other), Perform (Oratory), Research, Status, or Teach.
- Contacts* Followers, spirits, agents of your Philosophy, political leaders.
- Allegiance* Due to an alignment of purpose and services rendered, you may begin the game with 3 points of Allegiance to any of the five philosophies.
- Powers* Regardless of what Martial Arts you practice, your understanding of the world gives you access to Chi Augmentations.

CHARACTERS

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PREFECT

No matter how enlightened a time you live in, there is always a need for someone to catch and hold those who break the law. As a prefect, you work for the Forbidden City, helping to ensure that its citizens are safe, and that criminals do not go unpunished. Of course, frequent contact with the corrupt often leads to corruption itself. Have you managed to avoid being corrupted? If so, how?

- Wealth* Usually Average. Corrupt Prefects are sometimes Affluent.
- Skills* Dodge, Fast Talk, Kick, Knowledge (Law), Listen, Punch, Spot, and 3 other skills as personal specialities: First Aid, Grapple, Insight, Knowledge (Region, Group or Spirits), Language (Other), Martial Arts, Melee Weapon (any), Missile Weapon (any), Pilot (Rowboat or Ship), Ride, Status, or Track.
- Contacts* Other Prefects, informants, former criminals, spirits of knowledge.

PUPIL

The Forbidden City is home to some of the world's foremost masters, either Martial Artists, metal workers, or other craftsfolk. You are one of the very fortunate few who are able to learn from one of the greatest people in your field. You may be a long way from home, and the City might be more than you can imagine. How did you get your position, and what would you do to keep it?

- Wealth* Any, usually Average.
- Skills* Language (Own), Research, and eight other skills to reflect your course of study: Art (any), Craft (any), First Aid, Grapple, Insight, Kick, Knowledge (any), Language (Other), Listen, Martial Arts, Medicine, Meditation, Repair (any), Perform, Persuade, one Physical Skill if involved in Athletics.
- Contacts* Other pupils with various interests, your Master, his or her associates, folks from your home village or city.

SAGE

You have made it your life's work to understand all the myriad ways in which Chi impacts the living. You have made some startling discoveries in your short time as a serious sage, and people flock to you for answers. While you are far from having complete metaphysical knowledge, what you do know is rather impressive and useful. Still, there are those who feel that certain things are not for human knowledge. Perhaps you have learned something you really should not have.

- Wealth* Any, usually Affluent.

- Skills* Fast Talk, Insight, Knowledge (Chi, History, and Occult), Language (Other), Language (Own), Research, and any two other skills from the following list: Art (any), Craft (Any), Medicine, Meditation, Status.
- Contacts* Spirits of various sorts, other sages, alchemists, jaded nobles.
- Powers* Regardless of what Martial Art you practice, you have access to Chi Powers of both types to reflect the benefit of occult knowledge.

SAILOR

You make a living helping to make sure a ship arrives at its destination port. You might keep up with the rigging, keep the galley clean, or cook for the rest of the crew. You likely have dreams of saving enough money to captain your own ship, but it is hard to keep any money you make when you put into port, where the lure of distilled spirits, games of fortune and lusty women draw your earnings out like a tree does water.

- Wealth* Poor or Average, usually Average.
- Skills* Climb, Craft (Any), Dodge, Grapple, Navigate, Pilot (Rowboat or Ship), Swim, and any three of the following: Command, Language (Other), Listen, Repair (Mechanical), Repair (Structural), or Spot.
- Contacts* Former shipmates, port authorities, prostitutes, merchants of dubious goods.

SCHOLAR

There is so much knowledge in the world that no one can every learn everything. This does not stop you from trying. You may be an expert in a specialized field of study, or you might focus on teaching others how to do research so that the knowledge of those that came before is not lost to time. You know your chosen field is not for everyone, although you are often shocked at the appalling ignorance others display.

- Wealth* Average to Affluent, usually Average.
- Skills* Language (Other), Language (Own), Persuade, Research, Teach, and five Knowledge or Technical skills.
- Contacts* Other scholars, mentors, field guides, noble patrons, spirits of knowledge.

DRAGON LINES

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SCRIBE

Given the vast amount of paperwork needed to keep the Empire running, it is only natural that the Bureaucracy maintains scribes to copy documents. Your position may not have been glamorous, but it certainly afforded you a good education on how the Empire works, as well as how it is an extension of the Will of Heaven. If you have given up your position as scribe for Martial Arts training, how does your family feel about it?

- Wealth* Poor to Wealthy, usually Average.
Skills Art (Calligraphy), Fast Talk, Insight, Knowledge (any), Language (Other), Language (Own), Listen, Persuade, Research, Status.
Contacts Other members of the Bureaucracy, people with whom you used to do business, friends and family, neighbours
Allegiance: Due to actions performed in the past, you may begin play with 3 points of Allegiance to the Celestial Bureaucracy.

SERVANT

You were fortunate enough to rise from a low birth to attain a position as a servant for a wealthy person. The work was hard, and your employer may have been demeaning, but you were much better off than other people from your home. Though Fate has moved you onto bigger and better things, the fact that you once served tea on a platter worth more than your own skin has left an indelible mark on your conscious.

- Wealth* Poor to Average, though sometimes servants have limited access to their employer's lifestyle of Affluent or Wealthy, at the Game Master's discretion.
Skill Craft (any), Etiquette, Hide, Language (Own), Listen, Stealth, and choose four from the following list: Bargain, First Aid, Insight, Knowledge (Accounting), Language (Other), Persuade, Ride.
Contacts Other former servants, your old employer (if you left on good terms), household spirits, people met through your employer.
Powers In some instances, servants of sorcerers may have been trained by their masters to better perform certain actions. At the Game Master's discretion, you may begin with access to a single Chi power, regardless of what Martial Art you have selected.

SHAMAN

You practice something of a lost art. In times past, people like you would work as a go-between for mortals and creatures of the spirit. In today's world, spirits and mortals live and operate together on a daily basis. However, despite this advancement, there are still instances where someone with your specific talents is needed. Your tradition is usually taught in more rural areas of the Empire, although it is possible that some quirk of Fate has led you to be trained as a shaman, even if you are from a more Affluent, urban background. It is also likely that your shamanism teacher is also your Martial Arts instructor.

- Wealth* Poor or Average.
Skills Art (any), Insight, Knowledge (Spirits), Knowledge (Occult), Language (Own), Listen, Perform (Rituals), Persuade, and two of the following: Craft (any), Fast Talk, First Aid, Hide, Knowledge (any), Medicine, Language (Other), Status.
Contacts A multitude of spirits, your mentor and his or her teachers, local villagers.
Powers Those trained in shamanism often possess Chi Manipulations, especially those that deal with the summoning of spirits. You have access to them, regardless of what Martial Art you practice.

SLAVE

At some point in your past, you were taken from home and enslaved, made to perform menial and demeaning tasks for no pay and only just enough food to keep you alive. Your captors may have been humans, or you may have been whisked away to serve in some otherworldly spirit court. You have either escaped, which means you may have irate owners after you, or, more rarely, worked enough to buy your freedom. In any case, you are free again for the first time in years, and you may be a little unsure how to use that freedom. No one comes out of slavery unscathed, and you may actually miss the structure, no matter how this makes you feel.

- Wealth* Destitute to Poor, although you may have taken some of your master's wealth with you when you fled. Depending on how much you stole, you may be Affluent or even Wealthy, at the Game Master's discretion.
Skills Craft (any), Dodge, Etiquette, Fast Talk, Hide, Insight, Language (Other), Listen, Stealth, and one other skill at which you excelled during your captivity.
Contacts Members of the Shen Feng Society (see page 78), other former slaves, your former master (if you left on good terms), spirits of combat or vengeance.

CHARACTERS

SOLDIER



Though the days of the Dragon Empire's Glorious Expansion are past, there is always a need for soldiers willing to do as they are told for the sake of the Empire. You were once such a person, before your training. You have probably been to far corners of the Empire, and seen things that most people at home only dream about. You are no stranger to mass battle, and, even though you fight one-on-one now, memories of deeds done in the past may still haunt you. Now that you are out of the army, do you keep up with your old unit?

Wealth Poor to Average, although you may have kept some special items from your days in the army. Ask your Game Master if such an item is possible.

Skills Climb, Dodge, First Aid, Kick, Punch, and 5 of the following: Artillery, Command, Grapple, Hide, Language (Other), Listen, Jump, Martial Arts, Medicine, Melee Weapons (any), Missile Weapons (any), Navigate, Repair (Mechanical), Ride, Spot, Stealth or Throw Target, Thrown Weapon.

Contacts Army buddies, instructors, lovers from your various posts, children you did not know you had.

SORCERER

From a very early age, you have a great instinctive knowledge about the Dragon Lines, and you could manipulate them by will alone before most children could walk upright. Your ability to work wonders may have been seen as a gift from Heaven, or a dire portent of doom, depending on your place of birth and upbringing. Unlike the Sage, whose occult knowledge is learned, yours is natural, and based on instinct and intuition.

Wealth Any, usually Affluent.

Skills Craft (any), Insight, Knowledge (Occult), two other Knowledge skills, Language (Other), Listen, Perform (Rituals), Persuade, Research.

Contacts Spirits of various sorts, people seeking

magical aid, idealistic nobles, would-be apprentices seeking a mentor.

Powers You have access to Chi powers of both types, regardless of what Martial Art you practice.

SPY

Given the relative abundance of Chi, magical means of espionage are well known and used all over the Empire. Even so, mundane methods of obtaining and protecting secret knowledge are in high demand, most especially because few people think to use them if they have access to magic. You have trained for years in the methods of the spy; there is almost no place you cannot go, no information you cannot find. You almost certainly work for one of several intelligence communities in the Empire, although freelance spies are not unheard of.

Wealth Average or Affluent. If employed, you are most likely Affluent, as moneyed individuals are less susceptible to bribery.

Skills Dodge, Fast Talk, Hide, Listen, Research, Spot, Stealth, and three of the following: Art (Drawing), Disguise, Etiquette, Grapple, Kick, Knowledge (Any), Language (Other), Language (Own), Martial Arts, Navigate, Pilot (Rowboat or Ship), Repair (Mechanical), Ride, Swim, Throw Target, Thrown Weapon, or Track.

Contacts Agency comrades, informants, moles, skill trainers.

THIEF

You are adept at taking things that people would rather you not have. You might be a subtle cut-purse lifting coin from the idle wealthy, or a skilled cat-burglar who wishes stolen artefacts returned to their rightful owners - for a finder's fee, of course. It can be a glamorous life, although you have made a fair share of enemies. Those with the resources to collect things worth stealing often have out-sized egos to match. You may also have run afoul of the various criminal leagues in the Empire, such as the Seven Stalking Shadows, or the Tian Hui.

Wealth Any, subject to the Game Master's approval. Affluent and Wealthy thieves are themselves often targets for other thieves.

Skills Appraise, Dodge, Fast Talk, Hide, Stealth, and five of the following: Bargain, Climb, Disguise, Fine Manipulation, Grapple, Insight, Kick, Knowledge (Law), Listen, Persuade, Repair (Mechanical), Spot.

Contacts Fences, other thieves, "private" collectors, shady merchants.

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TRIBAL FOLK

You hail from one of the few remaining tribal cultures in the Empire. Very often, your tribe exists at the very edge of the Empire's territory, or in places so remote that actual citizenship is mostly academic. You may even be the last of your tribe, wandering through the world looking for a place to call home. The civilized world may be strange and unsettling to you, filled with bizarre customs and what, to you, seems impolite or downright dangerous behaviour. You may possess no respect for the laws of Empire, which seem to only protect the corrupt. Some may think you a simple country rube, but those who underestimate you may not live to regret it.

<i>Wealth</i>	Destitute to Poor.
<i>Skills</i>	Craft (any), Dodge, Grapple, Hide, Knowledge (Natural History), Spot, Throw Target, Thrown Weapons, Track, and two of the following: Climb, First Aid, Hide, Kick, Listen, Jump, Knowledge (Occult or Spirits), Martial Arts, Meditation, Melee Weapon (usually Spear or Club), Missile Weapon (bow), Language (Other), Ride, Stealth, or Swim.
<i>Contacts</i>	Fellow tribal folk, spirits of your home or ancestors, criminal underworld figures, travelling merchants.

WOODSMAN

You make a living tending to, and protecting people from, the wild places in the Empire. You might guide merchant caravans into new markets, or hunt monsters in ancient bamboo forests. You are likely either a rootless wanderer, or the type of person who selects a single place and lives there most of his or her life. What would compel you to travel the Empire and see the sights?

<i>Wealth</i>	Poor to Average, occasionally Affluent.
<i>Skill</i>	Craft (usually Knots), Knowledge (Natural History), Knowledge (Regional), Listen, Navigate, Ride, Spot, Throw Target, Thrown Weapons, Track, any one Weapon skill.
<i>Contacts</i>	Local natives, fellow woodsmen, grateful merchants, others who need a guide through dangerous wild places.

FALSE IDENTITIES

If you are a member of one of the following professions, you may have one or more false identities to protect yourself from reprisal, or to allow you access to certain contacts. If you possess false identities, work with your Game Master to determine what these identities are, and who might know you as this other person instead of

yourself.

The professions most likely to use false identities are:

Assassin
Criminal
Gambler
Inquisitor
Noble
Prefect
Spy
Thief

Each false identity is based another profession from this list. You do not gain any access to power or special skills from that identity, though you may use it for contacts. You have support materials that make your false identity seem legitimate to a cursory inspection, though only professionals will have identities that will stand up to scrutiny.

NEW SKILLS

The skills below are either new ones for use specifically with the Dragon lines setting, or skills from the BRP rulebook that have been changed enough for the setting that they need some explanation on how they work.

ACROBATICS (DEX)

This skill measures your character's ability to fold, bend, or pose their body in ways that take elaborate training to perform. Commonly held by circus performers and strange Martial Artists, acrobatics can be used in place of other skills or characteristic rolls that involve the ability to be flexible or nimble.

Effects: Following are the results for the different degrees of success:

Fumble: Your character not only does not perform the acrobatic manoeuvre at all, your improper performance results in some minor injury. Consult the Major Wounds table. The injury sustained is never permanent, but will take some time (or a trip to a healer or alchemist) to fix.

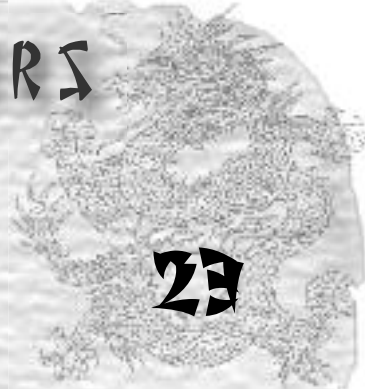
Failure: Your character does not perform the manoeuvre very well. Maybe you can not keep your balance, or you sprain something.

Success: Your character performs the desired acrobatic manoeuvre

Special: Your character not only performs the manoeuvre correctly, but he or she also does it particularly well. Onlookers are impressed by your skills. If used as a complimentary skill, the bonus is temporarily doubled.

Critical: Your ability to balance, bend, and walk on your hands is so impressive that, for the rest of the session, you can perform small feats of acrobatics without making a skill roll. This may provide a small (+5%) bonus to other skill tests, even if they are not strictly related to acrobatics.

CHARACTERS



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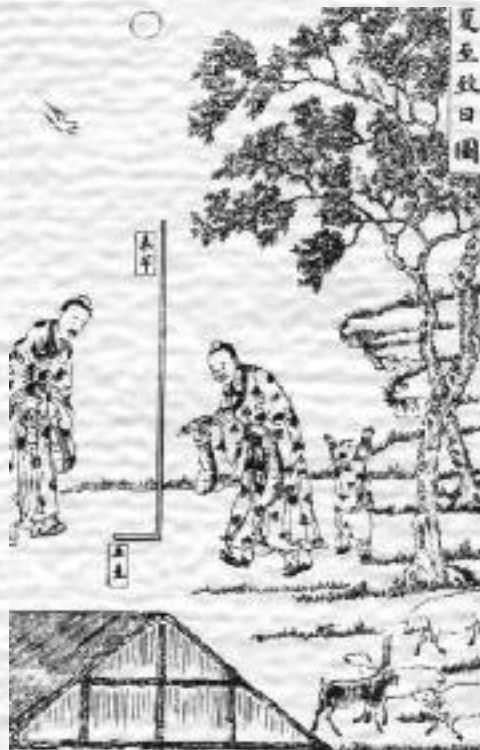
System Notes: Acrobatics may be used as a complimentary skill for nearly any physical skill, especially Climb, Dodge, and Jump. If a character possesses both Acrobatics and Jump, making showy or flashy jumps does not make the Jump roll Difficult.

and remains at its current strength.

Special: Your attempt at manipulating the Dragon Line is a stellar success. If you are attempting to adjust the strength of the line, it does so by 2 levels. If you are seeking to change the Line, it does so, as well as gains a level of strength with the new flavour

Critical: Not only have you vastly improved the line by 3 levels, your manipulation endows a feature of the area with a primitive spirit, which is mostly self-aware, and may bestow a boon upon you for creating it. If you have sought to change a Line's nature, you have done so with such complete success that the area will immediately begin changing to reflect its new nature.

GEOMANCY (INT)



This skill represents your character's knowledge and ability to sense, work with, and manipulate Chi in relatively slow, harmless ways. You may use it to get an intuitive sense of where a flow of Chi is, and what you might do to improve, impede, or completely obstruct its flow.

Effects: Following are the effects that result from the different degrees of success.

Fumble: Your character's attempts at manipulating Chi have drastically backfired. The Dragon Line you are working on drops by one level, and can become instantly stagnant if it drops to that level. Also, repairing the damage takes three successes per level instead of the usual one.

Failure: Your attempt at manipulating the Dragon Line fails, but just barely. The line's condition does not change, and you may make another attempt to change it.

Success: Your attempt at manipulating the Dragon Line is a success. If you are attempting to change the strength of the Line, it changes by one level. If you are trying to change the line, it does so

HEAD BUTT (25%)

This attack skill involves slamming the forehead into a foe, hopefully landing the blow on a sensitive portion of their anatomy, such as the nose, eyes, or mouth. Many Martial Arts styles teach it, although most see it as an uncouth attack fit only for animals.

If grappled, someone with the Head But skill may attempt to use it instead of trying to escape the grapple.

Head Butts do Crushing damage on a Special success, and may be used in conjunction with certain Martial Arts styles and Chi Powers.

If using the optional Hit Locations rules, assume that a head butt can only hit the head, chest or arm locations on a humanoid target. If another location is hit, move the result to nearest appropriate location.

IMPROVISED WEAPONS (10%)

This attack skill allows the user to make use of everyday items as effective weapons. Any item can be used as a weapon, so long as the following rules are kept in mind:

1. Most Improvised Weapons are of Medium length, although both Close- and Long-length improvised weapons do exist.

2. Improvised Weapons do damage according to their size and weight. Small items do 1D3, medium ones do 1D6, and large ones do 2D6.

3. Generally, Improvised Weapons are not made for combat. Each typically lasts 1D4 combat rounds before falling apart.

4. The type of damage done with a Special Success on the attack roll varies by weapon. Game Masters are encouraged to read up on these rules when you have a player take this skill.

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KICK (25%)

In Dragon Lines, the Brawl skill from BRP has been divided into two attack skills: Kick and Punch. Aside from being used with the feet and knees, Kick is in most ways identical to Brawl.

KNOWLEDGE (INT)

There are a number of new Knowledge skills in Dragon Lines. Unless otherwise noted, these skills work just like the general Knowledge skill from the BRP rulebook.

ALCHEMY

This skill allows you to identify and create potions and other substances that make use of the Chi contained in plants, animals and minerals. You need access to a lab in order to perform it. When used to identify an alchemical potion, it works like any other Knowledge skill. However, when used to create a potion, use the following effects list for the degrees of success. It may be a good idea for the Game Master to roll the dice to determine your effect. Alchemy ingredients are rare and hard to find; as such, an alchemist must spend a great deal of time looking for the stuff to make a single potion, unless he or she has access to a decent herbalist or ingredients merchant. Characters may make 1D3 potions between session, or up to 1D6 if there is a lot of downtime during the game.

Fumble: Something goes terribly wrong during the preparation, and the resulting explosion does something awful to you and anyone in the room with you. You each take 2D6 damage, and must also roll on the Major Wounds table, even if the damage was not enough to do so. You must also pass a Luck roll or earn a randomly determined Mutation from the BRP rulebook, and must re-roll the first mutation if it is not adverse.

Failure: Rather than the desired effect, the potion either induces a randomly determined Mutation from the BRP rulebook, or is appears good, but is instead a deadly poison (POT 15). The alchemist is aware of the nature of this potion, and is free to try again or to keep this for use.

Success: The potion operates as a single-use Chi Augmentation of the Alchemist's choice for his POW in combat rounds.

Special: The Potion is doubly potent, working as a single-use Chi Augmentation that works for twice the alchemist's POW in combat rounds, and doubles his effective characteristic for any power that uses one.

Critical: Not only does the potion work as described, it may also work for 1D3 applications, or also possess a secondary beneficial Augmentation of the alchemist's choice.

CELESTIAL BUREAUCRACY

This skill allows the character to know vital information about the Celestial Bureaucracy; who to bribe, how much, where to file their paperwork, and

other related useful bits of information. This skill covers those who make and enforce the law; for the Law itself, consider taking the Knowledge (Law) skill.

CHI

This skill represent the ability to recall information about Chi and how it behaves. If used in conjunction with the Geomancy skill, Knowledge (Chi) can be used as a complimentary skill. Generally, Knowledge (Chi) is more academic than practical.

SPIRITS

A must-have skill for sorcerers of all sorts, Knowledge (Spirits) covers all manner of spirit types, their habits and habitats, as well as general information about how they use Chi. It is a more specialized version of Knowledge (Occult), but lacks the other skill's information about non-spirit related matters.

GUNPOWDER

Alchemist's have known how to make gunpowder for centuries at this point, but the recipe for doing so is a closely guarded secret, the sort that only master alchemists possess. Many alchemists would rather take the secret to their grave than pass it on to unworthy pupils.

Characters who possess the Knowledge (Alchemy) skill can, if they have a skill of at least 60%, figure out a method for creating explosives. To use them, assume that the potion created with the Knowledge (Alchemy) roll will create a single-use version of the Flame spell with a single Chi point behind it. More sophisticated uses of gunpowder might also replicate other powers, at the Game Master's discretion.

LANGUAGES

The various Language skills work exactly like they do in the BRP rulebook, with a few changes.

Chin: The spoken and written language of the Dragon Empire, Chin will be the native tongue for all characters, human or otherwise, who are from the Empire. Its alphabet is ideographic, with each character representing a word or concept, rather than a letter. There are countless dialects of Chin, so speaking with someone who knows a different dialect means making a Language roll to understand each other. This is normally not the case when dealing with character who possess the same language.

Ancient Chin: A dead language, no longer spoken by any but scholars and the most ancient of gods and spirits. Many old manuscripts are written in this language, so scholars and sages should consider

learning to speak it. Some official documents are still written in this tongue, although this is falling out of favour will all but the conservatives.

Gao-Li: The language of the Gao-Li people, whose country to the Northeast has long since been subsumed into the Empire. Gao-Li is largely only spoken by immigrants from Gao-Li and the Diplomatic Corps from that country, although there is a sizeable body of literature making its way through the larger cities of the Empire.

Nipponese: Similar to Gao-Li, Nipponese is the language of Nippon, the former island nation to the northeast that is now a protectorate of the Empire. It is spoken by immigrants and diplomats from Nippon, and also by a variety of spirits that have moved to the mainland of the Empire to take advantage of the abundant Dragon Lines.

a secondary Meditation roll. Success means they have managed to stay in their meditative state, and failure means they are snapped back into waking consciousness. Skilled users of the Meditation skill are renowned for their ability to ignore outside stimuli. They may make Meditation tests to continue using Powers if disrupted by taking damage.

At the Game Master's option, some skills or powers might require a successful Meditation roll in order to activate.

The Meditation skill increases through experience as normal, and is trainable. There are a number of highly regarded Meditation instructors in the Forbidden City. Some will take payment in money for their training, while others insist on an exchange of services instead.

MEDITATION (01%)

Meditation is a process by which the user attempts to empty the mind of all internal distractions, bringing focus and clear insight to the mind. This takes roughly an hour to perform. This has a number of benefits. Characters that possess the Meditation skill may roll against it to gain one of the following effects:

1. Gain back a point of spent Chi. If meditating in an area with a potent Chi flow, this is doubled to 2 points. A Special or better Meditation roll doubles this further, to 2 and 4 points, respectively.

2. Gain insight into a problem. If the Meditation roll is a success, the practitioner may ask the Game Master for a clue regarding their current circumstance. If a Special result or better is rolled, it improves the clarity of this clue. Costs one Chi to activate.

3. Calm the mind, which allows the user to bring all of their mental facilities to bear. The next mental skill test made after a successful Meditation roll gains a +10% bonus. A Special Meditation roll grants a +20% bonus, while a Critical Meditation roll grants a +30%. In all cases, you do not gain an experience check when using skills augmented in this way. Costs one Chi to activate.

Meditation comes in many forms. For some, it is a still, quiet process where the practitioner sits in contemplation, while for others it is an active process, where the body runs through forms or katas and lets the mind wander. In any case, all uses of the Meditation skill take time, at least five minutes, to take effect. Attempting to rush the process makes the skill test Difficult.

A failed Meditation roll typically means that the appropriate state of consciousness has not been achieved. The person meditating knows this, and can retry after a few minutes. A fumbled Meditation roll means the person comes out of it confused and tired, having lost 1d6 Chi in the process.

It is possible to disrupt someone's Meditation. If this is attempted, the person meditating must make

PUNCH (25%)

The other half of the Brawl Skill, Punch represents your ability to strike with the hands, arms and elbows in order to do damage to an opponent. Unlike in standard BRP parrying a weapon with a punch does not do damage to the defender; a parry is more than a simple imposition of the hand to stop a blade. It can be shifting the attacker's weight just enough to make the blow fall wide, or any other means of blocking. In all other ways, the Punch skill is identical to the Brawl skill.

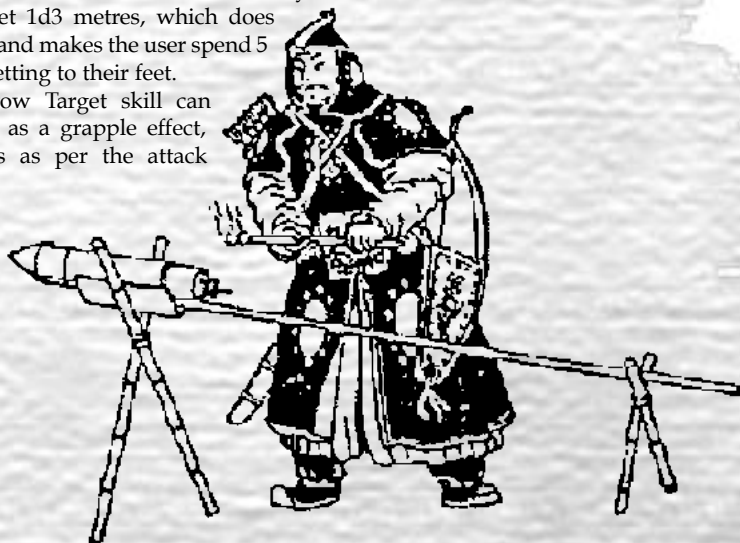
THROW TARGET (15%)

This skill represents the martial ability of throwing attackers, typically sending them a few feet away and making them prone. It is not really a damaging ability, unless a great deal of height is involved. This makes it good for pacifist fighters.

When used as a reaction to an attack, it works similarly to the Dodge skill, except that the attacker also winds up 1d3 metres away from the defender, and must make an Agility toll to land on their feet.

When used as an attack, the user may toss the target 1d3 metres, which does 1D3 damage and makes the user spend 5 DEX ranks getting to their feet.

The Throw Target skill can also be used as a grapple effect, which works as per the attack above.



3. MARTIAL ARTS



CHARACTERS MAY SELECT a single Martial Art style during step 6 of character creation. This replaces the existing step 6, which is personality. Which Martial Art style a character selects is as much an indicator of their personality as another other method.

NORMAL STYLES

Generally, normal styles are based upon real world Martial Art traditions, with some liberties taken to make them easier to use in a roleplaying context. Since they are based on real-world styles, they generally do not offer access to powers, like some of the more mystical styles found later in this chapter. Whether or not normal styles may be augmented by Chi is up to the GM and the nature of the game in which they appear.

BOXING (STR+CON)

Not a Martial Art in the sense that the term is normally used, Boxing is very much a fighting sport. Practitioners train to take blows without injury, to protect their heads and body, and deliver fist blows with speed and precision. Combatants square off in pairs, and typically wear gloves to protect their hands from injury.

- Style Attacks* Punch, Grapple (this isn't grappling as with wrestling, but the ability to bind an opponent's hands and arms to prevent an attack.)
- Style Skills* Dodge, Insight, Spot, Knowledge (Boxing), Perform
- Techniques* **One-Two Combo** (+10% to hit, Feint). **Bob and Weave** (+10% to Dodge, may Counterattack if missed). **Haymaker** (+10% to hit, +2 to damage).
- Style Powers* None normally, though the Game Master may grant access to Chi Augmentations if playing a Heroic game.

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Style Descriptions

Each style will have the following elements:

- 1. Overview.** Name of the style, a brief history, and its aims and primary focus.
- 2. Style Attacks.** Which forms of combat the style emphasizes. Each attack mentioned gets a +20% Art bonus.
- 3. Style Skills.** The skills most associated with the mindset the style emphasizes. They also gain a +20% Art bonus.
- 4. Style Powers.** Some Styles grant access to one or more Powers systems. Actually getting the powers is performed elsewhere, but when characters get to that step, they may only select Powers that they have been granted access to by either MA styles or Creature type. Characters who gain Chi Manipulations from their Martial Art gain the +20% Art bonus to those skills.
- 5. Techniques.** These special moves are common

elements of the style for which they are listed. Characters can begin play with as many techniques as they have room for, and can learn new ones from Masters during play. A character may only know one Technique for every full 10% Martial Art skill.

Not all styles are magical in nature. A great many martial arts allow normal humans to perform outrageous acts. Characters operating in a "Normal" campaign, or another BRP game using these rules, should select their style from the Normal Style list below.

Note that, when dealing with powers that have variable levels, the Martial Artist may use that power up to a level equal to the Martial Arts skill that grants that power divided by ten. For example, Sujon has a Fire Dragon Skill of 30%. This means when he uses his Fiery Blast spell, he may do so as if he knew Blast 3.

BUSHIDO (STR+DEX)

The Way of the Budo is a fighting art as well as a code of behaviour that governs the life of those who adopt it. Those who practice it are samurai, and they train in the use of the Daisho - a weapon pairing consisting of a katana and a wakazashi. A large component of Bushido is a recognition of authority; practising bushi often answer to a lord or other authority figure. Those who choose no lord, or whose lord has died, are referred to as ronin, masterless, and are distrusted in their home territories.

Style Attacks: Punch, Daisho (A bushi may use both a katana and a wakazashi with the same skill.)

Style Skills: Command, Etiquette, Ride, Dodge, Meditation

Techniques: **Iaijutsu Strike** (your character may act at your normal DEX rank when drawing a weapon from its scabbard. If you pay twice the Chi cost, you may strike at your DEX rank +5).

Incomparable Battle Awareness (when outnumbered, you may take a +10% to attacks and parries with either of the Daisho weapons. For an additional Chi per parry, you may Counterattack with any successful parry).

Severing Strike (if you do a Major Wound, you may spend a point of Chi. The affected location is automatically severed, and the target is not allowed a Luck roll to avoid the permanent effects of the Major Wound).

Style Powers: None normally. In some campaigns, the Game Master may allow Samurai access to Chi Augmentations to reflect special training.

CAPOEIRA (DEX+STR)

Capoeira is a Martial Art style from Brazil whose origin, influences, and even its name are matters of contention. It is known that the style places heavy emphasis on acrobatic manoeuvres and kicking, almost to the exclusion of anything else. When capoeira combatants face off, they often do so in a ring of spectators who sing, chant, or play instruments. The fighters perform a dance called a ginga, and time their attacks to the music.

Style Attacks: Kick, Head Butt.

Style Skills: Acrobatics, Dodge, Perform (Musical Instrument or Dance), Strategy, Spot.

Techniques: **Cartwheels & Handspins** (+10% to Dodge, Nimble Defence [Dodge]).

Au Batido (+10% to Dodge, if successful, you may Counterattack with a kick).

Malandragem (+10% to hit, Feint).

Style Powers: None when used in Normal game. In a heroic or higher game, knowledge of Capoeira may offer access to either Augmentations or Manipulations.

Martial Art Skill Base Chances

Each Martial Art has a different set of characteristics that provide the base chance that Art begins at. For Game Masters wishing for a more traditional method of determining base chance, assume that each Martial Art skill begins at 00, and gains a category bonus according to the type of skill it is. Most of the Martial Arts styles are Physical skills, and gain that bonus. However, there are four styles that are Mental skills: *Jeweled Courtesan, Sagacious Scholar, Will of Heaven, and Refreshing Zephyr.*

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KARATE (POW+DEX)

The Style most people think of when they hear "Martial Arts," karate is a fighting style from Japan that emphasizes a balanced approach to combat, as well as a disciplined mind and spirit. It is often practised with a philosophical component, with embedded ethics and strict oversight by instructors.

Style Attacks: Punch, Kick, Grapple, Throw Target.

Style Skills: Dodge, Meditation, Insight

Techniques: **Knife-Hand Strike** (+10% to hit, Knockout Blow).

Karate Chop (+10% to hit, +1 Damage, may break physical objects).

Pressure-Point Strike (+10% to hit, Paralysis).

Style Powers: None normally, though the Game Master may grant access to Chi Augmentations if playing in an Heroic game.

NINJITSU (DEX+INT)

Few styles are as contentious as the various styles termed Ninjitsu. Supposedly of ancient Japanese origin, the Art of the Ninja is a style that focuses on stealth, evasion, and attacking from ambush. Whether or not Ninjitsu as it is practised today is a legitimate descendant of an ancient style is impossible to determine.

Style Attacks: Punch, Grapple, Any two Weapons of personal Speciality.

Style Skills: Disguise, Fine Manipulation, Stealth.

Techniques: **Infiltration Technique** (+10% to Stealth, may sneak past guards unseen, no matter how close they must get to said guard).

Sentry Dispatch Method (+10% to Grapple if attacking from ambush. If your Grapple test is a success, the sentry cannot make any noise to alert his companions).

Monkey Steals the Peach (+10% to hit with Punch, +2 damage).

Style Powers: None if playing in a normal level game, unless the GM declares otherwise. If using Ninjitsu in a Heroic game, practitioners may have access to either Augmentations or Manipulations.

TAE KWON DO (STR+DEX)

Developed in Korea, Tae Kwon Do is a fighting art that bears some similarity to karate. Practitioners learn a series of forms, as well as kicks and hand strikes.

Supposedly, this style was created in order to deal with enemy officers, who often fought from horseback. To combat the advantage inherent in this, Tae Kwon Do styles developed flying kicks to unmount their foes.

Style Attacks: Punch, Kick, One Weapon Skill.

Style Skills: Dodge, Spot, Jump, Strategy.

Techniques: **Flying Side Kick** (+1 Damage, Knockback).

Crescent Kick Combo (+10% to hit, Feint).

Jumping Round Kick (+1 Damage, Knockout Blow).

Style Powers: None normally, though the Game Master may grant access to Chi Augmentations if playing in an Heroic game.

TAI CHI CHUAN (CON+DEX)

While not normally considered a fighting Art, Tai Chi has a long history of use both as a form of movement-based meditation as well as a faster paced striking Martial Art. Its core tenant is that, by moving the body in certain ways, you can enhance your Chi, and help it to enhance your health and general well-being.

Style Attacks: Punch, Any two of the following weapons: Chinese Broadsword, Jian Straight sword, Staff, Steel Fan, Spear, Three-Section Staff.

Style Skills: Dodge, Acrobatics, Meditation, Knowledge (Chi).

Techniques: **Flow Like Water** (+10% to Parry, Knockback).

Vital Point Strike (+10% to hit, Knockout Blow).

Disarming Method (+10% to Parry, Disarming).

Style Powers: None when used in a normal game. If used in a Heroic game, Tai Chi practitioners may have access to Chi Manipulations that result from increasing the flow of Chi to the mind.

YABUSAME (DEX+POW)

The Art of Mounted Archery, Yabusame developed both as a fighting art and as a meditation and spirit-appeasing art in Japan. As a fighting art, it allows samurai to calmly and precisely fire arrows from horseback on the battlefield. As a meditation, it helps the practitioner to clear the mind and focus on firing the weapon, and as a spirit-appeasing art, the sound of the broad, flat arrowheads used can either get a spirit's attention, or to help placate them when angered.

Style Attacks: One Bow Skill, Kick.

Style Skills: Command, Craft (Fletcher), Strategy,

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ELEMENTAL STYLES

People have always seen themselves as extensions of the environment around them. Elemental fighting styles have arisen out of this understanding, that people can take Chi from the environment and use it.

AIR DRAGON STYLE (INT + DEX)



Air Dragon practitioners see that the wind is unfettered by anything, and that creatures who sail upon the wind have freedom unlike anything humans know. Those who practice this art have attuned themselves to the flow of the lightest of Chi, and make their bodies sail through the air like the birds and sky-dragons.

Style Attacks: Punch, Kick, Throw, One Weapon, typically a sword, spear, or staff

Style Skills: Dodge, Jump, Fly.

Techniques: **Nimble Jumping Dodge** (+10% to Dodge, Nimble Defence (Dodge). You may also use Jump in place of Dodge).

Unexpected Direction (+10% to Stealth, subsequent attack is considered a Backstab. This technique only works if you are attacking from above or below while flying).

Hurry! (Your mastery of Air Chi lets you move at a remarkable pace. Double your MOV stat for a single round. This may be a running move, as well as used when flying).

Style Powers: Air Dragon Stylists are magicians who have access to Chi Manipulations from the following list:

Blast of Wind. By focusing Chi, Air Dragon Stylists can create a blast of air. This is similar to the Blast spell, save that it will also cause Knockback.

Avian Transformation. The character may transform into a large bird, of a type in keeping with his or

Meditation, Ride.

Techniques: **Lightning Strike** (your character may draw and fire an arrow without taking the 5 DEX penalty).

Zen Focus (you may make a single Archery attack in any round, even if you have made another action. This attack comes at the very end of the combat round).

In-Yo-In-Yo (+10% to attack rolls, +3 damage. This may take the damage over the maximum for the bow used. Also uses 3 arrows instead of 1).

Style Powers: None normally. At the Game Master's discretion, Yabusame practitioners may be allowed access to Chi Manipulations, especially those dealing with spirits.

MAGICAL STYLES



In the Dragon Lines setting, the abundance of fast-flowing streams of Chi have led to the development of a number of Martial Art styles that take advantage of this energy flow. While these styles are not appropriate to a more realistic campaign, they would certainly work in other, more fantasy-derived settings.

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Martial Artists as Magicians

Familiars and Staves.

While the information regarding familiars and wizard's staves from page 91 of the BRP rulebook is meant to apply to fantasy wizards using the Magic Spells power system, it is not too much of a stretch of the imagination that such things might be useful to Martial Artists as well, especially those whose Chi abilities mimic many of the Magical Spells found there.

The Magician's Familiar works exactly as described in the BRP rulebook. A character who wishes to have a familiar may also take on spirit beings of the appropriate SIZ, as well as regular animals.

Characters wishing to begin play with a familiar may opt to take the Familiar Creature from the Chi Augmentations as one of their powers, or spend a point of POW to start with the creature already bound to them.

For a Wizard's Staff, the rules work in a similar manner to those presented in the BRP rulebook, with some modifications. First, many Martial Artists who use Chi Manipulations have their weapon of choice made into a staff, and use it to both hold excess Chi and to fight with. When used to fight, rather than requiring a Chi:Chi resistance roll, the weapon can do an extra 3 damage, over and above its normal maximum, for 1 Chi, spent at the time of striking. Only 1 Chi may be spent at a time for this excess damage.

Characters who wish to begin with a weapon or staff should take the Lesser Artefact Chi Augmentation, with the Artefact being represented by a Wizard's staff or a weapon designed to mimic the staff's effects. Alternately, that character may sacrifice a point of POW to begin play with a staff or wizard's weapon.

Also, any weapon, staff or otherwise, that holds Chi count as being magical for purposes of injuring spirits and other creatures that can only be harmed by magic.

her character. This is the only alternate form he or she can adopt.

Conjure Air Elemental

Elemental Weapon

Elemental Mastery

Enhance DEX

Enhance INT

Chilling Wind. As per the Frost spell, save that the chilling effect is produced by cold, howling winds.

Healing. By applying soothing, cool Air Chi, the practitioner may heal injuries.

Invisibility

Lift

Lightning

Protection

Resistance

Sharpen

Speak to Mind

Vision

EARTH DRAGON STYLE (CON+STR)



Developed high in the monasteries of the Obido Mountains, Earth Dragon Style promotes the use of the cool, stable energies of Earth. Practitioners become like the very mountains themselves, seemingly still until they unleash an avalanche of destructive, unstoppable blows.

Style Attacks: Punch, Grapple, Any Two Weapons, favouring clubs or polearms.

Style Skills: Dodge, Navigate, Climb.

Techniques: **Stunning Blow** (+10% to Club or Punch, Knockout).

Rock-Splitting Strike (+10% to hit, +1 Damage, will destroy a physical object if struck).

Endurance of Ancient Stone (+10% to Parry, Protection).

Style Powers: Like the other Elemental Styles, Earth Dragon practitioners are magicians, and can select their Manipulations from the following list: **Sudden Avalanche.** If in the

presence of rocks, stone or earth, the Earth Dragon Stylist can cause a sudden shift that can damage an unwary foe. Aside from the requirement to be near stones, this is similar to the Blast spell.

Conjure Earth Elemental

Countermagic

Dark

Elemental Weapon

Elemental Mastery

Enhance CON

Enhance SIZ

Healing Stones. By charging certain stones with Chi, the Earth Dragon Stylist can heal the injured as per the Heal spell.

Altering Gravity. As per the Lift spell, though it can only be performed while in the presence of a large quantity of stone or rock.

Detect Mineral. Choose a particular type of mineral or ore that is found in the ground. You may use the Perception spell to locate that one type of item.

Protection

Seal. Works on stone only.

Unseal. Works on stone only.

Teleport. This may only be used to move from one mountain to another.

Wall of Stone.

Stone Wards. As per the Ward spell, save that the four anchor points are a set of four stones, each of a different colour

FIRE DRAGON STYLE (POW+STR)



One of the most straightforward of the Elemental Styles, Fire Dragon Style uses Fire Chi to fuel the body, increasing its speed, strength and health. Its fighting style focuses on strong punches and kicks, as well as ranged attacks in the form of blasts of searing fire.

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Style Attacks: Punch, Kick, Any Single Weapon form. Practitioners often choose a sword of some sort, although there are traditions that use other weapons.

Style Skills: Command, First Aid, Dodge, Spot.

Techniques: **Burning Weapon** (+10% to the Dull spell. If successful, the weapon becomes too hot to touch and the target is Disarmed). **The Dragon Above and Below** (must be able to attack with both hands and feet. Make either a Punch or Kick roll; if you succeed, you have successfully made a Feint). **Blazing Inferno Attack** (+10% to a melee attack. If you make a Special result, your target is on fire, and will take 1 damage per round until they can pass an Agility test to put the fire out).

Style Powers: Practitioners manipulate Chi through force of will. They count as magicians, and select their Manipulations from the following list:

Fiery Blast

Elemental Mastery: Fire

Conjure Fire Elemental

Dull. Using his or her Chi to heat an opponent's weapon, the Martial Artist may cause enough distraction to keep foes from hitting.

Enhance Strength

Enhance Dexterity

Enhance Constitution

Fire

Healing Cauterization. By heating up metal plates, the Martial Artist can use heat to drive out infections and heal injuries. Aside from using red-hot metal plates, this counts as the Heal spell.

Light. In this case, the lighted object always appears as though on fire.

Pit-Viper's Insight: When using this version of the Perception Spell, the Martial Artist can detect the body heat given off by living things.

Heat Protection: This spells lets the character avoid taking some damage from heat sources, including fire.

Heat Resistance: This spell allows the character to resist damage from hot environmental factors.

Flaming Weapons: As per the Sharpen spell, save this spell only augments unarmed attacks, or those from using a physical weapon. This spell wreathes the affected appendage or weapon in fire, and the increased damage is also considered to be fire for all

purposes.

Elemental Weapon: The character conjures a weapon made of a pure version of their element, in this case, fire. See the Elemental Weapon spell on page 54 for more details.

Wall of Flame. This potent spell allows the character to create a wall, composed of roiling flame. Anyone attempting to cross or scale the Wall will also suffer 1D6 fire damage per round.

Flaming Ward. As per the Ward spell, save that the four points must be some sort of burning fire, even a candle or a lit match will do.

WATER DRAGON STYLE (DEX+INT)



Developed in the foothills of the Obido Mountains, Water Dragon Style seeks to emulate the smooth, fluid flow of Water Chi. Practitioners know that flowing water cannot be stopped, only diverted, and that water finds its own level. This can be a weak force, but to those who practice Water Dragon Style, the weak can always overcome the strong by sheer persistence.

Style Attacks: Punch, Kick, Throw, One Weapon Skill.

Style Skills: Dodge, Swim, Meditation.

Techniques: **Throwing Stance** (+10% to Parry, target is Knocked Back). **Nerveless Finger Strike** (+10% to Punch, target takes ½ damage, but is Disarmed). **Tripping Method** (+10% to Dodge, target is tripped as they pass. Their next actions comes at -5 DEX ranks).

Style Powers: Much like other Elemental Styles, practitioners of Water Dragon Style are magicians, and have access to Chi Manipulations from the following list:

Water Tentacle Strike. If near a body of water, you may cause it to

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manifest as a lashing tentacle, with which you strike opponents. Aside from the requirement of being near water, this spell is identical to the Blast spell.

Aquatic Transformation. You may turn yourself, or a target, into a large, fresh- or salt-water fish. This is the only form you can take with this spell, but is otherwise identical to the Change spell.

Conjure Water Elemental

Diminishing Strike. A series of strikes to the target's vital centres allows you to temporarily reduce one of his or her characteristics. This is similar to the Diminish spell, save that a successful Punch attack is needed to affect the spell, rather than a POW contest.

Dispel

Impeding Arm-lock Stance. By striking at foes' arms and legs, you are able to hamper their ability to effectively strike you. This works just like the Dull spell.

Elemental Weapon

Elemental Mastery

Enhance DEX

Enhance STR

Enhance CON

Healing Waters. If you have access to liquid water, you can channel it to heal injuries.

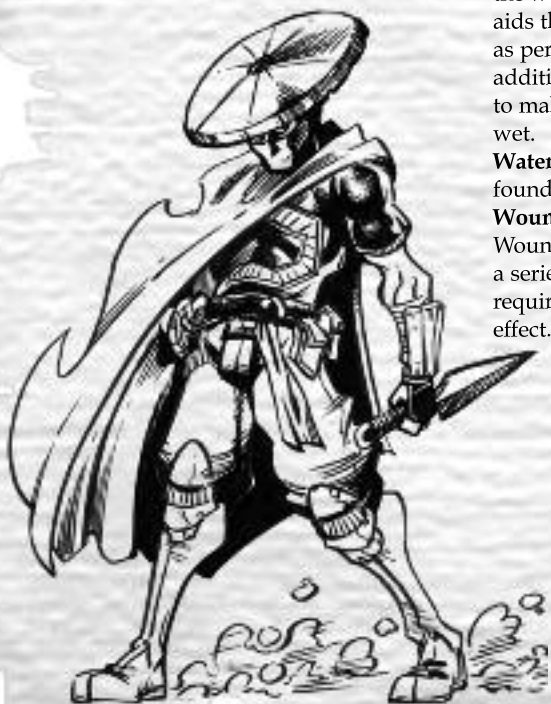
Illusion

Detect Water-as per the Perception spell.

Water-Enhanced Strike. If you are able to dip a weapon or appendage into a body of water, you may have the weapon absorb Water Chi, which aids the use of that weapon. This is as per the Sharpen spell, with the additional requirement of being able to make your weapon or appendage wet.

Water-Walking. As per the spell found on page 52 of this book.

Wounding Touch. As per the Wound spell, save that this version is a series of pressure point strikes that require a Punch roll in order to take effect.



THE SEVEN ARTS

The Martial Arts traditions known as the Seven Arts are a collection of different styles that are a relatively recent development. Where the Elemental Styles revolve around the use of Chi to augment human capabilities, the styles of the Seven Arts go even further, by changing the fundamental nature of their practitioners. The Seven Arts are often seen not only as fighting styles, but ways of being, or a collection of attitudes about life. They are not something you do, but something you are.

Each of the Seven Arts is based upon a certain characteristic. In order to practice one of the Arts, a character must have at least a 16 in the characteristic upon which the Art is based. Once learned, however, the Art can always be practised, including powers that stem from the Art that, under normal circumstances, have a strict characteristic requirement.

ENDURANCE OF THE MOUNTAINS STYLE (STR+CON)

Considered to be an offshoot of the Earth Dragon Style, Endurance of the Mountains was developed in the same monasteries in the Obido Mountains, as a response to the other Seven Arts Styles. Where Earth Dragon Style is mostly about using Chi to temporarily change the practitioner, Endurance of the Mountains works to make practitioners as permanent and enduring as the mountainside in which they live. Practitioners are frequently adherents to the Path of Enlightenment, hoping, perhaps foolishly, to achieve an eternal existence. In order to learn the Endurance of the Mountain Style, a character must have a Constitution score of at least 16.

Style Attacks: Punch, Grapple, One Weapon skill.

Style Skills: Climb, Insight, Sense, Meditation.

Techniques: **The Mountain Stands** (+10% to Parry, if you take damage, it cannot produce Knockback, even from techniques designed to do so).

Juggernaut Charge (+10% to hit if you can move a few feet before you attack. Automatically causes Knockback.).

The Mountain's Embrace (+10% to Grapple check, Disarming).

Style Powers: Practitioners gain access to the Chi Augmentations, and may select from the following list:

Hardy (Often taken multiple times to counter various damage types)

Increased Characteristics: Strength and Constitution

Keen Sense: Touch

Metabolic Improvement

MARTIAL ARTS

Natural Armour (rock-like skin protrusions)
Regeneration. If taken, this mutation replaces the accelerated healing common to all Martial Artists.
Structural Improvement

ETHEREAL WINGS STYLE (DEX+INT)

Much like its sister style Air Dragon Style, Ethereal Wings is devoted to the use of light, breezy Air Chi. Where it differs from the older style, though, is its emphasis on infusing the body with Air Chi, making it quite literally lighter than air. Practitioners of the Ethereal Wings Style are exceedingly hard to pin down, lock out, or avoid. They tend to get to places no one wants, and can see and hear things meant to be secret. You must have a Dexterity score of at least 16 to practice this style.

Style Attacks: One Weapon Skill, Punch, Kick.
Style Skills: Dodge, Jump, Hide, Listen.
Techniques: **Lighting-Fast Parry** (Nimble Defence [Parry]). **Skyward Leap** (+10% to Parry. If you succeed, you leap in the air and land behind your foe. Your next attack against them is at +10%). **Leap and Slash** (You leap into the air, your weapon a blur of shapes. +10% to hit, Feint, in addition to looking cool).
Style Powers: Practitioners of Ethereal Wings Style count as being Magicians, and may select Chi Manipulations from the following list:
Lightfoot. This must be taken as their first Power.
Dull. The practitioner is able to create gusts of wind at just the right moment to hamper a foe's attack.
Dark
Dispel
Enhance INT
Enhance DEX
Lift
Sharpen. As per Dull, above, save the gusts of wind help the practitioner hit with his or her own strikes.
Speak to Mind
Teleport

IRON LEVIATHAN STYLE (SIZ+CON)

Practitioners of this rare style are either giant spirits, or humans who are much larger than normal. While not a fast style, Iron Leviathan Style makes good use of its practitioner's size and girth by allowing for enduring stances and surprisingly fast strikes. Supposedly a derivation of the natural fighting style of a race of giants, Iron Leviathan is an adaptation of this ancient Art to be more in line with the human practitioners of the other Seven Arts. Mongo Kesh, an ogre of advanced age and wisdom, teaches Iron Leviathan Style out of a school in the Forbidden City. Prospective students must be at least SIZ 16, although priority is given to the largest students seeking entry. Many students who learn this Art are servants of the Yama Kings, though no few of them fall to Corruption.

Style Attacks: Punch, Grapple, Throw, One Weapon skill, typically large, two-handed clubs or swords
Style Skills: Insight, Listen, Sense.
Techniques: **None Shall Pass** (+10% to Parry rolls and negation of all knockback effects when guarding a narrow door, bridge or passageway). **Sundering Blow** (+10% to hit, +2 to damage, will destroy physical objects). **Squish!** (+10% to Grapple rolls, targets are at -10% on all rolls to escape).

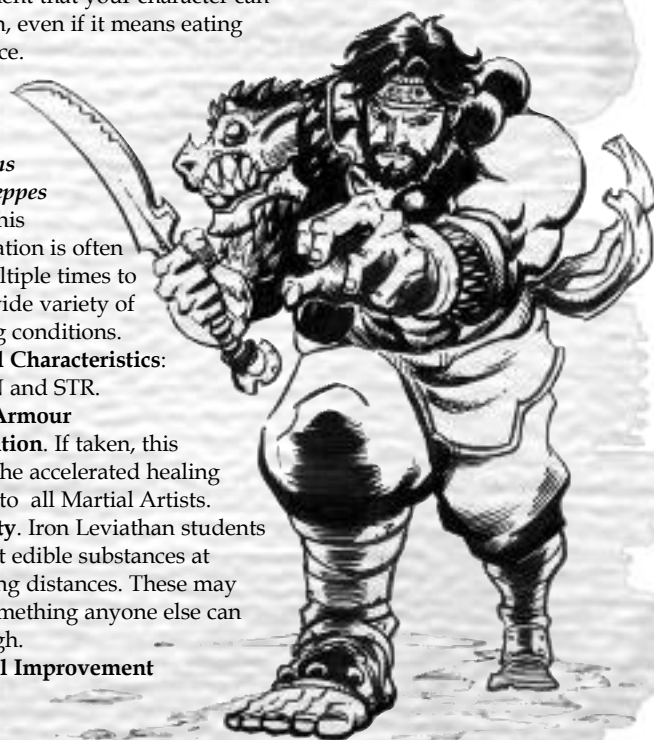
Style Powers: Iron Leviathan students gain access to the Chi Augmentations, and may select from the following list:
Adaptability. Each time this mutation is taken, select an extreme environment that your character can survive in, even if it means eating rocks or ice.

Desert
Jungles
Swamps
Mountains
Frigid Steppes

Hardy. This augmentation is often taken multiple times to cover a wide variety of damaging conditions.
Increased Characteristics: SIZ, CON and STR.
Natural Armour

Regeneration. If taken, this replaces the accelerated healing common to all Martial Artists.
Sensitivity. Iron Leviathan students can detect edible substances at astonishing distances. These may not be something anyone else can eat, though.
Structural Improvement

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JEWELLED COURTESAN STYLE (INT+CHA)

Not all of the Seven Arts are built as combat styles. The Jeweled Courtesan Style, for example, is designed to be a subtle Art that allows the practitioner to move in social circles and effect change without being noticed as having done so. Practitioners of this style tend to be female, although this is not a requirement. They are also as often assassins as well-meaning diplomats. You must have a Charisma of at least 16 to practice this style.

- Style Attacks:* One Weapon, usually a dagger or short sword, Punch, Grapple.
- Style Skills:* Etiquette, Fast talk, Insight, Persuade.
- Techniques:* **Seemingly Innocent** (Make a Fast Talk roll at +10% when faced with a target. If you succeed, you have lulled them into a false sense of security, and your next attack against that target is a Backstab).
A Dagger in the Dark (+10% to hit. If you attack a helpless foe and do damage, they cannot make enough noise to raise an alarm).
Witty Repartee (+10% to Fast Talk or Etiquette rolls when in a group situation, Nimble Defence [Fast Talk or Etiquette]).

Style Powers: Practitioners use Chi to enhance the abilities of the mind. As such, characters who know Jeweled Courtesan Style have access to the following Chi Manipulations:

- Aura Detection**
- Clairvoyance**
- Danger Sense**
- Divination** (see the sidebar on page 53 for more information about using Divination)
- Eidetic Memory**
- Emotion Control**
- Empathy**
- Intuition**
- Mind Blast**
- Mind Control**
- Mind Shield**
- Precognition**
- Psychometry**
- Sensitivity**
- Telepathy**



SAGACIOUS SCHOLAR STYLE (INT+POW)

While nominally a fighting style, this style is considered an "internal" Art, where users' understanding of the flow of Chi is used to augment their sense of self, as well as sense of the outside world. Often made up of geomancers of the highest calibre, Sagacious Scholar Style practitioners are sages first, warriors second. You must have an INT score of at least 16 to practise this style.

- Style Attack:* Punch.
- Style Skills:* Appraise, Dodge, Fine Manipulation, Geomancy, Any one Knowledge skill (typically Chi, Occult, or Spirits), Repair.
- Techniques:* **Detect Impeded Flow** (+10% to Geomancy tests when determining where a particular Chi flow is being blocked). **Spiritual Assault** (+10% to hit, +2 to damage. Can harm spirits). **Superior Repair Style** (+10% to Repair checks when fixing something that allows better Chi flow).
- Style Powers:* Sagacious Scholar practitioners gain a greater understanding of the flow of Chi. This allows them to use any Chi Manipulations from the list in Chapter 4.

TIGER CLAW STYLE (STR+DEX)

In the jungles far to the south of the Dragon Empire, the tiger is considered a sacred animal. Martial Artists from that region have observed the tiger for generations, and have used their knowledge and understanding of Chi to learn to emulate the grace, speed, and raw strength that this noble animal exhibits. In order to practice Tiger Claw Form, a character must possess a Strength score of 16 or higher.

- Style Attacks:* Punch, Kick, Grapple.
- Style Skills:* Climb, Dodge, Jump, Sense.
- Techniques:* **Hide and Pounce** (Make a Jump roll against an unwary foe. If it succeeds, you may attack from ambush on your next action). **Claw, Claw, Bite** (make a flurry of attacks, +10% to hit, +2 to damage). **Prey dispatch Method** (+10% Grapple, +2 to damaging effects).

Style Powers: Practitioners gain access to the Chi Augmentations.
Hardy: Tiger Claw stylists take half damage from falling.
Imitation: By channelling their Chi, Tiger Claws can leap like their totem

animal, allowing them to use the Imitation power to make prodigious leaps. By spending a Chi to augment their leaps, Tiger Claw stylists can make leaps far beyond what is normally capable for a human being.

Increased Characteristics: Strength and Dexterity. These enhancements are permanent, and do not require any activation. They are also very obvious and characters taking either of these mutations must give themselves a Distinctive Feature that represents it.

Keen Sense: Smell

Natural Armour. In this case, it manifests as unnaturally thick skin.

Natural Weaponry. The hands of a Tiger Claw stylist become hard, gnarled, and talon like. They may use them as claws, and long practice has made them usable as regular hands, although the GM may decide that delicate operations are difficult, if not impossible.



WILL OF THE HEAVENS STYLE (INT+POW)

Practitioners of this style have learned secrets that allow them to operate as a mediator between the mortal world and that of the spirits. Practitioners are quiet, soulful people who become sorcerers of unmatched skill. Those who serve the Heavens pursue errant spirits and help lay them to rest, and those who fall to corruption often enslave the spirits of the dead to their will, severing them from the Wheel of Fate.

Style Attack: Punch.

Style Skills: Knowledge (Occult or Spirits), Insight, Listen, Meditation, Sense, Spot.

Techniques: **Spirit Detection Meditation** (Make a Meditation Roll at +10%, if you pass, you may determine if spirits are

present within your POW in metres).
Ghost Smiting Technique (+10 to hit, +2 to damage. Your attacks may effect spirits and ghosts).

Unerring Insight Method (Make an Insight Roll. If you succeed, you can determine which, if any, Philosophies a target with which you are conversing belongs).

Style Powers: As sorcerers, practitioners may select from the Chi Powers, selected from the following list:

Chain of Being

Compel Spirit: Once a spirit has been reduced to zero HP, it is not slain. Instead, it loses cohesion and becomes a nebulous mass of ectoplasm. When in this state, cast

Compel Spirit. If successful, the spirit must give you its True Name, which can then be used as an aid (+30% to all tests) for future summoning and binding.

Curse of Sorcery. When used on a spirit, this spell grants the spirit a single Chaotic feature from the table on page 388 of the BRP rulebook. Practitioners of this style cannot cast it on living beings.

Liken Shape: Sorcerers are able to reshape their appearance in order to look like someone familiar to a spirit. The disguise is perfect, but is only visible to spirits.

Power Sink

Prepare Binding Object. Perform a lengthy ritual during which time you embed a mundane object with your own Chi (1 POW). This object may now be used to house bound spirits. Items imbued with spirits become Lesser Artefacts. Note also that, if the binding object is of immense personal significance to the spirit being bound, Sorcerers need not sacrifice their own POW, though they must still perform the ritual cleansing on the item.

Pox. This spell is usable against anyone.

Sorcerer's Talons

Summon Spirit

Spirit Ward. As per the Ward spell, but effective only against spirits.

Witch Sight. In addition to the normal effects of this spell, it may also be used to visualize flows of Chi, which appear as a mist of a colour appropriate to its type (red-fire, blue-water, green-earth, white-air, black-corrupt).

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OTHER STYLES

Frequently, single styles are developed by Martial Art masters in order to address a particular problem that master faced in their own lives. Often, these styles get taught to their students, who eventually teach it to their own students, until a style no longer has any association with the circumstances that brought it about. The styles listed below are like this; created for certain reasons, but still useful enough to be taught for general purposes.

COILS OF THE SERPENT STYLE (DEX+STR)



By studying the movements of the serpents of the Southern Jungles, Martial Artists have developed a style based on sudden, quick strikes and absorbing damage that might otherwise kill or incapacitate. Once a foe has been dazed, the fast strikes of the form are replaced by iron-banded grappling techniques.

Style Attacks: Punch, Grapple, One Weapon, usually a whip, rope-dart or three-section staff

Style Skills: Dodge, First Aid, Knowledge (Alchemy), Hide.

Techniques: **Snake in the Grass** (If you strike from ambush, you may spend a Chi and make a Stealth or Hide check to avoid being spotted after the attack, essentially allowing you to ambush more than once in an encounter).
Deadly Grapple (If you have an opponent grappled, you may opt to automatically Bite or expose them to Venom instead of an ordinary Grapple effect).

Vulnerability Strike (+10% to hit. The target's armour counts for only half its normal protection).

Style Powers: Practitioners of this style become increasingly snake-like as they age. Knowledge of this style allows

access to the Chi Augmentations, selected from the following list:

Camouflage.

Hardy: Poisons

Hybrid: Snake, **Hypnotic Gaze**

Imitation: Serpent Speed Strike

Imitation: Constricting

Increased Characteristic: Strength

Increased Characteristic: Dexterity

Keen Sense: Smell

Natural Armour: Scaly Skin

Natural Weaponry: Fangs

Sensitivity: Body Heat

Venom: Delivered via Punch attacks (contact poison absorbed through the skin), or through Fangs if they have developed

A MILLION LUCKY PUNCHES (DEX+POW)

While the other Martial Arts listed here are the combination of years of dedicated study, an infusion of Chi into the body, and the watchful eye of a master, it is sometimes easy to have only one or two of these factors. The result is very often an undisciplined style of fighting, one that relies upon fortune and happenstance rather than perfectly honed technique. There is a great deal of variety in such forms, but a good example of this has come to be known as A Million Lucky Punches.

Style Attacks: Punch, Kick, Improvised Weapons.

Style Skills: Climb, Dodge, Throw, Jump.

Techniques: **Lucky Punch** (Make a punch roll at +10%. When used, you will always hit something. If you succeed, and your opponent parries or dodges, you will instead hit one of his or her allies. If you fail this test, you will hit one of your allies, who may respond as usual. If you fumble, you wind up hitting a pillar or wall, and do your punching damage to yourself, in addition to the normal effects on the Fumble Table).

Lucky Dodge (When faced with an armed opponent, make a Dodge roll at +10%. If you succeed in Dodging, your opponent's weapon becomes lodged in a handy object. They must spend a full round and make an Effort roll to pull it out).

Surprisingly Effective Strike (When using an improvised weapon for the first time, make an Improvised Weapon roll at +10%. If the attack hits, it automatically causes Knockback. If the attack is dodged or parried, it instead does some sort of

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damage to the environment. This might put a hole in a wall big enough to wriggle through, or knock over a flaming brazier full of hot coals and oil.)

Style Powers: Practitioners have a mixed selection of powers, depending upon the nature of their particular fighting Art. They have access to both Augmentations and Manipulations, and may select from the following lists in any combination.

The Augmentations they may select from include:

Hardy: Often taken to protect from punches, kicks, or falling damage.

Imitation: This is especially common with practitioners who have an affinity for a certain type of animal.

Increased Characteristic: Typically taken as Increased POW (to improve their Luck roll) or Increased DEX.

Keen Sense: Any

Natural Armour: This manifests, not as thick skin, but as an amazingly lucky tendency to have material objects "happen" to impose themselves when being struck.

Regeneration: it turns out your wounds were not as serious as you had suspected.

The Manipulations at their disposal are:

Enhance: Any

Heal

Perception

Protection

Resistance

Seal ("How odd, the door's stuck!")

Sharpen ("You're hitting rather well today!")

Unseal ("The door's stuck? Let me try.")

Wall (Rather than create a barrier out of magic, this version of the spell allows for objects in the environment to fall into place, cutting off pursuit or otherwise blocking a passage.)

SUPPORT STYLES

When fighting Lesser Foes (see page 60), Martial Artists are at a distinct advantage. But, when fighting other Martial Artists, it is easy to get into an ally's way, hampering both their attacks and your own. Under normal circumstances, trained Martial Artists will only engage an opponent on a one-to-one basis, so as to prevent this. However, some warriors undergo special training in order to operate as a team with other fighters, so that they can engage

foes as a unit instead of individually.

Support Styles represent this specific training. Knowing a Support Style allows a Martial Artist to assist an ally when facing down a dangerous foe. They are useful both for non-combat oriented characters, as well as more traditional Martial Artists who want to develop another facet to their fighting repertoire. While of only limited utility when used by themselves, Support Styles are very handy when used in a group context, and will often be picked up as a second style as play progresses.

At the Game Master's option, a player may select a support style instead of a normal or magical style during character creation.

REFRESHING ZEPHYR STYLE (CHA+POW)

Developed by the notorious Master Wing Li, Soothing Winds Style is a pacifist Martial Art that is designed, not to fight for one's self, but to assist others in their own fights. Practitioners learn to gently disarm and immobilize hostile foes, as well as develop a series of meditations that allow others to quickly regain Chi lost to vigorous exercise. Practitioners are expected to be calm, polite, and soft-spoken at all times. This style has a strong philosophical element, which makes it unsuitable for the nature of many who attempt to learn it

Style Attacks: Grapple, Throw.

Style Skills: Dodge, Meditation, Etiquette, Persuade, First Aid.

Techniques: **Impeding Limbs.** (Make a Grapple Check at +10%. If you succeed, you have distracted your target. They are not grappled, but any allies may take a +10% bonus to their next attack against the target. If you fumble your Grapple roll, you have opened yourself up to attack, and your target gets an instant Counterattack against you).

Refreshing Zephyr (Can be used in combat. Make a Meditation roll at +10%. If you succeed, you may transfer up to 1D6 points of Chi from your own reserve to any single ally you can see).

Unfortunate Necessity (+10% to Grapple. If you successfully Grapple a foe, instead of applying a Grapple Effect, you must instead use this effect to cause a Knockout Blow).

Style Powers: By manipulating the flow of Chi around them, Refreshing Zephyr stylists learn to cast spells as though they were magicians. They gain access to Chi Manipulations, and may select up to six from the list below:

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Soothing Words. The practitioner may use the Control spell, but only to convince a foe to stop fighting and talk through their problems instead of trying to solve them with violence.

Dull

Heal

Light

Perception. Practitioners learn to sense the presence of others who bear hostile intent, so they can better diffuse the situation. This does not differentiate between those who seek to harm the practitioner from those who seek to harm others in the area.

Protection. This version of the spell can only be cast on others, not the practitioner himself.

Seal

Speak to Mind

Unseal

Vision

Wall

STEEL-RIBBONED WHIRLWIND STYLE (DEX+STR)

In the days before the Dragon Empire, there were innumerable tribes of humans and spirits who lived throughout the regions. Mostly, they were peaceful people, except for the occasional petty warlord who sought to impose his or her will upon any who could not defend themselves. A spirit of combat named Righteous Endeavour worked to put down these barbarous warlords, and noted that, each time he did so, there were mortal warriors of great skill and cunning that would seek to assist him. Over time, Righteous Endeavour developed the Steel-Ribboned Whirlwind so that he could fight along side these warriors, assisting them in their own efforts.

To this day, Righteous Endeavour seeks out individuals with great potential to teach his style to, so that they may help others in the overthrow of tyrants. Everyone who knows this style has been taught by Righteous Endeavour himself, and is forbidden from teaching it to anyone. Its techniques are closely guarded secrets, but this has not stopped less scrupulous foes from attempting to learn them anyway.

Style Attacks: Punch, Kick, One Weapon, typically a sword.

Style Skills: Command, Strategy, Dodge, Perform (Dance)

Techniques: **Dancing Ribbon Slash** (If a target is fighting another foe, and successfully parries an attack, you may make an attack right then,



instead of on your action, which the target has a -10% to parry).

Darting Strike (Make an Attack at +10%. If you succeed, you do no damage, but one ally counts as having made a successful Feint move against the target).

Abrupt Defence (If an ally fails to Dodge or Parry an attack directed at them, you may attempt to interpose yourself or your weapon. Make either a parry or dodge roll at +10%. If you fail, you take the damage instead of the intended target. If you make a critical parry, you may also Counterattack).

Style Powers: Practitioners learn to Chi Manipulations. They may select from the following list:

Diminish DEX

Diminish CON

Diminish STR

Dull

Enhance STR

Enhance DEX

Enhance CON

Heal

Protection

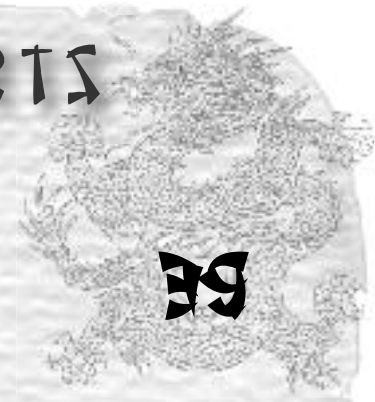
Sharpen

Speak to Mind

Wounding

Note that, in order to learn his style during play, a character must have at least 3 points in The Path to

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Enlightenment or The Way philosophies, and must have no points of Corruption. Characters who wish to begin play with this style automatically gain an additional 3 points to either of the two beneficial philosophies. Character who know this style may develop points of Corruption during play, but this does not hamper their ability to use this style. However, if practitioners of Steel-Ribboned Whirlwind Style ever become Allies of Corruption, Righteous Endeavour will track them down and attempt to sway them from their path. If this fails, he will attempt to destroy his errant pupil.

TECHNIQUES

The manoeuvres listed under Techniques for each style are special moves that encapsulate that style's approach to combat. They allow the user to tweak the rules of BRP combat in minor ways, granting them a small edge against opponents. A character may only have knowledge of a number of techniques equal to their Martial Art score divided by ten.

Unless otherwise noted, each use of a technique costs a single point of Chi. This applies to each use of the technique, even ones that allow you to do something at any time in a combat round. A character who spends his or her last point of Chi to use a technique will become unconscious at the end of the round in which the Chi was spent, whether the technique was used well or not.

TECHNIQUE EFFECTS

For the Chi cost, each technique generally applies a +10% bonus to the skill from which it stems, plus offers another bonus on top of the increased chance to hit. There are exceptions, and each Game Master is free to augment or alter the techniques used according to the desires of his or her specific campaign.

Each technique offers one (or more) of the following benefits to the roll it augments:

FEINT

By a complicated series of thrusts, fake attacks and last-second changes, you are able to convince your opponent that you are attacking from one direction, and then quickly attack from another direction. Feints are tricky to avoid if you are not prepared for them. If you succeed in a technique that involves a Feint, your opponent is at -30% to all attempts to avoid the attack.

However, this trick is hard to pull off against opponents who are prepared for it. If given a chance to observe your fighting style for a few minutes, anyone who passes an Idea roll will determine that a Feint is in your body of techniques, making it

unusable.

Also, each subsequent time you use a Feint techniques against the same foe, in the same combat, the parry penalty is reduced by 10%.

COUNTERATTACK

Combat rounds in BRP are 12 seconds long, which is more than enough time to go through a series of punches and kicks in order to damage an opponent. As such, each use of a combat skill represents more than a single attack or defence. For those who possess Counterattack techniques, though, they have trained in finding openings in an opponent's defence, and lashing out to take advantage of even momentary openings.

Whenever you use a technique with a Counterattack, you may make an attack roll at its full percentile immediately when the triggering action occurs. This is, in most ways, similar to a Riposte, save that it does not have to occur when paired with a critical Parry, and you need not be using two weapons to do it.

Game Masters may wish to set a limit on the number of times a Counterattack can occur in a single combat round. Even though each Counterattack costs a point of Chi to use, it may be a good idea to state that only a single Counterattack can be made per round, regardless of Chi spent, or that that number of times it can be used in a round is equal to the character's Martial Arts score divided by ten, rounded down.

DISARM

Few things are quite as dangerous as facing a foe who is armed with a weapon when you yourself are not. Weapons do a great deal more damage than fists and feet, and, coupled with the double-damage bonus from the Martial Arts skill, an armed character is a serious threat.

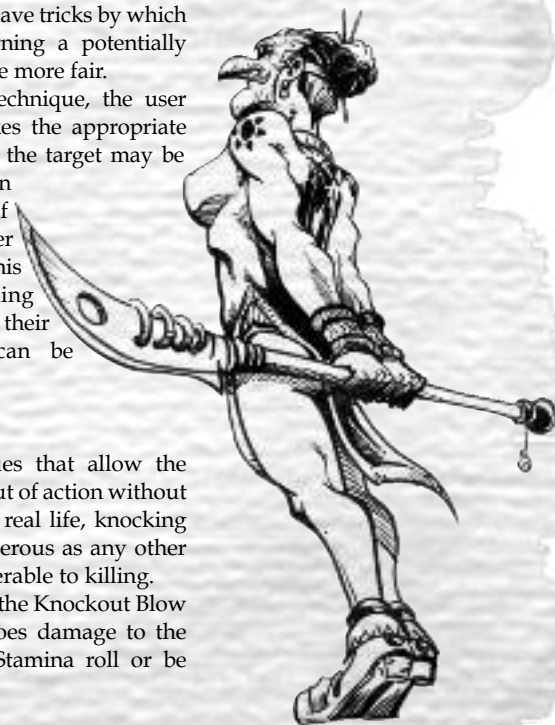
To counter this, many styles have tricks by which their foes can be disarmed, turning a potentially deadly fight into something a little more fair.

When using a Disarming technique, the user spends a point of Chi, and makes the appropriate skill check. If this test succeeds, the target may be allowed a Difficult Agility test in order to keep a weapon in hand. If using the Lesser Foes rules, Lesser Foes will always be disarmed if this manoeuvre is used, either taking them out of the fight, or making their attacks Difficult until they can be rearmed.

KNOCKOUT BLOW

Many styles have techniques that allow the practitioners to take opponents out of action without risking the foe's death. While in real life, knocking someone out can be just as dangerous as any other attack, in gaming, it is often preferable to killing.

If the skill test needed to use the Knockout Blow technique passes, and the hit does damage to the target, the target must pass a Stamina roll or be



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stunned for 1D6 combat rounds. If a Knockout blow is used against a character that is already stunned, the target is knocked unconscious for 1D6 hours, and will awaken with a terrible headache.

If used against Lesser Foes, Knockout Blows automatically cause unconsciousness, with no Stamina roll or second hit required.

BREAK OBJECTS

If a style has a technique than can break mundane objects, this is fairly simple to use. If the test passes, the struck object breaks, unless it is magical, sturdy, or in some way reinforced. This does not apply to worn armour, but it may apply to non-Artefact weapons.

PARALYSIS

Similar to Knockout Blow, a Paralysis technique can incapacitate a foe without risk of death. If the technique roll is a success, and the attack does damage, the target must pass a Stamina roll or be stunned. If used on a stunned target, or a Lesser Foe, the target is automatically paralysed. They remain aware of their surroundings, but are unable to move more than a few inches, and cannot speak.

KNOCKBACK

While all attacks have a chance of causing Knockback according to the BRP rules, styles with Knockback technique have special moves that will always cause it when used.

If the technique roll is a success, and the target takes damage from the Knockback attack, the target will automatically be knocked away from the user a number of metres equal to one third of the damage done. This generally will not cause any extra damage by itself, although the Game Master may decide that being knocked into a wall or pillar requires a Stamina test to avoid being stunned, or that being knocked from a high ledge means a long fall and a short, painful stop at the end.

INCREASED DAMAGE

Some techniques are simply designed to increase the damage done by the attack. This extra damage cannot make the total damage dealt be more than is possible for the attack type, unless otherwise noted.

Also, most extra damage techniques offer a flat +2 damage. There are exceptions, and these are noted in the specific entries. If designing new techniques, assume that the bonus offered is +2, unless you have a specific reason to do otherwise.

PROTECTION

Used to augment defensive rolls. If used, this technique allows you to take only half damage.

NIMBLE DEFENCE

These potent techniques allow the practitioner to make extra defence actions per round at their full percentage. The Chi cost must be paid each time the defensive skill is used after the first, normal, use.

BACKSTAB

These techniques allow you to make an attack against an unwary foe Easy if they meet the requirements for the technique.

SWEEP

This technique allows you to make an attack that may take an enemy's feet out from under them. If you successfully hit and do damage to an opponent, they must make an Agility to test to avoid being knocked off their feet. Targets who have been Swept suffer a -5 DEX rank penalty when making their next action, to represent getting to their feet.

LEARNING NEW TECHNIQUES AND CHI POWERS



The total number of Chi power and Techniques a Martial Arts practitioner may know is dependent upon the character's Martial Arts skill. Specifically, for every full 10% of Martial Arts the character possessed, he or she may know a single technique, and starting characters begin with 6 Chi powers, chosen from the list associated with their Martial Art.

Once play has begun, characters may train their Martial Arts skill with a Master who knows that Art at a level suitable for teaching. Once characters have increased their Martial Art skill to a point where they have hit a full 10% threshold, they have opened up an option to take a Power or a Technique.

In doing so, the character must spend a special training session with his or her master, who knows the technique or power being learned. Once the training period is over, instead of increasing their Martial Arts skill, characters may instead learn a new Technique, or gain a new Power from the list particular to their style.

Note that characters may only select either a technique, or a power when they hit a 10% threshold, but not both. Generally, Martial Artists

Creating New Martial Arts Styles

Individual Game Masters may decide that they need an Art that fits a different theme than the ones listed here. Creating a new Martial Arts style is pretty easy, and is largely a matter of applying existing skills and powers into a framework.

To create a new style, perform the following steps:

Attacks and Skills

- Each Art offers a +20% bonus to any seven forms of attack or skills, in any combinations. Fighting Arts tend to focus on various attack forms, while internal Arts focus on other skills and/or powers.
- The major Attack forms include: Weapons, Punch, Grapple, Head Butt, Thrown Weapons, Throw Target, Kick.
- As far as skills go, there is much more leeway, since there are more skills.
- Most fighting Arts include Dodge as a skill
- Internal or philosophical Arts include Meditation as a skill.

Power Access

Magical Martial Arts styles offer access to Chi Powers, the number or type of which are determined by the game level and the specific theme of that style.

- Normal level games get either no Powers, or a total of 4 Chi powers in any combination.
- Heroic games get 6 powers in any combination.
- Epic games get 8 Powers.
- Superheroic games get 10 or more powers, at the Game Master's discretion.

Techniques

Each style has 3 beginning techniques that characters may start with. To get techniques for a new style, either borrow and re-skin the existing ones, or take the generic Techniques from earlier in this chapter and come up with ones that fit the theme of the power.

- Remember that all Techniques get a +10% to the relevant skill in use, in addition to one other ability.
- Some Techniques do not get the +10% bonus, and grant two other abilities instead.
- Techniques cost 1 Chi. If a new technique has more than two abilities, it will cost 1 Chi for each ability it offers.

are encouraged to take new techniques from their Martial Art training, as there are other means of obtaining new powers. See the Philosophies and Equipment chapters for more information.

MARTIAL ARTS EXPERIENCE

Unlike most other skills in the game, a Martial Arts style does not increase through experience. In order to increase a character's Martial Arts skill, that character must use the skill training rules on page 184 of the BRP rulebook. Every style listed in this chapter, and any created by individual Game Masters, has someone in the Forbidden City that can train in that style, most often in various schools and temples found throughout. Using skill training this way may or may not cost money; some training cannot be paid for in goods, but must be paid for in service.

LEARNING NEW MARTIAL ARTS STYLES

There will be a point in the game where one or more of the players wish for their characters to learn a new Martial Art. They may desire to learn from ancient masters, instructional manuals, or potent spirits who possess secret styles found nowhere else. In all instances, learning new styles works similarly.

In order to pick up a new style, the Game Master rolls the teaching skill as normal for training, but uses the entry below instead of the one found in the BRP rulebook.

Fumble: You cannot learn anything about this style from this instructor; your learning style is completely incompatible with his, her, or its teaching style.

Failure: Indicates no skill improvement.

Success: Your character has learned the rudiments of the style, and you gain a base chance equal to the lower of the characteristics that form the base chance of that style.

Special: Your character has learned well, and knows a good bit about the style and its methods. You gain a starting chance equal to the larger of the characteristics associated with that style.

Critical: Your character has learned from one of the masters. You gain the new Style at a starting chance equal to both of the characteristics associated with the style added together.

From here, your training may proceed as normal, although you will not begin with with any techniques or powers.

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SAMPLE NEW MARTIAL ART: KUNG FU

Rather than being a single Martial Art, Kung Fu is a catch-all term to cover a variety of Martial Art styles that have developed in China over many years. As such, doing a single style meant to cover all of Kung Fu would miss out on the diversity that this martial tradition possesses.

To illustrate the method for creating a new style, I will be using Preying Mantis Style as a base. In addition to promoting a balanced form of fighting, the style also has some signature methods of striking that would make an interesting addition to the Martial Arts styles listed.

The most prominent feature of the style is the way in which Punching strikes are performed. In most styles, punches are performed by holding a closed fist ready to strike, and using the fist to injure an opponent when an opening presents itself. In Preying Mantis Style, the arms and hands are held out, with three fingers extended, in order to replicate the scything arms of the insect from which the style takes its name. To strike, the practitioner pokes or flicks his or her extended fingers, aiming for vulnerable spots, like the eyes or nose, or acupuncture meridians, such as the upper lip, inside of the arms, or elsewhere.

Given the mixture of flexibility, dexterity, and knowledge that the style requires, the base chance for this style would likely be DEX+INT.

When determining the attacks emphasized by the new style, we look at the style in real life. Preying Mantis Style would focus on punches, with a smaller emphasis on kicks and grapples.

So, the Style Attacks for Preying Mantis Style are: Punch, Kick, Grapple.

The skills associated with the style can be trickier to come up with. Since Preying Mantis Style is an external, fighting art, Dodge is a likely skill. And, since its attacks require some knowledge of anatomy and physiology, First Aid and/or Medicine would be good skills to have. This also allows for the practitioner to be a passable doctor as well. In modern times, the style is also used in competitions that do not involve sparring. As such, practitioners might possess the Perform skill, to reflect their ability to do forms and other manoeuvres in the presence of judges.

The Style Skills for Preying Mantis are: Dodge, First Aid, Medicine, Perform (Practice Forms).

Next come powers. Since Preying Mantis is based upon a real-world Martial Art, access to powers will not really fit with

the theme. In the real world, people are quite capable of doing amazing things with only time and effort to put into them. But, if used in a slightly more fantastical setting, someone practising Preying Mantis Style might gain access to Chi Augmentations to reflect special training. When designing overly magical styles, it might be a good idea to prepare a list of Chi Powers that fit the theme of the style, either selected from the list, or created for that style in particular.

For Preying Mantis Style, I would likely only allow access to relatively mundane Augmentations, like Increased Characteristics and Super Skills. Other powers might also be appropriate, depending on the nature of the setting and the character who possesses this style.

Lastly, each style offers a handful of techniques. Since Preying Mantis Style, in real life, focuses on precise strikes delivered to debilitate targets, the techniques used with the style will likely focus more on applying status effects rather than raw damage.

When looking at the list of potential technique effects, the following stand out as being good matches for the theme:

Feint, given that the style's methods of attack can be confusing if you are not familiar with it.

Knockout Blow. I can see this as a series of strikes to pressure points.

Paralysis. This might be less "realistic," and it appears to work in a manner similar to Knockout Blow. I think I will take this instead of Knockout, and replace the Knockout with Disarm.

Conversely, creating a new technique might be useful here. Preying Mantis Style has a very low crouching stance. Attacking from this low might knock an opponent down by tripping them up. Perhaps the attack, if it hits, means the target must pass an Agility test to stay on their feet. I will call this a Sweeping attack, and will likely add it to the general list of Techniques.

So, of the Techniques that seem appropriate, the three starting ones will be:

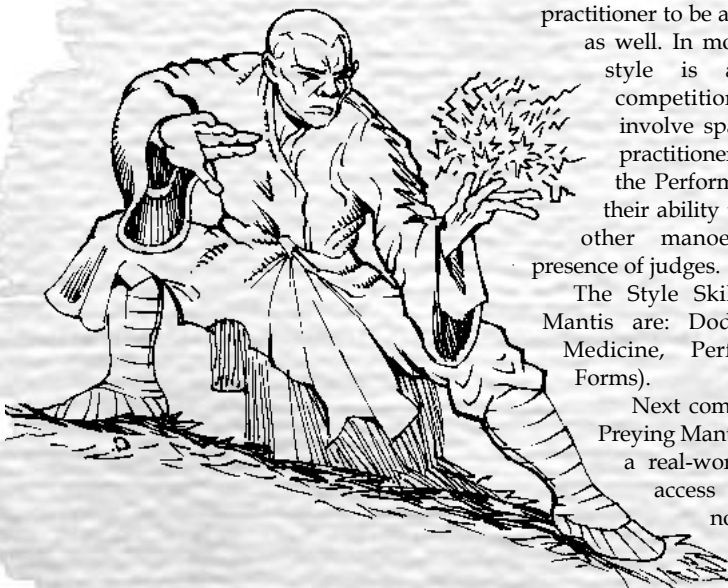
- **Feint**. It needs a fancier name, so I will call it "Dizzying Distraction Strike." It gives a +10% to Punch, and is also a Feint.

- **Paralysis**. "Pressure Point Jabs." +10% to hit, Paralysis.

- **Sweeping attack**. "Crouching Stance Attack." +10% to hit, Sweeping.

Preying Mantis style is a good example of the style creation process, as well as being a good addition to the list of styles.

Other Martial Art Styles can be created as needed, to better fit individual campaigns.





4. DRAGON LINES

THE PEOPLE who would eventually make up the Dragon Empire had knowledge of the flows of Chi that have covered the Earth since before there were written records. Oral traditions, many alive today, have stories dealing with the Dragon Lines, and those who could see, use, and manipulate the flows of magical energy for the good of humanity.

Over the long centuries, humanity, and the multitude of gods and spirits that have come to rely on Chi for their very existence, have grown so knowledgeable about it that nearly every facet of Chi has been studied, codified, and systematized. Due to the depth of this knowledge, there is little that cannot be accomplished using Chi, if the problem is approached with the right mindset and tools.

Geomancy is the art and science of manipulating Chi. Most people in the Empire have a rudimentary knowledge about Chi flows, but those possessing greater understanding of the skill recognize seven truths about Chi. Knowledge of these truths can help lay people understand the world around them, and can assist Martial Artists in

developing their talents through the use of Chi.

- It is the nature of Chi to flow. While some types of Chi flow at a slower pace than others, all Chi moves. Even Chi that has been compressed into matter is not entirely stagnant, although a mountain appears to be so from our mortal perspective.
- All of existence of made of Chi. Everything in the cosmos, from the Jade Emperor downward, is nothing more than Chi. Most things in the world are made of a single type of Chi, while other, more complex things (like people and intelligent spirits) are comprised of all types of Chi. In philosophical texts, the whole of existence is referred to as "The Ten-Thousand Things."
- Chi is divided in a number of ways. The most common, but by no means the most complete or best, is the one used by followers of The Way, who divide the types of Chi into Yang (active) and Yin (passive).
- Mortals and spirits can, through the use of breath training and martial discipline, store Chi, and use it to perform otherwise impossible actions. Given

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that Chi flows, Martial Artists harnessing, storing, and using Chi is a part of the natural rhythm of the universe.

- While "solid" Chi, that which makes up the mortal world, is considered "natural," Chi that exists as energy is considered "supernatural." Supernatural Chi is not seen as evil or destructive by any save the most ignorant, superstitious folks.
- If Chi does not flow, it becomes stagnant. Stagnant Chi is not healthy, and beings near a stagnant Chi flow will slowly become diseased. There are some spirits, notably those that serve Corruption, who derive power from stagnant Chi, and work to create as many areas of it as possible. Those who die in stagnant Chi become ghosts instead of moving on to the afterlife.
- Too much Chi of a certain type can be unbalancing, which can cause sane, healthy people to become violent and unpredictable. If left unchecked, undisciplined use of Chi can result in Corruption, a dark force that revels in anger.

The Geomancers of the Dragon Empire have used their prodigious knowledge of the flow of Chi so that the Empire and its people are as healthy and productive as possible. The areas closest to the Forbidden City are so flushed with Chi that many live to advanced ages, healthy until their deaths. Spirits abound, existing close to people and working with them to improve crops and protect against diseases that would harm the community.

Dragon Lines can exist in one of several conditions. The conditions are on a continuum. The Geomancy skill allows you to adjust the relative level of Chi through a Dragon Line or Chi nexus. The states are:

Abundant. At this level, the Chi present from the Dragon Line is much more than it would be ordinarily. Such spots are Chi Nexuses, and are highly coveted by spirits, priests and sorcerers. Nexus points have one or more dominant elemental associates, which colour both the nature of the nexus and the people who spend any time in them.

Present. At this level, Chi is present, but not in any particularly strong amount. This level is the baseline level of Chi in places that have an elemental association. A normal mountain lake has this level, as does a forest near human habitation.

Absent. For some reason, there is no Chi flow of any strength in the area. Spirits find it hard to manifest, and no creature may regrow spent Chi by any means other than drawing it from living sources. Spirits need Chi to thrive. By reducing a Dragon Line to this level, even temporarily, you can drive unwanted spirits away, unless the Chi is cut off (see below), in which case the spirits become hungry or hostile, depending on type.

Cut Off. It is possible to manipulate Chi in such a manner that a large portion of it cannot flow from its present location to another one. This is generally a bad thing, since Chi is meant to flow at all times. People who die in a place that has cut off Chi become ghosts, and cannot go to the afterlife.

Stagnant. If Chi is cut off from the flow of the rest of the world for long enough, it can go stagnant. Stagnant Chi spoils everything it touches; spirits become hostile, ghosts become hungry ghosts, and mortals gain Corruption points.

Change. This level exists outside the continuum. You may, if you have access to a functioning Dragon Line of any type, channel it through an Absent area, giving it the flavour of the line in use, or chance an existing line's flavour by funneling a different line through the area.

Still, Chi flows like water, but just as water does, it has to come from somewhere. At the edges of the Empire are places whose Chi has been stripped away and transported miles down the Dragon Lines, resulting in barren wastelands where hostile spirits collect meagre amounts of life-sustaining Chi from the poor and desperate who cannot leave because they have nowhere else to go.

USES OF CHI

Most people in Dragon Lines use Chi to subtly enhance their lives. People who make things for a living are almost always able to perform to the best of their abilities. Chi flows generally help people do what they do, only better.

This is also true for Martial Artists. These few potent people are take Chi from the environment and infuse their bodies with it. By doing so, they transcend many of the limitations of the body, and they become almost god-like in their aspect. Scholars who study the use of Chi recognize a three ways Chi is used: Chi Burning, Regeneration, and Chi Powers.

CHI BURNING

This is most often the first way Chi use manifests, often during a time of stress. Would-be Martial Artist spends great amount of Chi to escape from disaster. As time passes, and these lucky few move on to the disciplined training needed to perform actual Martial Arts, this less efficient means of using personal Chi falls to the wayside. Even so, raw talent and grit are sometimes more useful than any other tool.

To represent this, any character who possesses Chi points may spend them in the following fashion:

1. You may spend six Chi to shift the result of any die roll made by your character one level better, potentially turning a failure into a success. Using Chi to shift skill roll results does not count as a successful use of that skill, regardless of what the actual die roll was.

2. You may spend as much Chi as the maximum

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possible damage of a weapon to inflict that much damage to a target on a successful attack. This does not affect your damage bonus, which is rolled separately. You must declare this before the to hit roll is made.

3. Some folks seem blessed with good fortune, and are able to unconsciously use Chi to add some beneficial detail to their environment. This costs a variable number of Chi, from 1 for a minor thing, like finding a bit of flint and steel when a cheery fire would be nice, up to 10 or more when seeking something that might save your life in dire straits.

REGENERATION

Those who can manipulate Chi are able to recover from injuries that would be fatal to others. Anyone with a pool of Chi may, when injured, perform the following action:

For the cost of 1 Chi, they may spend an hour in quiet meditation. Doing so earns the character a single Hit Point (per location is hit locations are used). This may be done reflexively while sleeping, so long as the character has Chi points to spare. Should a character lose consciousness due to Chi point loss while injured, they will first recover a single point of Chi after an hour of rest, and then begin healing at a cost of 1 Chi per Hit Point per hour.

This is not true regeneration, as per the Chi Power. This form of healing that does not allow the character to regrow lost limbs, nor will it allow the character to ignore the results of permanent Major Wounds. If you lose any eye, it will not help you grow that eye back; it will only help you survive the injury that took your eye. It also will not allow you to regrow any lost Characteristic points, regardless of how they were lost.

CHI POWERS

Chi powers come in two varieties: those that grant their user an "always on" change, and those that offer the ability to manipulate environmental Chi. Both types of Chi powers are efficient means of using Chi, and they stem from either the user's supernatural nature, or due to years of practice and training.

The first major group of Chi powers are the Augmentations. These are changes to the body itself, are often always active, and usually require no expenditure of personal Chi to use. There are, however, exceptions to this.

CHI AUGMENTATIONS

ABSORPTION

As per the Super Power of the same name. Note that in Dragon Lines, you may only use this power to absorb Chi.

ADAPTABILITY

As per the Mutation of the same name.

AIR WALKING

This ability costs one Chi per combat round, or one Chi per hour if not in combat. It makes your character able to traverse the air itself, though you cannot actually levitate or fly. Instead, you move as though there are invisible stairs and walkways that only you can use. You may carry others up to the normal limits for your Strength.

ALLERGY

As per the Mutation of the same name. Note that most spirits will have an allergy to some substance commonly used by mortals, often iron, steel, or jade

APPEARS TO TAKE NO DAMAGE

A common transformation amongst spirits, but also used with mortal Martial Artists, this power allows the user to appear to take no damage, and suffer no pain from injuries, until he or she is reduced to zero Hit Points. At this time, they fall over, and all of the injuries they have taken so far suddenly appear all at once.

ARMOUR

When selected, choose what form of damage the armour offers protection from, either kinetic damage or Chi attacks. Whenever attacked by the chosen damage type, characters behave as though they possessed 3 points of armour against that type of attack.

This Augmentation may be taken more than once. Each time, its effects may stack for more protection from one damage type, or offer protection from another damage type.

ARTEFACT

Your character begins play with the possession of an Artefact of some sort. See the Artefacts in Chapter 9 Material Attachments. As a Minor Augmentation, you may select a Lesser Artefact. As a Major Augmentation, you may begin with a Greater Artefact. These later artefacts are items of extreme potency, and it is very likely that someone, perhaps a lot of someones, will be jealous of it and want to take it from you.

BANISHMENT

This manipulation costs 4 Chi to use. When faced with a spirit that has not been summoned by you, you may spend the Chi cost and engage the spirit in a single POW versus POW resistance roll

Adding Details

Generally, we suggest that you charge very little Chi for adding details. This encourages players to make use of this rule, which adds to the cinematic quality of the game.

It may not be not realistic, but it does serve to keep the game moving. Consider it a pacing mechanic; if you want to avoid having the players stuck when they have to get through a door, but they have no key or lock-picking ability, have them discover some means of opening it at the cost of a few points of Chi. That way, the game session does not grind to a halt. Some players may figure out some way to abuse your good nature, so be careful with the use of this system.

Also, consider spreading the Chi cost for adding new elements out amongst the group, especially if the added detail benefits everyone.

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contest. If you succeed, you may make the spirit leave the premises immediately. If you fail, the spirit remains, and mocks you. You may try again next round.

Possessing spirits will leave the body they had inhabited behind. Ghosts tend to disincorporate when banished, sinking into the general Chi flow of the environment. Other spirits try to leave if they are able to do so, and will cease hostilities if they had been compelled to attack.

Using a spirit's True Name grants a +30% bonus to the POW vs. POW Resistance attempt.



BEGUILING GAZE

This power costs 3 Chi to use. When activated, your APP counts as being 6 points higher. You may make a APP versus INT Resistance roll. If you succeed, the target feels as though you are good friends, and he will go out of his way to aid and assist you, perhaps even offering to serve you. You may have a number of beguiled companions not superior to one third of your APP at any given time.

Effected creatures may make an Idea roll each day in order to overcome this power.

BIPED/QUADRUPED

As per the Mutation of the same name.

BOUND SPIRIT

At some point in your character's past, a spirit was bound to you. Now, it serves you to the best of its ability. Work with your Game Master to determine the nature and powers of your spiritual companion. This power is only for spirits bound in the flesh. For spirits in binding objects, choose the Artefact power instead.

Note that, if you have bound this spirit yourself, you may select this power the next time your Martial Arts training allows you to do so. Once selected in this manner, the POW spent to bind the spirit is returned to you. You may only have a number of spirits bound to you or in your service equal to you APP.

If taken as an adverse Augmentation, the spirit that is bound to you is not helpful. In fact, it goes out of its way to make your life miserable. It might be the shade of a man you killed when you were 12, the spirit of an ancestor who is concerned that you are not living up to your potential (and verbally berates you about it), or even a demon who follows you around and tries to eat your friends.

If taken as a Minor adverse Augmentation, this is relatively benign, but still irritating. You can buy it off eventually by spending a Power slot when you have access to one. If taken as a Major Augmentation, the spirit cannot be gotten rid of in any way short of an exacting and arduous quest, and the spirit bound to you will actively try to stop you from completing it.

BREATHES FIRE

For whatever reason, the character may breathe fire 1D6 (rolled when power is selected) times a day. This attack does 3D6 damage, and may only focus on a single target within one metre. This is magical fire, so it does not harm the user, although it may set other things on fire.

CAMOUFLAGE

As per the Mutation of the same name.

CHI NEXUS

Your character has access to an area suffused with Chi. This may be the location of a particularly strong flow of one type of Chi, or an area in which more than one type of Chi overlap. Work with your

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Game Master to determine the type of Nexus it is, and how the abundance of Chi might manifest. See the Geomancy skill on page 23 for more uses of this resource.

As a Minor Augmentation, the Chi Nexus grants those who spend time in it an extra point of Chi, if they are missing any of their own. So, someone meditating in a Chi Nexus for an hour would get 1 (for the normal time it take to regenerate Chi), +1 (for a successful meditation roll), +1 (for the Nexus) for a total of 3 Chi per hour.

As a Major Augmentation, if the Nexus is especially strong; in addition to the above Chi bonus for regeneration, the Nexus also offers anyone with its boundaries a bonus equivalent to a single Chi Power from this list. This is often a form of slow regeneration, but other types may exist. Ask your Game Master for details regarding this feature.

CONGENITAL DISEASE

This is an adverse transformation, as per the Mutation.

CURSE OF SORCERY

As per the Sorcery Spell of the same name. Using this power on an unwilling target causes the user to gain 1 Allegiance point to Corruption each time.

DANGER SENSE

As per the Psychic Ability of the same name.

DECREASED CHARACTERISTIC

As per the Mutation of the same name.

DEFENCE

This power makes your character harder to hit. Each time this power is taken, those targeting you must subtract 5% from all attacks. This bonus does not increase with experience, but it can stack with other powers that reduce an attacker's chance to hit your character, such as Unarmed Combat. Your character cannot select Defence more times than his or her original DEX, although if the Game Master is using the optional rule allowing for attack skill ratings over 100%, this restriction can be ignored.

DISEASE CARRIER

As per the Mutation of the same name.

DRAIN

This power costs 1 Chi to use. When selecting it, choose whether your character drains Hit Points or Chi. You may drain 1D6 Hit Point or 2D6 Chi from a target that you can touch. You must be able to maintain contact over a full combat round. This may require a Grapple attempt in combat, or an Agility roll if outside of combat. No roll is required to drain an immobile or willing target. If your character wished to continue to drain a target on successive rounds, the requisite manoeuvre (Grapple, etc.), must be rolled again as per the appropriate rules.

Once contact has been established, your

character must beat the target in a Chi versus Chi Resistance roll. Success means that the power takes effect, while failure means that it does not have any effect, and the target can attempt to break free. If successful, the targeted resource is then transferred to your character at the beginning of the next round. Additional levels grant an additional D6 to the amount drained.

Hit Points. While being drained, the target must make a successful Effort roll to be able to act against your character. If the target's Hit Point total reached 1 or 2, he or she has fallen unconscious. If the target's Hit Point total reaches zero, he or she will die at the beginning of the next combat round. Your character cannot transfer more Hit Points than his or her own hit point total - any additional hit points drained are simply lost.

Chi. While being drained, the target must make a successful Luck roll to be able to act against you. If the target's Chi reaches zero, he or she falls unconscious. Your character may store more Chi above and beyond normal Chi maximum. These points are temporary, and will not be recovered once spent. They will also dissipate at a rate of one per hour. The maximum extra Chi your character can hold is equal to your normal Chi twice over, plus the number of times you have selected the Drain power. So, if you have a POW of 12, and the Drain power twice, you can hold 12 (normally), plus 12 (for the extra Drain power), plus 2 (the number of times you have Drain), for a total of 26 Chi.

EXPLODES WHEN SLAIN

When reduced to zero Hit Points, a character with this power detonates on its next DEX rank, even if it is dead. This explosion does 3D6 damage to everything within 3 metres of the character. Once exploded, the character cannot be brought back to life by any means short of Divine Intervention.

EXTRA CHI

Your character possesses extra reserves of Chi energy over and above what is normally granted by your POW characteristic. Each time this power is taken, it grants your character 10 extra Chi, though this has no effect on your character's POW score. The Chi may be personal energy from your character's own body, or it may be stored in an external source. The source is irrelevant except in cases where the energy supply may be targeted - personal Chi can fuel personal powers, and Chi stored in an object can fuel external powers as well as powers generated by the character directly. Furthermore, your character can have multiple energy supplies, each supplying Chi for different powers.

The Game Master should determine whether Extra Chi is taken into account when performing Powers that require a Chi vs. Chi Resistance roll test. It may be safer to only allow the character to use Chi determined by their POW for such tests, and only allow them to use the entirety of their Chi under certain special circumstances.

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EXTRA HIT POINTS

This power grants your character higher Hit Points than his or her CON and SIZ would indicate. These Hit Points are added on top of your character's normal Hit Points, and his or her Major Wound Threshold is adjusted to the new total. Each time this power is selected, add one to your Hit Point total, and redetermine your Major Wound level or Hit Points per Location accordingly.

You may select this power a number of times equal to your original CON score.

FAMILIAR

Your character may begin play with a Familiar, even if you are not a magician. Your familiar may be any creature of a SIZ equal to or less than $\frac{1}{4}$ your POW, and is assumed to have already been bound. In all ways, this creature behaves as a Magician's Familiar from page 90 of the BRP rulebook.

FAST

Your character is faster than most other people. All of your movement rates are raised to 12, or increased by 2 if your MOV is something other than 10.

HARDY

As per the Mutation in the BRP rulebook.

HIGHLY FLAMMABLE

Your character's makeup is such that, if ignited, you will burn hotly for a number of rounds equal to your CON. You are not harmed by these flames, although you still take damage from other sources of fire. While on fire, everyone within 3 yards of you takes 2D6 fire damage per combat round.

HIVE MIND

If your character has this Augmentation, he or she is considered to be one of a group of similar creatures, though the only one present in the campaign. Creatures with a Hive Mind often live in colonies and share the same mind. The experience of one of the group's creatures is simultaneously experienced by the other members of its colony. At the minor level, the group intelligence is short distance (CON in metres), and is limited to vague sensations or behavioural imperatives. At the major level, this augmentation forms a strong link (almost telepathic in nature) allowing full communication over an unlimited distance. Often species with the Hive Mind transformation have ant-like castles, with some individuals specialized for breeding, others for foraging, and yet others for warfare.

HYBRID

This transformation works exactly like the Hybrid Mutation from the BRP rulebook. It automatically grants the Natural Weapons power as well.

HYPNOTIC GAZE

Your character possesses an ability to hypnotize

living beings with eye contact and force of will. Make a POW vs POW resistance roll. If you succeed, your target cannot avert its eyes, and counts as being Stunned. While in this state, targets are highly susceptible to suggestion. All social skills made against them are Easy, and you may direct their actions as though they were your own. Furthermore, you can implant suggestions for later use by making another POW vs POW resistance roll.

Targets may make a Luck roll to break away from your character's Gaze. Once this occurs, they will have no specific memory of being hypnotized, although they will generally feel suspicion towards you.

IMITATION

This transformation is identical to the Imitation Mutation found on the BRP rulebook. Additionally, practitioners of some mystical Martial Arts may take this power without actually appearing mutated.

IMMATERIAL STRENGTH

This power allows a character to attack beings in the physical world, even if they are incorporeal, invisible, or otherwise out of phase with the targets. This power is very common with spirits who have the ability to become intangible, as it allows them to attack without making them vulnerable to mundane attacks.

This power costs 1 Chi per combat encounter to use. When activated, users may attack with Melee skills at short range, as though they were right next to their target. Attacking in this manner does not render the user visible or tangible.

Martial Artists who possess this power can also attack with their punches and kicks as though they were ranged powers, but they are not made invisible or intangible unless they possess these powers already and have them activated.

The range at which attacks may be made is relatively short, several yards at most.

INCITE FURY

This power costs 1 Chi to activate. It can be used on one's self, or on another target. If used against an unwilling target, a POW vs POW resistance roll is needed. Someone affected by this power immediately flies into a berserk rage, and will fight unceasingly until the power's duration wears off (the user's POW in combat rounds). The target is always able to choose who to attack.

The power increases the number of attacks the enraged target may make by one, which comes at the very end of the combat round. This spell offers no extra bonuses to any combat skill. It does, however, reduce the target's sense of self-preservation, lowering all parry and dodge skill attempts by 30%.

The target ignores any unconsciousness from a Major Wound. A fatal attack is still fatal, but the target will not die until the end of the round in which the fatal blow is dealt, after his or her last extra attack.

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During a furious state, the target cannot make any action that does not relate to some form of combat, so no defensive magic, or healing, or anything else.

INCREASED CHARACTERISTIC

This transformation works in a manner similar to the Increased Characteristic Mutation from the BRP rulebook, with the additional note that the player may select which characteristics he or she wants to have modified by this power.

INTANGIBILITY

Characters that possess this power may, at a Chi cost equal to their $SIZ/3$, become intangible, which enables them to move through solid objects at a rate of one object per combat round. Once through the object, they may elect to either become solid again, or pay an extra Chi to retain their intangible state. Outside of combat, this power costs one Chi per hour to maintain.

Characters in this state may only effect other intangible characters, or spirits of any type, unless they also possess the Immaterial Strength power. While intangible, the character is immune to mundane attacks, but can still be harmed by Chi magic and Martial Art attacks imbued with Chi.

Characters with this power are not automatically invisible.

INVISIBILITY

Characters who possess this power may, at a Chi cost equal to their $SIZ/3$, render themselves, and whatever objects that are in their possession at the time, invisible to the naked eye. Maintaining this power costs 1 Chi per combat round after the first. Under normal circumstances, an invisible character can do no more than walk or talk; anything more strenuous breaks the character's concentration, rendering him or her visible as soon as the action is taken.

However, characters who also possess the Immaterial Strength power can attack while invisible, and have that action not break the invisibility.

When evading attacks made by invisible opponents, assume that all skills are reduced to a quarter of their normal rating. If a Listen, Sense, or Spot check is made at the start of a combat round, defence skills are Difficult instead.

Characters who possess the Witch Sight power (see below) can always see invisible characters, and can fight them normally.

IRRESISTIBLE MOVEMENT

This power is identical to the Irresistible Super Movement power from the BRP rulebook.

KEEN SENSE

This power works similarly to the Keen Sense Mutation from the BRP rulebook. If taken as part of a mystical Martial Arts style, the power does not provoke an obvious distinctive feature.

Keen Sense works by making a purely natural sense operate at an increased, but still mostly human, level. For characters wishing to have senses beyond what is humanly capable, see Super Sense, below.

LEAP

A staple of mystical Martial Arts, a character with the Leap power adds two metres to their horizontal jumping distance, and one metre to their vertical. These numbers are increased each time the power is selected. Otherwise, this power works as the Leap Super Power from the BRP rulebook.

When used in conjunction with the Lightfoot power (see below), a character with this power need not worry about balance when landing on narrow ledges.

LIGHTFOOT

Another staple of mystical Martial Arts, this power lets you maintain perfect balance, regardless of the nature of the surface upon which you are standing. It costs one Chi to use per combat round, but is otherwise identical to the Lightfoot Super Movement power in the BRP rulebook. If used outside of combat, the single point of Chi powers the Lightfoot movement for an hour.

LIKEN SHAPE

As per the Sorcery Spell from the BRP rulebook. This power costs 4 Chi per use, and can be used to copy the appearance of any being, natural or otherwise, the user has seen.

LUMINESCENCE

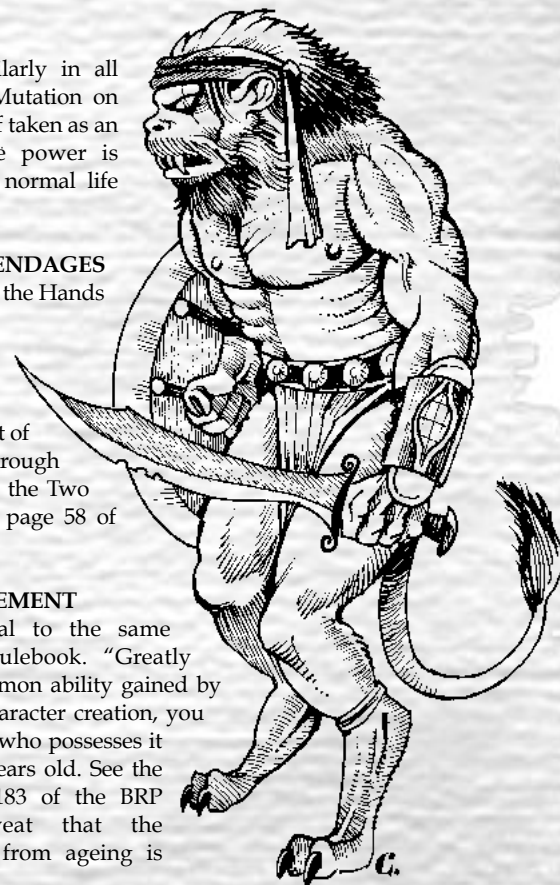
This power works similarly in all ways to the Luminescence Mutation on the BRP rulebook. However, if taken as an adverse transformation, the power is always on, making living a normal life difficult for the recipient.

MANIPULATION APPENDAGES

This power is identical to the Hands Mutation from the BRP rulebook. It often manifests as lashing tentacles or multiple limbs. Characters who possess more than one set of limbs, either naturally or through this power, may benefit from the Two Weapon Fighting rules from page 58 of this book.

METABOLIC IMPROVEMENT

This power is identical to the same Mutation from the BRP rulebook. "Greatly Extended Lifespan" is a common ability gained by Martial Artists. If taken at character creation, you may assert that the character who possesses it is already several hundred years old. See the rules for ageing on page 183 of the BRP rulebook, with the caveat that the Characteristic deterioration from ageing is



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largely done away with as a benefit of channelling Chi. Your character will also most likely have a number of allies and enemies gained over the centuries, at the discretion of the Game Master.

METABOLIC WEAKNESS

An adverse transformation, as per the Mutation of the same name from the BRP rulebook. This power might also represent a number of odd curses, living conditions, or the side-effects of spiritual blood common in Martial Art stories. Note that it is also possible to cure this condition as a side effect of your Martial Arts training. A Minor version can be gotten rid of by dedicating a new power gained through study and training to it, while the Major version can be gotten rid of by doing the same and reducing it first to a minor condition.

MUDDLE

As per the sorcery spell of the same name from the BRP rulebook, save that Chi values are used instead of Power Points.

NATURAL WEAPONRY

This power works identically to the Mutation from the BRP rulebook, with two exceptions: first, Martial Artists with this power do not necessarily grow claws or fangs, they may have trained their bodies to the point that their attacks are more effective; and second, this power automatically comes when a player selects the Hybrid Augmentation.

NEVER SURPRISED

Characters with this power are quite literally never surprised. They cannot be ambushed, snuck up on, or otherwise surprised. Whether or not this means they have sufficient time to warn companions of impending attack is up to the Game Master.

OVERPOWERING STENCH

Creatures with this power smell so bad that being anywhere near them is difficult, if not impossible. Fighting such a creature means making a Stamina roll at the start of the encounter. If failed, all attacks against it are Difficult for 1D6+2 rounds afterwards.

A human character with this transformation finds it hard to live a regular life. In this case, it is also an adverse transformation. Note that it is possible to get used to the smell, typically after a few adventures together.

Also, tracking a creature with this transformation by smell is Easy, although the tracking creature will rub its nose and whine while doing so.

PAIN SENSITIVITY

It works exactly like the Mutation of the same name from the BRP rulebook.

PHEROMONE

This power works exactly like the Mutation of the same name, with the following change: the power always has a smell associated with it, usually pleasant, and the user constantly smells of this odour, so much so that it is essentially a Distinctive Feature. This means that anyone who encounters a character with this power can readily identify it. Asking someone, "have you met a woman who smelled of cinnamon?" will always provoke an affirmative response if they have encountered such a woman.

POX

A character with this power can draw Chi out of a target and cause it to spill into the environment. It costs one Chi to activate, and the target must be within line of sight at the start of the power use. When activated, make a Chi versus Chi resistance roll. If you win, the target loses 1D6 Chi. When reduced to zero Chi, the target falls unconscious. You do not gain the Chi thus drained; it flows into the air and dissipates, although someone with a power that lets them sense Chi would see it as a swirling mist in the air for a number of hours equal to the target's POW.

If you fail the resistance roll, the Chi cost is spent, but the target loses none. On the plus side, the target will have no idea you are attacking it.

Also, while under the effects of this power, the target may not use any power or spell that is fuelled with their own Chi. This can be used as a clue that they are being attacked. Chi points lost from this spell are gone, but regenerate normally.

POWER SINK

The character begins play with an object or place in which he or she may store extra Chi. Aside from costing no personal POW (which is assumed to have already been spent), this power sink is identical to the Brazier of Power sorcery Spell from the BRP rulebook.

REDUCED SENSE

This adverse transformation works in a manner similar to the Reduced Sense Mutation from the BRP rulebook.

REFLECTION

Every time this transformation is selected, it allows the user to automatically reflect one Chi's worth of power back at the caster. Powers that cost only a single Chi therefore affect the original caster instead of the target characters. This power may be selected no more times than the character's original POW characteristic.

For example, if hit by a Blast spell that has 2 Chi behind it, a character possessing one level of this power would only take 1 Chi's worth of damage, or 1D6, and the caster of the Blast spell would take the other one Chi's worth of damage. Spells and Powers that require a resistance roll to activate will therefore test against the caster's characteristic, making each test have a 50% chance of working.

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REGENERATION

This power works as per the Regeneration Mutation from the BRP rulebook. Also, all Martial Artists in Dragon Lines have a minor version of this power, which takes 1 Chi to regenerate 1 Hit Point after an hour of meditation. This lesser version of regeneration is replaced by this power if and when it is selected.

SENSITIVITY

This power works according to the Mutation of the same name from the BRP rulebook. Additionally, when taken, the player may decide to be sensitive to Psychic and supernatural phenomena as per the Sensitive Psychic Ability from the BRP rulebook, instead of the other substance granted by the Mutation.

SIDEKICK

Characters who possess this power have attracted a companion who travels with them and assists them in any way possible. They may be a bound ancestor spirit, a student learning Martial Arts from you, a sorcerer's apprentice, or other types of characters at the Game Master's discretion.

The sidekicks are of a power level comparable to a Normal starting character, although they may have access to spells or powers other than what a Normal character would. Your Game Master may allow you to control your Sidekick from time to time. If the Sidekick ever develops a POW characteristic greater than your own, it leaves your service and becomes an NPC controlled by the Game Master. Your Game Master may offer you another Minor Augmentation to take the sting away.

SPEECH MIMICRY

This power works as per the Mutation of the same name. The Game Master is expressly encouraged to allow for multiple cross-species communication using this power. All creatures living in the high-Chi environment of the Dragon Empire have developed a fair degree of intelligence, and can be communicated with by someone possessing this power, though you may need to make an Idea check to understand what you hear.

SPITS ACID

A creature with this power may spit a glob of corrosive acid up to 6 metres away. They will develop a "Spit Acid" skill (base DEX) to determine whether they hit or miss. The acid is POT 2D10, and may be used a number of times per day equal to the user's CON/3. Generally, mundane armour only protects against the acid for one round, after which the acid has mostly dissolved it. Artefact weapons and armour are immune to acid.

SPIRIT BOON

At some point in your character's past, you have developed a good working relationship with a single powerful spirit or a community of less powerful ones. You will enjoy a minor benefit from the spirits,

in keeping with the nature and potency of the spiritual beings in question. Work with your Game Master to determine specific effects. If no effect seems appropriate, consider the boon to operate as a different augmentation power each session, in a manner that will assist in the adventure to come.

If you have already developed a boon with a certain spirit through play, you may select this Augmentation the next time you are able to do so. If taken in this way, the POW sacrifice needed to enter into the boon is returned to you upon taking this power.

STRUCTURAL IMPROVEMENT

As per the Mutation of the same name. Unlike other means of improving characteristics, this power always produces an obvious alteration, the likes of which are enough to produce a Distinctive Feature.

STRUCTURAL WEAKNESS

As above, including the addition of an obvious Distinctive Feature.

SUPER SENSE

Characters with this power have a sensory modality that operates beyond what a human, even an augmented human, could normally do. This power works as the Super Sense power from the BRP rulebook, although some powers will not exist, at the Game Master's option.

SUPER SKILL

Every time this power is selected, you may increase your effective ability at any single skill by +20%. Multiple selections of this augmentation allow you to increase a single skill, or to spread the bonus to other skills.

If the skill thus augmented is used, do not consider the bonus from this power when determining if you get an experience check. Also, you do not consider this bonus when making experience checks at the end of an adventure.

For example, Chun has a Jian sword skill at 60%. He also has the Super Skill power that he has applied to the Jian, making at effectively 80%. If he attacks with it, he only earns an experience check if he rolls 60 or under, although he will still succeed with the attack if he rolls 80 or under. Likewise, when he rolls to see if he can increase his skill, he still must only roll over 60%, not 80%, to earn the increase in the skill.

TRACKLESS

This power works exactly like the Trackless Super Movement Super Power from the BRP rulebook.

TRANSFER

This power works exactly like the Transfer Super Power from the BRP rule book, save that it only affects Hit Points and Chi. Transferring a Hit Point costs 3 Chi, and transferring Chi costs one point per Chi sent.

But I don't want any silly magic powers!

There is always a chance that there will be a player, who, despite being in an obviously magical setting, will insist that he or she does not want any magical powers in order to prove that mundane skill and discipline will overcome trickery and flash any day. This will not be an issue if you are playing a Normal game using the Martial Arts styles listed in the Normal section in Chapter 3 (page 26). However, if playing in the Dragon Lines setting, or other settings where magic exists, such a character will be outclassed by nearly everyone in the setting; the other players will have powers that let them do remarkable stuff, and the villains will, too. If you restrict the foes used to something the mundane fighter can handle, then the rest of the players will not be challenged, and if you challenge them, your mundane fighter might be paste if a creature or potent Martial Artist attacks him or her. As a compromise, let the mundane player select one of the Normal level Martial Arts, and grant him or her access to the Chi Augmentations, even if the Art would not ordinarily allow it. Tell the player that he or she can only select the Increased Characteristic and Super Skill powers, and to rationalize them as benefits from extensive training. Perhaps he or she is the Master's favourite student, and has been offered training secrets that none of the other students have access to. This way, the character is still relatively mundane, since they have no fancy Chi power, but has increased ability to stand up to the variety of dangers he or she is likely to run into.

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Chi Influence

The presence of so much Chi has some interesting effects on those who live in it. In places with a high Chi concentration, people tend to behave in a manner fitting with the type of Chi present. For example, those living in the presence of strong Fire Chi tend to be more aggressive than others, or are quick to respond to a threat with violence.

Conversely, those living near a concentration of Water Chi tend to be more emotional and introspective.

Chi will not be an overt influence over everyone in the area. Most people will be affected, but there are plenty of examples of people who are not overtly influenced. Martial Artists, in particular, have personal Chi in much higher concentration than what is in the area, making the local Chi influence on them almost nil, unless the individuals have adopted the Chi influence of the area as a means of expressing their own personalities.

Manipulation Duration

In most cases, Manipulations last for the caster's POW in combat rounds. However, if keeping track of multiple Manipulations becomes tedious, it is safe to say that manipulations last until the end of the combat for which they are cast, or about 5 minutes if cast outside of a combat situation.

UNARMED COMBAT

Characters with this ability have special training in a Martial Art that lets them hamper their opponent's own Martial abilities. Each time this power is selected, it counts as one level of the Unarmed Combat Super Power. This power may only be taken as a Major Augmentation, meaning it counts as two Minor powers in its own right.

UNDETECTABLE TO CHI

This uncanny power allows your character to be virtually undetectable to any means of locating him or her using Chi powers. It costs nothing to use, and, if coupled with the Invisibility power, makes him or her completely and totally invisible.

VENOM

This power works as per the Mutation of the same name, although mortal Martial Artists can possess it and have it expressed not as actual venom, but as nerve centre and pressure-point strikes that cause paralysis or other affects

WALL WALKING

As per the Super Movement Power of the same name. Costs one Chi per combat round, or one Chi per hour if outside of combat.

WATER WALKING

As per the Super Movement Power of the same name. Costs one Chi per combat round, or one Chi per hour if outside of combat. Two combatants with this power may fight along the surface of the water.

WEATHER CONTROL

As per the Super Power of the same name. It costs 3 Chi to activate, and one Chi per round to maintain. See the Super Power on page 168 of the Basic Roleplaying rulebook for a description of how this power works. Each time this power is taken, it counts as one "level" for all purposes.

WINGS

As per the Mutation of the same name. Common amongst creatures with spirit blood.

WITCH SIGHT

This Power costs 3 Chi to activate, and lasts for a number of combat rounds equal to the user's POW. In most ways, this power behaves as per the Witch Sight Sorcery spell on page 138 of the BRP rulebook. Additionally, the character may use Witch Sight to see flows of Chi, spirits, and other magical effects as swirling mist, coloured according to the nature of the Chi in question.

CHI MANIPULATIONS

Where the Augmentations represent ways in which the flow of Chi has adjusted the body of the Martial Art practitioner or Spirit, Manipulations represent ways in which the Martial Artist or spirit can influence the flow of Chi around them. Each Manipulation costs a certain amount of Chi, and has a skill associated with it. These are skills like any other: they can be trained, and they increase through experience.

Some Manipulations are similar to certain Augmentations. If characters have access to both Augmentations and Manipulations, they are free to select which version of the power they desire to have.

ANIMAL VISION

Costs one Chi to activate. When this power is selected, determine the nature of the animal for which the spell works, such as "birds," "rodents," or "cats." Supernatural versions of these creatures also work. When cast, this allows you to see through the eyes of any animal of your type that you can see at the time of casting. You may pay an extra five Chi to control the movements of this animal, although callous treatment of it may result in gaining Corruption.

ASTRAL PROJECTION

This spell works as per the Psychic Ability of the same name from the BRP rulebook. In this version, you may be able to use Chi abilities to interact with your perceived environment, and characters capable of sensing or perceiving Chi, supernatural or Psychic Phenomena may interact with you.

AUGMENT SKILL

You may spend up to four Chi, depending upon the Martial Arts skill that grants this manipulation. Roll the skill and spend your Chi. For each Chi spent, you may take a +20% bonus to the skill for which this Manipulation is taken.

See the notes for the Super Skill augmentation above for the procedure when dealing with Augmented skills and experience.

AURA DETECTION

This manipulation works as per the Psychic Ability of the same name in the BRP rulebook. Additionally, you may also see auras around spirits, and gauge their level of well-being and attitude.

BLAST

A general combat skill, the Blast Manipulation works as per the spell from the BRP rulebook. Also, depending upon which version of the Manipulation taken, the user may have access to one of the following effects:

Blast of Wind, used by practitioners of Air Dragon Style, also causes Knockback in addition to damage.

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Fiery Blast, used by Fire Dragon stylists, may also start fires. Living targets struck by it must pass a Luck roll to avoid being caught on fire and taking one damage per round. A successful Agility test will put these fires out.

Water Tentacle Strike, used by Water Dragon Stylists, must be cast near a body of water, or with a sizeable water supply in hand. Practitioners can also grapple with the tentacle, using their POW as the active characteristic.

Sudden Avalanche, used by Earth Dragon Stylists, can only be used when a large supply of rocks or soil is present. In addition to damage from the Blast, targets may also be effected by the Knockout Blow effect.

BOUNTY OF THE SEA

This manipulation costs four Chi. If the test is a success, it creates a sizeable quantity of fresh, drinkable water. This is typically enough water to fill a room, but the exact amount is up to the Game Master.

If cast with no water nearby, you must succeed in a Luck roll in order for the spell to work. In either case, the Chi cost is spent.

CHAIN OF BEING

Works as per the Sorcery Spell of the same name from the BRP rulebook. It costs four Chi, and only a single person needs to know it and succeed in the skill check in order to cast it.

CHANGE

This manipulation works just like the Change spell from the BRP rulebook.

CLAIRVOYANCE

As per the Psychic Ability from the BRP rulebook.

CONJURE ELEMENTAL

Each spell is learned to conjure a particular elemental, found in the bestiary of the BRP rulebook. It is in all other ways identical to the Magic Spell of the same name from the BRP Rulebook.

COMPEL SPIRIT

Costs four Chi. When dealing with a spirit, spend the Chi cost and make a Compel Spirit skill check. If you succeed, you may force the spirit to give you its True Name. Use of a spirit's True Name grants you great power over it: you gain +30% to tests to summon that specific spirit, as well as +30% to attempts to bind or bargain with said spirit.

Use of this spell can be dangerous. Spirits do not like being forced into servitude, especially if their True Name is involved.

COUNTERMAGIC

As per the spell from the BRP rulebook.

DARK

As per the spell from the BRP rulebook. Note

that the only means for seeing into or through a Dark spell is the Dark Vision or Heat Vision Chi augmentations.

DIMINISH

As per the spell in the BRP rulebook.

DISPEL

As per the spell in the BRP rulebook.

DIVINATION

As per the Psychic Ability of the same name, with the following changes:

1. The cost for the divination is a single Chi, and it takes an hour to perform.
2. Use of the Meditation skill beforehand increases the likelihood of the Divination skill succeeding.
3. It is usable once per session.

Use of a divination form counts as an offering of various bonuses, depending upon the quality of the items used. Common forms of divination in the Dragon Empire include reading I-Ching sticks, and using telling stones.

Game Masters may wish to obtain a copy of the I-Ching to keep on hand during sessions where Divination is likely to occur. See Appendix 1 for more details on using the I-Ching

DULL

As per the spell of the same name in the BRP rulebook. Also, this spell can take many forms, depending on the Martial Art style that teaches it. It does not always need to be cast on a weapon. Dull may also be used directly against someone using a Martial Art style.

ELEMENTAL MASTERY

This manipulation costs a single Chi to use. When activated, Elemental Mastery allows the user to control one single element in minor ways, in accordance with his or her Martial Art style. One might use it to heat cold food, or to keep companions warm when camping in the snow. Another person might put out a candle from across the room with a gentle breeze, or cool themselves when in the desert.

While not usable as a weapon, other, larger-scale uses of this power will likely come up in the course of play. When they do, consider the following: for each Chi spent, grants a 10% chance that the desired elemental effect occurs.

For example, Zhan wants to use his Wind Mastery to keep himself cool in the desert. He spends a Chi, and rolls his Wind Mastery skill. Later, while travelling through a narrow canyon, he sees an ogre menacing an unarmed traveller. Above the ogre's head is a dead tree, perched precariously on the canyon's walls. Since he already has his Wind Mastery activated, he does not need to re-cast it. Instead, he spends 7 Chi to get a 70% chance of

Telling Stones

Telling stones is a divination method in which the diviner obtains three stones: one gold, one silver, and one jade. He or she takes these stones to a tree that is supposed to contain an old and wise spirit. Generally, the bigger the tree, the wiser the spirit. After a short prayer and ritual to awaken the tree's spirit, the diviner tosses the three stones at the base of the tree. If the jade stone lies closer to the gold stone, the tree is considered to have answered "yes." If the jade lies closer to the silver stone, the tree is said to answer "no." If it lies an equal distance to each stone, the answer is either "maybe" or "do not know."

This form of divination may also be used with any object of great size that is said to house a wise spirit. Of course, any sorcerer with the right spells can call up a spirit and ask it directly, but some spirits consider magic rude, and Divination to be much more polite.

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causing a gust of wind to blow the branch onto the ogre's head. He rolls a 54, which is a success. The ogre rubs his sore head, and sees Zhan standing some ways away.

ELEMENTAL WEAPON

Costs three Chi to cast. Once you have successfully rolled against your Elemental Weapon skill, you can create any weapon for which you have at least a 50% skill out of a pure element. This weapon is exactly like a mundane version of the weapon upon which it is based, with the following changes:

1. It cannot be broken by mundane means, and takes no damage except from other elemental weapons and Artefacts
2. You may create elemental throwing weapons or arrows at a cost of one Chi per weapon.
3. Each weapon has the following addition effect when a Special result is achieved with it:
 - An Air Weapon will cause Knockback.
 - A Fire Weapon will set the target on fire, which is like Bleeding (one Hit point damage per round) except it can be put out by spending a round and making an Agility Roll.
 - A Water Weapon shifts in the user's hand, aiming for weak spots in the target's armour. Armour (even natural armour) protects for one point less than normal.
 - An Earth Weapon hits with surprising force. The target must make a Stamina roll or be Stunned for a round.

EMOTION CONTROL

This manipulation is exactly like the Psychic ability of the same name. At the Game Master's discretion, it might be harder to affect spirits, and easier to affect ghosts.

EMPATHY

As per the Psychic Ability from the BRP rulebook. When used on particularly corrupt or hostile spirits, using this ability may prompt a Luck roll to avoid being Stunned by the sheer force of the emotions welling up through their empathic link.

ENHANCE

As per the spell of the same name in the BRP rulebook.

FIRE

As per the spell of the same name in the BRP rulebook. To simplify things, the Game master may assume that every level of this spell hits 1D3 targets.

FLAWLESS MEMORY

As per the Eidetic Memory Psychic Ability from the BRP rulebook.

FROST

As per the spell of the same name. As with Fire, it may be simpler to assume that each level of the manipulation hits 1D3 combatants.

GIFT OF THE EARTH

Costs four Chi to use. When the skill check is made, this manipulation creates a sizeable quantity of earth, stone and rubble, enough to fill a room. It is in all other ways identical to the Sorcery spell of the same name.

HEAL

As per the spell of the same name in the BRP rulebook.

ILLUSION

As per the spell of the same name.

INTUITION

As per the Psychic ability of the same name. Also, it can be used to detect Chi flow, spirits, or other items related to Chi.

INVISIBILITY

As per the spell of the same name. Note that, in most cases, you will need to have a Martial Art skill of 40% or higher to make yourself invisible, and even then you have to be SIZ 12 or less. You can still use this Manipulation to make smaller objects invisible.

LIFT

As per the spell of the same name. Much like Invisibility, learning to fly with this manipulation depends on your SIZ. Other effects remain the same as per the spell.

LIGHT

As per the spell from the BRP rulebook, save that this version can be created to float in mid-air.

LIGHTNING

As per the spell of the same name.

MAKE WHOLE

Aside from needing a Make Whole skill check and 3 Chi, this manipulation works just like the sorcery spell of the same name.

MIND BLAST

As per the Psychic Ability from the BRP rulebook.

MIND CONTROL

As per the Control spell from the BRP rulebook.

MIND SHIELD

As per the Psychic Ability of the same name.

PERCEPTION

As per the spell of the same name. When used

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to detect Chi flows or the presence of supernatural creatures, this manipulation does not provide the ability to see anything beyond normal human perception. You may feel the flow of Chi, but be unable to see it.

PRECOGNITION

As per the Psychic Ability from the BRP rulebook. Note that a related ability, retrocognition, can be used exactly as precognition, except the user can perceive things in the past.

PROTECTION

As per the spell of the same name.

PSYCHOMETRY

As per the Psychic Ability. Note that using this manipulation on an Artefact can be potentially damaging. These items often have such long histories of use by powerful beings, that opening one's self up to the impressions left behind on them can unhone the mind.

When used on such an object, the user must make a Luck roll. If this roll fails, something in the object has lashed out at the user, who must make a Stamina roll to avoid being Stunned for 1D6 minutes.

This also applies when using psychometry on objects handled by powerful spirits.

REFUTATION

You may spend up to four Chi on this power. When used, this manipulation can re-enforce manipulations undone via Countermagic or Dispel. If either of the two manipulations are used to undo one of your own manipulations, you may immediately make a Refutation roll. If your roll is a success, and you can spend more Chi than the amount used to power the Countermagic or Dispel power, your spell remains in effect, and the Chi spent to counter it are lost.

Using this power takes great concentration, and you will be unable to Parry or Dodge incoming attacks. If you are hit and wounded while attempting a Refutation, you must pass a Luck roll, or the Refutation power automatically fails, and you lose the Chi invested in it.

RESISTANCE

As per the spell of the same name.

SEAL

As per the spell from the BRP rulebook. If the structure thus sealed is ordinarily of light-weight or flimsy construction, the additional Hit Points will prevent them from easily breaking.

SHARPEN

As per the spell of the same name, except that in Dragon Lines, Sharpen can be applied to any means of damaging an opponent, including fists, feet, and Natural Weapons granted by other powers.

SORCERER'S SPEED

You may spend up to three Chi on this manipulation. If successfully used, this power allows you to increase your MOV by one for each Chi spent. Unlike the Sorcery spell from the BRP rulebook, there is no chance that your character will become permanently affected by this power.

SPEAK TO MIND

As per the spell of the same name. This differs from traditional Telepathy in that it only allows for communication, not mind-reading or any other powers the Psychic Ability offers.

SUMMON SPIRIT

A versatile spell that separates true Sorcerers from other Chi manipulators, Summon Spirit comes in two forms, which take varying amounts of time and Chi to perform.

The Lesser Summoning involves calling out for spirits who may be present in an area to come to you and converse. It takes a rite lasting roughly five minutes, and costs five Chi. The spirits in the area are under no compulsion to be kind to you, but the nature of the power does generally convince them to answer. Once present, the spirit may be spoken to. The power behind the spell makes them at least neutral to the summoner, but their attitude may be changed based upon the summoner's behaviour.

Spirits called by a Lesser Summoning cannot be bound into service, nor can they be bargained with for services in exchange for freedom. Lesser Summonings are only about communication.

The Greater Summoning is a more involved, and potentially more useful, rite that allows the summoner to call upon spirits and do a great number of things with them. First, the summoner must perform a rite lasting an hour, and spend nine Chi at the end of the rite. If the Summon Spirit skill test is a failure, the Chi are lost, but the skill test may be performed again with the expenditure of another nine Chi.

When successfully cast, the spell compels a spirit to appear before you, effectively teleporting it from wherever it was to your location. The power of the spell will constrain it from attacking, at least initially.

Unless using a specific name to contact a specific spirit, the Summoning power will contact a spirit essentially at random, making it potentially quite dangerous to use. Spirits have two names: a general name and a True Name. Using a spirit's general name means that the spell summons that spirit specifically. Using a spirit's True Name not only summons that spirit, but also gives you a bonus to the summoning, bargaining, and binding, if it comes to that.

Once you have a spirit successfully summoned, you may perform one of the below actions :

- **Bargain for a service in exchange for a sacrifice.** The nature and severity of the sacrifice depend upon the nature of the service requested. Some angry, hostile spirits may demand the blood



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sacrifice of living creatures to secure their services. Doing so causes the character to earn one point of Corruption. The ultimate sacrifice for a spirit is some of the summoner's soul. By offering one POW to the spirit, you may be able to secure its services forever. See the Spirit Boon Chi augmentation for more information.

- **Bind the spirit to your service.** Spend a permanent point of POW and make a POW versus POW resistance roll against the spirit, using your lowered POW characteristic. If you succeed, the spirit is bound to you until you release it, or until your death. The POW spent may grow back - see the Bound Spirit Chi Augmentation for more details. Such servitude is often like torture for a spirit, and you may earn Corruption points if you treat a bound spirit in a cruel fashion. Spirits may be bound in one of two states:

If bound in the flesh, the spirit is always manifested in the physical world, unless it has the Intangibility power and you give it leave to do so. It will also stay within your POW in yards from you, though you may give it leave to go farther than that in the pursuit of commands. A spirit bound in this fashion will always try to follow any commands given it, although it may be rather "selective" in how it does so.

If bound to an item, such as a sword or ring, that item becomes a Lesser Artefact. Any powers the spirit possesses can be used by you, at any normal Chi cost, so long as the binding object is in your possession. You may call upon the bound spirit to manifest and aid you. It takes the spirit 1D8 rounds to manifest, during which time you may use neither its powers, nor the item from which they manifest. Once manifested, the spirit acts as though bound in the flesh.

- **Permanently Bind the spirit to an item.** This costs three POW, and is always considered an event that causes Corruption. The item created is a Greater Artefact, with all of the attendant powers and properties. Unlike the artefacts created via #2 above, Greater Artefacts created in this fashion are forever; the spirit inside may never be made to manifest, and will be forever imprisoned in the binding item. Destruction of the item destroys the spirit.

Because of the many ways in which they can affect spirits, sorcerers tend to receive a wide berth and polite treatment. Spirits are loath to offer up their True Names to any summoner, but certain unscrupulous ones may give out the True Names of rivals and enemies in order to avoid capture and binding.

Care should be taken when conjuring with unknown names. Occult history is full of examples of sorcerers calling up spirits using names given to them by others, only to discover that they have called up powerful servants of the Yama Kings or other such entities too powerful to bind and too dangerous to bargain with.

TELEKINESIS

As per the Psychic Ability of the same name.

TELEPATHY

As per the Psychic Ability of the same name. Note that this power also offers the Speak to Mind power as one of its abilities. Characters may only select true Telepathy if they have a Martial Art that offers it, are granted it by a Master, or learned from a Greater Artefact

TELEPORT

As per the spell of the same name. Note that a character with this power will not be able to teleport themselves until their Martial Art skill that offers this power increases to the point where the levels of the spell can match their SIZ. For example, a character of SIZ 12 would need a Martial Art skill of 40% or higher. The power would let them teleport smaller objects, though.

UNBREAKABLE BONDS

This power costs three Chi to use. When successfully cast, the target will be seized and held as if bound by invisible chains of great strength. The target cannot do anything of significance while under the effects of this spell. Normally, this spell only works on living beings and manifested spirits; it has no effects on creatures who have animated dead bodies, nor does it work against beings with no POW.

The target may attempt to break free once per turn on its initiative. To do so, match the target's STR against the user's current Chi on the Resistance table. If successful, the Bonds are broken. If failed, the target may try again next round. A three-point Dispel or Countermagic will cancel Unbreakable Bonds.

UNSEAL

As per the spell of the same name.

VISION

As per the spell of the same name.

WALL

As per the spell of the same name. Note that some manifestations of this power create the wall out of something other than Chi energy.

WARD

As per the spell of the same name. Note that some Martial Arts styles grant variant versions of this power.

WINGS OF THE SKY

As per the Sorcery spell of the same name.





5. KUNG FU MAYHEM

GENERALLY, COMBAT in Dragon Lines follows the same basic rules for combat in the BRP rulebook. However, in order to more accurately convey combat as seen in Martial Arts films and video games, the following optional rules, some from BRP and some new, can be used. Each option will result in a different feel during combat, and can be seen as a set of “dials and switches” for Game Masters to tweak combat in a number of ways.

COMBAT OPTIONS FROM THE BRP RULEBOOK

The following options from the book are suggested for use in Dragon Lines. Individual Game Masters are free to use them or select otherwise, as fitting to the needs of the game.

STATEMENTS OF INTENT

Combat rounds are 12 seconds, and a lot can happen in that time. Game Masters may wish to skip the Statement of Intent phase and let players decide what they want to do when their DEX rank arrives.

POWER USE

Since nearly everyone in Dragon Lines has powers, it does not add much to make a character using powers act at INT instead of DEX. At the Game Master's option, all power uses can take place at the character's DEX Rank.

FIGHTING DEFENSIVELY

This works as described in the BRP rulebook. Note that there are some powers and techniques that mimic fighting defensively, but still allow an attack action on the character's DEX rank.

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Remember the Martial Arts skill

One of the most powerful tools a Dragon Lines Character possesses is the Martial Arts skill. Not only does it grant access to powers, advanced healing, and attack skills, it also does something very important: When an attack rolls under both the attack skill and the Martial Arts skill, it does double damage. This is one of the things that helps Martial Artists fight the more powerful foes in the world. However, since the conditions that cause the double damage differ from other skill tests, it is very easy to forget it.

Make a special effort to remember to check the results against the Martial Arts skill, and remind your players to do so for the first few times they make an attack. Eventually, both you and your players will get into the habit, especially when the bonus damage is the only thing that will help them take down something big and scary.

PARRYING WITH IMPROVISED WEAPONS

For most characters, this works as normal. However, if characters possess the Improvised Weapons skill, they may parry with it as though it were a normal weapon for which they possessed a skill. See the skill on page 23.

MULTIPLE DEFENCE ACTIONS

The -30% penalty for multiple defence actions in a combat round stands, although there are new combat options that help mitigate these penalties. See below for more details.

SPECIAL SUCCESSES

Read up on the Crushing special success rules, as unarmed Martial Arts strikes trigger them.

ATTACKS AND PARRIES OVER 100%

These options are in effect. There are also other means of gaining extra attacks over and above having a high skill. Recall that combat rounds are 12 seconds long, and each skill roll is more than one swing of a weapon.

DODGING MISSILE WEAPONS

Not only can Martial Arts characters dodge missile weapons, they can also parry them with melee weapons, or even their hands or feet. Game Masters may declare that this is only possible when dealing with the relatively slow-moving projectiles of the setting, and not when being attacked by the firearms used by the Foreign Devils.

DYING BLOWS

Characters may make one final attack when struck down. In addition to the final action, before they die, they may make a short, melodramatic speech where they confess a true love, a regret about the past, the location of the secret treasure, or other such heart-rending displays.

SPOT RULES

Any spot rule stands as is, unless a character has a technique that relates to that rule. If so, the technique supersedes the Spot Rule, but only for that character using that specific technique.

TWO-WEAPON FIGHTING

In addition to the Spot Rules for Two Weapon Fighting on page 233 of the BRP rulebook, character using a weapon in each hand may also use the following rule:

Counterattack

If you get a Special result or better on a parry attempt when wielding two weapons, you may make an instant free attack with either weapon. This attack happens in the same DEX rank as the Special Parry, and is made at your full chance, regardless of the number of attacks you have already made this round. The counterattack does normal damage, and can be parried or dodged by the target. Characters who possess a Martial Arts skill always count as being armed with two weapons, even when using a weapon that takes both hands, as their feet are just as dangerous as their fists. This extra attack does not grant an experience check.

NEW COMBAT OPTIONS

The following combat options are meant to adjust combat of the BRP system in order to make it feel more like a Martial Arts film. Feel free to use as many or as few of these options as is fitting with your campaign.

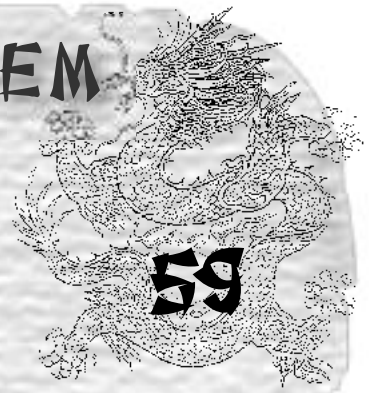
CHANGE OF VENUE

When running combat encounters, it can sometimes be easy to portray the fight as though it were taking place on a flat, featureless area - sort of like a boxing ring. It makes sense, given that combat is often personal and quite interesting enough that adding needless details only detracts from the action.

However, there are also times when a fight gets bogged down with details, or runs too long without anything exciting happening. If you find combat becoming boring, it is time for a Change of Venue. We suggest you try this every 3 or 4 rounds, although it will not be necessary for fights that consist mainly of Lesser Foes (see below).

A Change of Venue is simple; after a few rounds of combat, move the fight somewhere else. It may take some planning ahead of time, but once you get the hang of it, you may be surprised at what it brings to the game.

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To enact a Change of Venue, try to keep these ideas in mind:

CHANGE OF ALTITUDE

When enacted, the combat moves either higher or lower from where it took place initially. This not only provides new Environmental Elements, it also gives the fighters a chance to employ new tactics, especially doing fun things like using Knockback attacks to hurl foes from rooftops. Do this enough times, you and your players may start thinking in three dimensions, and acting accordingly. Some possible changes in latitude might be:

- In a Temple: The initial fight takes place on the ground floor. Subsequent fights might take place in the basement, in the attic, or even on the roof.
- In a Mountain Pass: Initially in the pass itself, next in a deep cave, or along the lips of a cliff.
- In a Bamboo Forest: On ground level, and then moving to the tree tops, and then to the low-hanging clouds overhead.

A LATERAL MOVE

When enacted, the fight stays on the same level, but moves away from where it had begun. It provides new Environmental Effects, as well as helps get the players to think of the setting less in terms of the elements as a series of boxes, and more as a coherent collection of places that exist in relation to each other. Some possible lateral moves include:

- In a Teahouse: A fight starts on the first floor, and moves out into the courtyard, and then into the streets beyond.
- On the Deck of a Ship: The fighting beings on the deck itself, and moves into the captain's cabin, and then out of the back of the cabin when someone gets thrown through a wall.
- Outside a forge: The fight begins in the outer buildings, and then moves into the interior of the compound, and finally into the forge itself, where a red-hot furnace is burning.

CHANGE THE NATURE OF THE CONFLICT

When enacted, the conflict goes from one type to another. This gives those involved the ability to make use of new, possibly higher rated, skills, as well as making it possible to enact other changes of venue later. Some possible changes in nature are:

- A social conflict becomes physical: An exchange of angry words finally erupts into drawn weapons and bloodshed.
- A chase becomes a magical attack: Pursuing a sorcerer through the city streets suddenly becomes a magical conflict when he starts flinging bolts of Chi to defend himself.
- A sword fight is defused: Two warriors are exchanging attacks and parries when a diplomatic spirit arrives and encourages them to talk through their problems instead of killing each other.

- An ambush: When fighting a stealthy foe, a few rounds might mean the foe has hidden himself, and will wait for someone to find him via perception skills before pressing the attack.

The various changes in venue can be combined to create a variety of changes, so that your ability to change the venue does not become stale or predictable. Also, players can call for a change if they think they have an idea that will make for a better fight. If they do say, suggest a Chi cost comparable to using Fate to add to the scene. Feel free to veto the suggestion if you think it's being overused. However, getting players to suggest cool changes to the fight scenes can take some of the burden of the Game Master.

Timing a change of venue can be a little tricky. Consider enacting a change when something from the following list comes into play:

- One of the characters uses a technique or power that causes damage to the area, or forces their opponent to move in some way (such as Knockback).
- A fumbled use of a Chi Power results in a fire, making everyone have to change the venue in order to avoid perishing in the flames.
- Someone uses a movement-based power, such as Leaping, to get somewhere a normal human could not.
- When dueling (see below), one of the duellists is injured. The opponent attempts to use this opportunity to escape, and changes both the nature of the conflict and the venue accordingly.

DUELING

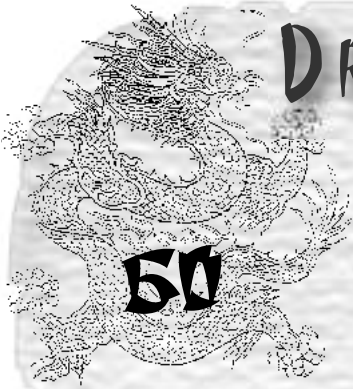
In Dragon Lines, combat comes in three broad categories. Dueling is one of these, Lesser Foes the second, and standard combat the third. When facing off against other Martial Artists, characters are considered to be Dueling, which works like most other forms of combat, with a few changes. This is meant to reflect the genre; in BRP combat, it is easy to overwhelm a foe by force of numbers. However, this does not accurately portray how fights between Martial Artists often go in movies and video games.

When Dueling, consider the following options:

Duels are One-on-One. All Martial Artists are trained in techniques that allow them to keep multiple foes from attacking them at once. To reflect this training, assume that all fights take place between two opponents.

When dueling, every fight takes place between the attacker and the target. If multiple fighters are attacking a single target, combat happens as a series of one-on-one exchanges, each operating as its own combat round.

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The only exception to this is if one of the fighters knows a Support Style, which have specific training for fighting in groups. Knowing a support style allows you and another fighter to attack a single target at the same time.

Duels use normal DEX ranks for initiative. When fighting in a duel, each character will act according to their DEX, and may attack, parry and dodge as usual. Party members not actively engaged in the duel may still act on their DEX, but may not engage in the fighting without suffering a -30% penalty. Generally, it is a good idea to give non-dueling characters something to do.

Parties of fighters can switch out who is attacking. After an exchange of blows, it is possible for one fighter to move into the duel and take the place of a comrade. This allows injured duellists a chance to recover while their foe is distracted. If both sides consist of more than one duellist, who fights who can change every round.

The Dueling Rules only apply to characters with the Martial Arts skill. When fighting Lesser Foes (see below) or other opponents, use the normal combat rules.

Duels are highly ritualized. Before a duel begins, all of the participants engage in Aura Attacks. Parties that outnumber their foes get a +5% bonus to their Aura resistance rolls. Lesser Foes do not count for determining if someone is outnumbered. Instead of rolling Aura versus INT, compare the highest Aura totals of each side against each other. The winner has seized the initiative, and will gain all of the benefits of a successful Aura Attack for the first round of combat. It is suggested that Dueling is the only time Aura Attacks are used in the setting, as they can be potentially too potent when dealing with other foes.

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

Fights become more interesting when given a context. A duel between two swordsmen is more interesting when we know that one is fighting to keep his mother alive, while the other fights to seek vengeance for a past wrong. A fight that takes place in an interesting location is also more interesting. When setting up fight scenes, it behoves the Game Master to construct the scenes so that there are things in the environment that may have an impact on the fight. The aforementioned duel is interesting when it takes place in an otherwise empty field. It becomes even more interesting when it takes place on a rope-bridge over a bubbling pit of earth-warmed mud.

When describing locations to your players, always give some consideration as to what environmental elements would play a part in a fight if one happened to break out in that location. If you

can manage to convey these elements in a way that is in keeping with your characters, so much the better.

For example, let us say your characters are entering a known crime syndicate headquarters, supposedly to pay the ransom for their Master's release. How you describe the room should be based on what your characters would see:

- The former soldier would notice that the men scattered around the restaurant all have hidden weapons on them, and that every one of them surreptitiously watches them as soon as they enter.
- The improvised weapons specialist would notice the placement of tables, chairs, teapots and other things that might be useful in a fight.
- The engineer might notice which walls are load bearing, and which ones could be knocked out without bringing the whole place down.
- The thief notices where all the doors and windows are, as well as the likely location of the cash box.

You get the idea. Not only does this provide the characters something they can latch onto, it also helps players see the world through their character's eyes.

You may also encourage your players to describe what sort of things their character would look for when entering a room. Perhaps by giving them a small (maybe +5-10%) bonus if these items actually get used, you can further encourage them to assist in creating dynamic, interesting locations filled with the little details that help bring a location to life. Also, recall the ability to add things to a scene by spending Chi (page 45). Encourage its use.

If pressed for description that you have not prepared, such as when the characters take an adventure off the planned direction, consider the following rubric for adding useful descriptions on the fly:

- Something on the floor. Whether it is rough sand in a foundry, or scattered boxes in a warehouse, there will almost always be something on the floor.
- Something overhead. There might be rafters, a tangle of vines, or even low-hanging clouds.
- Something in the way. Clear line of sight never goes far without being broken. There will always be something that gets in the way, either a support column, a rock wall, or a tree trunk.

LESSER FOES

They are known by many names: goons, mooks, thugs, bandits. They often serve a more powerful leader, one who benefits greatly from having large, intimidating muscle to do the dirty work. They may guard the homes of important diplomats, or fight in

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a war to prevent a tyrant from taking over and oppressing the weak.

They are not Martial Artists, nor are they a serious threat to anyone with any kind of martial training. They are Lesser Foes, and they make up the bulk of opponents that your characters will face.

More than anything, the use of Lesser Foes in the Dragon Lines game is a book-keeping measure. The rules allow you to run large-scale fights, with multiple members on each side, without having the high-flying action bogged down by needing to make a dozen attack and parry rolls each round.

The use of Lesser Foes is an optional rule meant to streamline play. It is entirely possible to play Dragon Lines without them, although this will make fighting large numbers of foes at once both longer to resolve and potentially more dangerous. If this is an effect you wish to achieve, ignore these rules.

All Lesser Foes behave the same way as far as the rules are concerned. Consider the following rules:

- A Lesser Foe's characteristics, if needed, are all 10. This means they have 10 Chi, 10 hit points (but see below), and no damage bonus.
- For initiative, they will almost always go last, giving player characters a chance to thin their ranks before the Lesser Foes can act.
- They have an effective skill of 30% with any weapon they use. This also applies to any skill checks they may be asked to make.
- If Lesser Foes significantly outnumber their targets, rather than rolling a bunch of 30% tests, consider using one of the following methods to adjudicate their attacks:

The Lesser Foes roll as a unit, rather than as individuals. Their numbers mean that the unit has a 50% chance of hitting each player character at least once. This means that, even if each player character is attacked, he or she will only have to make defensive rolls once in each combat round. This way of doing things is much more abstract than normal BRP combat.

Assume that 3 out of every 10 Lesser Foes succeed in their rolls, and allow the player characters to respond accordingly. This is not as abstract as the above method, and faster than rolling for each one.

Rather than rolling percentile dice, roll a single D10 for each Lesser Foe; a result of 3 or lower indicates a hit.

- Lesser Foes get critical results on a die roll of 1 or 2, and Special Successes on a 3 to a 6. Game Masters may wish to forgo tracking Critical and Specials for Lesser Foes.
- If a Lesser Foe hits, the target takes 1D6 damage, regardless of the number of Lesser Foes who happen to be involved in the fight. This is also an abstraction, where the damage represents a number of smaller wounds gained over the course of the 12 second combat round.
- Lesser Foes neither parry nor dodge attacks. They simply lack the training to do so effectively.
- A single hit from any weapon is enough to take a single Lesser Foe out of action. It may not be dead, or even seriously injured, but the



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trauma of the fighting is enough to make it not inclined to continue hostilities. Player characters and important NPCs are willing to fight to the death; by virtue of their lower strength, Lesser Foes are less inclined to do so. A Special Success against Lesser Foes removes 1D3 of them from the fight, while a Critical Success will remove 1D6. Remember, 12 seconds is a long time for a trained Martial Artist to go about convincing untrained warriors to not fight.

Taken as a whole, the above rules lead up to a single, small statistic block that can be used to cover a variety of foes, especially when you need a creature to engage the party, but can not (or will not) take the time to look something up.

All you need to keep track of is that you have a certain number of Lesser Foes, and each round some of them will die. The number of Lesser Foes is really the only thing you need to keep track of, mainly so the player characters will know when they are done fighting.

Even with such a simple stat block, facing identical hordes of opponents can become tedious. To spice things up, consider applying one or more of the following alterations to the basic Lesser Foe statistics:

- If the Lesser Foes are significantly armoured, it may take two or even three hits to remove them from combat.
- Well-trained Foes might have a base 50% to their skills, instead of 30%. This means they have an effective skill of 70% when using the first outnumbering option.
- If armed with particularly nasty weapons, increase the damage done to 1D8.
- Lesser Foes with ranged weapons are able to make their attacks at medium or long range.

USING LESSER FOES

There are a number of ways to integrate Lesser Foes into a Dragon Lines game. Naturally, the Game Master can use them as a tool as needed, but it may prove handy to have a set of guidelines for when they can come into play, and what sort of foes they might represent. Players may also use them, if they wind up recruiting other fighters to assist them in their goals.

- Any character who possesses a Conjuring or Summoning spell will also know how to use that spell to call Lesser Foe versions of what the spell would normally summon. This costs twice the normal amount of Chi, and takes roughly ten times the normal summoning length. If the resulting spell is successfully cast, the caller will instead have a number of Lesser Foe minions equal to his or her POW. They are mostly loyal, and will serve the character for the duration of a

single adventure, or until the task for which they are summoned is complete.

- Anyone possessing a Command skill can use it to take command of a body of fighters if their legitimate authority is not present. Discrete numbers of fighters should be determined by the number of warriors present, but if this is not known, assume that 10 fighters agree to follow the character.
- Any character who is Affluent or Wealthy can, with a few week's time, use their wealth to raise up a small army of Lesser Foes. They will be loyal so long as they continue to be paid. The character in charge can attract a number equal to twice his or her CHA, though individual Foes can be bought off if paid more than their current salary.
- A character that possesses the Sidekick Chi Augmentation may elect to have the power represent a supply of loyal henchmen. These are all Lesser Foes, but the benefit of them is that, even if the entire supply of henchmen is depleted, the character can always recruit/summon/buy more. He or she can have a total number of henchmen equal to the their POW or APP, whichever is most appropriate to the nature of the henchmen.

WHEN LESSER FOES WAR

When two forces go up against each other, and both sides have Lesser Foes under their command, the simplest solution is to have the two groups of Lesser Foes fight each other, leaving the player characters free to pursue the larger threats without having to delay by fighting through a horde of nameless minions.

Addressing casualties in this case is even simpler. The success of the player's group of Lesser Foes depends upon their own; if the player characters succeed in their goal, their Lesser Foes have also triumphed, with maybe a few casualties. If, however, the players are thwarted in their goals, their underlings have suffered a similar fate. Or, if you wish to convey a Pyrrhic victory, the players win their combat, but it costs them much in terms of their underlings.

THE LAST LESSER FOE STANDING

There may be times when a group of Lesser Foes is whittled down to the very last member. If the Game Master thinks this minion would be an interesting NPC, consider giving it a name and making it a full-fledged character. It loses much of the Lesser Foe rules, but will gain increased characteristics, better skills, and possibly Chi powers in keeping with its type. This new NPC may be loyal to the players, or might burn with a desire for vengeance against them.



6. THE FIVE NOBLE PATHS

IN THE DRAGON EMPIRE, the existence of gods and spirits is an unquestionable fact. People experience manifestations of the divine nearly every day. You may petition an immortal spirit of justice to oversee a trial, or you might have your lunch stolen by glowing green monkey spirits. The Emperor rules with a literal Mandate of Heaven, and temple rites often result in solid, visible manifestations of spirits, come to accept sacrifices. What a modern reader would see as otherworldly is part of the natural order; it is understandable, repeatable, and accepted in every level of society.

Such a culture has little room for religion as we know it. Religion hinges upon the need for faith in something, an external force that may or may not exist, but can still theoretically alter the lives of those who believe. In *Dragon Lines*, faith and belief are superseded by fact and knowledge.

However, human nature being what it is, few agree on what everything means. The existence of the supernatural, and what humanity's proper relationship to it is, are matters of contention, which, much like in our world, can lead to backstabbing, and open conflict over matters of doctrine.

There are an infinite number of ways to see the

natural order, but in the Dragon Empire, five belief systems hold enough prominence that everyone has heard of them and knows the basic tenants of the systems. Though they deal with gods and spirits, the philosophies are not religions in a strict sense of the word. They do not promote the worship of divine beings. Of course, the members of each path may feel that their way is the proper way, but this is not encoded into the philosophies themselves.

THE FIVE NOBLE PATHS

The schools of thought that are responsible for these conflicts are called The Five Noble Paths, and they make up the core of intellectual life in the Dragon Empire. Of these five, three are a welcome part of society, one is only grudgingly tolerated, and the last is loathed by all good and decent folk. Taken as a unit, the Paths are a matter of discussion, but they are also deeply held beliefs about life and how to live it.

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THE CELESTIAL BUREAUCRACY



This Philosophy describes the Bureaucracy as a system of governance that extends from the Jade Emperor, who is the King of Heaven, all the way down through the divine realms and into the physical world. In it, every being, be it a mortal human, a divine spirit, or something in between, has a position within the Bureaucracy, and duties to perform as an extension of that position.

The system charged with running the universe has excellent potential for people who are willing to work hard and remember their station. More than a few people of low birth have joined the Bureaucracy as a means of improving their station. For some, even death does not end their careers; the end of their mortal life can mean a promotion into a position in Heaven.

However, like any complicated system, the Bureaucracy does not always work as it is supposed to. There are loopholes in the rules that can be exploited by the clever. Even when working properly, the machine is sometimes cold and thoughtless about how it treats the weak and innocent.

The Celestial Bureaucracy is also the only Philosophy officially endorsed by the Empire, for obvious reasons. Many citizens chafe at the authority granted to this path, especially those for whom the State represents oppression or cruelty.

Part of the precepts of the Bureaucracy is that mortals and spirits, while both part of the natural order, come from separate aspects of reality and should not intermingle. Some members of the Bureaucracy adopt this to the exclusion of all else, which makes life difficult for the increasing number of humans with spirit blood living and working in the Empire.

Founder. The Celestial Bureaucracy has its inception during the reign of The First Emperor Lian Shan-Fong, whose genius at strategy and logistics made it possible to unite the various tribes

that would eventually form the Dragon Empire. While the actual formation of the Celestial Bureaucracy predates the human Empire by aeons, Shan-Fong is credited with the first serious attempt at making a human government that was a part of the Jade Emperor's Celestial Court. To this day, Shan-Fong is venerated for his role in shaping the current state of the Empire, and his descendants form the One Hundred Royal Families.

Principle Texts. The Celestial Bureaucracy has many canonical texts. The main one is The Yellow River Bridge, which details the planning, funding and construction of the bridge of the title. The narrative is a metaphor for the bridging of the mortal world with the divine, it is commonly attributed to Shan-Fong himself, though its real author is most likely Zhuong Xu-Mei, a high-level bureaucrat who lived centuries after Shan-Fong's ascension into Heaven. Abridged copies of The Yellow River Bridge are found in homes where the family maintains some connection to the Bureaucracy. It is common on holidays for the head of the family to read from The Yellow River Bridge, and to have children recite portions of it.

Other Features of Note. Ancestor veneration is a strongly held theme of the Bureaucracy. Every birth and every death is seen as a link in a vast chain, spreading from the family all the way up to the Heavens. It is considered the duty of the living to pray for their ancestors, so that the dead may be kept alive in the afterlife - otherwise, they would dissipate into the Dragon Lines and reincarnate, thereby losing a link in the chain.

The other interesting facet of this is that, with each birth, the person becomes further and further away from the Heavens, which may or may not have any effect on the individual.

Of the Philosophies, adherence to the Celestial Bureaucracy is most likely to demand strict and exclusive behaviour from its followers.

THE PATH TO ENLIGHTENMENT

This philosophy promotes the idea that, through adherence to the ideals of compassion, non-attachment and joy, mortals can transcend the limitations of the body and become immortal, divine spirits. Followers contend that anyone is capable of becoming immortal, since all of the world is composed of Chi, which is already divine. By following the philosophy's teachings, one can become fully aware of one's divine nature, and, by performing certain actions, one can strengthen the inner divine so that it becomes a vehicle for consciousness.

The Path to Enlightenment is not native to the Dragon Empire. Its founder (see below) developed the Philosophy centuries before the Empire had developed, and by the time of Shan-Fong, the Path to Enlightenment had already spread from the Indus territories far to east of the Empire, all the way through it and north into Nippon. Despite its

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foreign origins, the Path is fairly popular in the Empire, especially to those not born into one of the One Hundred Royal Families, or to those of otherwise low birth.

While the theory behind it is sound, achieving immortality through the Path is something of a challenge. Many people find the precepts of compassion and non-attachment hard to adjust to, as they are fond of life's pleasures. Fully adopting the precepts well enough to achieve the end goal requires a drastic change in lifestyle for most people, which is something very few seem willing to do. Not many are willing to live the aesthetic life of a monk, especially those not born and raised in a monastery.

The Path to Enlightenment is in no way endorsed by the Empire, though some of its officials are adherents to the Path. The Path itself is largely self-directed, and, while there is no overt priesthood, there are groups that gather together to aid each other in their practice of the precepts.

The closest thing to a priesthood the Path to Enlightenment possesses are the Duro people, who live in an isolated plateau high in the Obido Mountains. This collection of communities have followed the Path as a cultural imperative for centuries. All manner of learned sages live here, including the Holy Man, an Enlightened Monk who is supposedly the reincarnated spirit of every Holy Man who has ever lived.

Founder. The Path to Enlightenment has its origins in Sribaba Schara, a member of his city's wealthy nobility. As he aged, Sribaba came to see how his family's wealth and influence was a burden both on the family and on the backs of the poor. He forswore his worldly possessions, and left his home, wandering through the world for years seeking the secret to life. Legend says that, one day, while fasting and meditating under a date palm,

Sribaba understood what it took to become enlightened. He gave up his name and began teaching others how to follow his path. His teachings have spread throughout the world, interacting with local beliefs to give rise to the multiple variations found today.

Principle Texts. In his later years, Sribaba compiled his teachings into a set of ten scrolls, which he sent out into the world to be copied and translated so that anyone who wished it could do as he had done. The scrolls are commonly collected into a single book, called The Ten Pillars. Each chapter deals with one Pillar of the Path, and explains, in sometimes poetic language, what the Pillar is and how to use it. Those who have trained in the path from an early age have usually memorized the Pillars, and will debate their meaning whenever opportunity presents itself.

Other Features of Note. Due to its focus on the individual and on personal responsibility, the Path to Enlightenment is seen as an anathema to the Celestial Bureaucracy, who see its adherents as shirking their duty to their families and the government. The Path is popular with Martial Artists, where its focus on self-reliance and self-improvement work in tandem with the personal training of a martial student.

Many spirits also profess to walk the Path to Enlightenment, even when they already possess immortality. Such spirits often suggest that even they can improve, and they feel The Enlightened One is a good example to follow, even if he is human.

Given the Path's overtly spiritual nature, the Pillars contend that most spirits are worth treating with the respect afforded any other being. This is especially common in an area where one amongst the local walkers on the Path has achieved Enlightenment.

Amongst the walker of the Path, there is a saying: "If you meet the Enlightened One, kill him." This has a number of different interpretations, but the most common is that, if you do meet a being who professes to be the Enlightened One, it is only a Corrupt spirit attempting to sway you from your path. Knowing this, it can have no power over you. However, leaving it to harass others would be endangering them, so it falls to you to make sure it cannot do so.

THE WAY

To outsiders, the philosophy known as The Way makes no sense. It is a series of poems, often taking the form of riddles, that pose questions of the reader and make statements regarding possible answers. Somewhere between the questions and the answers lie a manner of being in the world that promotes good health, vitality, and long, but not eternal, life. At least, that is the theory. To those not versed in The Way, the riddles do not amount to much, and are therefore not worth thinking about.

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To the followers of The Way, not only do the answers not make sense, but they also are not supposed to. The Way promotes developing comfort when faced with adversity, asserting that only by acting as if nothing bothered you, can you get to a mental place where nothing bothers you. The inherent contradiction is meant to foster an attitude of indifference, combined with calm demeanour and willingness to see the humour in all situations.

The Way says that the only way to accomplish something is to not do it. It suggests that one should not fuss over work, or take credit for it when its done. Do what needs doing, and then go on to something else. It abhors war, especially wars of conquest, but at the same time does not baulk at personal combat. To some, this is a profound contradiction, but to the followers of The Way, this idea simply is.

While the Celestial Bureaucracy frowns on The Way, they cannot do so too publicly. The White Lotus Emperor himself is a follower of The Way, and speaks about its precepts at length whenever asked. While most other Philosophies demand single-minded pursuit, someone can always follow The Way, regardless of what other allegiances they may have, although combining The Way with an alliance with Corruption seems a contradiction. Given how prone followers of The Way are of embracing contradiction, it is possible that someone will do so just to prove that it can be done.

While most of The Way is in riddles, there are a few concepts that are surprisingly clear. The most commonly discussed are the Three Treasures. In the text (see below), three character traits are described as being equivalent to all the gold and jade in the world. They are compassion, moderation, and modesty. The saying goes that the compassionate can afford to be kind to everyone, the moderate can afford to be charitable, and the modest can be an equal to everyone. The thinking goes that, if everyone could adopt these treasured behaviours, the world would be a much better place.

Founder. The precepts of the Way were developed by a man named Lung Bo, an advisor to the Emperor Chang Tzu-Mu. Lung Bo had developed a means by which the world could be governed for the greatest good of all people. The Emperor was, for a long time, enamoured with Lung Bo's teachings, and followed them with great success. However, once members of the One Hundred Royal Families began pushing the Emperor to invade the lands of the Gao-Li people, Lung Bo found the Emperor's ears closed to him.

Principle Text. Once the invasion began, Lung Bo retired from his post in disgust. While travelling the Empire, a gate guard supposedly asked Lung Bo for a concise description of his Philosophy. Lung Bo took the opportunity to pen The Book of The Way, which would become the premier text on The Way, which is still copied and sold today. Its critics decry it as riddles disguised as a Philosophy, while its adherents ask, "what is the difference?"



Other Features of Note. Other than a few character guidelines, like the Three Treasures, and its abhorrence of needless violence, The Way places few strictures on personal behaviour. This is especially prominent when dealing with spirits and Chi, for which the follower of The Way is given mostly complete freedom to do as he or she pleases. Lung Bo himself was rumoured to be half-dragon, and encouraged others to explore their spiritual side.

A work of art popular with followers of The Way is called "The Three Old Men." It depicts three titular men, standing around a large vat that is labelled "vinegar." Each of the men is holding a finger, said to have been dipped in the vinegar, into his mouth. The expression on each man's face is said to depict one of the three main philosophies in the Empire: the man with the sour expression is Emperor Shan-Fong, who asserts that life is sour, and people need rules to control their behaviour; the man with the bitter expression is The Enlightened One, who asserts that life is bitter and filled with pain, and it is better to get away from it entirely; and the man with the smile on his face is Lung Bo, who asserts that life is sweet, and we are free to do as we wish. The painting also indicates that The Way encompasses the other two philosophies, as each is but a choice of behaviour.

THE YAMA KINGS

Even in a world filled with mystical power, potent spirits and gods, and amazing feats, Death is still very much a part of life. Martial Artists and spirit heroes can heal from almost any injury, and their hardy constitutions help them deal with poison and disease. Most normal people, however, have no such luxury. When most people become gravely injured, they get sick and die. There is a saying amongst the old and infirm; "I am going to meet the Yama Kings." When people begin to say such things, they appear to know that they are going to die.

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The Yama Kings are dark spirits that oversee the souls of those who have died, taking them from the Dragon Lines, judging them based on their behaviour in life, and determining what is to happen to the soul afterwards. Good people are sometimes sent to the Heaven to work in the Bureaucracy, indifferent people, or those who died in infancy, are usually returned to the world via reincarnation, and those who have committed crimes and not been punished have their fate enacted upon them in one of the many Hells over which the Yama Kings watch.

Their names are unknown. The land of the underworld is called Yama, so these beings are known also as "The Kings Of Yama." Popular art describes them as large, bestial-faced creatures with hundreds of arms bearing fearsome weapons. They wear elaborate headdresses, and are often wreathed in red flames.

Those who serve the Yama Kings do so for a variety of reasons: some have done some great wrong in the past, and seek to avert their punishment in the afterlife. Others do so as relatively beneficial way of enacting a desire to kill. Others still are spirits of the dead, given new life to hunt down those who escape the Yama King's Judgement

Those who serve the Yama Kings are merchants of death, in some form or another. They may be holy assassins, arms merchants, or hunters. To them, the killing of another creature is a sacred task, once that fuels the Wheel of Reincarnation, moving the good on to better lives, and punishing the wicked. Not all are evil; many are mercy-killers, who use their talents to end needless suffering.

The other Philosophies have differing ideas about those who serve the Yama Kings. The Celestial Bureaucracy sees them as an unfortunately necessary evil, while those who walk the Path to Enlightenment see them as depriving others of their chance to transcend the circle of birth-death-rebirth. Followers of The Way tend to let the Yama King Servants do as they feel they must, though they keep an eye on those who appear to enjoy killing just a little too much.

Founder. There is no one in the human world who is attributed to be the founder of those who serve the Yama Kings. Only those who have some connection with death are asked to serve them. There is no recognized hierarchy; no temples to the Kings of Yama exist, and no one to give orders to the servants, aside from the Kings themselves. They appear to have been around since before humans walked the Earth and died.

Principle Texts. Since there is no organization that promotes the service of the Yama Kings, there are no dogmatic texts that are central to the philosophy. There have been, however, a number of artists and poets who have worked to please the mighty spirits, and who have done Yama-inspired works of arts as a form of expression. One such work is The Underground Heaven, a book of poetry written by Makoto Ichiro, a Nipponese ronin samurai-turned-assassin after his master died in the final days of the Empire-Nippon War. He served the

Yama Kings for many years afterwards, bringing down souls who had escaped the Kings' judgement. The poems detail Makoto's many bizarre experiences, up to and after his death. They describe the nature of the Yama Kings, what happens to the souls brought before them, and the geography of the various Hells. The Underground Heaven is popular with various subversive youth cultures, as well as with the more introspective soldiers, warriors and murderers in the Empire.

Other Features of Note. Despite ideas to the contrary, servants of the Yama Kings are not permitted by The State to perform acts of murder any time they please. The State only sanctions a handful of Yama-serving executioners, and even these are only used when killing high-profile criminals or political extremists. In the wider Empire, servants of the Yama Kings are given no protection from the laws against murder, and, as such, must be exceedingly careful to avoid capture.

The most common targets for a Yama King servant are undead creatures. The foul magic that brings such beings back to a semblance of life is a mockery of the natural order, and deprives the Kings a portion of their stock in trade. Many servants of the Yama Kings are exorcist/fighters, who bring peace to the undead, and destroy the meddlesome sorcerers who raise them.

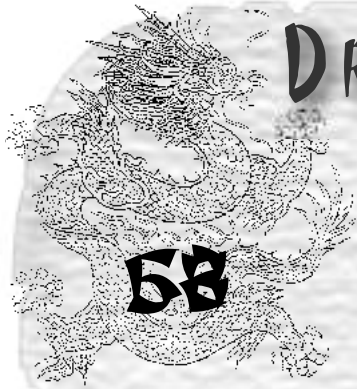
CORRUPTION



The other Philosophies, even that of the Yama Kings, have some accepted place within society in the Dragon Empire. The last philosophy, that of Corruption, exists in all levels of society, but it not a welcomed part of it. Corruption is a very real, personal force, one that encourages those who embrace it to follow their basest desires, to act out their animalistic aggression, to forget what it means to be human in place of what it means to be an animal. Corruption can be amazingly empowering, but that power is also one of the most destructive forces in the world.

The Philosophies all recognize the dual nature of the living soul; people have two souls, a higher aspect called the hun, and a lower aspect, called the p'o. The other philosophies work to increase the hun, which encourages people to aspire to be more like

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the benevolent spirits of the Heavens. This allows their souls become lighter, so that after death, the hun floats up to Heaven.

The p'o is the part of the soul that represents all of the worst parts of what it means to be human. History has shown in countless ways our capacity to be greedy, murderous, selfish beings with no accounting for how we harm others to benefit ourselves.

The philosophy of Corruption works to empower the p'o, making the individual a selfish creature that cares only for itself and its own desires. Once someone has answered the p'o's siren call to power, it becomes easier, and more fun, to answer it again and again. Very soon, what was good about the person has fallen away, their identity almost completely linked to their lower, baser, self.

Not everyone who falls to Corruption becomes a violent murderer. Many simply become greedy, and are willing to take bribes instead of performing their duties as they are supposed to. This is actually more common than the former variety, but much more difficult to spot and flush out. Corruption is so bad in places that no one will do their job without hefty bribes or other, less wholesome, favours

Ultimately, everyone who becomes corrupt dies. Even if they are not slain by those seeking vengeance for what they have done, the internal corruption of the soul eventually spreads to the body. However, when a corrupt person dies, instead of going to the Yama Kings, the p'o stays behind on earth, and becomes a hungry ghost or another malevolent spirit. This is a form of immortality, and many Corrupt see it as a reward, instead of the tragic end to a sad tale.

Founder: None exist, as the corruption is merely an expression of moral failings, and has therefore always been part of the human psyche. Even so, there are tales of an organized spirit court that calls itself The Black Temple. The Temple is lead by a powerful hungry ghost called Gao Hong-Nu. This being, and his cohort of other hungry ghosts, travel the length of the Empire, feasting upon the souls of the weak and corrupting the strong into their own cause. While not the sole author of evil in the world, Gao Hong-Nu is one of the most potent forces of corruption. Countless have suffered and died because of the actions of he and his host. His name is used to frighten disobedient children, but even full grown adults whisper it in the dark.

Principle Texts: Several years ago, a small press in the Forbidden City began churning out copies of a slim volume titled The Hidden Doctrine. This text purported to be written by an unnamed Celestial Bureaucracy clerk who worked in a very high level of government. The author asserted that humanity was not really a member of the Celestial Bureaucracy, and that good deeds and hard work would not get anyone into Heaven. The State exists for its own aims, and actively keeps people from getting what they desired in life. The only way to get what you want, suggested the author, was to be sneaky and take what you could get away with stealing, threats

and murder.

Copies of the book quickly circulated, and crime in the city made a sudden upswing as people began to follow its advice. Prefects discovered the print shop that was making the books, and closed it down, executed all parties responsible, and burnt every copy of the book they could discover. But the damage had been done; already, people who would ordinarily be model citizens were taking the book's advice literally and began stealing everything in sight.

To this day, the author of The Hidden Doctrine has yet to be uncovered. Crime inspired by the book happens every day, and officials have begun collecting hand-copied versions of the text at the scenes of horrendous murders.

Even if Gao Hon-Nu is not responsible for The Hidden Doctrine, its existence has made it easier to sway the minds of mortals into falling to Corruption.

USING THE PHILOSOPHIES

The various philosophies manifest in the Dragon Lines game as Allegiances, as per the rules on page 315 of the BRP rulebook. All of the rules for Allegiance are in play regarding the philosophies, with the following minor changes to reflect the setting.

OBVIOUS ALLIANCE

When a character possess an Allegiance score to one of the Philosophies that is 20 or higher than any other Philosophy, they are offered a chance for a more overt alliance with that force. In the Dragon Lines game, the offer for alliance is always made by a vision or visitation from a potent agent or spirit aligned with that force. If the alliance would be better served by keeping it secret, the offer comes during a period of meditation or deep sleep. However, if the alliance is one that it would benefit the characters to have everyone know about it, the offer is made during waking hours, in a public place, or at least in front of the character's companions.

SINGLE ALLIANCE

A character may maintain only a single alliance at a time, with a single exception. Those who follow The Way may follow more than one philosophy, as The Way teaches that that there are no contradictions in character. Gaining an alliance with another force does not hamper the character's alliance with The Way, although the other forces may or may not allow the character to retain that alliance should they wish to become further enmeshed with the other Philosophy.

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The Benefits of Allegiance

The Celestial Bureaucracy. Bonus skill points equal to your Celestial Bureaucracy Allegiance can be applied to any skill, three times per session.

The Path to Enlightenment. You may add temporary Hit Points to your total Hit Points equal to 20% of your Allegiance total to the Path (round up). If using the optional Hit Locations rules, these extra Hit Points may be distributed to your various locations as you see fit.

The Way. Up to three times per session, you may call upon The Way to grant you bonus points of Chi equal to 10% (round up) of your Allegiance score to the Way. You may only do this when your normal allotment of Chi is at 2 or less. If you reach zero Chi, you may do this as a free action to keep from becoming unconscious.

The Yama Kings. You may add skill points as per the Celestial Bureaucracy, although the skill points may only be used towards skills that are used for combat, warfare, or the taming or otherwise pacifying of hostile spirits.

Corruption. To reflect the trickery inherent in the philosophy, those who use Corruption may choose any of the above benefits, up to three times per session. The normal conditions, if any, apply.

Great Boons, however, are larger scale, more potent gifts that are only handed out to the force's most favoured champions. When your Allegiance hits 100%, you will automatically be contacted by a servant of your force and offered a Boon. You may select a Greater Boon with a reasonable expectation that you will get it. Taking a Greater Boon reduces your Allegiance back down to 0%, though you are still considered an ally of that force. Also, if you are a candidate for Enlightenment (see below), the benefits from Enlightenment are determined before your Greater Boon is granted. The Greater Boon manifests as a Major Chi Augmentation, often in the form of rare and singular artefacts (see page 114 for examples).

Purging Unwanted Allegiance. As a Lesser Boon option, you may request that any accumulated Allegiance for any single Philosophy be removed from you, as a promise to dedicate your life to your chosen force. This is not a choice made lightly, and all of the philosophies will want to ensure that you fully understand the commitment you are making before allowing this to occur.

BENEFITS OF ALLEGIANCE

These are unchanged from the BRP rulebook. However, which benefit you gain depends on the force to which are you allied. If you have not declared a formal Alliance yet, either because of lack of interest or because your score is too low to declare an Alliance, you may use the benefit that matches with your highest Allegiance score.

Note that using a benefit always results in an Allegiance check against the force in question, so each time you use a benefit, it is likely to increase the appropriate Allegiance by a significant amount.

FORTUITOUS INTERVENTION

This benefit is similar to Divine Intervention from the BRP rulebook, although the abundance of Chi in the setting makes Fortune smile on the living more often than fickle gods.

When calling upon Fortune to aid you, make an Allegiance check against the force being petitioned. If you fail, your Allegiance score is reduced by half the die result, and help does not come. If you succeed, you gain some measure of assistance from your force, but your Allegiance score is automatically reduced by the total amount rolled on the dice.

Generally, this method of Intervention is subtle. An unobservant character might easily miss it when it occurs. It is also more of a gamble; calling on Fortune to aid you will always result in an Allegiance adjustment.

The nature of how the intervention manifests depends largely on the force being petitioned.

BOONS

This is a new way to benefit from your Allegiance to a Philosophy. If you are an Ally to a force, and have an Allegiance score with that force that is at least 50%, you may, by performing a lengthy ritual meditation, request a Boon from the source of your Allegiance.

The requested Boon must be in keeping with the precepts of the Philosophy, you must have a clear, pressing need for the power granted by the Boon, and the proposed use of the Boon must fall in line with the philosophy in question. There is no roll to simulate this; whether to Boon is granted is up to the Game Master, who plays a representative of the force in question.

If the Game Master determines that the Boon request is appropriate, you immediately reduce your Allegiance to that force by 50%, and either gain the Boon, or be instructed in a way that will allow you to gain the Boon. You are still considered an Ally to that force, though your change in Allegiance may result in representatives from the other philosophies contacting you and requesting that you switch sides.

A **Lesser Boon** is any single minor Chi Augmentation, or a Chi Manipulation at base chance (usually your INT). They are the most common form of Boon given out, and most forces are willing to allow someone allied with their force to use them.

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ALLEGIANCE POINT ACCRUAL

Characters accrue points of Allegiance in the normal way: actions in keeping with the nature of a force grant Allegiance. At the end of a story arc, or even at the end of a session, check your character's actions against the following table

ACTION	THE CELESTIAL BUREAUCRACY	PATH OF ENLIGHTENMENT	THE WAY	YAMA KINGS	CORRUPTION
Aiding the Weak	2	1	1	0	-1
Behaving Dishonourably	-1	-1	0	0	2
Behaving Honourably	1	2	1	1	-1
Charity to the weak or destitute	1	1	3	0	-1
Creating Something to Honour your Force	1	1	1	1	1
Destroying a Supernatural Creature	1 (if Hungry or Corrupt)	1 (if Hungry or Corrupt)	1 (if Hungry or Corrupt)	1	0
Destroying Something Sacred to Another Force	1	0	0	1	3
Freeing Someone From Imprisonment	3 (Only if they are unjustly held)	2	3	1	0
Invoking your allied force disrespectfully	-2	0	0	1	2
Invoking your allied force respectfully	3	2	2	1	0
Killing someone in cold blood	-1	-2	-3	1	2
Killing someone in Self Defence	1	0	0	3	3
Major Service to your Allegiance	3	3	3	3	3
Protecting Someone	2	2	2	1	0
Saving Someone's Life	3	3	3	0	0
Theft	-1	-2	1	0	2
Bind a Good Spirit	0	0	2	1	2
Imprison Someone	2	0	0	2	2
Love another	0	0	3	1	0
Tell a lie	-1	0	1	1	2
Tell the truth	2	1	1	1	0
Take Revenge	0	-1	1	1	3
Take Advantage of a helpless foe	0	-1	0	1	3
Injure Someone	0	0	1	1	2
Practice Non-Attachment	0	2	2	0	0
Appeal to Legitimate Authority	2	1	0	1	0

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Fortuitous Intervention

The Celestial Bureaucracy. If in a civilized area, some official with the government, like a prefect or a clerk, arrives, sees your predicament, and is disposed towards assisting you. If you are in a wild place, a spirit aligned with the Bureaucracy arrives to assist you in some way, usually in a subtle manner. You will likely not see the spirit in action; they tend to use coincidence to aid their supplicants.

The Path to Enlightenment. Your aid almost always comes in the form of some sort of coincidence, usually a fairly normal one that can be explained away by a quirk of chance. It often manifests as other people who are uniquely equipped to aid you arrive at the most opportune time.

The Way. Your aid manifests as you getting what you want through no action of your own. This can be through coincidences, which are often incredible, or even outright magical phenomena that just sort of happen to you. Those who follow the Way often gain a reputation as witches and sorcerers because of this, even if they do not possess any overt Chi powers.

The Yama Kings. Someone dies, perhaps suddenly, and their passing allows the circumstances to change just enough for your aid to manifest. If in a jail, your guard might suffer a sudden heart attack and fall close enough for you to reach the key to your cell. If being attacked by a wild animal, it instead is attacked by a larger animal, allowing you to make your escape.

Corruption. Your aid manifests in one of a number of ways, all of which appeal to the target's baser nature. Someone holding you might let you go for a bribe, or those pursuing might become so overcome with rage that they begin to attack each other instead of chasing you.

that force on a successful POW x3 roll, the force will often come to the character with assignments and suggestions, which can make the character's life interesting.

Enlightenment



The Celestial Bureaucracy. Those Enlightened by the Bureaucracy may gain one of the following benefits from the BRP rulebook: Achieve a Personal Goal, Limited Immortality, Double Three Skills. Additionally, if this person ever dies, his or her spirit automatically ascends to Heaven, where he or she takes a high, prestigious position within the Celestial Bureaucracy.

The Path to Enlightenment. Those Enlightened by the Path may gain one of the following benefits from the BRP rulebook: Achieve a Personal Goal, Limited Immortality, stewardship of a Greater Artefact (see page 114 for a selection). Additionally, if the person ever dies, their spirit automatically becomes a god-like being, charged with assisting others in finding their way through the Path.

The Way. Those who follow the Way to its end may gain one of the following benefits from the BRP rulebook: Achieve a Personal Goal, Limited Immortality, Living Avatar. Additionally, upon death, the character's spirit goes on to become a Heavenly Shien, which spreads Chi around the world. They often aid mortals who petition them, and some are offered veneration.

The Yama Kings. Those who become devout servants of the Yama Kings may select one of the following benefits from the BRP rulebook: Limited Immortality, Double Hit Points, ownership of a Greater Artefact (see page 114 for examples). Additionally, when the character dies, they are given important positions within one of the Hells, overseeing the damned and keeping them from escaping.

Corruption. Those who completely fall to corruption may select any single benefit from the selection on page 318 of the BRP rulebook. This makes them unpredictable, as each champion of corruption has the potential to be quite different. Additionally, when the character dies, his or her spirit becomes a Hungry Ghost with beginning stats and powers equal to what it possessed in life, plus the powers inherent to a Hungry Ghost.

ENLIGHTENMENT

In Dragon Lines, the process of gaining Apotheosis due to Allegiance is referred to as Enlightenment, and it represents a sudden rush of insight in the nature of existence. Note that, if someone's Allegiance drops below 100 because of Boons, they are still considered to have been Enlightened, and continue to gain from the benefits of that condition.

As with other facets of the Allegiance system, the manner in which the Enlightenment manifests depends entirely upon the force that grants the change.

Lastly, any character who achieves Enlightenment will find the force to which they are aligned very much a part of their lives. In addition to being able to initiate a profound encounter with

7. THE DRAGON EMPIRE



AGES SAY that the Dragon Empire is the grounds upon which the Ten-Thousand Things have their origin. It is an ancient land, filled with mystery and wonder. Its people are diverse and complex, its waters pure and flowing, and its Emperor inspired and benevolent. It has recorded history stretching back almost to the time when the Jade Emperor created the very Earth upon which we stand. Even so, there many things the sages do not know, and areas of the Empire that human eyes have not seen. No matter how swiftly the Dragon Lines flow, Chi is immaterial, and we are but crude matter in comparison; we cannot go everywhere.

The Dragon Lines effect all of the Ten-Thousand Things, but chief among them are three things that are most often affected by Chi, and are therefore easy to describe; the people who live amongst the Dragon Lines, the societies that they create for themselves, and the very land itself. These three facets make up the majority of the Dragon Empire, and by discussing their forms, we can understand the Dragon Lines. Since we are made of Chi, understanding it leads to a deeper understanding of

ourselves and our place in the cosmos.

This is how the world is now. It may have once been different, and may again change. But of what profit is it to dwell on the past, or to look in the future? The "Now" is a Gift, which is why we call it the Present.

THE PEOPLE OF THE DRAGON EMPIRE

While no one besides the hermits and aesthetics that live in the hills are ever truly isolated from their society, much can be learned by looking at the nature of individuals. This is especially true in the Dragon Empire, with its vast diversity. People are defined as being either human and mortal, or spirit and immortal. Of course, there is considerable overlap, and even with these categories, there are subtler distinction to be made. Even so, this division is an easy enough one to use, and gives us a good starting

THE DRAGON EMPIRE



point. By looking closer at the humans, spirit-blooded and divine beings that make their homes in the Empire, we can see ways in which the Dragon Lines both draw people to certain portions of the Empire, as well as create beings of a certain temperament.

MORTAL HUMANS

The majority of the Dragon Empire's citizens are mortal human beings. Humans come from many different subcultures within the Empire, which impact nearly everything about a person; what they look like, how they behave, even how they think about the world and their place in it. However, some comparisons can be drawn, and certain patterns emerge when dealing with mortals. Generally, mortals are either members of society, and therefore considered civilized, or exist outside the bounds of society, and are therefore barbarians.

CIVILIZED PEOPLE

Mortals build villages in areas where the Dragon Lines are particularly strong, and build temples and other important buildings on Chi Nexus sites when they can. This is often an unconscious process, though many places possess geomancers to ensure that the Chi flows are properly used. These villages grow to become cities, and spread out into the world. The people who live in these cities naturally develop a hierarchical system.

The high-born people typically own larger houses as near to the local Chi Nexus as possible. They tend to follow intellectual or political professions, and see physical labour as beneath their station. Currently, it is fashionable for the wealthy and influential of both genders to grow their fingernails long, and to have servants paint them with coloured lacquers, in order to show their ability to not work the land for their living.

Clothing varies by personal taste, but is often made of coloured silk, and layered to produce interesting contrasts of colour and texture. Men tend to grow lengthy facial hair, and often oil, braid, or dye it to match wardrobe selections. Both genders wear the hair on their heads long, and have servants put it up in elaborate displays using combs, ties and decorated pins to hold it in place. Due to the often voluminous garments, the high-born often have weapons concealed on their persons, as well as the skill needed to use them. It is said that a wise man is kind to his servants, but only a fool trusts them.

The wealthy are often trained to express a sense of entitlement when dealing with those of lower status. They behave as though it is their right to possess the best in all things, and will angrily berate someone of lower station who asserts a right to what the wealthy demands. To make matters worse, the nobility often travel with armed bodyguards, who

will force compliance to a noble's demands. Note that this only applies to people of lower status. When dealing with other high-borns, or other beings of status, there is a complex interplay of manners to determine who is in the right.

Those of lower birth have a harder time in life. They are expected to work in some manner, with certain professions bearing more prestige than others. Their jobs often take them outdoors, even when the weather discourages it. Nearly everyone wears conical rice-paper hats to avoid the worst of the sun and the rain. Where the wealthy tend to focus on themselves and their families, the peasants see themselves more as a part of the community. This is largely because the wealthy fancy themselves above others, while peasants know they need each other to survive.

Martial Artists are a special case. In many ways, they exist outside the normal social order. Peasants will likely treat them in a manner similar to the high-born, regardless of the actual circumstances of their birth. Nobility will behave as though the Martial Artist is one of them, but with only grudging respect. The wealthy tend to assume that the laws of the land will protect them and their holdings. With the abilities Martial Artists possess, it can be hard for conventional authorities to keep them in check.

As such, training as a Martial Artist is a quick way for someone of low birth to quickly improve the station of themselves and their descendants. For this reason, many peasant families attempt to have one or more of their children taken on as students of one of the various Masters in the Empire. This is a major investment, and will often bankrupt a family to pay the fees needed for instruction.

BARBARIC PEOPLES

Those mortals who exist outside of the accepted civilized society are considered barbarians. This term means something different to members of the Empire than it does in other times. Here, a barbarian does not necessarily mean a brute, a savage, or someone prone to violence. It is entirely possible to meet a barbarian who is kind and considerate; he or she simply is not a part of the established Imperial culture.

While many barbarians exist in villages in isolated parts of the Empire, many of the Empire's barbarians are part of one of several nomad tribes that roam the edges of the Empire. While technically citizens of the Empire, and therefore bound by its rules, the nomad tribes see themselves as free from its strictures, able to come and go as they please. See the section on the Horse-Clans below.

It is common for civilized folk to make assumptions about the nature of the barbarian's life. The most common assumption is that the barbarians are entirely lawless. This is actually far from the truth. What laws do exist for the barbarians are based upon strength and honour instead of justice and piety, as in the Empire. The Horse-clans, for

Bowing

One means by which differences in status are reflected in everyday interactions is the custom of bowing. When two people meet, it is customary for the person of lower status to bow by bending at the waist. The difference on status between the two people indicates how deeply the lower status person is expected to bow. The person with higher status hardly need bow at all; a simple nod of the head will usually be enough. It is considered poor form to not bow at all, even if the difference in status between the two parties is extreme.

If the difference between the two people is rather high, or the person of low status wishes to place himself at the mercy of the other, he or she may perform a very deep bow called the kowtow. This involves kneeling and placing one's forehead against the ground. This form of bowing is reserved for expressions of great respect and reverence.

All people are expected to kowtow to government officials, as they represent the White Lotus Emperor in the performance of their duties.

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Hostile Spirits

Spirits, like ghosts, need Chi to survive. If in an area where Chi flow is strong, they behave exactly like normal characters; when their Chi reaches zero, they become quiescent, and can only act again when their Chi reaches at least one.

However, should they be in a place with no ambient Chi, and their personal reserves reaches zero, they instead become Hostile. Like when a similar situation occurs with a Hungry Ghost, a hostile spirit will go to any lengths to restore its Chi, even slaying supposed friends and those it is sworn to protect. If the hostile spirit has any powers that allow it to drain Chi from a target, they will use it until they have gotten their Chi back to a positive number.

If they do not possess such an ability, things get more dangerous. A Hostile spirit will attack any being that possesses Chi until their target is dead. At which point, they absorb 1D6 of the target's Chi (up to its maximum Chi if it is below 6) as it escapes the body.

Friendly spirits that become hostile are aware of their actions, but are unable to control themselves. If anyone is harmed while a spirit is hostile, it must make a Corruption Allegiance check at the end of that session. If they ever have an opportunity to become allies of Corruption while Hostile, they will automatically take it.

Subduing a Hostile spirit and getting to a place of high ambient Chi will usually allow it to become non-Hostile, although spirits who have fallen to Corruption may only pretend to return to sanity.

example, have a fairly rigid code of conduct, called The Way of the Saddle, which has very clear laws governing theft, especially that of horses. Since horses are such a part of the Clans' lifestyle, this body of laws covers a great deal of their society.

INTERACTIONS BETWEEN THE BARBARIANS AND THE CIVILIZED

At the edge of the civilized section of the Empire, relations between the two people tend to be strained. Many of the barbarian tribes see nothing wrong with raiding villages and smaller cities for supplies, and the civilized folks naturally have a problem with this. Even in places where the barbarian tribes have some terms with the villagers and have ceased raiding, memories of past injustices are as strong as ever.

This is especially problematic where the Dragon Lines flow strongest. Such places tend to increase the corresponding emotions in humans and spirits, making them more prone to lashing out in violence if near a Fire line, or working in secret to harm perceived enemies if near a Water line. Chi flow is as much as resource as water or food, and more than once a barbarian tribe has sought the use of a Nexus in order to heal a leader, only to be turned away at the city gates that guard it.

Of course, there are exceptions. The young are often able to forgive misdeeds that occurred before they were born, and it is surprisingly common for people from separate social classes to fall in love, despite the parental disapproval they might earn because of it. Not surprisingly, barbarian families are most likely to accept a spouse that comes from a city than a wealthy noble family would be to welcome a barbarian horseman into their homes.

Popular fiction has romanticized the trope of two young lovers leaving society behind and traveling together in the wilds of the Empire, so much so that several series of plays and stories have reached something of cult status amongst their fans. Many young nobles dream of meeting a wild, lusty barbarian to take them away from their stifling life in the city, with its rules and expectations, to a life of freedom and wonder.

SPIRITS

Given the strength of Chi flow in the Empire, it is little wonder why spirits of various sorts live and work alongside their mortal counterparts. Where mortals need to eat, drink and breathe in order to live, spirits need only exist near a Chi flow. The ambient level of mystical energy is enough to keep a spirit alive and thriving, as though they were people with access to free food, shelter, and the best medical care in the world.

Because life as a spirit is much easier than life as

a mortal, many spirits forsake living amongst humans and exist in the wild places of the Empire. Such spirits have much more common interactions with barbarians than they do civilized people. Many of these so-called "wild spirits" are hardly more than animals, as they do not possess the qualities that would allow them to exist peacefully alongside normal humans.

Spirits of the wild are not always hostile to humans. Some may even take human form and spend time getting to know certain human beings. Many villages on the outskirts of the Empire have an "Old One in the hills" that assists the village and protects them from ogres and raiders. Frequently, these Old Ones are in fact spirits in human form. Some wild spirits even fall in love with mortals, and are able to produce children as an outgrowth of that love. These spirit-blooded beings often have a hard time fitting into society, as discussed below.

Those spirits that do reside among mortals usually have a very good reason for doing so. Many have specialized needs that can only be met by dealing with people, while others must have regular access to a Chi Nexus in order to maintain their physical form over time. Others have discovered that their lack of need for the same things humans need to survive allow them to use money to amass greater influence in the human realm. What the spirits do with this influence depends on their nature; some benevolent ones work to make mortals' lives easier, while others desire to gain further power for their own ends.

Some humans distrust spirits that live amongst mortals, and work to put legislation in place to prevent spirits from taking what some consider "an unfair advantage" over their human counterparts. This is especially true in places where the Celestial Bureaucracy holds sway. The thinking goes that, since spirits do not need to rest or feed a family, they can work harder and for longer than mortals. They can therefore produce goods of better quality and sell them for cheaper.

In such places, the local magistrates often enact legislation to the effect that spirit merchants and craftsfolk must pay tariffs on their good and services, keeping them in line with mortals. To get around this, some spirits adopt human families, or even take mortal spouses and create families in the old-fashioned way. In most cases, those who do so are able to have the tariffs waived, and are still able to out-perform their mortal oppressors.

In general, spirits and spirit-blooded offspring are accepted parts of society, able to live and work next to their mortal neighbours without fear of oppression or reprisal. There are exceptions, of course. Such places tend to see spirits as inherently dangerous, and the ones that seem able to be around people are only faking it so as to gain trust. Ironically, places that have such strong attitudes regarding spirits very often push those spirits into Hostility, making them into the monsters they are feared to be.

Even with the potential dangers associated with spirits, most people see them as no more dangerous

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than any other person living nearby. In fact, in times of crisis, the abilities many spirits possess make them a valuable asset. Spirits of the forest help locate lost children, and those of the earth help ensure that crop yields are at their highest possible point for the eventual harvest. Like Chi, the material of which all things are made, spirits interact with all levels of society, sometimes in awful ways, but mostly in pleasant, neighbourly ones.

FOREIGN DEVILS

The last consideration to discuss when talking about the citizens of the Empire is how they perceive the Foreign Devils. These strange people come from far-away lands, and apparently seek to despoil the Dragon Empire by taking everything that others works towards and selling it in their homelands for profit. The official Imperial policy towards them is that they are not allowed anywhere within the Empire or its holdings, including the waters of the eastern coast. Of course, the Foreign Devils appear to have no compunction against breaking local laws. The worst part is that their refusal to do as they are told has emboldened the criminal elements of the Empire, who have, in many cases, decided to work with these despicable invaders.

Citizens of the Empire typically consider the Devils to be exceptionally ugly, lacking in manners, and greedy. In many ways, they represent everything that the Empire works to avoid in its own people. They are called Devils because it is hard to believe that they are not malevolent spirits, given the nature of their opposition to everything that is right and proper.

Imperial ministers of information assert that the Foreign Devils are everywhere, hiding out in dark places, waiting for a time when they can rise up and take over. Anyone who matches the description of one is shunned by the people in the Empire, as are those citizens discovered to be working with them. Even something as kind as providing a meal to one can be taken as aiding them in their efforts to despoil the Empire's lands.

Anecdotal evidence has surfaced that asserts that all of the Devils are not so bad. Many are reported to have been kidnapped in their home lands and made to travel to the Empire against their will. Some simply seek freedom from their captors, and are willing to become productive citizens if given the chance.

Even so, they represent a very real threat to the safety and security of the Dragon Empire. Already, there are reports that the Devils have joined with hungry ghosts, hostile spirits, and pirates to quietly take over islands off the coast, and even some remote villages have fallen to them. They supposedly use those captured as slaves, forcing them to work to build fortifications at the expense of their own crops.

And lastly, the Devils are feared due to their strange weapons, which are much like spears that

emit a thunderous crack and a plume of smoke, not unlike that of a dragon. These devices appear to work using an alchemical formula, and propel small metal balls that do grievous harm to those attacked by them. Already, these terrible weapons have been outlawed, even though they find their way into the hands of bandits and barbarians all over the Empire.

So far, the only Foreign Devils captured have been low ranking ones with little to no knowledge of the true plans their masters have in store for the Empire. Many in the army and amongst the Royal Families assert that having these beings freely walking the lands fought for by our ancestors means that the White Lotus Emperor has lost his Mandate to rule, and that new leadership is needed to remove these accursed Foreign Devils from the land.

Of course, such thoughts are treason, so no one ever says them very loud.

ORGANIZATIONS

Humans are social animals. Our societies are structured so that getting together and working as a group is much more effective than operating as an individual. This offers us a number of benefits, as well as certain drawbacks that must be weighed. Organizations come in a variety of forms, and in many ways, the form an organization takes reflects the character of its members.

While no two are exactly alike, there are enough similarities between organizations that we can use a rubric to discuss salient points of the organizations.

THE CELESTIAL BUREAUCRACY

Overview

By far the largest and most complex organization in the Empire, it might be more accurate to say that the Celestial Bureaucracy is the Empire. It is a vast, sprawling organization with representatives in nearly every village, city or trading post. They oversee a multitude of activities, collect taxes for the Empire, and try to keep life as civilized as possible. In addition, all of the official organizations listed here are also considered part of the Bureaucracy.

Goals

To oversee, prolong and maintain the Dragon Empire in its current form. As this covers a great deal of activity, the Bureaucracy is broken up into six different Ministries, each of which focuses on a specific aspect of government. Instead of actively trying to spread its influence, current policy, due to the Emperor's decree, is to maintain the status quo.

Playing as a Foreign Devil

With your Game Master's permission, you may opt to play one of the Foreign Devils, loose in the Dragon Empire. Such a character would have the odds stacked against him or her, as almost no one in the Empire will think favourably about the character, and most will as easily turn you into the local prefects as look at you.

Still, many possible character concepts could benefit from such a situation. Such characters are created similar to other Dragon Lines characters, with one notable exception: you cannot begin play with any Martial Arts style, though you may learn them during play. To compensate, you may select one Personality Type during the optional step 6 of the character creation process.



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Courtly Intrigue

While seemingly working together for the benefit of the Empire, the Six Ministers all secretly plot against one another to further their own aims, as well as those of their Ministry. Not even considering their potential Martial Arts powers, each one wields immense temporal power that, if properly applied, can make a party's life miserable or joyous.

As the word of their exploits travel, the PCs may attract attention from one or more of the Ministers, who may want to use their talents for their own ends. Doing so offers great reward, but discretion must be in place, lest the other Ministers discover their identities.

Leadership

The White Lotus Emperor sits on the Dragon Throne, where he rules over the Dragon Court, made up of the six ministers who oversee the day-to-day operation of the various facets of the Empire. When making important decisions about the Empire, the six ministers advise the Emperor on how a decision would affect their ministry. This essentially works as a vote, either ya or nay, with the Emperor holding a tie-breaking vote. There is no legislation holding the Emperor to this structure; he can always disregard advice from his ministers if he so desires. So far in his reign, this has yet to occur. These Ministries, and the people who oversee them, are:

The Ministry of Rites. Overseen by Minister Ran Ming-Nuo, a hard-line believer in the tenants of the Bureaucracy. He deals with the construction of temples, and schedules religious celebrations so as to prevent overlap, and to make sure that celebrants are not taken away from their work too frequently. Even though he is involved in the interaction between humans and spirits, Minister Ran thinks spirits should remain as removed from humanity as possible. He is also something of a single-issue Minister; if an issue comes to a vote, he will always align himself with the side that would have the least impact on the spirit world, unless that impact would make it more separate from the mortal realm.

The Ministry of Personnel. Overseen by Minister Peng Mao-Han, one of the two women ministers. She is an adept student of human behaviour, and is capable of reading people with an astonishing level of accuracy. Her Ministry handles hiring and maintaining the vast number of people needed to keep the Bureaucracy running. This includes the people who work for the other Ministries, something that often rankles at the other Ministers. Rumour asserts that Minister Peng has eyes and ears in all levels of the Bureaucracy, and uses the knowledge gained for both her own ends, and to improve the functioning of the Empire as a whole.

The Ministry of Revenue. Overseen by Minister Fan Man-Nu, a tight-pursed legalist who is responsible for the collection of taxes and the dispensation of funds for other projects. He holds a great deal of sway over the Empire, not only for his unwillingness to fund superfluous projects. Minister Fan is well known for his hatred of corruption and bribery, and he goes to great lengths to assure that no funds meant for the Empire's use are being diverted into places where they should not be. His Ministry includes the Eyes of Fate intelligence organization, which carefully combs tax records for any discrepancies, and makes frequent trips out to the edges of the Empire to hunt for missing funds.

The Ministry of War. Overseen by Minister Shen Kuai-Wei, a spirit-blooded warrior of advanced age well known for his fiery temper and willingness to invade foreign countries. Minister Shen is a master tactician, capable of winning conflicts, even when outnumbered, ambushed, or in otherwise unfavourable conditions. It was due to his masterful planning that

both Gao-Li and Nippon were annexed into the Empire. However, despite his skill, Minister Shen is out of favour with the Emperor, who thinks the Empire is large enough without attempting to conquer lands to the west and north.

The Ministry of Justice. Overseen by Minister Jia Ma-Ning, the second woman in the Dragon Court. Minister Jia worked her way up through the legal system of the Empire, and has passed judgement on nearly every crime possible. Despite a lifetime spent dealing with the worst sort of people, human and spirits both, Minister Jia maintains a commitment to the ideals of justice seemingly unclouded by personal bias and undamaged by her time as a judge. While she is largely incorruptible, she also knows that corruption is rife within her department, and is working diligently with the other Ministers to ensure that corrupt officials are found and replaced with better ones.

The Ministry of Public Works. Overseen by Minister Pan Mu-Nuan, a dedicated public seroant who seems to truly desire to help the Empire serve its people. He is responsible for the construction and maintenance of the Empire's buildings and roads, as well as having the infrastructure in place to take advantage of new sources of gold, jade and Chi that might turn up. A large number of the Empire's geomancers work for this Ministry. Unfortunately, Minister Pan's organization is as corrupt as they come, and projects almost always take far longer and cost more money than they should. Minister Pan has only recently been granted the position, when his preceding Minister, Chu Mu-Van, was implicated in a bribery scheme that had siphoned vast quantities of gold and jade from the Empire's coffer.

Influence

The Celestial Bureaucracy is easily the most powerful and influential organization in the Empire. Its eyes and ears are everywhere, and there is no place in the world its agents cannot get to. It is like the Dragons from which the Empire takes its name; hard to awaken, but furious when angered.

THE PREFECTURE SYSTEM

Overview

The Prefecture is the primary law enforcement system in the Dragon Empire. Made up of mundane investigators and Martial Artists of varying degrees of power, the Prefecture has bases in every major city, in addition to bases in the rural areas that are responsible for a number of villages. They investigate crimes, arrest criminals, and oversee incarceration and transport to trial.

Goals

In addition to the stated goals mentioned in the overview, each Prefecture has its own problems to deal with, and their goals most often revolve around



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discovering the source of some local problem and putting an end to it. This can be problematic, especially in the rural areas, where only a handful of prefects are present to deal with a possibly overwhelming threat.

Leadership

Technically, each Prefecture operates under the leadership of the Ministry of Public Works. The High Prefect of each Prefecture reports to Minister Pan once a month, usually in writing. Once every season, the High Prefects travel to the Forbidden City for personal meetings with the Minister to discuss issues particular to each Prefecture. Otherwise, the High Prefects are allowed to run their territory with little oversight, under the assumption that each High Prefect is as intelligent and capable as he or she is reputed to be.

Each Prefecture holds its members in ranks, which determine the level of influence the individual has, as well as whom he or she takes orders from.

Constable. *The lowest rank, given to new recruits or those of higher rank who make mistakes and need disciplinary actions. They deal with the public on most cases, and make up the rank-and-file of the prefecture in times of mass conflict.*

Superintendent. *A rank given to prefects who have spent some time in service, and who show a capacity for leadership. A superintendent is responsible for the constables in their area. They take reports and pass them to higher levels, and pass instructions from higher levels down to the constables. Most superintendents see little work in the field.*

Supervisor. *The highest rank within a given prefecture base, the Supervisor oversees all of the operations of that base. In addition to their roles as administrators, some Supervisors maintain a section of their territory as a sort of personal base of operations, keeping that area free from crime as much as they can.*

High Prefect. *The highest rank most prefects ever receive, the High Prefect deals with the Supervisors of all the prefect bases in their territory, taking reports, suggesting courses of action, and reporting to the Minister of Public Works.*

Influence

High, in most places. The Prefecture system is an extension of the Celestial Bureaucracy, charged with its duties by the Emperor himself. This is not always the case in rural areas; some sections of the Empire have little to no prefecture presence, and such places are frequently lawless hell-holes where only criminals prosper.

THE SEVEN STALKING SHADOWS CRIMINAL SYNDICATE

Overview

This gang of murderers, thieves and cut-throats takes its name from the Seven powerful Bosses that head up the gang, as well as their proclivity to stalk potential victims, finding out all they can about them, and then attacking, taking money and property, and leaving only bodies behind. Rumours say that the Bosses, and many of the street-level members, are not human at all, but are malevolent hungry ghosts that take pleasure from inflicting pain and terror. While nearly all of the members who have been arrested have been human, there are reports attributed to the Seven Stalking Shadows of their members walking through walls, vanishing into thin air, and leaping from rooftops.

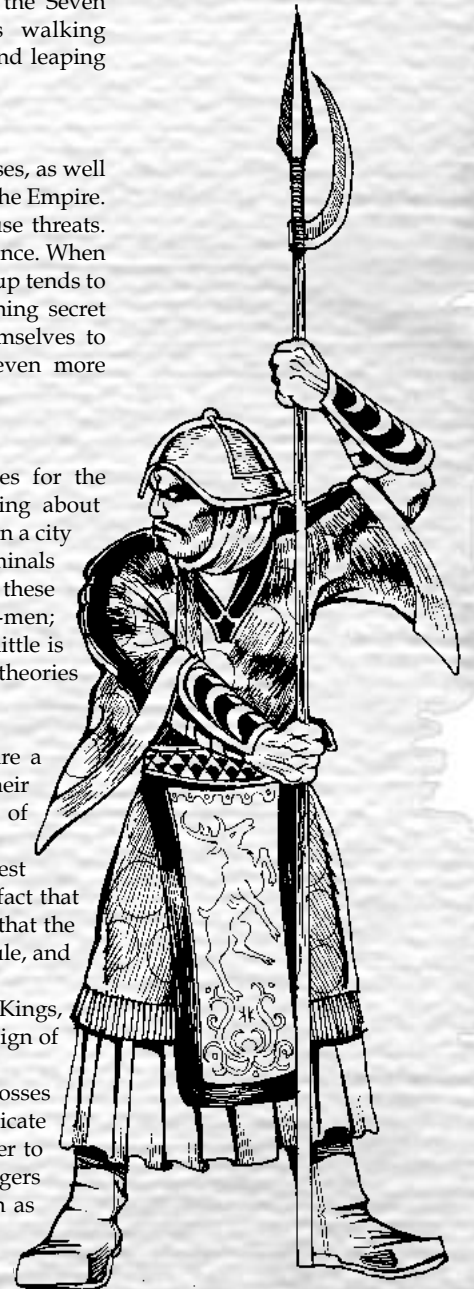
Goals

Increase the wealth of the seven bosses, as well as their influence amongst the people of the Empire. When officials cannot be bought, they use threats. When threats do not work, they use violence. When violence does not work, murder. The group tends to be short-sighted, and focuses on remaining secret whenever possible. If they applied themselves to something large-scale, they could be even more frightening than they already are.

Leadership

The Seven Bosses are iconic figures for the Syndicate. While no one knows anything about them, even the rumour of their presence in a city is enough to make everyone, other criminals included, be extra careful. In a way, these beings are something like bogey-men; everyone is afraid of them, although so little is actually known about them. Several theories exist as to who they might be:

- The most common is that they are a collection of Hungry Ghosts, who use their powers to kill people and create more of their kind.
- Some say they are demons manifest on earth, free to kill as they please. The fact that Heaven allows this to occur is sure sign that the Emperor has lost Heaven's Mandate to rule, and should be replaced.
- They may be servants of the Yama Kings, using stealth in order to continue their reign of terror for their grim masters.
- Still others assert that the Seven Bosses do not actually exist, that the whole Syndicate is a fiction put up by the prefects in order to increase their funding. The fact that muggers and murderers have adopted this fiction as fact only proves its effectiveness.



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Prefecture Problems

The many criminal gangs that operate in the Empire are aware of several problems in how the Prefecture System operates, and use these weaknesses to their advantage.

- 1. The monthly reports to the Minister of Public Works are often intercepted and replaced with reports indicating far fewer problems than what the original report contained. Couriers are often bribed to allow this willingly, while others have their papers switched while they sleep.*
- 2. While High Prefects are usually appointed by the Minister, lower-level prefects are hired from the local population. It is possible for criminals to slowly infiltrate the ranks of the prefecture and undermine its structure from within.*

What is known is that many government agencies have said they will pay great sums of money in exchange for verifiable information on one of the Seven Bosses.

Influence

Hard to tell. Within the criminal world, the Seven Stalking Shadows are almost legendary, and have a great deal of sway over lesser groups. If the rumours are true, the Seven Stalking Shadows also have their hands in higher levels of government as well, making their influence that much greater.

THE TIAN HUI LEAGUE

Overview

This gang of opportunistic thieves take their name from an Ancient Chin saying that means "The Heavens aid those who take for themselves." They remain true to this saying by stealing anything and everything they can lay their hands on. While they approach their work with some humour, and refuse to murder or threaten to get what they want, few of their victims find it all funny when their possessions disappear in the middle of the night.

Goals

Loot the most ostentatious, valuable things you can find, fence them for cash, and donate a percentage of your proceeds to the League, who will, in turn assist you when you are in a jam, and direct work your way as assignments come in. Thumb your nose at those who collect art while people starve, and have fun doing it.

Leadership

The League is only a fairly loose collection of professional thieves, who approach their tasks with a certain mindset. They do not actively force other thieves to join them. The "leaders" such as they are, are simply long-term members who gather with the rest of the group to select targets and divide assignments amongst themselves. As such, the leadership tends to change every so often, as their members are arrested, or killed by irate victims. Since there is such a high turnover, the League has little in the way of long term goals. They see themselves as Heaven's operatives, reminding people that the duty of the rich is to use their wealth to help the lives of the poor.

Influence

Little outside their own organization. They recruit from the body of professional thieves in the Forbidden City, but refrain from overtly making life difficult for others. However, there have been famous cases where another thieves guild had moved into the Tian Hui's territory, and the League used its own skills to set the rival league up for a series of daring robberies. Once the rival guild was wanted by the prefects, the League covertly assisted in their arrest, thereby aiding the police and getting rid of competition.

THE SHEN FENG SOCIETY

Overview

Despite many of its other progressive policies, the ownership and traffic of slaves is not illegal in the Dragon Empire. Those who owe debts and cannot pay are sold into slavery to work off that debt, and prisoners of war are sold into slavery by The State as a means of making money. The Shen Feng Society is a group that abhors slavery, and works to both help slaves escape to freedom, and to influence the government to do away with the practice in order to better serve the Heavens. They are an illegal group, and so must maintain their membership in the Society a secret.

Goals

To liberate enslaved people and spirits and assist them in starting new lives on the frontier. Also, they wish to overturn slavery as an institution, and make it so that every person in the Empire is paid a fair wage for their work. Many members were once slaves themselves, and do not wish that condition on anyone.

Leadership

The Society is organized in the cells, which consist of 3 to 10 individuals in an area, who all work together to single out slaves for liberation. Each cell member only knows a handful of other members, including in their own cell. There is theoretically a lead cell that oversees the Society, but no evidence of the nature of this cell, nor any of its members, has ever been discovered. It is likely that the lead cell is composed of spirits, who are capable of remaining hidden from even the most thorough prefecture investigation.

Influence

As an illegal conspiracy to deprive the wealthy of property, the Shen Feng have only a little influence in the Empire, and even then only amongst those who know of its existence and are willing to assist in the liberation of slaves. Their illegal nature means that they must also deal with criminals on a regular basis, which most members see as an unfortunate necessity. However, the kind of altruism that comes from being a member also tends to promote advancement in the Philosophies, which gives the Society a handful of powerful and Enlightened members that can be called upon for aid when a situation gets out of control.

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INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES

Power comes in many forms. Martial Artists gain power over their bodies through disciplined training, and politicians gain power through other people. Still others gain power simply by knowing things. Knowledge is, in some ways, the easiest power to get, but also the hardest to use effectively. There are many groups in the Dragon Empire that collect secrets and horde them for their own use. Two such groups are detailed below.

THE EYES OF FATE

Overview

The Eyes of Fate are the official intelligence operatives employed by Minister Fan Ma-Nu's Ministry of Revenue. Officially, they exist to track down and recover treasury funds that have vanished from the Imperial coffers. Unofficially, they work as Minister Fan's eyes and ears. They travel the length and breadth of the Empire, eavesdropping on private conversations, accessing sensitive documents, and collecting as much information of the workings of the other Ministers as at all possible. It can be grim, dangerous work; those operating in their unofficial capacity will be denied and left to hang should they be discovered.

Goals

In addition to their overarching goals as listed above, the Eyes of Fate are currently investigating the disappearance of a large supply of gold and jade from all over the Empire. Someone has been quietly siphoning away small sums, in amounts that might be overlooked as errors in accounting, and funneling this money to locations unknown. Over time, the amounts add up to a sizeable fund. The only lead thus far came when a coin with a distinctive mark vanished in one prefecture, and was discovered again in another, in the hands of a known bandit. How the coin got from the storehouse where it was kept to the bandit's hand is a matter of great interest for the Ministry.

Leadership

Minister Fan runs the organization with a great deal of oversight. He trusts his many Keepers, who in turn oversee a body of investigators. The Keepers act as a go-between with the Minister and the investigators, handing out assignments, and furnishing the Minister with reports from the field. Individual investigators often only know their Keeper, so that they cannot turn over fellow investigators if captured. At times, multiple investigators work together to perform a dangerous mission. In these cases, each agent is given a false identity to operate under, so that even after the mission, their former partners would be unable to discover their true identities.

In the past, this has been a disadvantage. In some cases, operatives falsely claiming to be

Keepers recruit potential agents under the auspices of the Eyes of Fate. It can be some time before the operatives realize that they are not actually employed by the Ministry of Revenue, and they they have been duped by a criminal agency to work for them instead. It is almost as though no institution is sacred enough that criminals will not try to exploit it.

Influence

Not surprisingly, the Eyes of Fate have a great deal of influence over the rest of the Empire since they know so many secrets about who deals with whom and why. However, the Minister himself must sanction the deployment of any of the informational assets the Ministry possesses. In the past, he has shown willingness to only use the bare minimum necessary to ensure a target complies with the Ministry's requests. Because of this, it is hardly common knowledge that the Eyes of Fate know as much as they do.

THE NONG SHU-PENG

Overview

Where the Eyes of Fate are an intelligence community that operates under the official sanction of government, the Nong Shu-Peng are something of a freelance spy ring, brokering in information in exchange for money, power and privilege. They also take contracts for intelligence-gathering jobs, with a sliding scale fee that fluctuates based on how useful the information gained would be to their employer. They are, of course, not above using it themselves.

Goals

Find out all they can about everyone of importance in the Empire. Use this information in a way that brings the ring greater power and influence. They do try to keep their client's identities secret, as it could be bad for business to have them revealed. More specifically, Nong agents have recently discovered that representatives operating on behalf of Shen Kuai-Wei, the Minister of War, have been meeting with the leaders of the various Horse-Clans in the western Wastelands. The nature of these meetings is not currently known, although what interactions have been observed indicate that the Ministry Representatives are approaching the Clan leaders as fellow warriors and chiefs. Some speculate that the Ministry is attempting to turn the Horse Clans into an army, but this is conjecture. It is said that the Nong Shu-Peng will pay greatly for information regarding this turn of events.

Leadership

The Nong Shu-Peng is run by a man who goes by the nickname Black Leopard, whose real identity is only known by a few people. He is known to keep a stern hand on the organization, because anyone who traffics in secrets knows the value of keeping

Prefecture Problems

3. Much of the Prefecture system operates on the assumption that those working within it are of truly noble intentions, and give them surprisingly little oversight. If a High Prefect can be corrupted by criminal elements, it becomes much easier for criminal leagues to operate in areas that High Prefect oversees.

4. The frontier prefectures are often used as punishment for prefects from the cities who have made mistakes in their duties. Such disciplinary action often breeds resentment in the prefect, opening them up to potential corruption, either through mystical subversion or simple bribery.

Criminals are a crafty lot, and they always look for ways in which they can make the prefecture system less efficient and more corrupt. These above are the most common methods, but clever criminals can also find other ways to turn any situation to their advantage.



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some to themselves. To combat this tendency, Black Leopard pays his agents exceedingly well. And has been known to make a violent spectacle of anyone who attempts to not report everything they learn on the field.

Influence

Moderate. While the organization knows a great deal about vast numbers of people, its use of this information is hampered by the precautions in place within the organization, and the leader's desire to keep his people in line. In some ways, the Nong Shu-Peng is teetering on the brink of collapse. All it would take to topple the whole thing would a small amount of pressure in the right place.

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

There are many organizations in the Dragon Empire that do not fall under the previous rubrics. Many are so small that their influence is felt only in the village or city in which they operate. Others are mostly social clubs that have no overriding goals or organization beyond a regular meeting time and place. Sometimes, these smaller-scale organizations can grow into something larger and more influential.

THE SHEN WEI-REN

Overview

Initially a small group of Martial Artists, the Shen Wei-Ren have grown into a larger group with chapter houses all over the Empire. They style themselves as something of a freelance public works group, and they use their powers and skills to assist the weak, the downtrodden, and the poor. The society recruits from the Empire's Martial Artists, and will only accept those with a reputation for being honest, virtuous and above corruption. They will assist in the construction of a new building as often as they will put down dangerous monsters before they can harm the innocent.

Goals

Use your talents for the public good. Protect the weak, and teach any who wish to learn your skills. Collect payment only so much as it will not unduly burden the payer. Be a force for good in your area. In particular, the Shen Wei-Ren is trying to discover the cause of the sudden explosion in the number of Hungry Ghost attacks taking place all over the Empire. Thus far, they have only discovered that the incidences are increasing, and appear to follow a pattern, the exact nature of which has not been determined.

Leadership

The society is led by thirteen of the oldest and most potent Martial Artists in the organization. They operate a Chapter house in the southern outskirts of the Forbidden City, and see to the most important functions of the organization. An audience with this Inner Circle can be made by any member, though only the most important, influential matters will warrant the attention of all Circle Members. Members who have failed in their duties are sometimes called to the main Chapter House to face meeting in which the Inner Circle's displeasure and disappointment is made known.

Influence

Little, outside their own circle, but growing. Many places in the Empire hold the warriors of the Shen Wei-Ren as folk heroes. Their tales are told to children to give the youngsters something to aspire to. In these places, even the prefects will converse with the local Shen residence before making important decisions. As the number of places like this increase, certain members of the Celestial Bureaucracy have begun to think they may have a problem brewing in their proverbial backyards. If the peasants were ever to revolt, they would likely have a small army of beloved warriors of great skill and cunning to back them up.

LIFE IN THE DRAGON EMPIRE

Given the diversity of cultures, Chi levels, and geographical conditions within the Empire, it is almost impossible to convey a single way of life that encompasses the life of every citizen. Even so, it is possible to speak of such things in broad terms, expressing what life appears to be like from an outsider's standpoint.

What follows are overviews of what life is like in the Empire's many villages and cities. This is considered a base from which most other places will grow.

AN IMPERIAL VILLAGE

OVERVIEW

Villages in the Empire tend to be a loose collection of neighbouring farms, who share an agreed-upon area for trading and social gatherings. The meeting places often have multiple buildings near them to handle various important functions, such as housing the local prefecture, or allowing farmers to sell or trade their goods for other items.

IMPORTANT PEOPLE

Not every village will have all of these positions filled, but most will have at least of few.

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- **A leader** - Someone from the village who is appointed, through various methods, to a position of authority from which he or she makes decisions that affect the village as a whole. This can sometimes be a council of multiple people. Sometimes a village will be adopted by a powerful spirit, which serves as the leader of that village.

- **Farmers** - Any village needs supplies, and farmers are the only way important needs for survival for a large group of people can be met. There are prosperous farmers, who have enough to sell their excess for money and increase their holdings, and there are small scale operations of a single family who toil just to have enough to eat. Farmers will generally make up the bulk of the population.

- **A Magistrate** - An official from the Empire, who lives in the area, usually with his or her family. The official oversees legal business and pursues the Empire's interests in the area. Very often an outsider, the magistrate is sent to the village from a city, far enough away that the magistrate knows little about the people he or she oversees. For some, this is punishment; for others, it is an opportunity, and the manner with which they approach their position can be an indicator of how the position affects their careers.

- **A Prefecture** - Some of the larger, more centrally located villages have their own Prefecture in the area. The norm is that there is one prefecture with two or three villages, who travels on a circuit to address claims. Villages that do house prefectures may only host a single prefect, who operates as something of a sheriff, or they may have a small Prefecture House and several prefects who run it.

- **A Ceremonialist** - Often a priest, witch or sorcerer, this person is responsible for the religious or spiritual health of the village and its inhabitants. Usually, but not always, this person is afforded a great deal of respect.

- **Craftsfolk** - There are usually one, and often multiple, people in the village who practice an assortment of related Craft skills, often in keeping with the trade or function of the village. The Imperial Culture places a lot of emphasis on beauty as well as utility, so most craftsfolk possess an Art skill that is related to their crafts.

- **Thieves** - There are always people who, for various reasons, must steal to survive. They may be hungry orphans, or members of a gang, or just generally ill-tempered people who delight in taking things from others.

- **Teahouse Proprietor** - Teahouses often serve as informal local meeting places, and those who run them are usually given a great deal of respect in the community. If the teahouse is a success, it also funnels money into the community, which benefits everyone.

- **Martial Artist** - Most villages have at least one trained fighter to protect the community from threats. It may vary from a single old person of advanced skill to a special school where students are educated and trained in the Martial Arts.

- **Outsiders** - In most villages, there are people who are from somewhere else, who have come to the village for a variety of reasons. If the village is on a trade route, the outsiders might be merchants from the Indus Valley. They might be a handful of escaped slaves seeking a life not in bondage, or newly awakened spirits trying to find a place in the world.



PASTIMES

While most villages respect the value of hard work, they also recognize the inborn human need to rest. Taking care of one's self is seen as a net benefit to the village as a whole. Villagers throughout the Empire enjoy a number of games. Even responsible adults find time to play a game of one sort or another every now and then. Conventional wisdom says it keeps the aged feeling younger.

Common games include:

Flying Kites. A relatively recent invention, kites made of silk and bamboo are a favourite amongst children, and more than a few adults continue to fly kites when the weather is ideal for it. Kite fliers say that wind spirits like to play with the kites by creating different air currents to make the kites fly in different directions. See the village of Zhian Hu for more details.

Go. This board game is popular with the higher social classes. It consists of a square board marked off with a grid, and a supply of two colours of tokens, black and white. The game is played by alternately placing tokens on the spots on the grid where the lines meet. The object of the game is to control the board by placing tokens in such a way that your opponent cannot play. It teaches strategy and tactics, and has a whole subculture associated with it in most large cities.

Xianqi. A game similar to modern chess, this game is strategy is popular with people of low social

Games within the game

Players who wish to take part in any of the above games during play can use their Gaming skill (base chance INT+POW) to simulate their ability to play any or all of these games. Some Game Masters may wish to say that each separate Gaming skill has many potential specialities, like a Knowledge or Science skill. In this case, each of the above games would be its own skill.

In some cases, other skills may be used as complimentary skills with the Gaming skill. The Strategy skill is often useful when playing Go or Xianqi, and possibly Mah-jong

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classes. It is not uncommon for every village to have a member who is also the local Xianqi champion. Even if of higher social class, many prefects and magistrates cultivate an appreciation of the game in order to get involved in local politics.

Chuiwan. A game similar to golf.

Cuju. A game similar to modern soccer. In most places, this game is especially popular with women, and is one of the rare times when women of mixed social status are capable of being together in anything. Some places have male team members, mainly in places that do not have enough women to fill up two teams. Very few entirely male teams exist.

Mah-jong. A tile-sorting game that involves taking a selection of tiles from a carefully constructed pile and building a set of matches within their collected tiles. In places, you can play Mah-jong as a gambling game, in which case it is deadly serious. However, in most villages, people play it for fun, and do not place any special significance over whether they win or lose.

SPECIAL FEATURES

Every village has something about it that gives the village a sense of self, or has some other distinguishing feature that separates it from any other village like it. It might have access to a trade route or waterway, or be in the middle of a giant Dragon Line that flows through the main square. There could be old ruins nearby, or a bamboo forest that is rumoured to be haunted. And, even if these things are not actually true, villagers might believe it anyway, as a matter of pride.

SAMPLE VILLAGES

NUNAN

OVERVIEW

As the last major stopping point for the Trade Roads from Indus before entering the Forbidden City, the formerly little village of Nunan is growing dramatically due to the savvy business sense of its Headman, Li Chang-Xia. By getting the local farmers to become partners in the village's future, the returns made on investments in marketplaces, inns and teahouses along the road have made the partnership rather wealthy.

IMPORTANT PEOPLE

Li Chang-Xia, Leader. This cunning person was selected by the town to handle its affairs some years ago, back when it was little more than a watering hole along the way to the Forbidden City. He has, through a series of crafty business deals, grown to a position of power and influence in the village. Everyone assumes he is corrupt, but thus far no evidence linking him to illegal or immoral activities has been found.



The Farmer's Association. The "farmer's guild" is the name by which the wealthy landowners who have profited from Li's leadership call themselves. Because of their new wealth, many have hired others to watch over their affairs, while they live in luxury. They have a vested interest in keeping things as they are. Other farmers not in the guild are pushed further and further out of town, mostly because, since they lack organization, they cannot compete with the Guild in the open market.

Zhen Su-Kun, Magistrate. The Magistrate is a position of influence in Nunan. The Magistrate is a prim, polite woman who makes sure the Empire's taxes are properly paid on goods sold within the village. Normally very by the book, Zhen is willing to reduce or wave the more extraneous "import fees" in exchange for a bribe. She feels justified in this, because the "import fees" are meant to be applied to "unwelcome" visitors, and are not truly a part of the fee schedule, so it is not seen as missing if not applied. Technically, this is illegal, and it would almost certainly cost Zhen her job if discovered. Zhen also presides over criminal charges, and she and her entourage travel to outlying villages in this capacity every few months.

Supervisor Shi Bai-Mai, Prefecture. Supervisor Shi oversees a good-sized prefect house that provides law enforcement for Nunan and several other surrounding villages. They maintain a heavy presence in the village proper, and try to discourage illegal trade going on in the area. He is constantly under-staffed, and petitions the High Prefect of the area for more men and funds.

Thieves. A small gang of hoodlums have taken to calling themselves a guild, and have been

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ripping off caravans headed for the city. They seem surprisingly tough; on more than one occasion, members of the Seven Stalking Shadows tried to move into the village, and the locals managed to oust them each time. It is supposed that the gang, which calls itself The Nameless, has some sort of supernatural support, but the Prefecture has no actual knowledge of what that might be.

Huan Lang-Bo, Teahouse Owner, The Scarlet Crane. A posh teahouse and inn near the northern edge of the village, The Scarlet Crane caters to the more wealthy and influential traders, offering services and accommodations no other teahouse can provide. Huan believes in discretion and has set up meeting rooms for "private" business deals. He maintains a cadre of sorcerers to ensure that no one, not even other magicians or Martial Artists, can listen in on what is being discussed. He charges much for this service, but, so far, no one has complained. It is assumed that, should someone lodge a formal complaint, Huan's operation might be dealt a crippling blow if he loses too much of his clientèle. Rumours suggest that a cabal of teahouse owners see his operation as a monopoly, one supported by the local magistrate. They have a plan for toppling the Teahouse Giant in Nunan, but need some assistance to do so.

The Shen Wei-Ren. The Martial Art confederation maintains their headquarters in Nunan. The society jointly owns a large compound some distance away from the village. They maintain a training centre there, which is always filled with a variety of students learning different Martial Arts styles. These students are a constant presence in the village, and have, on more than one occasion, fought to protect Nunan's people and holdings from attacks by bandits, hungry ghosts and marauding demons. Also, the Shen Wei-Ren use the compound to hold meetings, so at any given moment, there could be several of the world's most powerful fighters only a short distance away.

SPECIAL FEATURES

Abundant Earth Chi flows in the area cause crops to grow thickly and with more vigour than is strictly natural. Nunan is known for its herbs, used for everything from seasoning dishes to making alchemical potions. No alchemists currently live or work out of Nunan. This thick growth of vegetation also applies to the bamboo forests that spring up around the village, and spread out for many kilometres in every direction. Rumours suggest that the forests are haunted, and prospectors return with strange artefacts of gold and jade with enough frequency to indicate many secret caches of goods hidden in them.

OTHER VILLAGES

The villages mentioned below are similar enough to the "generic" village above that their description only needs to point out the major differences to get the point across.

Zhian Hu

A walled village on the frontier of the Empire whose residents have a good relationship with the monks who live in the nearby Lung Ting monastery. Due to the high Wind Chi that flows through the area, the villagers are able to send kites up to near the monastery, and convey coded messages via the movement of the kites. Recently, a band of giants, ogres and unscrupulous human bandits, who call themselves the Hundred Hungry, have tried to ambush the monks so that they cannot come to the village's aid the next time the band lay siege to the village.

Hunmao

A well-established fishing village that straddles the Chang-tse river, Hunmao is also the home of a set of bizarre Chi-related phenomena. Where the village has formed on either side of the river, there is a strong Fire aspected Dragon Line. The points where the Fire line and the river touch produce warmer water, larger, healthier fish, and the occasional intelligent fish or amphibian. Also, for a few nights each spring and fall, the Fire line surges with power. This has a predictable result on the population, as well as causes curious balls of red fire to erupt from the river and fly some distance into the sky. People come from all around the Empire to witness this phenomena, and claim everything from good fortune to miraculous healing because of them.

There are many theories why the fireballs occur here and nowhere else, but the true answer is unknown. It is generally accepted that the Fire Line has something to do with it; several years ago, the Fire Line was accidentally diverted away from Hunmao, and the fireballs that year were less spectacular than normal. The village earns a great deal of money from this activity, and there are reports that the village headman, Li Fu-Rui, will pay handsomely for someone to set up the Fire Line to be more stable, and to produce a bigger surge to garner larger crowds.

AN IMPERIAL CITY

OVERVIEW

While most of the Empire consists of rural wilderness, there are a number of larger, more civilized, cities. These settlements are often among the oldest places in the Empire. Most of them were, at one time, cities of importance for the kingdoms that once filled this land, but have been swallowed up as the Empire has expanded. Because of this cultural diversity, the cities of the Empire vary in character. Some are filthy warrens, filled with

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Corruption, while others are pristine examples of human tolerance and dignity. Most fall somewhere in between these two extremes.

Cities are almost exclusively built upon the convergence of multiple powerful Dragon Lines. These lines are not the result of any human geomancy. They are instead created by the nature of their surroundings, and are therefore nearly impossible to alter with anything short of god-like magic. Only the elements and the passage of time can alter these Dragon Lines.

This has the added side effect of making Imperial Cities, well, weird. The concentration of Chi affects the minds of those who live in it, adjusting them to behave in certain ways. Their behaviour in turn effects the Lines, which devolves into a feedback loop. This, plus the cities' usual habit of only allowing certain people into them, means that there are few new ideas to alter the course of things.

Plus, this sort of power flow attracts spirits by the droves. Many appear human, but are capable of strange powers. To an outsider, it is too easy to assume that you are speaking to another human, only to have it disappear when it grows bored of the conversation. This can be unnerving to those who are not used to it.

All cities are walled for defence, though most have outlying villages to supply the food and supplied sought after within.

IMPORTANT PEOPLE

All of the same positions from the villages exist in the cities. The only difference is that the positions in the city are always supported by groups of people who benefit from the position. Regardless of any other factors, the cities of the Empire all have a Magistrate and his or her staff, as well as a large Prefecture base, in order to maintain some order and ensure that taxes are properly paid.

PASTIMES

Many of the games familiar to those from the country find players in the cities. Most cities have a regional pastime that local people enjoy. These are usually influenced by the high Chi presence in each city.

SPECIAL FEATURES

Each city has one or more distinct features that colour the nature of how it is run, and what the lives of the people who live in it are like.

SAMPLE CITIES

GUMEI

OVERVIEW

Gumei lies near the lip of a deep-earth rift. Just below the surface, molten rock sends a plume of heat and Fire Chi up towards the city. However, the city also rests at the base of Mt. Mamuyu, and a strong line of Air Chi sweeps through the city. The interplay between these two Chi lines is evident in nearly every aspect of the city. The main ways in which the two opposing themes play out are as Passion and Intellect.

All of the buildings in Gumei are domes of various sizes, composed of a reddish-brown clay that keeps them insulated. An advanced system of fans provides cool air to keep the city at a warm, but comfortable, temperature. Each rounded roof is topped with as many flags, wind chimes, or bells as the owner can afford. The wealthy live in the larger domed structures higher up in the city than the poor, who must contend with more of the heat from the earth below.

Those who live in Gumei learn to appreciate intrigues and games of strategy, as it activates both side of the Gumei character. This manifests in different ways in different places.

LEADERSHIP

The Gumei are led by a Council of Nine, who represent the nine most wealthy houses in the city. However, how and who measures this wealth are matters of some dispute, which means that the Council of Nine are almost always warring amongst themselves to prevent their positions from being taken by either newcomers from the lower houses, or their fellow Council members. This internal bickering has become something of a reflex, and the Council often reverts to it when tragedy is not presently looming.

As such, the city operates largely without the interference of the Council. Day to day decisions are made by the people who must perform them, employing a clear-headed insight into what would be best for the community. Only rarely do the people who work in the city seek the Council's opinion, since it almost always means becoming a pawn in their squabbling.



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PASTIMES

Everyone in Gumei plays one or more games of strategy in their off hours. Children form neighbourhood clubs to play Xianji, a pastime many keep up with into adulthood. Nobles and other people of high birth learn Go from master players, often paying extensive fees in order to gain the position of student. People respect a good game player, and the quickest way to win someone's trust is to play them and either win through skill or lose but make a good showing of skill. Once a year, the city holds the Festival of the Winds, where the local wind-gliders perform feats of aerial acrobatics.

SPECIAL FEATURES

Due to the interaction of the winds from the Mt. Mamuyu and the warm updrafts from the volcanic vents in deep beneath the city, locals have devised a way to harness the winds. Anyone with the proper equipment (like long capes or sturdy kites) can use the Flight Chi power as though it was their own. This only works within the city and for a few meters around it. Most natives have done this enough to use it at will, and outsiders can learn to do it, and control their travel somewhat by learning the Fly skill.

YUNLU, THE TEMPLE-CITY IN THE SKY

OVERVIEW

Yunlu is the only Imperial City that has no fixed location. It was built centuries before the Empire rose to power, and is the only city that was peacefully annexed instead of being taken during a war of conquest. The City itself is not anchored to the ground, but floats on a bed of clouds as it travels over the face of the Empire. Being closer to the Heavens, Yunlu's Chi is predominantly of Air and Heavenly aspect, which helps make it a place of quiet contemplation, intellectual pursuits, and peaceful sorcery.

As there is little ground in Yunlu, the inhabitants must trade for many of the foods they need in order to survive. They manage this by using the peculiar properties of the Temple City to construct devices that use both scientific and mystical properties to be of use to the other cities and villages of the Empire.

The Temple City's buildings are composed of blue-gray bricks, and nearly every one has multiple spires and towers, making the Temple City appear as a city of magnificent castles. Yunlu is also one of the only places in the Empire where Heavenly Chi is available in such staggering quantities, making Yunlu home to strange spiritual beings found nowhere else in the world.

As such, it has a higher percentage of spirit and spirit-blooded inhabitants than any other city in the Empire, even more so than the Forbidden City.

Other sky cities exist, though only Yunlu moves around and is part of the Empire. The other sky cities are largely legendary, though some explorers assert that they do indeed exist.

LEADERSHIP

Yunlu is also strange in that it is ruled by a hereditary monarch, who takes the title King or Queen. The Empire allows this to occur, so long as the Temple City maintains its tax payments and does not try to expand its borders at all.

The current King on Yunlu is Sun Ziyi, an ancient man with some spirit blood. His only son disappeared years ago, so the city is facing a new challenge: who will become the new king when the old one dies? The Imperial Magistrate for the city is Huang Ti-Kun, a greedy bureaucrat from the Empire who is pressing for the monarchy to be disbanded when King Sun dies, so that the Temple City can be more thoroughly integrated into the Empire. Of course, Magistrate Huang likely has designs for the leadership position herself.

All this would be for naught if and when the King's son returns to the city to claim his birthright. Such an event would cause massive ripples in the ever-shifting power structure of the City, quite possibly turning the Temple City into something else entirely.

PASTIMES

Kites are popular amongst children, with wealthier ones attempting to outdo each other with increasingly outlandish kites. Falconry is also popular with the nobility, and even some of the lower classes. Birds of all types are used to ferry messages across the Temple City. Also, the ease of spirit summoning (see below) has resulted in an underground culture that binds spirits and pits them against each other as a gambling sport.



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SPECIAL FEATURES

Due to its relative closeness to Heaven, everyone in the Temple City can use the Summon Spirit Chi Manipulation as though they already possessed it at its base chance. Natives to the city always learn it, regardless of their Martial Arts training, and outsiders who come to the city can use it while in the city limits. If outsiders are taught the spell properly before they leave, they can continue to use it outside. Summoners from Yunlu are loathed to bind spirits; they much prefer to negotiate with spirits in exchange for services.

THE UNDERWORLD CITY OF TUNG TIEN

OVERVIEW

Tung Tien is a strange realm that exists entirely below the ground. Annexed into the Dragon Empire centuries ago, the inhabitants of this dark city consider themselves to live in an independent city-state, rather than a puppet city of the Empire. However, the majority of the population is content to let the Empire run things in the City, for one very good reason: most of the inhabitants of Tung Tien are dead.

When a person dies, his or her soul descends to the Yama Kings for judgement. Those whose higher souls are more powerful are allowed to ascend to the Heavens. Those whose lower souls are more powerful are sent to one of the myriad Hells to purge them of Corruption. Those with balanced souls face a choice: they may either return to life to try again for Heaven, or they may move to Tung Tien, and wait out their afterlives in hopes that something more interesting comes along.

Not all who reside in Tung Tien are ghosts. Every few years, one or more people find their way to the Underworld city through natural caverns that lie beneath the Empire. Those who arrive at Tung Tien find contentment in the dark quiet, living their lives until death, and their souls return as ghosts after that. Those families that live in Tung Tien treat their dead members as living children do their parents; the dead are given respect, and expect to be listened to. Death to one who lives in Tung Tien is a benefit, a release from the arduous nature of life.

LEADERSHIP

Theoretically, Tung Tien is ruled by the eldest ghost in the place. In practice, the Underworld City is mostly a dead place; few new homes are built, no one needs much in the way of goods and services, and the inhabitants largely wait until they can die to join the ranks of their ancestors. It can be a grim place for outsiders, but those born here find it more peaceful than sad.

The being who wields the most authority here is the Gatekeeper, Shan Yu. Shan Yu is a spirit of immense power. He guards the nearby portal to the lands of Yama, which allows any who crosses it access to either Yama or Earth. If he catches wind of political rumblings in Tung Tien, he makes his desire known. Not once in a millennium is the word of Shan Yu disregarded.

PASTIMES

Given the amount of time ahead of the living inhabitants, pastimes tend to be the sort of thing that take a great deal of time and attention, since this is all most of the inhabitants have. Many of history's most famous artists and musicians find their way here after death, and some research has been done to determine precisely how death affects the artistic process. Sculptors craft works of stunning detail and intricacy, and philosophers read ancient treatises and debate in quiet whispers.

Once a year, on the Day of The Open Hells, residents of Tung Tien go to the Gate to Yama and burn Hell Money for their ancestors, hoping to bribe their loved ones out of Hell. In times of need, Shan Yu will also allow people to pass through to Yama in hopes of contacting a dead loved one. It is said to be easier to enter Yama than it is to leave.

SPECIAL FEATURES

Those who die while in Tung Tien will almost always come back as ghosts. Only those who are fully committed to one of the five philosophies will be able to move on to their afterlives; everyone else wakes up as a ghost, able to move beyond the Underworld City like any other spirit. Any ghost in Tung Tien can also find enough Chi to keep from becoming Hungry indefinitely. This is not the case once one leaves the confines of the city itself.

THE FORBIDDEN CITY

OVERVIEW

The Forbidden City is the Capital of the Dragon Empire, and is easily the largest and most influential city in the Empire. It is built on a scale far exceeding any other city, and boasts a population easily five times larger. A great percentage of these beings are spirits or spirit-blooded. Only Yunlu has a higher percentage of spirit residents, but even so, the Forbidden City has the Temple City beaten in terms of sheer numbers of spirits.

The name of the city is actually a misnomer: the city is only forbidden to foreigners. Any citizen of the Empire is free to enter and conduct business in the city, so long as he or she follows the (sometimes complicated) laws. The only truly Forbidden part is the Dragon Seat, the palace at the top Mt. Obido. Here, only those who work in the palace or are courtiers of the Dragon Court may enter.

The city itself is broken up into districts, each of which is almost its own city, complete with a magistrate and prefecture houses. Each district will be dealt with below.

LEADERSHIP

Where the Dragon Court sees to the running of the Empire, the Forbidden City has its own governing body that helps keep the various districts running together. The person who holds this position is referred to as The Imperial Overseer, who

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answers only to the Dragon Court. The Current Imperial Overseer is a man named Eagle Nan-Tu, a veteran of the Nipponese War, who bought the position with loot plundered from Nippon. He is exceedingly unpopular with the Nipponese Diplomatic Corps, who take a deep insult from his being allowed to gain power through theft. Eagle has eyes everywhere, and is suspected of being Corrupt, though his power prevents the Prefecture from attempting to arrest him. A great number of people want him dead, and are willing to pay dearly to make it so.

PASTIMES

Any and all games and expressions of joy can be found in the city, from Go tournaments to illicit drug-dens. Even some games normally found only in isolated farm towns or villages, (like Gumei), have players here, though many may be hard to track down. The production and appreciation of a variety of Art forms are also popular, with galleries displaying the works of master painters one week, and the life-like wooden sculptures done by other masters the next. Theatre is also wildly popular with members of all ranks of society. Presently, dramatic works from the Gao-Li lands enjoy some popularity.

SPECIAL FEATURES

The entire Empire is a massive geomancy project, designed to funnel as much ambient Chi to the Forbidden City as at all possible. Given that the Imperial Palace itself rests atop a natural Dragon Line, the entire city is constantly bathed in such high levels of Chi that all manner of phenomena are possible. Normally, Geomancers under Imperial command work to make sure the Dragon Lines are kept as a safe, stable arrangement. However, there are times when this carefully balanced arrangement is upset (sometimes on purpose) and the magical fallout can produce some exceedingly strange things.

CITY DISTRICTS

The Forbidden City is a rough circle, encompassing large sections of the Obido mountain range that lies to the north and west of the city. The east end of the side is bound by the flow of the Yellow River, the largest river in the Empire. The Trade routes from the rest of the Empire all meet at the City's Southern Gate, and the thick, protective walls run from the Gate up into the Obido Mountains. The Imperial Palace is situated in the middle of this circle, nestled in a high mountain valley capped with four peaks, called the Pillars of Heaven.

THE IMPERIAL PALACE AND THE ONE HUNDRED ROYAL FAMILIES: THE NOBLE DISTRICT.

In the centre of the Forbidden City lies the Dragon Court, where the Emperor sits and rules over the Empire. Around this point is the actual Imperial Palace, where the Royal Families work. Outside of this are the Stairs of Ten Thousand Steps, a broad ramp filled with switchbacks and heavy iron gates. This causeway is one of the most defensible places in the Empire, as it is the only means, short of magic, of getting to the Palace. Only those who are meant to work in the Palace itself, or those granted an audience with the Emperor or one of the Six Ministers, are allowed up this causeway, and anyone trying to force their way up would have to contend with a large contingent of highly trained guards and a cadre of Martial Artists who work as security for the Palace.

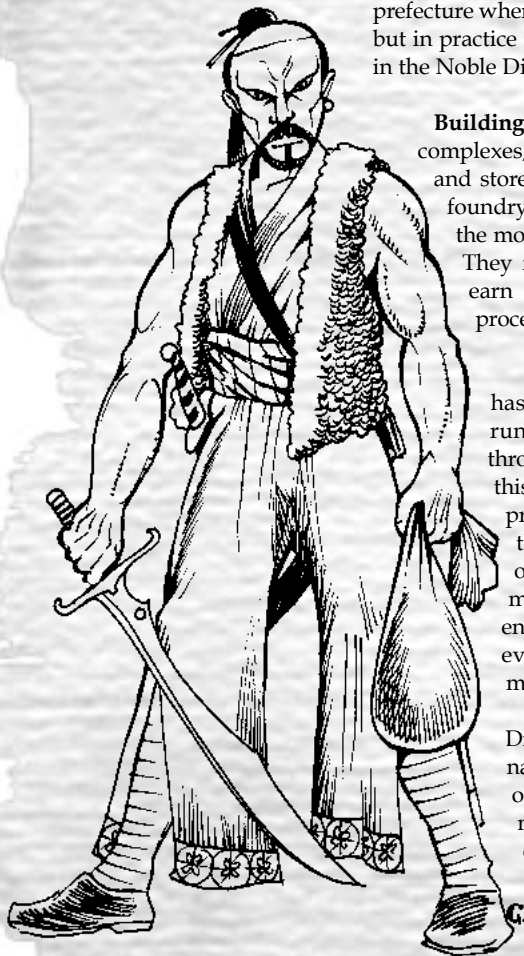
In the lower reaches of the mountains, close to the Stairs, lie the homes of the One Hundred Royal Families, those nobility whose ancestors had, in the past, aided the formation or maintenance of the Empire. These noble families live in what most

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Smugglers

Given how tight Harbour security is, no sane smuggler attempts to offload contraband in the harbour. It is much more likely that they will travel south, past the City, to one of the less-secure ports there, where secret cargo and liberal bribery often go unnoticed.

This is how the demon-statues find their way into the City. The Prefecture does not even know how they get into the city, much less who might be sending them, or for what purpose.



others would consider opulent luxury, but their lives are not without trails and travails like anyone else's.

A thick defensive wall, ornately carved on the inside, separates the noble families from the rest of the City. There is a single gate to the rest of the City, guarded in such a way that only the "right" people can cross it. Not that many nobles bother: this district of the City has most of anything a noble and his or her family could ever want, the City's best restaurants, the finest clothing manufacturers, and importers of the best distilled spirits the Empire has to offer.

More decadent nobles do stray into the rest of the city. Several of the homes near the wall have secret basement tunnels that lead out further into the City, often connecting with the sewer tunnels (see below). These also allow rakish noblemen to smuggle people and goods into their homes without being seen by idle passers-by.

Prefecture Presence: High. There appears to be a very public prefect every few hundred meters in the Noble District, though most are trained to look past the illegalities perpetuated by the noble families in favour of arresting undesirables, even those who happen to be doing nothing but walking or sitting and enjoying the sights.

Additionally, most of the buildings in this district have private security in the form of human soldiers, spirit guardians, or mystical wards. Technically, they are supposed to only report to the prefecture when they discover the law being broken, but in practice many things occur to those captured in the Noble District.

Buildings of Note. Sprawling Royal Family complexes; high-end playhouses, restaurants, and stores; Dragon's Breath Forge, a weapon foundry owned and operated by a cabal of the most skilled metalsmiths in the Empire. They forge weapons for the nobility, and earn much money and prestige in the process.

Dragon Lines. The Imperial Palace has large Dragon Lines of all types running to it, and they also move through the homes and businesses of this district. The Geomancy here is so precise that it keeps everything besides the most potent Chi effects from occurring spontaneously. Even so, many of those who live here have enough Chi to be considered spirits, even if their ancestry is entirely mundane up until that point.

Should an alteration to the Dragon Lines occur here, the intricate nature of the Geomancy here is more of a hindrance than an aid. Any mistake will cause a series of cascading magical effects that, even

when they have passed, will likely make it difficult to be put back into shape. There are many reasons why someone might do this, the most likely of which is that there are so many treasures stored in this District that enterprising thieves will do anything to circumvent magical security, even if it means throwing the whole district into mystical disarray.

THE HARBOUR DISTRICT

Overview. The eastern side of the City abuts the Yellow River, and has a sizeable harbour and mercantile district near the river to maximize the trade coming from the northern provinces. Trading ships, heavily laden with goods, dock in the harbour, and cargo is unloaded and shipped to the nearby markets for sale. The Harbour Security Prefecture keeps a close eye on river traffic, as well as randomly inspecting shipments for contraband. In the past few weeks, a number of curious demon-haunted statues have found their way into the city from the North. The Prefecture has no idea how they are getting through the harbour, as no inspection has ever discovered any.

The Harbourside Markets are something of a jewel in the Imperial Crown. Here, all manner of goods and services can be found, even the less than legal pastimes enjoyed by those who can afford them. It is said that, if one needs something of dubious legality, many such things are also sold after dark, when an unofficial black market takes over. Power brokers, hired swords, and brothels appear when the sun goes down behind Mt. Obido.

Outside the harbour itself, the banks of the Yellow are often meticulously maintained parks, where the interplay between water and earth is explored, played with and displayed. Here, playful water spirits splash and frolic in the waves, sometimes conversing with people who approach them with respect. The parks are very different after dark. They are sometimes used as meeting places for young lovers, and the spirits of the water often take a sinister turn. Bloated bodies turn up with disturbing frequency.

The Island Fortress of Yi-Sheng lies some distance away from the harbour. It is the base of operations for the Harbour Security Prefecture, which maintains a sizeable body of trained men and swift ships needed to pursue smuggler and pirates downriver. The Fortress is a dominating structure, composed of the same hard yellow stone that makes up the island. There is supposedly an extensive underground jail system under the Fortress, but very few people have seen it and returned to the mainland to report the tale.

Prefecture Presence. High during the day, low to non-existent at night.

Leadership. The Harbour district is overseen by two men: Harbourmaster Lin Shu-fu and Supervisor

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Undertown and the Noble Tunnels

It makes sense that the two underground systems in the Forbidden City would connect in places. This is mostly the case, though many assume otherwise. The tunnels used by members of the noble families link to Undertown, but are set up in such a way that casual movement from Undertown to the Noble Tunnels is tricky, if not outright dangerous.

If one needs to get into the Noble District without being seen, and potentially deadly traps are not a deterrent, willing guides can be found in Undertown and hired for a price.

Li Si-mun. Each is an experienced administrator and manager of people, capable of resisting corruption, and of keeping a largely uncorrupted staff as well. Between them, legitimate businesses in the Harbour district are thriving, and the residential areas between the Market and the harbour are beginning to fill with families instead of criminals.

They have also made themselves a fair number of enemies, both in the criminal world and in the legitimate business world. Many enterprises would also benefit if either men could be bought off through blackmail.

Buildings of Note. Warehouses, docks filled with ships, stores that are likely a front for some illegal operation. Mr. Chung's Teahouse, one of the more well-known eateries in the Forbidden City, also sits in the markets of the Harbour District. See *The Curse of the Foreign Devils* for more details about this establishment.

Dragon Lines. Thanks to the river, the Harbour District enjoys a large flow of Water Chi, which is concentrated most strongly near the water itself. There is also a large Air flow in the district, put in place by merchants who wanted their decisions to be made with a clear head. The combination of the two Chi flows means that the Harbour is often blanketed in damp, fish-smelling fog, especially in the early morning and during the night.

Furthermore, the District's Water Chi appears to be exceedingly sensitive to environmental changes. If anything occurs to alter the area around the riverbanks, the local spirits often begin displaying very strange behaviour. This normally happens for a couple of weeks before the metaphysical environment adjusts and reaches an equilibrium.

UNDERTOWN

Overview. Undertown is the name given for the population of the poor and socially ostracised that make their homes in the network of tunnels that run under the City. Those who are able to get into the City, but unable to find a place in any of the legitimate surface social structures often drift their way down to Undertown, where there are opportunities for everyone, not just the wealthy and influential.

The tunnels that make up Undertown were, at one time, storm drains and sewage tunnels that funneled waste from the Forbidden City to the Yellow River. As the City grew, the system in place to handle this function was adjusted to meet the new demands. This had the by-product of producing a series of tunnels that are no longer used; the water and offal that would flow through it having been shunted into another series of pipes.

The people who live here do what they can to survive. Many are homeless humans, and strange, inhuman spirits that cannot intermingle with those who live on the surface. They have developed as much of a society as their situation allows. Barter is common, and a complicated series of boons, debts and favours works to ensure that the Undertowners, if not exactly close-knit, look after one another.

Prefecture Presence. None at all. If surface-level prefecture agents witness a suspect escaping into Undertown, they will likely stop pursuit and let their quarry go. Prefects know that their presence is not wanted, and going down risks a knife in the ribs. This makes Undertown a great hiding place for those seeking asylum. Bounty Hunters can make a good living by descending into Undertown and returning with those who have been on the run.

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Getting Around Town

The road system in the Forbidden City is carefully designed so that traffic moving around the city is largely unimpeded. Originally designed for military use, everyday people use the broad, paved avenues to travel the city, see the sites, and to move their goods from their workshop to the markets in the Harbour District. Young people make money by ferrying travelers around the city in rickshaws. Also, a rail system runs on huge, throbbing bands of Earth Chi through the city at right angles. Citizens may use the train for free, provided that they take care of the stone cars and the smooth benches inside. The wealthy may opt to ride in a secluded car with padded seats for an additional fee. There is some talk of extending the line outside of the city, to aid in trade. Doing so would require a massive reworking of the Dragon Lines to support the abundance of Earth Chi needed to move the train cars.

Buildings of Note. Ramshackle homes built from whatever detritus can be found; dark, dank tunnels lined with mouldering green tiles; cavernous chambers converted into impromptu marketplaces; secret hiding places and caches of weapons that have lain forgotten for decades.

Dragon Lines. Even though most the City's sewer and storm drains no longer empty in Undertown, some water still gets in via tunnels that are not properly sealed. The constantly wet conditions indicate the existence of a Water Line, though it appear to be Stagnant in most places. Also, deep into the tunnels, there are reports of strange, dark Chi bubbling up from the Kingdoms of Yama, making Undertown the home of more than just the rejected living. Rumours suggest that, in addition to the Chi of Death, an actual gateway to Yama exists in Undertown, although some suggest this is instead the prison of an ancient demonic spirit.

LIFE, DEATH AND ANCESTOR WORSHIP: THE FUNERAL DISTRICT

Overview. A city that has existed for any length of time will eventually produce corpses that need to be buried. For the Forbidden City, the fact that so many of the dead were of noble stature, and demanded worship as ghosts, meant that it was not very long before a large, stately cemetery was built to house the family mausoleums and the shrine at which the living make offerings for the dead. In ancient times, the town that would eventually become the Funeral District was a series of villages that made money by burying the wealthy dead from other places. They all grew to the point where it become feasible for them to all merge into a single city, known as Gonghu by the locals.

As The Forbidden City grew, Gonghu was subsumed into its boundaries. Today, the Funeral District oversees the vast supply of graves, crypts, mausoleums, and caves used to lay the bodies of the honoured dead to rest. Funeral homes and prayer companies have established themselves to assure that the dead rest easy in the grave, and exorcists patrol the byways and paths of the district to keep roving bands of hopping vampires from breaking out into the city proper.

Most of the Funeral District is made up of quiet, almost park-like places of meditation where the living come to commune with the deceased. Here, the dead are respected, and therefore kept to their afterlives. This is not the case in the Tombs of the Forgotten Dead. In these areas, the identities of the dead have been long forgotten, and no one comes to make offerings anymore. Even worse, the living sometimes take to squatting in abandoned crypts for shelter, seeing the possibility of angering a ghost small danger compared to freezing to death from exposure. The streets near the Tombs of the Forgotten Dead are distressing places to wander at night, as the presence of hundreds of angry, Hungry

Ghosts can test the courage of even the stoutest heart.

Prefecture Presence: Low. Generally, the patrols of exorcists and groundskeepers pursue and arrest any vandals or tomb-raiders that attempt to deface or despoil the crypts. The captured are turned over to the small Prefecture that oversees the Funeral District, who will hold the criminals for trial. The Magistrate for this District is a ghost named Just Wu. In life, he served in the same position. Famously, Just Wu died in his sleep one night, and his ghost appeared at his former post the next day, as though nothing had happened.

Buildings of Note. Much of the Funeral District is made up of above-ground crypts, lined up next to each other. In most places, the Funeral District looks very much like a neighbourhood where mortals live, with one house next to another. Those who work in the Funeral District often live there as well, their own homes rarely differing much from the crypts that house the dead. Also, some of the older tombs are vast, treasure-filled buildings whose inhabitants are lost to time. A fortune can be made selling stolen grave-goods on the black market.

Dragon Lines. The presence of so many places where the Earth has been disturbed has increased the amount of Earth Chi that flows through the Funeral District. As such, all manner of life tries to grow here. Plant life thrives in this environment, though the caretakers are careful to ensure that only plants appropriate to a cemetery are grown here. However, the presence of the bodies, as well as the Forgotten Dead, has also increased the amount of Death Chi in the area, making it increasingly common for spirits of the dead to manifest in anger or to re-take their decayed corpses to act out in vengeance. The District exorcists have their work cut out for them; many spend all evening destroying Hopping Vampires and ensuring the dead are truly at rest.

They say that something dark is emerging in the Funeral District, something that even Hopping Vampires flee from.

FIRE AND STEEL: THE CRAFTSFOLK DISTRICT

Overview. In the Empire, there is an assumption, held by many to be the noblest of truths, that one can learn a craft to such a degree that you could travel to the Forbidden City, and live out your life with a wealthy patron who will buy all of your works and keep you and your family safe and comfortable for the rest of your life. People who believe this story flock to the City after their apprenticeship, with wild dreams of setting up shop.

When these people come to the City, they wind up in the Craftsfolk District. Here, the flow of

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Dragon Lines enhance the work needed to take raw materials and turn them into something not just functional, but also beautiful. The district is crowded, hot, and noisy, packed with small family businesses working until they can not stand in order to churn out goods fit for the Royal Families and, hopefully, for the Emperor himself.

The Craftsfolk District runs into the Harbour Markets through a single wide street, the Jade Avenue. Every morning, the craftsfolk who have something to sell travel into Market in groups, which have transformed over time into the Auspicious Parade. This tradition has developed some renown, and people flock to Jade Avenue to witness the displays of skill and craft.

The idea that anyone with enough skill can become wealthy here is actually somewhat true. Wealthy nobles do seek out particularly skilful craftsfolk to adopt. However, they only ever select the most skilled and artistic craftsfolk present, and the competition between all of the craftsfolk of a particular brand is sometimes staggering.

This section of the City is much more functional, and less manicured to appear pleasing, than the rest of the city. It is also the least organized; people set up shop wherever they can find the space to do so, which gives the streets a labyrinthine feel that only the locals can navigate reliably. Anyone who spends any amount of time here quickly develops some measure of the Knowledge (Craftsfolk District) skill, simply to get around in a timely fashion.

There is money to be made here working as a guide or messenger. There is a lot of back-room business being done at all times, and discrete communications must be handled through traditional means without a mystic or Marital Artist on the payroll.

Prefecture Presence: Medium. Thieves generally must be very highly skilled to ply their trade here, as so many of the residence are rightfully paranoid about their property and have security to match. The Prefecture is most often called into the Craftsfolk District to settle disputes between warring members of a similar craft. Recently, someone has been egging two rival weaponsmiths on, so that their formerly simmering rivalry has erupted into a vicious, bloody conflict with violent death on both sides. Even while hostilities continue to burn, the identity of the truly responsible party remains a mystery.

Buildings of Note: Small scale factories, forge compounds and workshops. No one who lives here does not work in one of the many operations, though there are occasional eateries and rough-and-tumble teahouses every few blocks.

Dragon Lines: The Fire and Earth Dragon Lines that feed the Imperial Throne flow through this district. The Fire Line in particular is exceedingly strong. This very likely influences the competition between the various craftsfolk. The strong Earth Line here also produces a curious effect; within the

District, all materials used tend to behave as though they were of the finest quality, even if, in other places, they are dross. This effect lasts even if a finished product is taken out of the district. The combination of skill, excellent material, and Chi means that more Lesser Artefact-level items come out of the Craftsfolk district than do from any other place in the Empire.

THE FIRES OF HEAVEN: THE BARRACK DISTRICT

Overview. The Imperial Army is famous throughout the Empire for its actions in taking new territory, most recently the annexation of the Nipponese Protectorate, and the taking of Gao-Li before that. In addition to thousands of soldiers, the Army also boasts a sizeable cadre of many of the world's most talented and dangerous Martial Artists, many of whom have years of military experience and training. And, the bulk of these people make their homes on the Barrack District of the Forbidden City.

This sprawling area takes up a good proportion of the City, and is made up of the homes for most, if not all, of the army's soldiers, their families and their servants. At any given time, three quarters of the entire army are present in the city, training, drilling, and making parades to the delight and awe of the citizens.

The Army is open to men, women, and spirits of indeterminate gender, though there is some division of labour by gender and species. No one fit to serve is turned away. Those who can handle the highly regimented life come to see it as their only identity, something which the leadership is quick to enforce. The people stationed in the Barrack District are there supposedly to defend the Forbidden City, though this is unlikely to happen anytime soon.

It has been years since the Imperial Army last marched as conquerors, something that certain members of the Royal Families have started to lament. Though some of the Army is stationed in various places around the Empire, the bulk of it remains here. Recently, some units have been called to active duty and marched to various borderlands of the Empire. Everyone suspects that something big is happening, though the military leadership is itself notoriously tight-lipped about what is going on. Astute observers have noticed that the units that are shipped off almost always have a majority of members who are vocal opponents of the talk of war, meaning that the majority of the Army still in the City are loyal to the Royal Family's policy of aggression.

Prefecture Presence: None. The Barrack District is overseen by military patrols, and justice is handled by a military tribunal, even for civilians arrested in the district. Military Justice is frequently more cruel than similar institutions in the rest of the Empire, which, according to its proponents, serves

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as a deterrent against committing crimes against the Imperial Army.

Buildings of Note: Low, squat apartment homes filled with lower-ranked soldiers and their families, training gyms, Martial Arts instruction centres, and beautifully cared for gardens and parade grounds. Some of the higher ranked members have impressive compounds all to themselves, run very much like miniature military bases.

Dragon Lines: The Barrack District is awash in ambient Fire Chi, the same line that runs through the Craftsfolk District, as well as a flow of Chi from the Heavens that spills out of the Imperial Palace. This produces a fairly specific mindset in those who spend any time here. The Fire Line makes them willing to fight at a moment's notice, and the Heavenly Chi reminds them that they exist for the good of the state, not to any single person (even the Emperor), or the Royal Families.

OTHER PLACES OF INTEREST

The Dragon Empire is vast, and the massive geomancy project that funnels Chi to the Forbidden City also produces a number of areas that have strange properties resulting from an abundance of Chi, or, in some places, a mysterious lack of it. And, due to the Empire's extensive military history, there are places where old forts lie in ruins, or battlefields that saw so much death that the area is forever tainted by sorrow and unmourned death.

THE WASTELANDS

In the Northwest corner of the Empire lies a strange, barren stretch of desert that, for some reason, has little to no Chi flow. Imperial geomancers have worked for decades to repair this unfortunate situation, but nothing they have ever tried has paid off.

The Dragon Lines in the Wastelands are seemingly disconnected from the flows in the rest of the World. So, instead of flowing naturally, Chi here becomes sticky and stagnant. As a result, everything in the Wastelands is unnatural, warped by spoiled mystical energy, turning even harmless plant-eating animals into twisted, dangerous predators. Huge boulders and sections of the mountains break free and drift into the air, floating on currents of Chi as though they weighed less than clouds.

The Wastelands is guarded by the Wall, a massive earthworks project that took years to build and cost thousands of lives. It stretches for mile upon mile, its stone and brick seemingly unassailable to hostile creatures. Sentry duty on the Wall is often the first assignment of newly recruited soldiers, as well as a punishment post for those

who make grievous errors or hold politically unpopular opinions. Occasionally, some fiend from the Wastelands slips past the Wall and moves into the Empire proper. Such creatures can cause untold havoc until they can be bested. The smart ones hide, move quietly and bide their time; the farther away they get from the Wastelands, the less likely they are to encounter someone who can stop them.

No humans live naturally in the Wastelands, though there are reports of sages who use Martial Art techniques to resist this area's warping nature. Anyone traveling here has a reason to, and must go about their business quickly, as staying too long in the Wastelands can and will result in dissolution, a loss of self, and eventual mutation.

In addition to strangely mutated animals, the Wastelands boast a sizeable population of hungry ghosts and hostile spirits. Since the Dragon Lines are not connected to the Underworld, spirits of the dead cannot undergo punishment by the Yama Kings, nor can they return to the world via reincarnation. Corpses left to rot do so normally, though few go for long without being possessed by one spirit or another.

It was not always like this. There was a time when the Wastelands flourished. There are intact buildings, now home to monsters and ghosts, relics of a civilization long dead. They doubtless hold treasures of the past, but the dangers of the area are such that few are brave or insane enough to attempt to recover them.

THE SOUTHLAND JUNGLES

The Southern Border of the Empire is composed of tropical jungles that run into the waters of the Indus Ocean. The people of these lands have always been ruled by one power or another, and see the current leadership of the Dragon Empire as just the latest of a long line of would-be oppressors. The Imperial Magistrates and Prefecture houses constantly deal with people who behave as though they were not a part of the glorious Empire. In most places, this manifests as simply ignoring the authorities unless they cannot. In others, outright hostilities have erupted as small city-states try to wrest their freedom from the hands of their Imperial Overlords.

Even the Royal Families are divided over what to do with the situation. Some point out that the gains from possession of the jungle lands are not worth the trouble gained from administering them. These nobles suggest returning self-rule to the people and entering trade relations with them. Another group thinks that allowing savages to defeat the Empire would be a grave insult, one that could only be removed by an act of genocide. Thankfully, the Emperor himself sides with the former group, though he has yet to allow the jungle lands their freedom.

The conflict over freedom is set upon a backdrop of curious mysticism. The locals believe that the

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Jungle is itself alive; the trees, vines, and animals are all the physical body of a vast and powerful spirit. Shamans enter into agreements with this spirit, which dictate where they can hunt, what plants they can eat for food and medicine, and how to use the spirit to fight their foes. Tales exist that describe jungle warriors who could vanish without a trace, or how the trees come alive and eat invaders. In such stories, it can be difficult to separate truth from propaganda.

More so than any other part of the Empire, the jungles of the Southlands have huge sections that have not seen human visitors for centuries. The stone pyramid-temples of a lost culture rise majestically from the jungles, tempting and dangerous, filled with the promise of riches in equal measure to their promise of death. Even spirits who might otherwise be unaffected by the jungle's many dangers find themselves imperiled by these hidden temples, as ancient and complicated magics serve to ward them from spiritual assault. As spirits are largely ageless, it is possible that explorers from a century ago lie trapped and bound inside a temple in the jungle, having long since lost hope that someone would discover them and set them free.

THE WIND PLATEAUS

The Kamalaya Mountain range runs through the western and central areas of the Empire. It is well known that the southern areas of the mountains range are sparsely populated by mountain villages and secluded monasteries pursuing all manner of esoteric wisdom. Slightly less well known are the Wind Plateaus in the western range of the mountains.

The Wind Plateaus are a series of broad, flat expanses of stone rising hundred of kilometres from the valley below, and rising over and above the surrounding mountains. The space between the Plateaus has been carved out by the omnipresent winds that blare through them, howling as they move through the gaps. Some tribes of humans and spirits have made homes on the sides of the Plateaus, carving them into the living rock, often developing cunning designs of wood and rope to raise and lower people and goods into the city from the plateau above. Crossing these bridges is perilous at best; the constant blasts of wind makes the ropes sway, sometimes even upending and dumping travellers down to the valley floor.

The natives of this area have developed a series of rope bridges to move from one plateau to another. The system has many traps and redundancies in place, so that the experienced traveller can often lead unwanted companions astray, even stranding them on an abandoned plateau without food or water. The rope bridge system is old, and many bridges have collapsed years ago without repair. There are supposedly lost cities in and on top of the Plateaus, places that no one has gone for many years. There is likely nothing to be found here but dust and old ghosts.

One of the more curious peoples of the Wind Plateaus are a race of spirits who call themselves the Dropa. Although they claim to have come from the Heavens, and therefore are spirits, these beings are entirely material, living, breeding and dying in a manner similar to mortals. They are short, bald, have odd skin tones of bright yellow, dark brown or bright red, and the humans in the area consider them to be exceedingly ugly. The Dropa say they were forced to come to this part of the world

Playing a Dropa

Dropa are a playable race, though their rarity means that you must get the Game Master's permission to play one.

To create a Dropa, construct the character normally and apply the following modifiers:

Apply a Decreased SIZ Chi augmentation.

Apply a Decreased CHA augmentation.

One of your Distinctive Features should cover your skin colour, as it will be very different from the norm.

Apply an Increased INT augmentation.

Apply an Increased POW augmentation.

Dropa are a psychic people. Regardless of what Martial Art a Dropa character practices, he or she may also select Chi powers that relate to the mind, either their own or another's.

Dropa are also considered a novelty in all parts of the Empire, as they are almost unheard of in places other than the Wind Plateaus. A Dropa character out in the world might be searching for a new home when his or her village is destroyed by raiders, or to recover a stolen artefact important to his or her people, such as a Dropa Stone.

The Dropa Stones are round stone plates, which look something like a record to modern eyes. They are engraved with pictograms that, if translated, tell the story of the Dropa people and how they came to the Empire. They are priceless relics, making them worth stealing, and also worth recovering.



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thousands of years ago, when their Heaven-going ship become broken and fell from the sky. They have managed to cling to a spartan existence, though they suspect that their race will eventually die out. They have fewer births each year, and their numbers are being thinned by the human tribes in the area.

One of the larger Plateaus is home to the Duro people, a tribe of humans that have a well-developed meditation tradition that links meditative practice to both Philosophy and Martial Arts. Duro people have a wide respect for spiritual beings, and work towards living in harmony with the spirits that ply the winds of the Plateaus. This makes their disgust and hostility towards the Dropa very hard to understand from an outsider perspective. Duros will harass any Dropa they see, regardless of the circumstances, until the Dropa takes the hint and flees. Failing that, the Duro will attack the Dropa, hoping to injure it enough that it will die, if not kill it outright.

If asked about this strange, out-of-character animosity, the Duro generally refuse to answer, indicating that it is a matter of cultural significance, and that it is none of the business of those asking. Some younger Duro tribes-members do not really know why they are expected to mistreat the Dropa, only that they are, and those who do not are threatened with fairly harsh punishment.

HORSE-CLANS AND EARTHQUAKE LIGHTS: THE PASTURES

Once past the Western foothills of the Kamalaya mountain range, the ground slopes out and flattens, forming a wide expanse of grasslands punctuated with small collections of hills, and the occasional mountain. For centuries, these lands have been home the many Horse Clans, having been subsumed by the Empire long ago. Much of this land is settled by Imperial Villages, though the Clans still live a nomadic lifestyle only slightly hampered by the presence of the villages.

In times past, the Horse-Clans lived by periodically raiding the villages, taking people as captives to supplement their own breeding. This tradition has ceased to a large degree, although some Clans do still follow it. These days, Clans-folk are as likely to retire to a sedentary life in a village as to die in the saddle.

As time passes, the Horse Clans are undergoing a transformation. In the Empire's history, a huge army of Horse-Clan warriors took the Imperial Throne, and kept it for several generations. They eventually lost it to the ancestors of the contemporary Royal Families. The fact that they once ruled the Empire is not lost on the Clans, though to most of them it is a bitter



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reminder of their failure, rather than a point of pride. Even as little as one hundred years ago, the Horse Clans were larger, proud, and effectively in control over vast swathes of the Empire. Now, due to a careful response by the Minister of Public Works, the Horse Clans are being slowly integrated into the Imperial Civilization, whether they want to be or not.

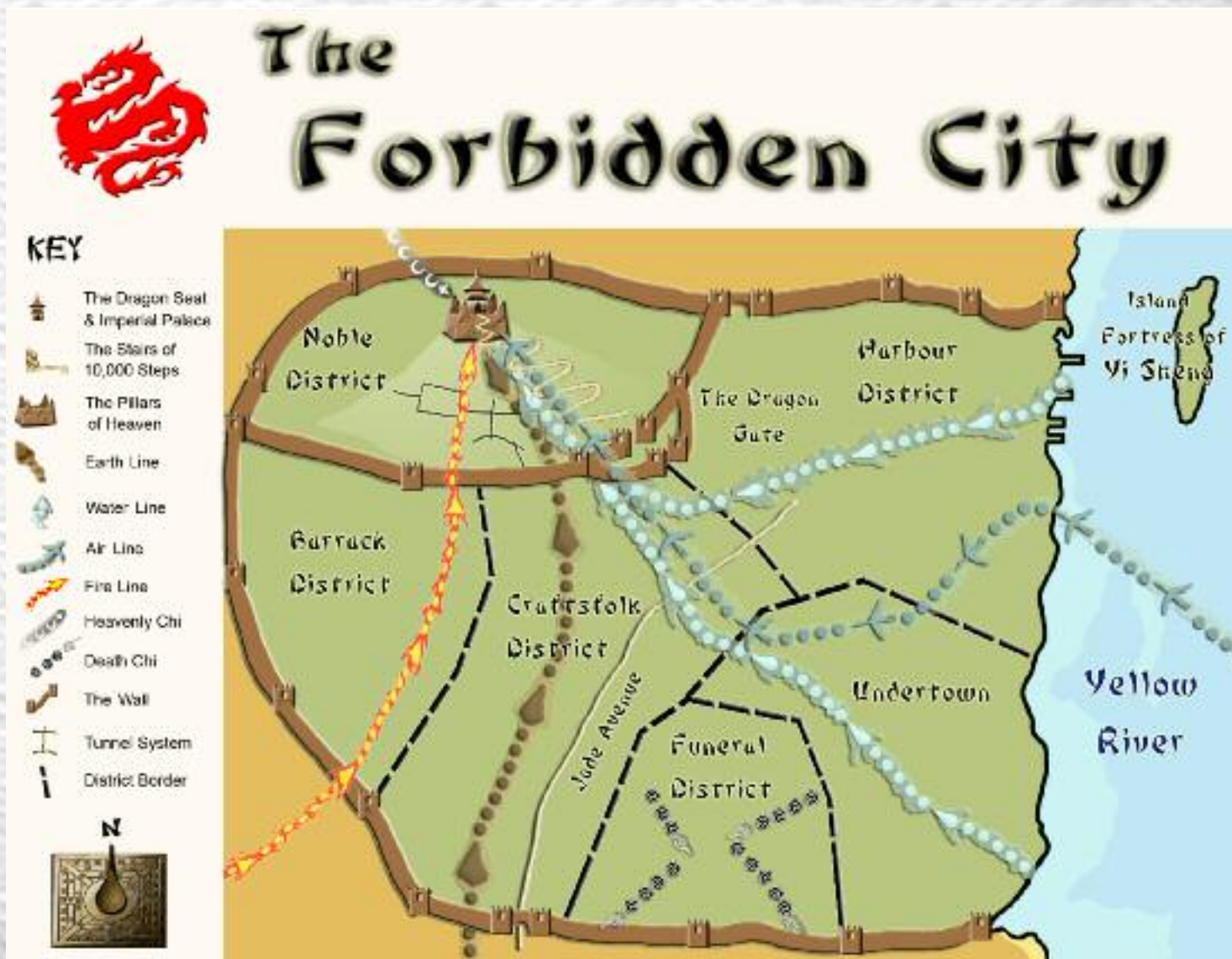
Part of Clan's distrust of the Empire stems from the famous Earthquake Lights. In some parts of the Pastures, curious Chi phenomena take place. There are placed where lines of Earth Chi, instead of running alongside each other, have been made to periodically run into each other. The energy released when this happens manifests as strange, rainbow-coloured lights in the sky, which can be seen at any time, day or night, and are often followed by earthquakes, and, even stranger, by the appearance of bizarre spirits and other creatures. These are thought to be either attracted to the Chi discharge, or even brought here from other worlds, the barrier between this world and others is weakened by the opposing lines of Chi.

It does not have to be this way. The opposing

Dragon Lines can be fixed; the Horse Clan's geomancers can spot the places that need repair, even though they themselves do not possess the understanding of the rest of the network. It is presumed that the Earthquake lights are there on purpose, a reminder by the Empire that they, and only they, control the fate of the Empire's citizens.

THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

The above places are only a sampling of the sorts of places common in the Empire. It is far vaster than what is listed here, and there is ample room for the Game Master to add elements to the setting as he or she sees fit. The Empire was, at one time, greedy and over-reaching. It had a history of taking over a smaller kingdom in order to gain access to some secret or power, only to forget about it and leave the once prized conquest forgotten in a storage shed somewhere.



KEY



Mountain



Rift in the Earth



Nexus

0 100 200 300 400 500 Miles
0 100 200 300 400 500 Kilometers



Earth Line



Water Line



Air Line



Fire Line



Village



City



Trade Route



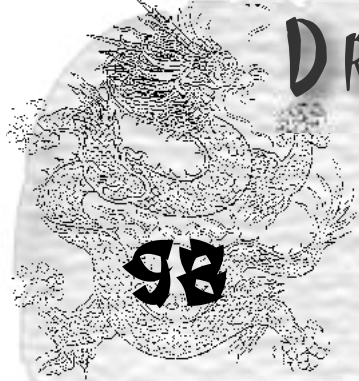
The Wall

THE WASTELANDS





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8. THE TEN THOUSAND THINGS

THIS CHAPTER includes game statistics for a variety of creatures, spirits and regular people that inhabit the Dragon Empire. It also includes the Random Power Tables, which assist in the creation of strange spirits and other foes your characters may encounter.

RANDOM POWER TABLES

There are many times where you, as a Game Master, need an interesting monster, but lack inspiration for creating one yourself. These random tables are designed to offer a quick way of creating spirits, monsters, and other weirdness with a minimum amount of fuss. Simply select an existing creature that you have game stats for, and roll on these tables a few times. I find that 1D3 times is enough for a relatively "normal" creature, while 1D6 rolls or more tend to create weirder, more potent, results.

These tables can be used to create both weird monsters and benign spirits. The difference is largely cosmetic, and since the powers do not have enough detail on their own to determine how a given ability manifests, you can make adjustments to describe as needed. For example, a tainted Wastelands monster with the Natural Armour Augmentation will have thick, scabby skin, while a benevolent Forest Spirit with the same power may be covered in bark, or simply have the armour be represented by a shimmering orb of protective energy.

Furthermore, these tables are just suggestions. If they help you create something that needs a power not given by the rolls, drop one and add the power you would like.

FOR EXAMPLE

I need a strange Wastelands monster for my game, and I'm stuck for ideas as to what sort of creature the characters will meet. I think it might be interesting to have them run into a pack of hungry, predatory animals, which may have once been wild dogs. I'll be using the game stats for a dog, from page 335 of the BRP rulebook. It will not hurt for all of the mutants to be the same, so I'm just going to take the average result.

STR 7 CON 11 SIZ 5 INT 5 POW 7 DEX 13
Move 10 Hit Points 8 Damage Bonus -1D4
Attacks: Bite 30% 1D6-1D4 (bleeding)
Skills: Listen 75%, Sense 90%

I do not need these things to be particularly powerful or too strange, so I think they'll only get 1D3 mutations. I've also decided to give them a distinctive feature, so they're all completely hairless.

So, the D3 results in a 3. Rolling a D100 three times gets me: 27, 100, and 48. The dogs will therefore get two Chi Augmentations, and one Chi Manipulation.

The Augmentations. Rolling twice produces the

POWER TABLES

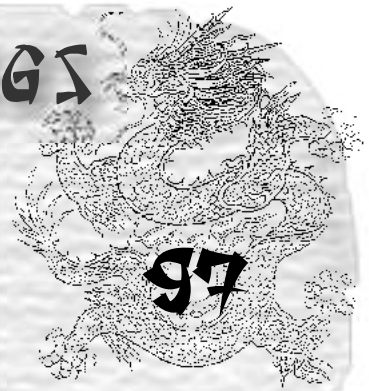
STEP 1: Roll to determine if the power is an Augmentation or a Manipulation.

D100 Roll	Result
01-65	Augmentation
66-100	Manipulation

STEP 2: Roll to determine Augmentations. When a rolled Augmentation can be either positive or negative, there is a 50% chance of either. Monsters and tainted spirits are more likely to have negative Augmentations, but they can manifest in healthy spirits and creatures as well. All Augmentations are Lesser, unless they are rolled again, or you decide otherwise. If you do decide to make an Augmentation Greater, it should count as two rolls instead of one.

D100 Roll	Resulting Power
1	Absorption
2-3	Adaptability
4	Air Walking
5-6	Allergy
7	Appears to take no damage until dead
8-9	Armour
10	Banishment
12	Beguiling Gaze
12	Biped/Quadruped
13	Breathes Fires
14	Camouflage
15	Congenital Disease
16	Curse of Sorcery
17-18	Danger Sense
19-20	Decreased Characteristic
21	Defence
22	Disease Carrier
23	Drain
24	Explodes when Slain
25-26	Extra Energy
27-28	Extra Hit Points
29-30	Fast
31-32	Hardy
33	Highly Flammable
34	Hive Mind
35-36	Human Seeming
37-38	Hybrid
39-40	Hypnotic Gaze
41-42	Imitation
43-44	Immaterial Strength
45	Incite Fury
46-47	Increased Characteristic
48-49	Intangibility
50	Invisibility
51	Irresistible Movement
52-53	Keen Sense
54-55	Leap
56	Lightfoot
57	Luminescence

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58-59	Manipulation Appendages	51-52	Frost
60-51	Metabolic Improvement	53-54	Gift of the Earth
62-63	Metabolic Weakness	55-56	Heal
64	Muddle	57	Illusion
65-66	Natural Armour	58	Intuition
67-68	Natural Weaponry	59	Invisibility
69	Never Surprised	60-61	Lift
70	Overpowering Stench	62	Light
71	Pain Sensitivity	63-64	Lightning
72	Pheromone	65	Make Whole
73	Pox	66	Mind Blast
74-75	Reduced Sense	67	Mind Control
76	Reflects Magic back to Caster	68	Mind Shield
77	Regeneration	69-70	Perception
78	Sensitivity	71	Precognition
79	Sidekick	72-73	Protection
80	Speech Mimicry	74	Psychometry
81	Spits Acid	75	Refutation
82-83	Structural Improvement	76-77	Resistance
84-85	Structural Weakness	78	Seal
86-87	Super Sense	79-80	Sharpen
88-89	Super Skill	81	Sorcerer's Speed
90	Trackless	82-83	Speak to Mind
91	Transfer	84-85	Summon Spirit
92	Unarmed Combat	86-87	Telekinesis
93	Undetectable to Magic	88	Telepathy
94	Venom	89	Teleport
95-96	Wall Walking	90-91	Unbreakable Bonds
97	Water Walking	92	Unseal
98	Weather Control	93	Vision
99-100	Witch Sight	94-95	Wall
		96-97	Ward
		98-99	Wings of the Sky
		100	Wound

STEP 3: Roll to determine Chi Manipulations. Most creatures have a skill with any known Manipulations equal to their POW x 3.

D100 Roll Resulting Power

1-2	Animal Vision
3-4	Astral Projection
5-6	Augment Skill
7-9	Aura Detection
10-12	Blast
13-14	Bounty of the Sea
15-16	Brazier of Power
17-18	Chain of Being
19-20	Change
21-22	Clairvoyance
23-24	Compel Spirit
25-26	Conjure Elemental
27-28	Countermagic
29-30	Dark
31-32	Diminish
33-34	Dispel
25	Divination
36-37	Dull
38-39	Elemental Mastery
40-41	Elemental Weapon
42-43	Emotion Control
44-45	Empathy
46-47	Enhance
48-49	Flame
50	Flawless Memory

STEP 4: Apply rolled powers to the creature, adjusting characteristics as needed.



Fenghu Dogs



DRAGON LINES

following results:

75-Reduced sense. This is an odd one, since dogs are so reliant on their senses. After some thought I decide that the dogs are all blind, and use their sense of smell almost exclusively. This in turn will make them all skittish and frightened, which tends to make even ordinary dogs more likely to attack. For visuals, I think having all of the dog pack's eyes filmed over and white with cataracts will make them even scarier.

37-Hybrid. This result is not something I had expected. But, once I made them dog-human hybrids, they became even stranger. Instead of running on all fours, I thought they'd probably be hunched over, able to scamper about and attack with claws and bigger teeth. This, combined with the white eyes and no hair have turned a simple dog into something rather menacing.

The Manipulation. Rolling once produces this result:

51-Frost. Again, not something I had anticipated, but worth considering. I could see all of the pack getting into position, and having them all launch a salvo of Frost spells at their targets before engaging in melee. Their low POW means that most of the pack will fail the spell-casting attempt, and low Chi points means it may only allow them to cast it once without becoming unconscious (likely a dangerous position to be in with the rest of the pack).

The adjusted stat block looks like this:

STR 7 CON 11 SIZ 5 INT 5 POW 7 DEX 13
Move 10 Hit Points 8 Damage Bonus -1D4

	Location	Hit Points - Armour
1-4	Right Leg	3 -
5-8	Left Leg	3 -
9-11	Abdomen	3 -
12	Chest	3 -
13-15	Right Arm	2 -
16-18	Left Arm	2 -
19-20	Head	3 -

Attacks: Bite 30% 2D6-1D4 (bleeding)
Claws 30%, 1D4-1D4 (bleeding)
Frost 27%, 1D6 cold damage in 3 metre area.
The dogs can either each cast this twice an encounter, or once and have it do 2D6 damage with the same area.

Skills: Listen 75%, Sense 90%

Powers: **Reduced Sense:** Blind, **Hybrid:** Human (Gains Hands and a bonus to Bite damage, already included), **Frost,** included in Attacks.

It occurs to me at this stage that I do not have a name for these things yet. After some thought, I come up with the name and a bit of background.

The creatures are known as Fenghu dogs. They are dogs who have been possessed by spirits in the Wasteland. When a spirit takes over a dog, its Chi begins to warp the poor animal into its current shape - humanoid, with sharp clawed hands and a dog's snarling muzzle. While the spirit controls the animal's movements and actions, the animal is still

very much aware of its condition and acts accordingly. Along the Wall in the Empire, it is considered a mercy to kill these things on site, as it releases the animal from its torment.

Fenghu Dogs can breed with themselves and other dogs. The resulting pup is always a Fenghu Dog. It is presumed that the possession takes place while the pup is developing.

Due to their half-spiritual nature, Fenghu dogs can be summoned using the Summon Spirit spell, and, due to their low POW, are easily bound or commanded. They live for violence and destruction, but must attack in packs due to their small size and lack of power. They make loyal followers, as long as they're fed, making them a commonly used tool by the more intelligent creatures in the Wasteland.

When using the Fenghu dogs in game, I'd take careful consideration of how I want the players to perceive them. If I want the players to not be able to walk through these creatures easily, or possibly make them a credible threat, I'll have them harry the group for a while before attacking in numbers, trying to isolate group members and gang up on them to take one down, only to have everyone retreat to consume the fallen party member. These Fenghu dogs will not attack unless they can muster enough dogs to outnumber the party two to one, and they will flee if $\frac{1}{4}$ of their numbers are slain. I would use the full stat block for each dog.

However, if the dogs are part of a larger group, and are merely the pets of a larger foe, I would use the Lesser Foe rules to represent the dogs, perhaps with one or two who use the full stat block to represent the best breeding stock the larger villain has in his or her possession.

GHOSTS

Even with properly functioning Dragon Lines, there are a lot more ghosts in the Empire today than there used to be. Some refuse to move on until their business is done, others desire to remain around their family to help them succeed, and still others remain because they have been wrapped in potent sorceries to keep them here.

In most cases, when ghosts return to the physical world after the death of their bodies, they continue to function much as they did in life, with the following exceptions:

As per the character creation section for ghosts, ghostly characters have access to Chi Augmentations, and automatically know the Intangibility (reversed), Immaterial Strength, and Drain Powers.

When reduced to zero Chi, they become Hungry, and run the same risk as PC ghosts of becoming Hungry forever.

Ghosts continue to change as they age, though not in a manner the living are accustomed to. Ghosts continue to develop Chi Powers as they age,

THE TEN THOUSAND THINGS



effectively making very old ghosts largely inhuman, even if they have not succumbed to Hunger. In general, a ghost gains 1 randomly determined power for every 25 years of "life" they have lived as a ghost. This power is in addition to whatever other powers the ghost may develop as time passes.

To develop a ghost, take an existing set of statistics and apply the three powers that ghosts come with, as well as any power they develop because of age. Also recall that ghosts present in the physical world are here for some reason, and fulfilling that reason will banish the ghost, even an ancient, unwilling one. This is one way in which mortals can best even the oldest ghosts without having to fight them.

SAMPLE GHOSTS

MURDERED VILLAGER

This villager stayed out later than usual, and was attacked on the way home. The body was left lying alongside the road, and was discovered the next morning. The ghost arose before the funeral, and was able to remain in this world past the ceremony. All it can recall about the attack was that it was one of the other villagers, who has a distinctive feature in a place not normally seen by the public.

MURDERED VILLAGER

STR 13 CON 12 SIZ 10 INT 10 POW 14 DEX 13 APP 12
Move 10 Hit Points 11 Damage Bonus None

Location	Hit Points - Armour
1-4 Right Leg	4 -
5-8 Left Leg	4 -
9-11 Abdomen	4 -
12 Chest	5 -
13-15 Right Arm	3 -
16-18 Left Arm	3 -
19-20 Head	4 -

Armour: None, but Intangibility makes the ghost immune to normal weapons

Attacks: Punch 30%, 1D3 (crushing) See Immaterial Strength

Skills: Language (Chin) 75%, Remember Life 35%, Sense Murderer 75%

Powers: Immaterial Strength, Intangibility, Drain Chi
Purpose: Bring murderer to justice

Notes: This ghost is very likely to become Hungry before moving on, especially if it discovers the identity of its killer before anyone else can. It will attack anyone who it thinks is responsible for its death, and may spend all of its Chi on attacking with Immaterial Strength. Once this occurs, the ghost will become Hungry, and will lash out until it has drained someone (anyone) of Chi.

LITTLE GIRL LOST



Twenty five years ago, a little girl vanished while hiking with her parents in the forest near their village. Everyone in the area looked for her, but no one ever discovered where her body had fallen into a small sink-hole near the trail. She died instantly, and her ghost haunts the woods. Initially, she was looking for a way to have her body discovered, but now she is only interested in draining life-sustaining energy from people hiking on the trail. She will meet them early on, and give a story about how she got separated from her parents, who were on their way to a nearby village. She asks if she can travel with the party, and will drain Chi from them at every opportunity.

LITTLE GIRL LOST

STR 8 CON 10 SIZ 5 INT 15 POW 15 DEX 16 APP 16
Move 10 Hit Points 8 Damage Bonus -1D4

Location	Hit Points - Armour
1-4 Right Leg	3 -
5-8 Left Leg	3 -
9-11 Abdomen	3 -
12 Chest	3 -
13-15 Right Arm	2 -
16-18 Left Arm	2 -
19-20 Head	3 -

Armour: None, though Intangibility makes her immune to normal weapons

Attacks: Scratch with nails 30%, automatic hit if she's being held, 1D3 damage
Drain Chi 80% chance outside combat, make a Chi versus Chi resistance roll, 2D6 Chi drained if affected

Skills: Dodge 35%, Act Ingratiating 75%, Stealth 100% (in the woods)

Powers: Drain, Immaterial Strength, Intangibility, Luminescence

Purpose: To be properly buried

Notes: The ghost uses her Luminescence ability to project balls of light that appear in the woods around the trail. She hopes to lure her victims to investigate the lights, and fall into a trap (a dead-fall, a cliff, poisonous plants, a monster's lair), so that she may feed upon their Chi as they die. She has almost certainly become Hungry in the past, and is in danger of doing so again. She will become an actual Hungry Ghost in a few year's time.

DRAGON LINES



Monkey Style Kung Fu

This lost Martial Arts style can only be learned from a Training Manual (see page 117), or from a ghost or spirit who knows the style.

Style Attacks

1. Punch
2. Grapple
3. Throw Object

Style Skills:

1. Climb
2. Dodge
3. Jump
4. Hide

Style Powers

Practitioners gain access to Chi Augmentations, and may select from the following list:

Danger Sense

Fast

Hybrid (Monkey)

Imitation (Monkey)

Leap

Lightfoot

Manipulation Appendage (Tail)

Super Skill (any Style Skill)

Trackless

Techniques

Nimble Monkey Dodge (You may use your Climb skill as a Dodge once per round, with no penalty)

Taunt (Infuriating Insult that counts as a Feint)

Three-Limb Strike (+10% to Hit, +2 to damage)

THE UNDYING SOLDIER



Battlefields are gruesome places - bodies stacked deep, the crows and flies, and the Hungry Ghosts flitting about, drinking Chi from the dying just as their last breaths go out. This is the fate of many a soldier. But not this one. He became aware shortly after his death, and used his ghostly weapons to fend off the Hungry Ghosts so that his fellow soldiers could go on to the next life. He is unsure why he has stayed behind, though he thinks it may have something to do with the reason he died, fighting to protect his village from an army of bandits. It has been just over 100 years since his death, but that hardly matters to him.

THE UNDYING SOLDIER

STR 16 CON 14 SIZ 15 INT 11 POW 13 DEX 16 APP 13
 Move 10 Hit Points 30 Major Wounds 8
 Chi 23 Damage Bonus +1D4

Location	Hit Points - Armour
1-4 Right Leg	10 - 4
5-8 Left Leg	10 - 4
9-11 Abdomen	10 - 4
12 Chest	12 - 4
13-15 Right Arm	8 - 4
16-18 Left Arm	8 - 4
19-20 Head	10 - 4

Armour: 1 Point, hide armour (+3 Protection points)

Attacks: Punch 50% 1D3+1D4 (crushing)

Spear 65% 1D6+1+1D4, (impaling)
 Shortsword 50%, 1D6+1D4, (bleeding)

Skills: Climb 75%, Dodge 40%, Hide 45%, Jump 45%, Language (Old-Fashioned Chin) 60%, Listen 55%, Martial Arts (Monkey Style Kung Fu) 35%, Sense 60%, Spot 65%, Stealth 100%, Throw 65%, Track 70%

Powers: Drain Chi, Immaterial Strength, Intangibility, Extra Energy, Imitation (Monkey), Compel Spirit 39%, Protection 3 39%

Purpose: Learn that his village is either safe or no longer in existence

Notes: Monkey Style Kung Fu is a lost style that has no living practitioners. If the Undying Soldier is allowed to fulfil his purpose, he will teach the rudiments of the style to interested students before moving on.

ANCIENT ANCESTOR

Since your death, you have remained close to your descendants in order to make sure they are keeping an important family tradition alive, not the least of which are the prayers and offerings that keep your spirit from moving on to the afterlife. Age has made you stronger than you were in life, and fate has seen fit to provide you with abilities beyond the ken of mortals. Your condition makes it so that you can see things others cannot, and you take steps to protect your family from forces they cannot perceive. You began counting your age again when you died. When you reached 200 years, you stopped counting.

ANCIENT ANCESTOR

STR 13 CON 12 SIZ 14 INT 17 POW 14 DEX 14 APP 15
 (APP 21 Beguiling Gaze)
 Move 10 Hit Points 13 Damage Bonus +1D4

Location	Hit Points - Armour
1-4 Right Leg	5 -
5-8 Left Leg	5 -
9-11 Abdomen	5 -
12 Chest	6 -
13-15 Right Arm	4 -
16-18 Left Arm	4 -
19-20 Head	5 -

Armour: None, though Intangibility makes the Ancestor immune to normal weapons

Attacks: Punch 65% 1D3+1D4+POT 2D6 Sleep venom (crushing)

Kick 65%, 1D3+1D4 (crushing)

Dagger 75% 1D4+2+1D4

Drain Chi 70%, outside combat. 2D6 Chi damage

Fire Breath 50% 3D6 (3/Day)

Skills: Appraise 35%, Dodge 45%, Insight 55%, Knowledge (Family Lore) 65%, Knowledge (History) 100%, Language (Old Fashioned Chin) 100%, Persuade 55%, Sense 50%, Stealth 100%

THE TEN THOUSAND THINGS

Powers: Allergy (Jade), Breathes Fire, Beguiling Gaze (5 Loyal Retainers) Drain Chi, Empathy 50%, Hardy (Chi Damage), Hypnotic Gaze, Immaterial Strength, Intangibility, Unbreakable Bonds, Venom (Sleep)

Purpose: Protect and support family until they complete a great task

Notes: Thanks to a constant supply of Chi from praying family members, this spirit has never become Hungry, and is careful to avoid doing so.

GRANDMOTHER CINDERS

Tradition holds that this ancient ghost was an old woman who had died in a fire, though no one in living memory remembers the fire or anything about it. For as long as anyone can recall, she has been in the area, showing up at strange moments and attacking those who are a danger to others. Some think of her as a guardian, while others note that she has attacked the innocent in the past. People from the village all bear scars from when they were burned by Grandmother Cinders, which are shaped like a hand having grabbed their wrist.

GRANDMOTHER CINDERS

STR 16 CON 12 SIZ 10 INT 18 POW 20 DEX 12 APP 10
Move 10 Hit Points 11 Damage Bonus +1D4

Location	Hit Points - Armour
1-4 Right Leg	4 -
5-8 Left Leg	4 -
9-11 Abdomen	4 -
12 Chest	5 -
13-15 Right Arm	3 -
16-18 Left Arm	3 -
19-20 Head	4 -

Armour: None, though Intangibility renders her immune to normal weapons

Attacks: Blast of Fire 60%, 1D6 per point of Chi invested

Drain Chi 60%, outside of combat 2D6 Chi

Flame 60%, 1D6 damage to targets within 3 metres of blast, per point of Chi

Fire Staff 60%, 1D8+1D4 (crushing)

Grapple 75%, special, plus 1D6 Hit Point

Drain (as per the Drain Power)

Punch 55%, 1D3+1D4, (crushing)

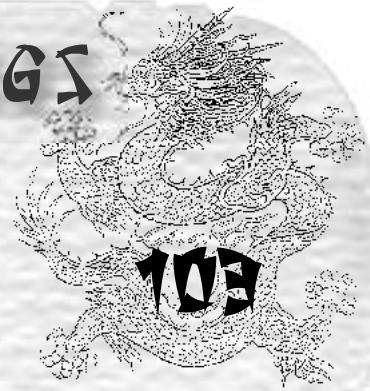
Skills: Dodge 55%, Get the Wrong Idea 50%, Jump 55%, Language (Ancient Chin) 120%, Stealth 100%.

Powers: Blast (Fire) 60%, Explodes when Slain, Drain (Chi), Drain (Hit Points), Flame 60%, Hardy (magical weapons), Immaterial Strength, Intangibility, Irresistible Movement, Elemental Weapon 60%, Leap

Purpose: Have her body discovered and have a proper funeral

Notes: It is hard to tell how much Grandmother Cinders knows about her condition. She has been dead for so long that its possible she does not even remember being alive. While

she does lash out, seemingly at random, she does not use her Fire or Drain powers unless she needs to protect someone from harm.



HUNGRY GHOSTS

Many ghosts experience a time or two of becoming Hungry from lack of Chi, and most are sufficiently horrified by the experience that they are very careful to avoid it happening again. Not every ghost is lucky, though. The chances of a poor, unmourned ghost becoming Hungry are high, and many ghosts who do not move on lose what is left of their humanity, becoming ethereal predators, preying on themselves and each other.

Hungry Ghosts have all of the same powers as normal ghosts, save that, where the powers of normal ghosts manifest in ways best described as mystical, Hungry Ghost powers always manifest in a way that makes the creature crueler, angrier, and more monstrous. They grow in power as they age. Old Hungry Ghosts are phenomenally dangerous, and they often have a cadre of other Hungry Ghosts around them. Additionally, they gain sustenance and power from eating the souls of other creatures, be they spirits, ghosts or the living. Worst of all is that Hungry Ghost gains new powers by killing and consuming other beings with powers. Each time a Hungry Ghost eats the soul of a Martial Artists, sorcerer or another being that possesses Chi powers, the Hungry Ghost may retain one of the target's Powers at its base chance.

For this reason, Hungry Ghosts are killed as soon as they are spotted, lest they become too powerful to destroy. Many exorcists hunt them



DRAGON LINES



Hungry Ghosts and Corruption



As mentioned in Chapter 2, Hungry Ghosts who gain Corruption have a hard time resisting the call to alliance when it occurs. As such, Hungry Ghosts almost always become allies to corruption, even though many will not realize it. Even worse, should they undergo Apotheosis, their new form will also have regained a great deal of their human minds, adding keen intellect to the expression of cruelty the ghosts are capable of.

down as a calling, and the Shen Wei-Ren work to keep Hungry Ghost infestations from getting completely out of control. Also, assassins employed by the Yama Kings scour the physical world, sending all Hungry Ghosts they can find back to the Hells.

Once a Hungry Ghost reaches a certain SIZ (which seems to vary by ghost), it explodes into multiple ghosts of smaller SIZ. Each smaller ghost retains something of the memory of its former self, but these memories are commingled with those of whoever the ghost had eaten, resulting in a strange, hybrid personality that soon collapses into something inhuman.

Hungry Ghosts often gleefully give themselves over to Corruption, and they see this as yet another path to new powers. Since Hungry Ghosts see themselves as already damned, they are perfectly willing to gain what power they can. This is often the fate of those who serve Corruption in life; in death, they become something terrible and evil.

SPOILED NOBLE

While alive, the spoiled noble squandered wealth, reputation, and sanity in pursuit of personal pleasures. All manner of fine foods were consumed while the peasants starved, wines were guzzled by the gallon, and the pleasures of the flesh were pursued with no accounting for propriety or family honour. Death was a release. Freed from the anchor of the flesh, the noble has found a new way to gain pleasure: stalking, slaying and eating the innocent. The noble's human mind has broken. All it knows now is Hunger.

It appears as a gaunt, pale-skinned version of itself, clad in tattered funeral garments. When stalking, its eyes flash red, to better terrify its prey.

SPOILED NOBLE

CORRUPTION: 50
STR 14 CON 13 SIZ 14 INT 12 POW 14 DEX 15 APP 8
Move 12 Hit Points 14 Damage Bonus +1D4

Location	Hit Points - Armour
1-4 Right Leg	5 - 3
5-8 Left Leg	5 - 3
9-11 Abdomen	5 - 3
12 Chest	6 - 3
13-15 Right Arm	4 - 3
16-18 Left Arm	4 - 3
19-20 Head	5 - 3

Armour: 3 (Natural Armour), Intangibility makes it immune to normal weapons.

Attacks: Claws 55%, 1D6+1D4 damage (bleeding)

Skills: Sense 55%, Stealth 100%, Track 50%

Powers: Drain Chi, Fast, Immaterial Strength, Intangibility, Natural Armour (Flawless Iron Hard Skin).

Purpose: Consume the entire world

Notes: Whatever human feeling the noble once had is gone. This ghost is a predator first and

foremost, and there is little chance of ever getting his mind back. Given his Alliance with Corruption, there is a chance of becoming an Ally to that force.

BLOOD-MAD WARRIOR

This formerly noble ghost was once a famous warrior and Martial Artist who died defending his home from an army of bandits. He lived long enough to see the city fall, and went mad with grief. He lashed out at anyone he could reach, bellowing in rage and sorrow. It took dozens of the bandits to take him down, but they did. His soul went to the Yama Kings for judgement, but has somehow escaped back to the physical world. It haunts the ground where its home once stood, attacking anyone who dares defile its sanctity. This would not be so bad, if this were a remote location. Instead, there is a small city on the site of the old one, and close to a hundred people live in the area the jealous ghost considers its own. It grows bolder the more it eats, and soon, there will be nothing left but empty houses and the wind.

BLOOD-MAD WARRIOR

CORRUPTION: 45
STR 16 CON 14 SIZ 14 INT 13 POW 14 DEX 14 APP 10
Move 10 Hit Points 19 Damage Bonus +1D4

Location	Hit Points - Armour
1-4 Right Leg	7 - 3/6
5-8 Left Leg	7 - 3/6
9-11 Abdomen	7 - 3/6
12 Chest	8 - 3/6
13-15 Right Arm	6 - 3/6
16-18 Left Arm	6 - 3/6
19-20 Head	7 - 3/6

Armour: 3 (6 with Protection), Intangibility makes it immune to normal weapons

Attacks: Punch 60%, 1D3+1D4 (crushing)
Jan 90%, 1D8+1+1D4 (bleeding)
Grapple 55% special

Skills: Dodge 45% Sense (Smell) 90%, Track 55%

Powers: Armour (3 points, ghostly lamellar), Drain Chi, Immaterial Strength (Major-the ghost can make melee attacks at some distance), Intangibility, Super Skill (Jan Sword), Extra Hit Points (5), Protection 3 42%, Keen Sense (Smell), Never Surprised

Purpose: Protect the ruins of its home, keep the living out

Notes: If the Undying warrior ever gains Apotheosis from Corruption, the returning mind will be horrified at what it has become, and will seek to address the wrongs it has caused. This will eventually cause Corruption to withdraw its power, stripping the Warrior of both its mind and the powers gained through service. If the Warrior is able to hold onto its sense of self when this happens, it may be able to become a non-Hungry ghost, and possibly move on.

THE TEN THOUSAND THINGS



SPECTRE OF APPROACHING SORROW

Some time ago, there was Martial Artist from the Far South who came to the Forbidden City to seek his fortune. He was from a poor background, and wanted to use his Martial skills to both bring him wealth, and to make a difference in the world. Like so many, his ideals were corrupted by contact with the criminal elements of society. He was eventually betrayed by those he thought were friends, and he swore vengeance upon them with his dying breath. Once he manifested as a ghost, he hunted down, slew, and ate those who had betrayed him. By the time he was finished, the proud warrior had transformed into a cruel, snake-shaped figure, with enough spite and cunning to be a serious danger. Some Sorcerers are foolish enough to summon him, thinking they are strong enough to bind him. The Spectre does not work for anyone who cannot bind him, and will attack should the binding attempt fail.

SPECTRE OF APPROACHING SORROW

CORRUPTION: 75

STR 18 CON 15 SIZ 18 INT 10 POW 20 DEX 16 APP 5
Move 12 Hit Points 33 Major Wound 8

Location	Hit Points - Armour
1-4 Right Leg	11 - 3
5-8 Left Leg	11 - 3
9-11 Abdomen	11 - 3
12 Chest	13 - 3
13-15 Right Arm	8 - 3
16-18 Left Arm	8 - 3
19-20 Head	11 - 3

Armour: 3 Points shimmering scales, immune to Mundane Attacks

Attacks: Grapple 50% special
Punch 50% 1D6+1D6
Tentacle Lash 60%, 1D6+1D6

Skills: Dodge 89%, Knowledge (Chi) 50%, Martial Arts (Coils of the Serpent) 60%Stealth 90%

Powers: Structural Weakness (-9 APP, inhuman cruelty), Camouflage (+20% to Stealth due to shifting skin colour and texture), Disease Carrier (Attacks cause exposure to POT 7 Disease), Drain Chi, Hands (Tentacles-1 additional attack) Human Seeming, Hybrid (snake) (1D6 Claw damage), Immaterial Strength, Intangibility

Purpose: Unknown. He appears to be gathering Artefacts from around the Empire, for no foreseeable purpose. Some speculate that he is building an army of Hungry Ghosts, while others assert that he wishes to become something of a god by eating everyone who lives.

Techniques: **Snake in the Grass** (If you strike from ambush, you may make a Stealth or Hide check to avoid being spotted after the attack, essentially allowing you to ambush more than once in an encounter).

Deadly Grapple (If you have an opponent grappled, you may opt to automatically Bite or expose them to Venom instead of an ordinary Grapple effect).

Vulnerability Strike (+10% to hit. The target's armour counts for only half its normal protection).

Notes:

Though his history is well known, the Spectre's human self is completely lost to Corruption. He will not ever step away from the path he is on. The only way to do away with the Spectre is to defeat him in combat, permanently bind him to an object, and give that object to one of the Yama Kings for safe keeping.

THE LEGIONS OF P' O

Not everyone who dies has sufficient Chi to provide a fully functioning body. The p'o of the newly dead can be set adrift, not pulled down to the Underworld to be reintroduced to the Reincarnation Cycle. If enough of these lightweight p'o are in an area together, they do congregate and feed off one another until only one remains. Such creatures often attempt to possess living bodies in order to gain more energy.

However, if a more powerful Corrupt spirit discovers a shoal of these remnants, it may make an Allegiance check against its Corruption score. If this succeeds, the spiritual residue becomes swollen with Corrupted Chi, turning them into hardier, more dangerous beings. They are often used as shock troopers by their more potent masters, sent ahead to overwhelm opposition with sheer numbers.

Individual members of the Legion are like caricatures of who they once were. Their features are twisted into horrid, hateful grimaces, and their clothing is far outdated and worn to ribbons. They manifest with pale grey skin, and eyes that burn with insensate malice, which are visible at night.

Use the Lesser Foe rules to represent the Legions of p'o. Their exact numbers are rather hard to determine. Assume a given ambush by these creatures accounts for two or three p'o for each player in the group. They fight until thoroughly defeated, safe in the knowledge that they will reform again a few days later.

They are utterly loyal to the person in charge of them, and will only attack this person if the goal for which they are summoned is failed. Sorcerers in league with Corruption may summon the Legion with the Summon Spirit spell, although a horde of them always answer the call. While they are easily bound to service, they tend to be hateful and malicious when around the living, even if bound.

Lastly, they owe their existence to Dragon Lines, and can only exist in a place where the local Lines are cut off and have started to stagnate. If the Dragon Lines can be repaired, the Legions will swiftly break apart into nothing, absorbed back into the flows of Chi.

DRAGON LINES



THE KILLER METEOR

Some time ago, a star fell from the Heavens and landed near a village on the outskirts of the Empire. The local blacksmith knew that such stars often contain metals of the highest quality, so he paid several local men to trek out the the meteor and bring it to him. Once in his possession, the smith began chip away at it to get to the precious metals inside.

It was only when he had finally penetrated the centre of the ball of stone that he realized it contained something. A flow of inky darkness erupted from the sphere, killing the smith and consuming his soul. The meteor appeared to be a container for an unbelievably ancient Hungry Ghost, which was so old that it only manifests as a ball of thick, tar-like stuff that floated in the air. It attacked any living thing it discovered without mercy, seeking only to increase its own size and power.

While it is theoretically possible to defeat the ghost in combat, it simply reappears a few days later. The only way to stop it entirely is to obtain the meteor and re-bind the Hungry Ghost to it.

THE KILLER METEOR

CORRUPTION 75

STR 18 CON 15 SIZ 25 INT 5 POW 16 DEX 13
Move 12 Hit Points 40 Damage Bonus +2D6

Armour: 3 (Natural Armour), Intangibility makes it immune to normal attacks.

Attacks: Tendril of Darkness 40%, 1D6+2D6 (crushing) Can attack up to 3 targets per round.

Bite 25%, 1D8+2D6, (bleeding)
Grapple 45%, special+2D6 Chi drain

Skills: Dodge 35%, Hide 40% (60% with Camouflage), Sense 55%, Track 75%

Powers: Camouflage, Change 48% (see notes), Consume (gains 1 Size, CON or STR when it eats 10 human-sized beings) Drain Chi, Fast, Flight, Immaterial Strength, Intangibility. Natural Armour (fluid outer covering).

Purpose: Unknown. It appears to be only interested in eating, and also only speaks in muttered Ancient Chin.

Notes: The Killer Meteor does not have enough Chi to transform its whole body, so it uses the power by shunting off parts of itself to create human-sized lures. It can make these completely convincing without a close examination. There is usually only a single line of black fluid connecting the main body to the decoy. It has 5 Hit Points and 3 points of Armour. If this line is severed, the puppet portion dies, and the ghost loses points of SIZ equal to the SIZ of the portion lost. The creature will almost certainly flee should this occur, as it greatly weakens it.

If using the optional Hit Locations rules, the lures have the following hit locations:

	Location	Hit Points - Armour
1-4	Right Leg	2 - 3
5-8	Left Leg	2 - 3
9-11	Abdomen	2 - 3
12	Chest	2 - 3
13-15	Right Arm	2 - 3
16-18	Left Arm	2 - 3
19-20	Head	2 - 3

The mass of the Killer Meteor itself has only the one Hit Location.

UNDEAD CREATURES

In reality, undead creatures are thankfully rare, but they do exist. They are corpses, usually human, that have been possessed by a Hungry Ghost, who uses the body to interact with the physical world without needing to spend Chi to do it. The ghosts that would do this are the most dangerous, as they possess the intellect needed to figure this out, and the desire to use a body to collect Chi from the living.

HOPPING VAMPIRES

This peculiar undead creature is seen as something of a comical figure to the majority of those living in the Empire. In stories, they are depicted as rigid, silly beings, wearing clothing resembling that worn in an old dynasty. They can only move by hopping about, a mode of movement that even the least athletic can out pace. These hopping vampires are often the minions of other comically inept villains, whose grandiose schemes cannot help but be foiled by benevolent heroes.

Anyone who has actually seen a real hopping vampire knows how much these figures differ from the real thing. A hopping vampire manifests when a Hungry Ghost finds a body that has not been properly buried, which it then takes possession of. The rigid arms-front posture may look silly, but it belies an immense physical strength, and the hopping gait, which looks so funny on the stage, allows the vampires to move faster than most people. Instead of being funny, is nearly painful to see. It looks wrong somehow.

As time in their new body passes, the hopping vampire becomes increasingly bestial. The body ceases decomposition, and takes on an unwholesome corpse pallor. Fangs develop in the mouth, and a sort of white fur begins growing from the arms, face and hands. As with intangible ghosts, hopping vampires feed off of Chi, and can grow larger and more powerful by consuming the souls of those they slay.

Furthermore, the most dangerous thing about these creatures is that they travel in packs. If one hopping vampire managed to find a corpse, it will immediately seek out a victim, usually someone from the corpse's family. Once this person is slain, the body becomes a host for another Hungry Ghost, which becomes another vampire. Without intervention, a plague of vampirism can swiftly depopulate even a large city.

THE TEN THOUSAND THINGS



HOPPING VAMPIRE

CORRUPTION: 50+1d20

STR	2D6+12	(19)	Move 12
CON	3D6	(10)	Damage Bonus +1D6
SIZ	2D6+10	(17)	Hit Points 14
INT	2D6	(7)	Armour None
POW	3D6	(10)	
DEX	3D6	(10)	

Location *Hit Points - Armour*

1-4	Right Leg	5 -
5-8	Left Leg	5 -
9-11	Abdomen	5 -
12	Chest	6 -
13-15	Right Arm	4 -
16-18	Left Arm	4 -
19-20	Head	5 -

Attacks: Claw 50% 1D6+1D6 (crushing)
 Bite 30%, 1D4+1D6 (bleeding)
 Grapple 50%, special

Skills: Dodge 50%, Sense (track by smelling breath)
 75%, Hide 50%

Powers: Drain Chi, Fast, Leap x 2

Notes: Hopping vampires are especially interested in Martial Artists, and will attack relentlessly. If they succeed in consuming the soul of a Martial Artist, they will gain the warrior's Martial Arts Style at its base skill chance. This doubles the vampire's hit points (and requires re-figuring their Hit Points by Location), and gives them access to some of the victim's memories. Once a hopping vampire has taken a Martial Art style, it will concentrate on taking Chi Powers from its victims, if they have them, as well as growing

larger and more powerful otherwise.

Also, given their spiritual nature, hopping vampires are susceptible to the Banishment Chi Power. A successful Banishment causes the vampire to flee, though it is only pushed out of the body it possesses if the banisher performs a Special success or better on the POW versus POW Resistance roll.

CHING SHIH

Malevolent, hateful beings, ching shih are hideous, putrid corpses that house Hungry Ghosts. They differ from hopping vampires in many ways, chief of which is that ching shih serve none but their one burning hatred. They also care less for their shells, and are willing to jump from one body to the another if need be.

Ching shih grow in power similarly to hopping vampires. They do not have the same desire for Martial Arts, and instead focus on gaining new powers to make themselves stronger and more readily able to slay potent adversaries. They prefer to attack from ambush, using their powers to get the drop on unsuspecting victims.

Regardless of the form it possesses, ching shih always have two hallmarks: firstly, their breath is distinctly horrible, making being anywhere near them unpleasant; and second, they alter the host bodies to possess long, barbed tongues with which they can attack. The stats below represent a ching shih that has been around a for a while. For new bodies, use the corpse's physical characteristics, and add the ching shih's mental ones, skills, bad breath, attacking tongue, and wall-walking ability.

CHING SHIH

CORRUPTION 70+1D20

STR	3D6+6	(16)	Move 10
CON	3D6+6	(16)	Hit Points 17
SIZ	3D6+8	(18)	Damage Bonus +1D6
INT	2D6+6	(13)	
POW	3D6	(10)	
DEX	3D6+6	(16)	

Location *Hit Points - Armour*

1-4	Right Leg	6 - 3
5-8	Left Leg	6 - 3
9-11	Abdomen	6 - 3
12	Chest	7 - 3
13-15	Right Arm	5 - 3
16-18	Left Arm	5 - 3
19-20	Head	6 - 3

Armour: 3 (thick, lumpy green skin)

Attacks: Tongue 60% 1D3+POT 10 Paralysis poison (Tongue attack can be used at any melee weapon length)
 Claws 45% 1D6+1D6 (bleeding)
 Grapple 65% special

Powers: Drain Chi, Manipulation Appendage (Tongue) Natural Armour, Overpowering Stench, Venom, Wall-Walking



Necromancy

Anyone who knows the Summon Spirit Chi Manipulation can create a loyal hopping vampire. Use the spell to summon a Hungry Ghost (the spell can be fine tuned to do so with a Research roll), and bind the spirit that answers to a corpse. The resulting monster will serve the sorcerer as best as it can, though it will eventually become too much for the sorcerer to handle.

A curious thing happens as a loyal vampire creates new ones: its progeny are also loyal to the original summoner, even though he or she has not already bound those creatures. In addition to granting the summoner a potential army of the undead, it also gives the vampires a weakness. If the summoner dies, the vampires will all return to their spiritual state, and will be too weakened to effectively fight back.

Because of the potential for danger, wilfully creating hopping vampires is a crime punishable by death.

DRAGON LINES



Forest Children as Player Characters

It is possible for a Greater Forest Child to break away from his or her homelands and explore the world at large. Such characters are created as any other character, save the following exceptions: Their first two Powers must be Fast and Teleport. The Teleport power works for free when in the woods, and works normally elsewhere.

He or she may select the Sidekick power at any time a power is available. If so, instead of a single sidekick, a number of lesser Forest Children equal to the character's APP score will show up and follow them around. They are replaced as they are slain, with new ones simply arriving some time later to fill the vacated positions.

Notes: As a spiritual being, ching shih are susceptible to Banishment. They will willingly flee a body, effectively resetting their powers and skills, if it means avoiding being destroyed. The only way to kill one utterly is to trap it in a Ward and perform the Banishment. The combination of the Ward and the Banishment spell keeps the spirit from fleeing and sends it straight to the Underworld.

Servants of the Yama Kings and other exorcists have a special hatred for both hopping vampires and ching shih, and will go to great lengths to make sure they are banished.

OTHER MONSTERS

Ghosts are not the only strange things in the Dragon Empire. The high Chi flows produce alterations in almost all creatures, to one degree or another. They are monsters in that they deviate so heavily from the norm. They may or may not be hostile towards humans. Most live in very specific environments, which usually do not overlap with human habitations. Things do change, however, and a subtle shift in the Dragon Lines could bring any of these creatures into conflict with people.

MANNU

Mannu are creatures of the wooded mountains. They tend to be gregarious and social with their own kind, but avoid human beings whenever possible. Their thick, hairy pelts protect them from the cold. They stand nearly twice as tall as normal people, and are capable of great destruction when angered, which is thankfully rare.

When in the woods, mannu move like ghosts. They can run at full speed with complete silence, appearing and vanishing seemingly at will. While they generally use this ability to flee when frightened, they are also quite capable of defence if they feel sufficiently threatened. If doing so, only a few mannu appear at a time, keeping their distance and hurling boulders. Once their foes have attempted to engage, the visible ones flee, and a new set of mannu appear. Given the size and strength of these creatures, often the only safe prospect is to flee.

There is evidence that suggests that the mannu will take in a lost traveller rather than let them die in the mountains. Once rescued, the traveller will become warm and sleepy, and will awaken three days later having transformed into one of the mannu, forever lost to the human world. However, there have also been sightings of mannu infants, so it assumed that they can grow their numbers as needed. There are also chilling tales of mannu attacking humans and taking captives, who are generally never seen again.

Many scholars assume that the mannu do this to inflate their numbers in quick order, possibly in response to some threat or accident. The source of this threat has never been determined, although a number of expeditions have been mounted to



discover why this might be occurring. There is some conjecture that the mannu may have a sort of civilization high in the mountaintops, and are desperate to keep their villages secret, while others suggest that the mannu instead live in caves, which connect to deep fissures leading to the Underworld. Who knows what they may face? Perhaps this is why they need to take captives from time to time.

MANNU

STR	4D6+8 (22)	Move 14
CON	3D6+6 (16)	Hit Points 19
SIZ	4D6+8 (22)	Damage Bonus +2D6
INT	3D6 (10)	Armour 1 (thick fur)
POW	3D6 (10)	
DEX	3D6 (10)	
APP	3D6 (10)	

Location	Hit Points - Armour
1-4	Right Leg 7 - 1
5-8	Left Leg 7 - 1
9-11	Abdomen 7 - 1
12	Chest 8 - 1
13-15	Right Arm 5 - 1
16-18	Left Arm 5 - 1
19-20	Head 7 - 1

Attacks: Thrown Boulder 30%, 1D6+2D3 (crushing)
Claw Swipe 50%, 1D4+2D6 (bleeding)

Skills: Dodge 40%, Listen 35%, Language (Chin) 45%, Sense 30%, Spot 35%, Track 35%

Powers: Fast x 2, Hardy (Cold)

Notes: Even though mannu are not spirits, something about their makeup means they can be bound similarly to spirits. They cannot disincorporate, but will obey anyone who possesses the binding object. Anyone ordering them to do something against their nature must force them to do so with a POW versus POW Resistance Table roll. Mannu are generally not strong enough to break themselves free, but may manage to convince someone to aid them.

THE TEN THOUSAND THINGS



FOREST CHILDREN

Forest people are a race of diminutive creatures, humanoid in appearance, that live deep in ancient forests. They have a clan structure which means near-constant warfare between different tribes, resulting in long standing feuds and skirmishes. Since they normally live so far away from people, only the learned and explorers have heard of them, much less interacted with them.

They are not spirits, but, much like any animals that live in high Chi areas, have developed a number of traits similar to what spirits possess. Some abilities are common to Forest Children, while others are unique to individuals. Some grow to human size as they age, while most do not. In any given community, the leader will almost invariably be the biggest and the strongest.

All forest children are short, have skin a sort of green-yellow, and wear leather of various colours on every part of their bodies, leaving only the skin of their faces exposed. There is a vast gap in intelligence amongst the forest children, with the less intelligent ones led and used by their more intelligent leaders. The smaller, dumber ones are fanatically loyal to their leaders, and will gleefully give their lives if asked to do so. The smarter ones are cunning foes, who exist in a constant state of warfare with one Forest Tribe or another.

As the Empire grows, more and more settlements are made, sometimes developing at the outskirts of Forest Children territory. Since most people cannot read the signs the Forest Children leave to mark their territory, the Forest Children see their new human neighbours as a tribe of giants, invading their homes. They are not by nature hostile to people, but can be capricious and cruel, especially if they feel threatened.

LESSER FOREST CHILDREN

For these creatures, it is probably best to use the Lesser Foe rules. They are much smaller than most player characters, and are really only a threat when they attack in numbers. They will fight so long as they expect they have a chance to win. If a battle goes the wrong way for them, the survivors will retreat, regroup, and attack again when they think they have an advantage (usually at night).

Due to their innate ability to teleport within the woods, Forest Children are expert at setting up ambushes. When running combats with them, assume that the Forest Children will act first in any combat round. Otherwise, combat runs as normal with Lesser Forest Children.

GREATER FOREST CHILDREN

STR	3D6 (10)	Move 12
CON	4D6 (14)	Hit Points 13
SIZ	3D6 (12)	Damage Bonus None
INT	3D6 (12)	
POW	3D6 (10)	
DEX	3D6+8 (18)	
APP	3D6 (10)	

Location	Hit Points - Armour
1-4 Right Leg	5 - 2
5-8 Left Leg	5 - 2
9-11 Abdomen	5 - 2
12 Chest	6 - 2
13-15 Right Arm	4 - 2
16-18 Left Arm	4 - 2
19-20 Head	5 - 2

Armour: 2 (leather armour)

Attacks: Dagger 45%, 1D4+2 (bleeding)
Bow 45%, 1D6+2 (impaling)

Skills: Dodge 60%, Hide 90%, Stealth 90%, Track 90%

Powers: Fast, Teleport (in woods only, no Chi cost), Any Single Super skill, and another single power as a personal speciality

DRAGONS

No creature is as feared and worshipped as much as the dragon. Semi-divine beings of immense age and power, these creatures are so suffused with Chi that they are both spirit and flesh at the same time. They radiate Chi in the same way a Chi Nexus does, and simply being in a dragon's presence means being bathed in its radiant nature. Each dragon is unique, with its own personality and quirks. None have ever been captured or slain by humans; many suspect that their very natures make it impossible to do so.

Dragons all appear as long, sinuous snake-like creatures, with thick, colourful scales, long whiskers, and arms that terminate in four or five claws. They twist and turn as they fly, their scales clashing like a thousand brass cymbals. They have a fondness for games of strategy, and may refrain from eating a human being if it offers the dragon a decent opponent.

Dragons subsist entirely on Chi, and need nothing else to survive. Most eat and drink anyway because they find it fun. Most are sorcerers and Martial Artists without peer, and some will teach their skills to students they find especially interesting. Dragons are also known to change shape and marry mortals. Their offspring are spirit-blooded, and bear many marks of their semi-divine heritage.

Use the Dragon statistics from the BRP rulebook to represent an average adult dragon, with the assumption that larger and smaller ones exist. In addition to the powers already listed, grant each dragon four or more Chi Powers befitting the character of the dragon, in addition to the Change Power. This version of the spell is optimized for the dragon, allowing it to turn into a single, specific human shape indefinitely at a cost of 10 Chi each time. These points of Chi do not return until the dragon returns to its normal shape.

Dragons and Player Characters



Characters wishing to play a dragon may create a normal Spirit-Blooded character from Chapter 2, and state that the spirit in their blood is a dragon. Select powers according to the dragon type. Those with dragon heritage often learn one of the Elemental Dragon Styles. This starts as an emulation of their heritage, but eventually it manifests as actual draconic power. Eventually, learning the Change power with enough levels behind it to transform oneself into a dragon will allow that person to determine his or her True Form. At the Game Master's option, this might involve a lengthy quest to finally determine the character's true draconic heritage. The player may select one of the Five Noble Paths that best represents their true nature. If they are able to attain Enlightenment from that path, they may choose to have their True Form become that of a dragon instead of another benefit of Enlightenment. Being in their True Form counts as not using Chi, and using the Change spell allows him or her to become their human shape.

DRAGON LINES

SPIRITS

Most of the spirits in the Dragon Empire are only there for colour. A merchant who deals in weapons is not all that different if he is a spirit of war than if he is purely mortal. Likewise, spirits in the wild are often no more than mundane animals given some sort of fabulous feature due to their mystical nature. Generally, most spirits are just like their mortal counterparts, save the addition of a handful (1D3) of randomly determined powers and a few appropriate Distinctive Features.

Additionally, some spirits may have a broader impact on your campaign. Such beings are may be much like player characters, able to influence the world around them by their very presence. Still others may have broad-ranging abilities and responsibilities within the Celestial Bureaucracy that make them more likely to interact with an ongoing story. Such beings are usually singular in nature, unique and irreplaceable.

RIGHTEOUS ENDEAVOUR, HEAVEN'S ASSASSIN

There are times when mortals make grave insults to Heaven, either by mistake or through willing disobedience. While the Jade Emperor is benevolent, there are crimes which cannot be allowed to go unpunished. When such crimes occur, the Celestial Bureaucracy sends Righteous Endeavour, its most prized assassin, to ensure that, not only does the perpetrator die, but the world knows he or she has died due to Heaven's displeasure.

Righteous Endeavour is a consummate warrior; he was once a mortal who trained in countless ways of inflicting death, and used his abilities to protect the weak and innocent from those who would take advantage of them. He sees himself as a hard man, one who performs a thoroughly distasteful job so that others do not have to. His transition to immortality has cemented this idea, though he has become less grim in his duties now that his own death is no longer a threat.

While he rarely feels a need to work with others, he will align himself with groups working to bring down petty tyrants and bandit kings. He is also the originator of the Steel Ribbed Whirlwind Martial Art style, and is known to teach it to the most noble, upstanding mortals he uncovers in his travels.

Righteous Endeavour manifests as a tall, muscular man with thick, black hair, a long beard, and long, flowing eyebrows. He can go anywhere, and bring Heaven's justice anywhere in the Empire, and beyond. He knows many secrets, and refuses to meddle in the affairs of mortals unless he is commanded to do so.

RIGHTEOUS ENDEAVOUR

CELESTIAL BUREAUCRACY 55

THE WAY 30

STR 18 CON 14 SIZ 18 INT 16 POW 18 DEX 20 APP 14

Move 12 Hit Points 32 Major Wound 8

Chi 38 Damage Bonus + 1D4

	Location	Hit Points - Armour
1-4	Right Leg	11 - 9
5-8	Left Leg	11 - 9
9-11	Abdomen	11 - 9
12	Chest	13 - 9
13-15	Right Arm	8 - 9
16-18	Left Arm	8 - 9
19-20	Head	11 - 9

Armour: Typically none, though he has access to a Lesser Artefact suit of lamellar armour, (9 points of Protection) should he feel the situation warrants it. Intangibility makes him immune to normal weapons.

Attacks: Kick 90% 1D3+1D4 (crushing)
Punch 90% 1D3+1D4 (crushing)
Grapple 75% special
Jian 90% 1D10+1+1D4 (impaling)
Dagger 75% 1D4+2+1D4 (impaling)
Spear 55% 1D10+1+1D4 (impaling)
Throwing Knives 90% 1D4+2+1D2 (bleeding)

Skills: Dodge 75%, Fine Manipulation 75%, Hide 75%, Knowledge (Alchemy) 55% Listen 55%, Martial Arts (Ethereal Wings) 55%, Martial Arts (Steel-Ribbed Whirlwind) 100%, Spot 75%, Stealth 75% Track 75%

Powers: Dull, Dispel, Extra Energy (x2), Fast, Enhance DEX, Intangibility (reversed), Lift, Lightfoot, Sharpen, Teleport

Techniques: **Abrupt Defence** (If an ally fails to Dodge or Parry an attack directed at them, he may attempt to interpose himself or his weapon. Make either a parry or dodge roll at +10%; if he fails, he takes the damage instead of the intended target. If he make a critical parry, he may also Counterattack)

Dancing Ribbon Slash (If a target is fighting another foe, and successfully parries an attack, Righteous Endeavour may make an attack right then, instead of on his action, which the target has a -10% to parry)

Darting Strike (Make an Attack at +10%. If he succeeds, he does no damage, but one ally counts as having made a successful Feint against the target)

Leap and Slash (+10% to hit, Feint, in addition to looking cool)

Lightning-Fast Parry: Nimble Defence (Parry)
Skyward Leap (+10% to Parry. If he succeed, he leaps in the air and land behind his foe. His next attack against them is at +10%)

The Nature of Demons

In the Dragon Empire, demons are simply spiritual creatures who, for one reason or another, have an intense hatred for, and express hostility towards, mortals. Any spirit, ghost or divine being is capable of becoming a demon, just as any mortal is capable of committing murder.

This does not mean that a demon will always attack a mortal. Many are willing to work with mortals, so long as the outcome benefits them enough. This does not mean that the demon will not try to corrupt or destroy the mortals involved, only that it may not automatically attack them on sight.

Many, but not all, demons fall to Corruption eventually, their hatred gives them an easy path to power, so long as they continue to feed it. It is possible for demons to reform, and try to live down their hostile reputations and come to appreciate and understand mortals in a way that allows them to turn their faces from hatred.

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THE TEN THOUSAND THINGS



SHAN YU, GUARDIAN OF THE YAMA GATES

The Dragon Empire has at least two gates that allow movement between the world of the living and the Underworld realm of the Yama Kings. Normally, only those in service to these dark lords are allowed to use the gates, as the spirits of the dead sink to the underworld via the Dragon Lines. Still, this does not stop some overly ambitious mortals from attempting to gain access to the dead and their vast knowledge of the world's secrets.

Anyone foolish enough to seek entry into the Hells must first best Shan Yu, the creature that guards each gate. Shan Yu is aware of what transpires at all Yama Gates, and can manifest at any of them at the same time. He typically is called to repel those seeking entry without proper permission, but he also works to keep the gates from being overrun by escaping souls seeking entry back into the physical world.

Shan Yu's history is unknown. He has served as guardian for as long as history records, and, in the few instances where he has been beaten, he does not die. When the next challenger approaches the Yama Gate, Shan Yu manifests as healthy and as vigorous as he was at the start of his last fight. Care should be taken so that, if beaten, he agrees to allow the entire party to pass; otherwise, he will fight with each party member individually.

SHAN YU

YAMA KINGS 99

STR 35 CON 23 SIZ 23 INT 12 POW 17 DEX 17 APP 12
Move 10 Hit Points 46 Major Wound 12
Damage Bonus +2D6

Location	Hit Points - Armour
1-4 Right Leg	15 - 6
5-8 Left Leg	15 - 6
9-11 Abdomen	15 - 6
12 Chest	18 - 6
13-15 Right Arm	12 - 6
16-18 Left Arm	12 - 6
19-20 Head	15 - 6

Armour: 6 points ornate ceremonial armour with a snarling dog face

Attacks: Polearm 150%, 2D6+2+2D6
Punch 100% 1D3+2D6
Kick 100%, 1D3+2D6
Grapple 150%, special

Skills: Climb 90%, Dodge 75%, Jump 75%,
Martial Arts (Iron Leviathan Style) 55%,
Sense 75%, Spot 75%, Throw 75%

Powers: Allergy (Jade-Major) Natural Armour (x2),
Regeneration, Hardy (Steel Weapons)

Notes: Shan Yu's Allergy to Jade is a secret only his masters and a handful of powerful spirits of knowledge possess.

Techniques: **None Shall Pass** (+10% to Parry rolls and negation of all knockback effects when guarding a narrow door, bridge or passageway)

Sundering Blow (+2 to damage, will destroy physical objects. Artefacts are immune)

Squish! (+10 to Grapple tests; targets are at -10% on all tests to escape)

MARTIAL ARTISTS

Even with the vast number of supernatural creatures in the Empire, eventually your characters will have to fight other Martial Artists of varying skill in order to achieve their own ends. Given the diversity of martial forms and styles, not to mention the potential combinations of attacks and Chi Powers, producing a set of game statistics to cover every possibility would be nearly impossible.

Even so, there will no doubt be times when you find yourself in need of a Martial Artist to oppose your characters, and do not have the appropriate character already prepared. In such instances, consider using the stat block below, with a few modifications, to cover the Martial Artist until such time as you can create a proper NPC.

In many ways, this system works similarly to the Lesser Foes, though the ones below are closer to an actual BRP character. All we have done is round off a few edges, and given it a little kick to make it work. Again, this is not intended to replace creating NPCs as normal, but only to serve as a quick-and-dirty character when you need one.

MARTIAL ARTIST

STR 16 CON 14 SIZ 12 INT 10 POW 12 DEX 16 APP 12
Move 10 Hit Points 26 Major Wound 7
Damage Bonus +1D4

Location	Hit Points - Armour
1-4 Right Leg	9 -
5-8 Left Leg	9 -
9-11 Abdomen	9 -
12 Chest	10 -
13-15 Right Arm	7 -
16-18 Left Arm	7 -
19-20 Head	9 -

Armour: None, normally. This may vary by character.

Attacks: Punch 50% 1D3+1D4 (crushing)
Kick 50%, 1D3+1D4 (crushing)
Grapple 35%, special
Various Weapons 60%, 1D6+1+1D4 (bleeding)

Skills: Dodge 35%, Martial Arts (various) 35%, Other skills 35%

Powers: One power package (see below)

Notes: This stat block represents a relatively early Martial Arts student, one only just out of his or her apprenticeship. He or she is no slouch in a fight, but cannot withstand being outnumbered, and will not be able to handle fighting anything terribly tough.

Power Packages

Select one or more of the following packages to alter the normal Martial Artist stat block. Wherever possible, the power packages are meant to reflect the end result of various powers, rather than being concerned with a few minor details.

For NPCs using these rules, it may be best to not track Chi use as normal. Simply assume the NPC has enough Chi for a battle, and if the fight happens to go on longer than usual, have the NPC surrender or fall unconscious from excessive Chi use.

The Strong Fighter: All attacks do +2 damage, and can break objects with bare hands/feet

The Sword-Saint: Can always parry at full percentage, counterattacks on a Special parry, and does +1 damage with a sword

The Nimble Fighter: Always goes first in every combat round, is capable of astounding feats of athleticism, and can always Dodge at full percentage

The Powerful Fighter: Can attack at range with blasts of magic, which are Weapons according to the stat block.

The Enduring Fighter: Takes half damage from all attacks, and strikes last in every round

DRAGON LINES



If you need stronger NPCs, there are some changes that can be made to the basic stat block to reflect this. To represent characters who have been practising for a while, add 25% to each skill, and perhaps use two power packages. Star pupils, the likes of which may only appear once at any given time, have an extra 50% to each skill, while old Master-level fighters have +75% to each skill, and two packages.

FOREIGN DEVILS

These outsiders come from lands far away. They appear to be trying to infiltrate the Empire, selling weapons to bandits, and generally undermining the Emperor's legitimate authority. While most of the Empire think of the Foreign Devils as a united menace, there are actually several different groups that are in competition with each other. A canny character might be able to play one group against another.

These stats can also be used for members of the Royal Guards, the Imperial Army, or brigands and bandit kings. In these cases, assume that limited access to firearms means none of the characters possess skills in the various firearms listed, nor will they possess them.

SOLDIERS

Rank-and-file soldiers use the Lesser Foe stats, since they are really no match for trained Martial Artists. However, due to their access to firearms, they can make attacks at range, instead of just being limited to close-combat attacks. If used in hand-fighting, their bayonet-fitted rifles are considered long weapons, though they can attack at short range with feet and fists.

SERGEANTS

Any group of soldiers will have a leader with them, mostly to keep them in line and to ensure that they remember what they are supposed to do. These men tend to be larger and crueller than their underlings, and rule by terror as often as by example.

FOREIGN DEVILS SERGEANT

STR 16 CON 14 SIZ 14 INT 10 POW 10 DEX 12 APP 8
Move 10 Hit Points 14 Damage Bonus +1D4

Location	Hit Points - Armour
1-4	Right Leg 5 -
5-8	Left Leg 5 -
9-11	Abdomen 5 -
12	Chest 6 -
13-15	Right Arm 4 -
16-18	Left Arm 4 -
19-20	Head 5 -

Attacks: Punch 60%, 1D3+1D4
Grapple 50% Special
Head Butt 45% 1D3+1D4
Billy Club 50% 1D8+1D4
Musket 60% 1D10+4
Bayonet 60% 1D6+1+1D4

Skills: Dodge 30%, Speak Chin 20%, Command 50%

OFFICERS

Foreign officers oversee several Sergeants and hundreds of soldiers. They are very often from military backgrounds, and have a ship or two under their command. They have orders to pursue interests of their home nation at all costs, and some have more specific orders about landing in the Empire, and convincing the Emperor, or the Dragon Court, to open trade relations with their home nation. These men and women are generally driven, obsessed individuals who will stop at nothing to get what they desire.

FOREIGN DEVILS OFFICER

STR 16 CON 16 SIZ 12 INT 17 POW 10 DEX 17 APP 12
Move 10 Hit Points 14 Damage Bonus: 1D4
Armour: *Varies*. They have access to heavy full plate (8/1D10), but wear a suit of Cuirboulle (3/2D3) when on a ship.

Location	Hit Points - Armour
1-4	Right Leg 6 - 3/8
5-8	Left Leg 6 - 3/8
9-11	Abdomen 6 - 3/8
12	Chest 7 - 3/8
13-15	Right Arm 4 - 3/8
16-18	Left Arm 4 - 3/8
19-20	Head 6 - 3/8

Attacks: Saber 150% 1D8+1+1D4
Punch 50% 1D3+1D4
Flintlock Pistol 75% 1D6+1

Skills: Dodge 89%, Fast Talk 75%, First Aid 58%,
Jump 82%, Stealth 77%, Navigate 85%,
Sailing 112%, Swim 79%

Powers: None normally, but most will do anything to get them





9. MATERIAL ATTACHMENTS

WEAPONS

THE DRAGON EMPIRE is shaped by war. Its long history is stained with thousands of years of bloody conflict, either in wars of expansion, repelling invaders, or violent coups. The Empire's martial focus is the largest reason why the study and practice of Martial Arts has such cultural heft. Even though a Martial Artist can do great damage with feet and fists alone, it takes more than a handful of trained warriors to go to war. Warfare requires weapons, and the Empire has developed a trove of weapons that, to an outsider, might be considered bizarre, outrageous things that cannot really be used in a battle.

To a trained warrior, anything can be used as a weapon. This attitude had led to the development of many tools for combat, from mundane weapons to Artefacts whose masterful forging has endowed them with abilities that can be passed on to their users. Each type will be discussed here.

Below is a selection of weapons commonly found in the Empire. The Spear and the Sword are the Mother and Father of weapons, and are the most likely ones to be found. Nearly everyone has some training in one them. Other weapons are the result of highly specific martial traditions, whose use and battlefield purpose are lost to history. Even so, all of these weapons have practitioners who continue to use them out of a sense of tradition.

Many of the weapons used in the Dragon Empire are exactly like the weapons found in the BRP rulebook, usually with altered names and a flair for decoration. For such weapons, use the game stats in that book. The weapons are listed below. In each case, they follow all of the rules for a weapon of their type. There are also some Imperial names that cover regional variants, which function as their normal kind.

DRAGON LINES



Black Powder Weapons

The Foreign Devils make use of curious weapons that use an alchemical preparation to propel a projectile, much like a crossbow but with more force. These items come in two forms: long ones, often fitted with a bayonet and used by low-ranking soldiers, and shorter, more compact ones used by the officers.

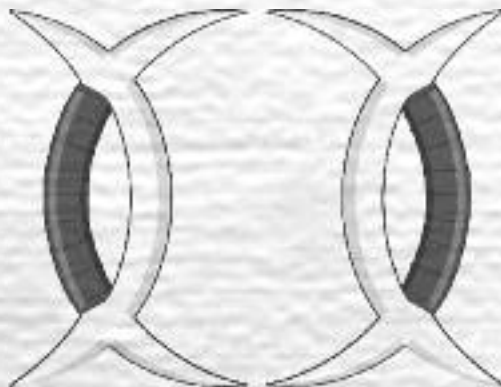
To represent them, use the Musket for the foot-soldier's rifles, and the Flintlock Pistol for officer weapons. Anyone with the alchemy skill and access to an unfired round can, with time, create new ammunition for either of the weapons.

Nipponese Weapons

There are a number of weapons in the BRP rulebook that are Japanese in origin. While Dragon Lines is not a Japanese setting, these weapons may have made their way to the Empire through the Nipponese Diplomatic Core in the Forbidden City. Player characters may opt to use any of the Nipponese weapons if they have a clear rationale as to why they possess them.

Note also that the katana and the wakazashi are emblematic of the Nipponese national character, and Nipponese characters are known to take great offence if they see such weapons in the hands of a non-Nipponese character, even if they are only on display.

- Bows (all types)
Crossbows do exist in the Empire, though they are rare.
- Clubs (all sorts)
- Darts
- Halberd
- Hammer (all varieties)
- Knives
Push daggers are knives that, instead of the blade projecting up or down from a closed fist, it comes out between two fingers of a closed fist.
- Lances
- Maces (all types)
- Mauls
- Spears (all types)
Snake Spears have a wavy bladed tip. Double-Headed Spears have blades on both ends. Using one counts as being armed with two weapons.
- Swords (all types)
Several kinds of two-handed swords exist, such as the Kwon Dao, and the Da Dao. Long swords are known as Jian (straight swords), and come in varieties like the Snake Straight Sword (She Jian) and the Piercer Straight Sword (Ci Jian). These swords are straight, as the name implies, and double edged. There are also styles that use them in pairs. Broadswords are larger, heavy, single-edged swords. There are a bewildering number of variations, such as the Nine Rings Broadsword, The Ghost Head Broadsword, and the Swallow Tail Broadsword. Broadswords are often used in pairs. Butterfly Knives are actually short swords used in pairs.
- Scythe
- Sickles
- Staffs (all)
A quarterstaff is a devastating weapon in the hands of a master. They are especially common, since they can be easily mistaken for a simple walking staff.
- Tridents
They are called Tiger Forks in the Empire, but are in all ways similar to a trident. They also have no particular maritime associations, so they can be found anywhere.
- Whips
Sharp metal tips are often mounted on the end of whip, increasing its damage to 1D4, and giving the user an option to have it do bleeding damage on a special success. Some whips are composed of links of chain. These do 1D6+db damage, and have double a whip's normal hit points.



MARTIAL ART WEAPONS

While the weapons listed above are similar enough to weapons familiar to those in the West, there are also a number of traditional weapons specific to the setting that players may wish to use. These weapons are not exactly common, though they are the sort of thing a player character might learn to use.

CICADA WING SWORD

Consisting of a long staff-like handle with projecting blades on both ends, and two crescent-shaped blades mounted over the handle, the Cicada Wing Sword is used to both attack and push foes back with the crescent blades. Users develop a Technique that causes Knockback.

DAGGER AXE

This large weapon is a heavy weighted dagger mounted on a long wooden stock at a right angle. The weapon is swung with great force, hopefully impaling its target on the blade.

DEER ANTLER KNIVES

Named after their shape rather than the material of their construction, Deer Antler Knives are two overlapping metal crescents with a cloth handle. They are used in pairs, and can be thrown using the same skill.

EMEI PEIRCERS

These curious weapons are long metal rods tipped with sharp arrowheads. They also have rings mounted on the shaft, which slip over the fingers and allow the user to manipulate them in a variety of ways. They are a stealth weapon, usually concealed in long silken sleeves before use.

FLYING CLAWS

This weapon consists of a hand-shaped metal claw, complete with hooked fingers, mounted at the end of a rope or chain. They are used to entangle an opponent and to keep them from running away. They can also be used as a climbing tool (+10% to Climb checks). They may come in single and double varieties, where a claw is on either end of the rope or chain.

HOOK SWORDS

These weapons look like straight swords with their tips bent over to form hooks, with crescent-

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shaped blades over the hands to protect them. Used in pairs, hook swords require some skill to use, but once mastered, are astonishingly effective weapons. They can attack at multiple lengths, and are useful for disarming opponents. Users may develop a Disarm Technique.

HOOKEED SPEAR

A spearhead with a crescent blade mounted under it is useful in a number of ways. It can be used to pull targets with the recurved blade, possibly to pull enemies off of horses. The blade can also be used to strike like a polearm, as well as to be spun to yank a weapon out of a target's hand. This versatile weapon can be difficult to master, but is deadly once learned. Users may develop a Disarm or Knockback Techniques.

METEOR HAMMER

When two metal weights are mounted on a rope or chain, they can be used to strike, disarm, or confuse an enemy. Plus, they have the advantage of being composed of simple, easy to find components, making them a popular weapon with more frugal warriors. A version of the Meteor Hammer, called the Mother and Son Hammer, uses two very large metal weights, but is otherwise the same.

MONK'S SPADE

A polearm with a weapon on both ends, the Monk's Spade was developed as an outgrowth to the Path of Enlightenment tradition of carrying a spade while traveling to bury corpses that might be found along roadsides. Monk's Spades consist of a long pole with a metal spade on one end and a crescent blade on the other. The weapon's length is useful in keeping enemies at bay, and the fact that a user can attack with either end makes them additionally useful. Using a Monk's Spade counts as being armed with two weapons.

ROPE DART

Consisting of a sharp metal spike at the end of a length of rope, the Rope Dart is used in a manner similar to the Meteor Hammer, though the sharp point can more readily pierce the skin of a target. Much like a normal whip, the user may opt to cause a bleeding effect on a Special result rather than entangling with the rope.

STEEL FAN

A collapsible fan made of steel, iron and brass, a Steel Fan is a tool as well as a weapon. Primarily used as a parrying weapon, the fans are also practical in that they can be used to keep their users cool in the heat, to hide the user's face when dealing with strangers, and to signal troops from a distance. Some fans have serrated metal triangles fit onto the edge, so that they can be used to sweep when open and jab when closed. Often used in pairs. Users may develop Feint and Protection Techniques.

THREE-SECTION STAFF

Hard to use, but also hard to fight against, a three-section staff is made of three arm-length sections of wood joined together by rings or short lengths of chain. The weapon can be swung at length as a flail, using the last two sections as the striking points, or with one section in either hand, in a manner similar to paired weapons. Also known as the Coiling Dragon Staff, the weapon is considered something of a pacifist's weapon, since the most effective means of use make it unideal for battlefield conditions.

UNICORN HORN SWORDS

These paired weapons consist of a short, outwardly curved blade, with a crescent-shaped hand protector blades and a short bladed point on the reverse side. While not particularly tricky to use,

Strike Ranks

If using the optional Strike Rank system, the weapons taken from the BRP rulebook use their standard Strike Rank Modifier. The new Martial Art weapons from the table above have the following Strike Rank Modifiers:

- Cicada Wing Sword: 3
- Dagger Axe: 1
- Deer Antler Knives: 2
- Emei Piercers: 3
- Flying Claws: 3
- Hook Swords: 3
- Hooked Spear: 1
- Meteor Hammer: 2
- Rope Dart: 3
- Steel Fan: 2
- Three Section Staff: 2

WEAPON	SKILL	BASE	DMG	SPECIAL	RANGE	HANDS	HP	STR/DEX	VALUE
Cicada Wing Sword	Staff	10	1D8+1	Bleeding	Medium	2	19	10/13	Expensive
Dagger Axe	Polearm	10	2D6+2	Impaling	Long	2	25	12/12	Expensive
Deer Antler Knives	Dagger	15	1D6+2	Bleeding	Short	2	15	10/13	Average
Emei Piercers	Dagger	15	1D6+1	Impaling	Medium	1	10	7/10	Average
Flying Claws	Other	05	1D4+1	Bleeding	Medium	2	5	7/10	Cheap
Hook Swords	Sword	10	1D8	Bleeding or Crushing	Medium or Long	2	15	9/13	Average
Hooked Spear	Spear	10	1D10+1	Bleeding or Impaling	Long	2	15	10/13	Expensive
Meteor Hammer	Other	10	1D8+1	Crushing or Entangling	Medium or Long	2	5	7/13	Cheap
Monk's Spade	Polearm	10	3D6	Bleeding	Long	2	20	10/14	Average
Rope Dart	Other	10	1D6+1	Impaling or Entangling	Medium or Long	2	5	7/13	Cheap
Steel Fan	Other	15	1D8	Bleeding or Crushing	Short	1 or 2	20	10/13	Expensive
Three Section Staff	Other	10	1D6	Crushing	Short or Long	2	15	10/14	Average

DRAGON LINES



Unicorn Horn Swords are a rarity in the Empire. Those who still practice the swords must travel far and wide to find masters from which to learn new techniques.

ARMOUR

Armour plays less of a role in the Dragon Empire than it does in some other places. Generally, the Imperial Army uses the bulk of the armour crafted in the Empire. Martial Artists avoid using it because it hampers their movements and limits their agility. Occasionally, suits of armour turn up in odd places, and the leaders of the Foreign Devils are known far and wide for their love of heavy armour plating that covers most of the body (8/1D10).

Of the armour available in the BRP rulebook, only a few items appear with any regularity. Primitives and poor tribal folk wear hide (1/1D3-1) armour. Some prefects and thieves wear suits of soft leather (1/1D6-1) if they are expecting trouble. Soldiers are given a suit of armour when they enlist; poor soldiers wear hard leather (2/1D6), while officers, heavy infantry and shock troopers all wear ornate suits of lamellar (6/1D8-1).

Even amongst Artefacts (see below), Artefact armour is rare, the sort of thing the Emperor rewards successful generals with, which is then passed down through the family. These are almost all Lesser Artefacts

ARTEFACTS

Craftsfolk in the Empire have been encouraged to perfect their Art for the good of the Empire for thousands of years. As such, there are many who have learned so much about their Art that they are capable of crafting items of such potency that they are as filled with Chi as living things. The innate Chi of these items keeps them sharp, clean and usable for such a long time that they are still in pristine condition today. These items are called Lesser Artefacts, and they represent the most common forms of Artefacts in the Dragon Empire.

Even amongst craftsfolk, Greater Artefacts stand as a testament to what can be achieved with a combination of immense skill, expertise, time, and abundant Chi. These items are singular examples of skilled work; no two are alike, and each is a manifestation of the person or spirit who created it. Some have long histories, stretching back to the very founding of the Empire, while others are unknown until they turn up, often in the hands of someone who does not know what they possess.

LESSER ARTEFACTS

The vast majority of Lesser Artefacts are particularly well crafted versions of otherwise mundane weapons and armour. They are very expensive, out of the price range for all but the most wealthy of nobles. They are also some of the very few artefacts that can be commissioned with a reasonable expectation that they can be created.

Lesser Artefact weapons have the following properties:

They cannot be broken, regardless of what their Hit Points may otherwise be.

Their fine balance means they do an extra point of damage in combat. Edged weapons retain their sharpness indefinitely; there have been swords found buried in the dirt for several hundred years that cut workers who were not careful with them.

They seem to become bound to their owners. Even if stolen, they will somehow find their way back to those who possessed them. The only way to end this is to willingly give the Artefact to someone else.

Suits of Lesser Artefact Armour have the following properties:

They seem to fit perfectly, regardless of the SIZ of the owner.

They protect for an additional point of damage.

They exceedingly durable; nothing short of an attack by a god-like being can damage the armour. Purely mundane actions, even acid, may damage the wearer, but not the armour itself.

GREATER ARTEFACTS

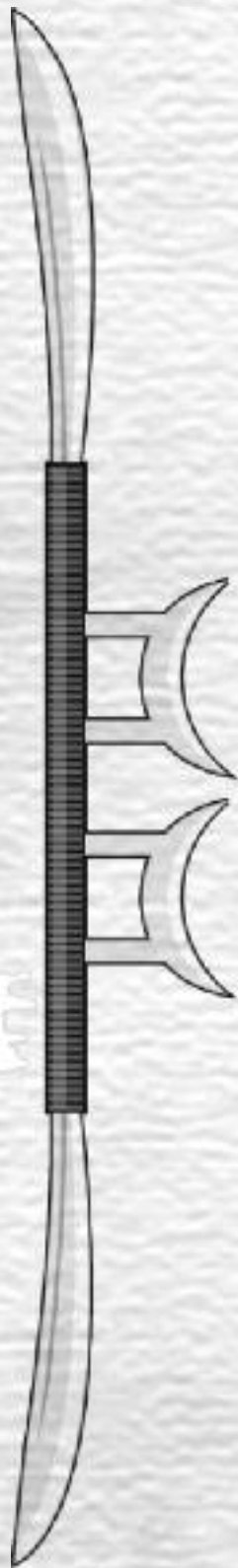
Unless otherwise noted, Greater Artefacts possess the same qualities as Lesser Artefacts, and many more besides.

BLACK CLOUD

A jian of perfect proportions, Black Cloud is the masterpiece of the sword-smith Wei Shu-Shin. It was intended to be a birthday present for Shu-Sin's spirit-blooded daughter, Yun-Mei, but the old man was killed and the sword stolen before he could give it to her. Its current location is unknown, though Yun-Mei, an adept of the Air Dragon Style, is famously scouring the Empire for both the sword that is her birthright, as well as her father's killer.

Black Cloud is crafted from steel so dark that it appears to be black in most lighting conditions. Every inch is etched with sinuous dragons, representing Yun-Mei's mother, and graceful Cranes, representing Yun-Mei herself. It has a matching scabbard, made of black jade. Neither the weapon nor the scabbard can be marred by any force short of the Heavens. This distinctive appearance should indicate that the sword will be spotted if it turns up, but so far, this has not happened.

Black Cloud is unbelievably sharp. It always



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does maximum damage (8+db). Also, it inflicts damage to any weapon that is used to parry it, quickly whittling any non-artefact weapon used against it down to splinters. Non-Artifact armour protects against it until its protection has been exceeded, at which point it renders the armour useless. It can supposedly kill anything, even immortals and spirits, though, as far as anyone knows, this has not been tested.

Lastly, the wielder can use Black Cloud's powers as though they were his or her own. These cost no Chi, though only one can be used in any given combat round. The powers most commonly attributed to the sword are: Flight (about as fast as a dragon flies), Air Walking, Lightfoot, Super Skill (Sword).

Black Cloud may possess other powers at the Game Master's discretion, especially if the user is on a quest to return it to its rightful owner.

DEMON STATUES

These curious objects of antiquity have their origins in the distant past. An ancient culture, whose history is lost to time, summoned powerful, inhuman spirits and bound them in the form of grotesque, diminutive statues. The mystical strength needed to accomplish this feat is staggering; it would take nearly every sorcerer and mystic in the Empire operating on concert to repeat this act today, and the resulting expenditure of Chi would create a vast wasteland and very likely kill those who attempted it.

Regardless of how they came to be, the statues have survived the ages, largely to do their demonic nature. There are several known statues, all of which have a history of ownership that brings nothing but ruin and despair to those who own them.

The demon bound inside each statue wishes to take over the body of any who come into contact with it, so that it may once again enjoy the pleasures of the flesh. The possession is slow, and often goes unnoticed until it is too late for the victim to recover their sense of self. Eventually, the body is completely given over to the demon, who warps it to better reflect how the demon sees itself. Once this has occurred, there is very little that can be done to return the victim to his or her former self.

The statues establish a psychic link with anyone who touches one. Once established, the demon uses the link to encourage feelings of possessiveness and lust for the statue itself, as well as the demon it represents. Initially, the demon acts as though it has a POW of 1. Each morning, as the person wakes, the demon must test its POW against the targets. If it wins, the target is overcome by the demon statue, and will carry it with them at all times. If the demon fails, it's effective POW increases by 1.

Once the target is overcome, the demon begins to assert its mastery. It will offer the target a Chi Power in order to let the target gain whatever it desires. In exchange, the demon gains full use and

ownership of the body for a period of time. Initially, this period might be a few minutes to an hour, but each time the target allows this to happen, the time span increases, until the target is nothing more than a guest in its own body.

By this time, the target's body will have been warped and twisted by the various Chi powers it possesses. Each power grants the victim an obvious distinctive feature of a demonic nature: Increased STR causes the victim's muscles to bulge and turn visibly red beneath the skin, while Natural Weapons cause the growth long, black talons at the end of the victim's finger.

The total number of powers gained in this fashion is equal to the victim's CHA. Once this many powers have been gained, the victim loses control of the body entirely. Before then, each time a power is gained, the victim may make a Luck roll. Success means they may drop the statue and forfeit all the powers thus gained, but few who fall under the demon's sway choose to do so.

There is no known means to destroy one of these foul things. They may only be hidden away, far from the hands of those who would possess them for their own power. And even then, the demon's influence often overcome wildlife in the area, creating bizarre demonic monsters where none should exist.

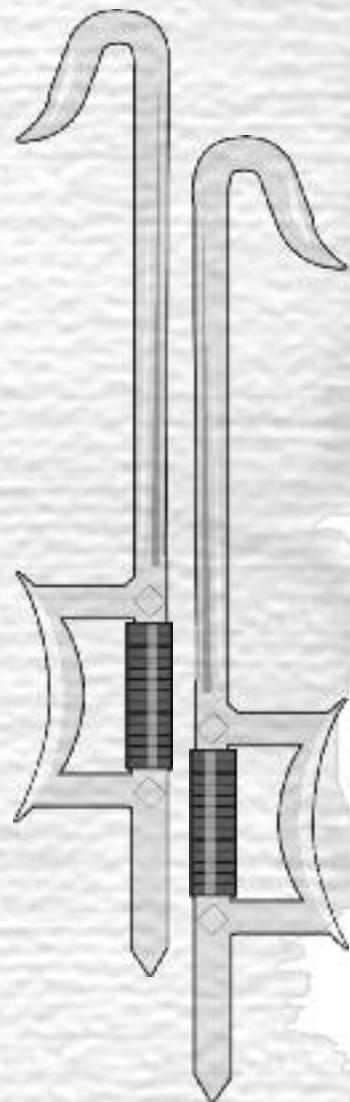
DRAGON EGGS

Dragons, being creatures of pure Chi, have life cycles that work in ways no mortal creature understands. Much of how they create new dragons is a mystery. However, one thing is certain: sometimes, the most fortunate people can stumble upon a Dragon's Egg. If this occurs, the person is considered twice-fortunate, because the use of a Dragon's Egg can produce a variety of wondrous things.

When a dragon wishes its offspring to be another dragon, it mates with another of its kind, and lays its single, gem-stone like egg in a place with high Chi. They prefer a Chi Nexus of an elemental alignment to themselves, though any will do. If left alone, the egg will eventually hatch into a small dragon, which will grow into an adult, having a perfect knowledge of its parents and heritage.

However, if a living being discovers the egg and removes it from the Chi Nexus, the young dragon's mind touches the mortal and forms a bond. The Dragon-Bound, as the person is now called, can carry the dragon with him or her, take care of it, and use some of its power as his or her own. When the egg hatches, the young dragon will travel with the mortal, learning how the human world works, aiding where it can. Eventually, the dragon will become an adult, and leave its human companion, though many maintain friendships for years.

Once per session, the Dragon-Bound may feed Chi into the egg in order to use one of the infant Dragon's powers. Each point of Chi thus spent



DRAGON LINES



grants a 10% chance that the dragon will aid its human companion.

Also, the Dragon-Bound can assist in the dragon's growth. When the Game Master calls for experience checks, the Dragon-Bound may sacrifice one or more of his or her available checks to the dragon egg. When a threshold of sacrificed checks is reached, the dragon inside begins to hatch, a process taking several days. The exact number of checks needed is left up to the Game Masters, though it should be timed to happen at a time when the arrival of a new dragon will cause the most interesting story.

The newly hatched dragons tend to be very loyal to their companions, and may use their powers in a similar way as when they were an egg. At this stage, they generally act as familiars, though they possess an independent streak that causes them to try things on their own from time to time.

ELIXIR OF IMMORTALITY

Few Artefacts are coveted to the same degree as the famous Elixir. One sip from this golden alchemical brew will render the drinker truly immortal. They will gain the Regeneration power, and will always be able to return from any injury, no matter how grave. They are immune to disease, poison, and ageing as well.

The source of the Elixir lies somewhere in Heaven, and only the most worthy of heroes are allowed to drink it. Those who do so are very often taken to Heaven to live as Gods as they age, since the Earth can only handle so much power in one place at a time.

Every so often, rumours surface of an unscrupulous Alchemist who is able to produce the Elixir by distilling it from the bodies of fallen gods and spirits of great power. Such Elixirs are of similar potency to the real thing, though the forces of Heaven take a dim view on those who use them. Drinking a false Elixir grants an Allegiance check against Corruption, with an automatic three points gained.

Characters who begin play with this Artefact are considered to have already consumed it. At the Game Master's discretion, they may be on a quest to bring a bottle of the Elixir to someone who needs it before they die. Such a quest would be fraught with peril, as there are always dangerous people who desire the real Elixir for themselves, and care nothing for whom it is intended.

THE JADE WOMAN

Somewhere in the Empire, there exists a bookmark, constructed from the creamiest green jade. It is exceedingly thin, carved in such a way as to depict a young woman in fancy, old-fashioned clothes, reading from a book. Many such bookmarks exist, though only one has the mystical properties

for which the Artefact is well known.

Whenever the owner of the Artefact is alone, the bookmark manifests as a woman, one who looks exactly like the one in the bookmark. Her name is Jade, and she is friendly, curious, and absolutely loyal to whoever owns the bookmark. No one else can see her. When manifested, she can interact with the world, though only her owner can perceive her. If anyone else is present, or comes into the same room as her owner, she vanishes.

She is not a mortal, nor is she a spirit. She exists as she is, and has for centuries. She knows a great deal about a number of subjects, and offers stunningly accurate advice on whatever situation her owner may face. She has a 90% chance of offering some useful, accurate advice once per session, though she may try her best at other times, and generally is an interesting companion otherwise.

One of her most useful properties is that, if placed in a book overnight, in the morning she will have memorized the contents of the book and be able to discuss it, what it means, and her interpretation of the contents as soon as she is removed from the book. She dislikes being placed in works of dark sorcery, but will grudgingly do so if asked nicely.

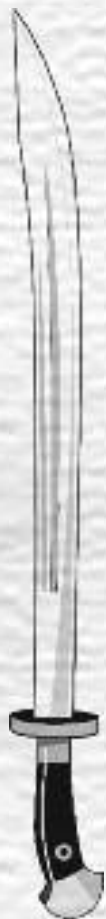
There is theoretically a way for the Jade Woman to be freed from the bookmark to live and age as a real woman, but she does not know what it is. If pressed, she will indicate that she does not wish this to happen, as she is content with her present existence. She is capable of love, and has had her heart broken a fair number of times. She has a long list of lovers and husbands, though not all of her owners responded to her in this way.

THE SEVEN DEMON BAG

This rough-looking leather sack appears to be composed of several different shades of blue leather, stitched together in a manner that appear haphazard and careless. It has many curious properties, though only someone who knows its true nature would be able to make use of them. Anything placed in the sack vanishes; the next time someone reaches into it, whatever the bag supposedly held would be gone.

The true power of the bag will only become known if examined by a sorcerer or any other character who possesses the Summon Spirit Manipulation. By spending a few minutes looking over the bag, the sorcerer realizes its true nature: The Seven Demon Bag is a superb binding object and prison for spirits. And, despite its name, any spirit can be bound to it. Rather than binding demons, the Bag makes normal spirits into demons.

Anyone who possesses the Bag may opt to use it as a binding object for any spirit they encounter. Instead of spending POW to do so, however, the binder uses a special property of the Bag to set up the binding. When the Bag holds at least one spirit, it appears full, and the contents will occasionally



MATERIAL ATTACHMENTS



shift, move, or moan in response to outside stimuli. Additionally, the bag may hold up to seven separate spirits at a time. If more than seven are bound to it, the spirit with the highest POW will automatically break free of the binding and lash out at the owner, even if he or she was not the sorcerer responsible for that particular demon's binding.

Spirits bound to the Bag behave as normal; they may be made to manifest outside the Bag, and can perform actions in keeping with their natures. Additionally, the owner of the Bag may use any skills or Powers possessed by any of the spirits bound to the Bag as if they were his or her own. The owner must pay any Chi costs to use Powers, and each skill or Power may only be used once a week. Also, the spirits bound to the Bag do not count against the owner's number of spirits they may have bound at any given time.

The Seven Demon Bag is a boon to sorcerers, as it greatly enhances both their own powers and their ability to make use of spirits. Great care should be taken, however, as spirits bound to the bag will always eventually become hostile towards humans as their personalities are warped by their confinement. Each week spent in the Bag causes a non-Corrupt spirit to gain a point of Corruption Allegiance, and most will gladly become allies to Corruption when and if the opportunity presents itself.

Ironically, the safest way to use the Bag is to only bind actual demons. When used in this way, the inhabitants are not able to harm the owner directly, regardless of what else happens while in the owner's possession. Spirits who become demons, however, are under no such compulsions, and may use their powers to harm the owner in any way they can imagine.

TERRACOTTA WARRIORS

One of the few Greater Artefacts for which there are multiple renditions, Terracotta Warriors are tireless automata constructed of clay and animated by ancient magic. Originally created to guard the grave of The First Emperor, Lian Shan-Fong, these constructs have been looted, and have wound up in many parts of the Empire. They bond with their owners, becoming peerless bodyguards and protectors. They are silent, though many users report that they are comforted by the presence of these stoic, nearly human creatures.

Terracotta Warriors use the Martial Artist stats on page 109 of this book. Each uses a different power package, and the Game Master should talk to the player taking this Artefact to determine which power package they are most interested in. Also, the warriors have 6 points of Natural Armour, and the Regeneration power when in contact with earth or stone. They grow through experience just like any character, and can even learn to speak some rudimentary Chin.

If reduced to zero Hit Points, the warrior

crumbles into red dust, which is useful in alchemical operations. The warrior will reform at the nearest concentration of earth or stone at the next sunrise, and will unerringly track down its owner, if the person is still alive. If the owner ever dies, the warrior becomes seemingly comatose, and will animate and protect the next living being that touches it, regardless of that person's character.

TRAINING MANUALS

Many Martial Art traditions maintain secret vaults where their techniques, meditations and practice forms are kept secret, in case the last living master of the form dies before he or she can teach any new students the style. In these vaults, stacks of scrolls, and bound books lie in wait, ready for the day when some promising person reads them and attempts to emulate what the drawings suggest is possible.

Anyone in possession of a training manual can, after a period of study and three successful Literacy (Chin) or Literacy (Ancient Chin) rolls, begin to learn the rudiments of the style the manual covers. After six months of arduous practice, the reader may take on the Martial Arts Style for which the manual was written at its base chance. The reader may also manifest a number of appropriate Chi powers equal to their new Martial Art skill divided by 10 (round down).

However, learning from a manual is no replacement for the real thing. Unless the reader is able to find an actual teacher for that style, he or she cannot increase the Martial Art skill over its initial rating. The only exception is if they take on students themselves, and spread the style to others seeking to learn. Then, and only then, can they increase their understanding of the style in question.

For every month of training taught, the teacher gains a single experience check to that Martial Arts skill. This is the only way a Martial Arts skill ever increases through experience. At the Game Master's discretion, player characters may be allowed an experience check on their Martial Arts skill if they teach it to someone else.

Training manuals are highly prized. There are teachers who refuse to teach certain people, and training manuals are often the only way for the refused to learn a new style. Teachers who possess training manuals would do well to be exceedingly careful with them; they are always the target of thieves and other unscrupulous individuals.



10. ADVENTURES



THE DRAGON EMPIRE is a big place, with much to see and do, with many exotic creatures to befriend, fight, or kill. The scope for adventures in this setting is large enough to accommodate a variety of play styles. However, even the best Game Master has a night when the ideas will not flow, when the players look at you expectantly, hoping to be led through an adventure.

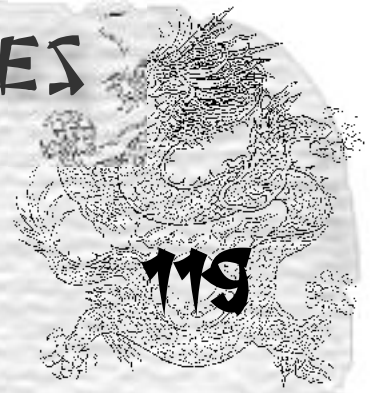
Below are story seeds, adventure ideas, and short campaign arcs that can be filled out and used, either as the basis for an ongoing game, or as side-quests, one-shots, or short campaigns. They are left vague on purpose, so that they may be adjusted to fit the needs of individual games.

THE BREAK-IN

While in the home of a wealthy noble in the Forbidden City, the characters are awakened by an alarm sounding through the house. A group of thieves has broken into the house and are attempting to steal something valuable, perhaps a Greater Artefact that has been in the noble's family house for generations.

The first encounter with the thieves is in the hallways, where they are making short work of the house's security staff. As the characters try to intervene, the thieves break through a window and escape out into the central courtyard, hoping to flee into the night.

If cornered in the courtyard, the thieves fight, trying to disable the player characters to discourage pursuit. They show decent Martial Art skills. One of their numbers possesses the Wall-Walking power, and,



while the others fight, this one takes the stolen item and runs to the rooftops.

From here, a short chase scene follows, where one or more of the characters pursue the thieves across the rooftops, which are illuminated by the glow of the full moon, hanging in a cloudless sky. Characters who do not possess the Leap power will have to make Jump tests at every gap in the rooftops. If they fail this test, they fall to the ground, taking some damage and, more seriously, losing their quarry.

If at least one of the characters is able to follow the thieves, he or she is able to corner them in a warehouse in the Harbour District. However, even if all of the thieves are subdued, the stolen item is not on them. It will take an hour's search and Special result on a Search or Spot check to find it, stuffed into a crevice on one of the rooftops. They only get one chance to find it; if this test fails, it is missed, and picked up by someone else before it can be discovered.

Where to go from here: If the thieves are taken captive, they eventually manage to escape. The noble with whom they are staying suggests that someone in the Forbidden City had been asking about the stolen item, wondering if it was for sale. When the noble declined to sell, he had assumed the potential buyer had dropped the matter.

If the characters are willing, the noble will pay them handsomely to recover the item if it is missing, or to discover if the buyer is responsible for the theft. The characters are directed to the buyer, and are given leave to handle the investigation their way.

If the buyer is responsible, he or she must have a high need for the stolen item to risk such an obvious theft. Perhaps the real responsible party is someone seeking to discredit the buyer, someone who knows the buyer sought the item, and arranged a theft to make the buyer look guilty.

outside of the bouts. For example, someone is peddling alchemical potions to the fighters in order to grant them new Chi powers. This is a clear violation of the rules of the tournament, but unless hard evidence of this is uncovered, there is no way to tell who is selling them, nor who is taking them. Additionally, when a single fighter becomes the favourite to win, he or she is found dead one morning, having fallen victim of a sinister poison. It appears as though someone wants a specific fighter to win, and is willing to go to great lengths to ensure that this fighter is in the final match, and that this fighter will win.

The tournament is overseen by Wang Chi-Wu, a tall, ancient looking man with wispy white hair and long, lacquered fingernails. He is almost certainly spirit-blooded, though no one has gotten close enough to him to know for certain. He uses a Terracotta Warrior as a bodyguard. This warrior has been at Chi-Wu's side for years, and is more experienced than a usual one (+5 to any two characteristics, 3 additional randomly determined powers).

It is possible that Chi-Wu is running a scam. The entry fee for the tournament is rather high, so much so that poor fighters need a sponsor to be able to compete. The one fighter might be a plant working for Chi-Wu, who expects a cut of the proceeds rather than access to the prize should he or she win. The fighter who dies from poisoning might have discovered the nature of the scam, and was killed before the truth could be made known.

Of course, it may be someone else entirely.

THE CURSE OF THE FOREIGN DEVILS

During an evening out in the Forbidden City, the player characters wind up in Mr. Chun's Teahouse, enjoying an evening of tea and dumplings on the third floor of the restaurant. Shortly after a brief interaction with their waiter, a loud group of Foreign Devils enters the teahouse and starts making demands for food and drinks. This is a problem for a couple of reasons: the Devils do not speak Chin, and only get louder as their demands are not met; and Foreign Devils are not allowed in the Forbidden City at all, much less this far away from the water.

It is only a matter of time before things get out of hand. There are two Foreign Devils for every player character, as well as Sargent Queeg, a hulking brute of a man who is, in theory, in charge of the men. He speaks just enough Chin to be insulting. Eventually, one of the Devils will slap the waiter, the same one who was previously serving the player characters. Unless the characters intervene, the Devils decide to wreck the place. There are plenty of tables and chairs to throw around, as well as a gong

THE TOURNAMENT

Martial Artists from all over the Empire have gathered in an arena far north of the Forbidden City. Each fighter will pair off against another. The winner will advance, while the loser is ejected from the tournament if he or she survives the bout. The fights all take place in one of several specially designed areas within the arena; some are simple pits of sand, while others take place on thin walkways, over spiked pits, or even atop a series of columns that rise out of a deep pool of water.

The reasons for the tournament will vary. Perhaps the winner will be granted a sip from the Elixir of Immortality, or gain the opportunity to face off against a powerful supernatural threat, or even just bragging rights for being the best fighter of this generation. For whatever reason, the top prize is something everyone wants, so it attracts many of the most powerful Martial Artists alive today.

In addition to the action taking place in the actual tournament, there should be things to do



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in the middle of the first floor that makes a very satisfying "bong" sound when someone is thrown into it.

If fighting breaks out, treat the Devils as Lesser Foes, except for Queeg, who uses the stats for the Sergeant on page 110 of this book. Queeg and the Devils use only fists and billy clubs, trying to avoid lethal combat if possible. If more than half the Devils are defeated, or Queeg falls to a player character, the group flees in mass, heading towards the waterfront.

THE WATERFRONT

If the characters pursue the fleeing Devils, or travel to the waterfront on their own later, they happen upon a curious sight: dock workers, ship captains, and others are fleeing from the waterfront. If one is stopped, he says that evil spirits have come out of the water and are attacking everything they can find: ships, cargo, people, even the wooden dock itself.

When investigated, the evil spirits turn out to be a trio of water elementals, whose water appears cloudy and corrupted, as though filled with impurities. They attack the players without a thought for tactics, attempting to knock them into the water so that they can be drowned. Use the following stats for them:

STR 26 CON 12 SIZ 7 INT 14 POW 10 DEX 10 APP 13
Move 10 Hit Points 10

Armour: Immune to non-magical Attacks

Attacks: Fist 50%, 1D3+1D6
Drown 50% (see Spot rules for drowning)

Powers: Increased Strength (+10), Structural
Weakness-Stagnant Water (-4 CON)

Skills: Dodge 75%, Speak Chin 75%, Navigate 100%,
Sense 50%, Spot 50%, Swim 100%



The water spirits are not destroyed when defeated. Instead, they dissolve into stagnant puddles, and continue to harass the players verbally. They indicate that they are angry because someone has disrupted the Chi flow in this section of the harbour, which has altered their basic structure.

If pressed, the spirits indicate that a Dragon Line that used to flow into the harbour from The Island Fortress of Yi-Sheng has suddenly ceased. Deprived of this flow of Chi, the water spirits had begun to mutate from hunger, until their baser nature has gotten the better of them. Surely, if the Dragon Line flow from the Fortress could be repaired, the water spirits would return to normal.

If the characters seem reluctant to investigate the matter further, remind them that, should they uncover the cause of this bizarre phenomena, they will likely gain the attention of the Emperor, and the benefits that come from it. Plus, as Martial Artists, people expect them to do this sort of thing.

THE ISLAND FORTRESS

Unless the characters have some means of travelling by water or air, they will need to hire a boat to get to the Fortress. It is a short ride there, and soon the players will realize that the Harbour Defence Prefecture normally stationed on the island seems absent. As they get closer, observant characters will realize that the Fortress have been taken over by a contingent of Foreign Devils, who patrol it in teams of five to ten. If the ship attempts to dock at the small harbour on the island, the Devils begin to fire upon it with their rifles. A few rounds later, a massive cannon blast sounds from the parapets, which is likely to stave the hull if it hits.

Character may opt to force their way onto the island, or back away and sneak on later. In either case, they will need to deal with a mass of Lesser Foe soldiers (2-3 units of 10 each, one of which is on the parapet, and will fire upon intruders from above), and a Sergeant (including Queeg, if he is still alive), before they can enter the Fortress proper. Once inside, they will have to fight their way past another unit of soldiers and their Sergeant before mounting the stairs and taking on an Officer (Commander Morris), and his loyal bodyguard (advanced Lesser Foes, one for each player character). Just as the Commander Morris falls, he clutches a medallion around his neck and vanishes in a puff of black smoke.

AFTERMATH

The members of the Harbour Defence Prefecture are being held in the jail beneath the island, and, once released, they will go about bundling up the surviving Devils for punishment. They thank the characters for their aid, and suggest that any seeking to join the Prefecture would be welcome.

Unless the characters have a geomancer amongst them, one working for the Prefecture will start repairing

ADVENTURES



the Dragon Line, which the Devils had upset when they used an explosive during their taking of the Fortress. Soon, the water spirits in the harbour return to their normal selves, and promise to aid the characters at some point in the future in thanks for their rescue.

MOUNTAINS OF PERIL

The player characters are on route to Mao Ning Monastery, where Madame Shin, a famous diviner, will read their fortunes to put them back on the right path. They are high enough in the mountains that there is snow, regardless of the time of year. After a few minutes of in-character talk, have everyone make a Perception roll of some sort to notice the angry mountain spirits before they cause an avalanche.

The characters are all in the path of the falling snow and ice, and must make an Agility roll to avoid being caught in it. Characters who succeeded in their Perception test gain a +20% bonus, which is halved for those companions that can be warned before the avalanche. Those who pass are able to keep from being trapped. Those who fail are caught in the avalanche and swept a short distance away, taking 1D6 damage from bumps and bruises. Those who fumble are actually buried in the snow, taking 1D8 damage, and will begin using the spot rules for drowning as they suffocate.

While they get back together, everyone hears a bizarre, hooting cry in the sudden stillness. Anyone passing Knowledge (Spirits) or Knowledge (Obidi Mountains) recognize the hunting call of mannu, which are large, ape-like beings that normally keep their distance from people. Several rounds later, a group of mannu appear on a ridge, and begin hurling rocks and chunks of ice at the party. After several rounds of this, a smaller group of mannu move in from the trees to attack. There is one mannu for each of the characters, and split off so that everyone is engaged.

If the characters happen to fight off the mannu, they will discover the cave later, as they hear someone calling for help from it.

IN THE HALL OF THE MOUNTAIN KING

If the characters have yet to discover the tunnel, they hear a man's voice calling for help from inside it shortly after the fighting winds down.

The tunnel runs down away from the opening for several yards, before coming to an abrupt drop down into a crevasse. There is a man standing on a narrow ledge some distance down.

He says his name is Den Ming Chu, and that he got separated from his party when the mannu attacked them. He says that he is a valet for a Master Li Fu Huang, who was headed for the Mao Ning to have his fortune told.

Getting down to Den Ming Chu takes a climb roll, although anyone using a length of rope can do so

without needing to make a test. Den asserts that he cannot climb up himself, because his arm was injured in the fall. Someone will have to climb down and help him up. The climb down is Easy, and the climb up with him is Difficult. A failure means they do not progress upwards; they only fall on a fumble. The fall is short to a catwalk across the crevasse, which leads to the Hall, below.

THE HALL

From the vantage point on the ledge, characters can see that there is an underground city, seemingly carved into the very rock itself in the mountain. It is very old and dusty, and appears to be deserted. Exploration of the city reveals that it is indeed deserted. There are large scorch marks in various places. Anyone with Knowledge (Spirits) recognizes the after effects of a dragon's fiery breath. No bodies are found, though some of the buildings are sealed shut using the Seal spell. Use of the Unseal power can open them up, revealing houses filled with skeletal remains of those who sought shelter from the dragon. The skeletons are short, and the decayed rags they wear are in a style none of the characters have ever seen before.

The only thing of interest left in the abandoned city is a Chi Nexus of Earth alignment near the centre of the city. There is an elaborate temple built around it, though it too has been deserted and stripped of all valuables. At the Game Master's discretion, there might be a Dragon Egg resting in the Nexus, which one of the character might take with them when they leave. If such an artefact has no place in the ongoing story, the Game Master may leave it out entirely.

The characters are free to leave at any time. They may either climb out the way they came in, or try to find another exit through the cave system. Either way, they will eventually emerge back into the open, and the mannu will have long since fled. The characters may make their way to the monastery.

ARRIVAL

Since they have arrived late, the monks are relieved to see them, having feared the worst. They indicate that the rest of Li Fu Huang's entourage had already arrived, and that the Master will be most grateful that his valet has survived. Den thanks the characters again, and leaves them to rejoin his master.

The characters are allowed to rest and refresh themselves before their audience with Madame Shin. Once this is done, they will each be allowed to converse with her. She will toss I-Ching sticks and read their fortunes. If the Game Master has any long-term goals for the characters, now might be a good time to foreshadow events that you want to occur later.

After the fortune-telling, the characters are shown to small cells where they may sleep.

Change of venue

Any time a character or a mannu is forced back because of a technique or power, their collision with the mountain pass will uncover a tunnel leading deep into the mountain. The mannu seem reluctant to follow the players into the tunnel, so it may be used as shelter if things go poorly for the players.

Master Li

This nobleman is a member of the Hundred Royal Families. He is also a member of a conspiracy to dethrone the Emperor and put a puppet on the Dragon Throne. He is here to see if, in general terms, his ambitions will play out.

Distrusting Chu

Anyone who used skills or powers to determine if Chu is telling the truth get the sense that he is hiding something, although only Witch Sight reveals his true nature.

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THE ATTACK

In the middle of the night, the characters are awakened by loud banging on the door to their cells. When opened, they meet a group of Li Fu Huang's soldiers, who loudly accuse one of the characters of having attacked their master. They are angry, and seek to subdue the party rather than listen to pleas of innocence. They are Lesser Foes, and there are 2 for every character.

Once the guards have been taken care of, the characters are free to move about the monastery. Someone has started a fire, which is spreading through the building. The character may opt to assist in fighting the spread of the blaze, which may be a good chance to use certain Chi powers.

In the confusion, one of the characters spy one of the party, moving away from the site of the blaze, seemingly heading for the door to the monastery. This is the Spectre of Approaching Sorrow, using his Human Seeming power to appear as one of the party. If they try to apprehend the doppelganger, it abruptly turns back into Den Ming Chu, who smirks at them and asserts that they have been a great deal of assistance.

Should the characters attack, Chu's disguise drops, revealing the Spectre of Approaching Sorrow. The Hungry Ghost attacks, focusing on a single character at a time. Since the Spectre is technically another Martial Artist, recall the advice given under Genre-Appropriate Combat. Generally, the fight is a series of one-on-one exchanges between the Spectre and a single other player at a time, rather than all of the party ganging up on him at once.

The Spectre will flee rather than fight to the death, though he is not above killing a player character in order to escape.

AFTERMATH

The fire is eventually put out, and Madame Shin vouches for the characters' story about a shape-shifting ghost being responsible for the attack on Master Li. The nobleman is gracious with characters, and thanks them for the service they had provided. Mentally, he will file away what he knows about them, thinking they may be of use to him during the coup attempt.

THE SLEEPING DRAGON

This really only works if one or more of the characters own or maintain a Chi Nexus. If you wish to use this story seed, consider giving the group as a whole a Nexus over which they have responsibility. This is especially useful if the group will be stationed around a single place, and have most of their adventures are in the area, rather than ranging all over the Empire.

One morning, the characters are heading towards the Chi Nexus in order to do their daily meditations. Once they get within a metre of the Nexus, they see a massive adult dragon, curled up and asleep.

This presents a bit of problem. The dragon is likely too powerful for the group to run off in combat, and will not be happy with them if awakened by them. Indeed, if the group attempts to meditate, despite the dragon, it awakens and informs them that it has taken over this Nexus, and says it will eat them if they do not leave.

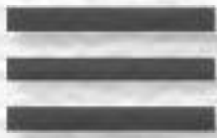
The players can try to simply ignore it. This will deprive them of their Chi Nexus, which they may be all right with if the alternative is to be eaten by a dragon. Unfortunately, the dragon will eventually head out to entertain itself, resulting in havoc in the area. And, if the characters are occupying the Nexus when it returns, it will attack until it has driven them off. Furthermore, the locals will put pressure on the group to do something about the dragon, which may jeopardize their relationships with their neighbours.

If the characters can impress upon the dragon of their need for the Nexus through social skills, they may be able to convince it to leave, but only if they can find it another Chi Nexus nearby. Any such thing is likely to be protected, so it will take some fighting to capture this new Nexus as well. Doing this for the dragon actually impresses it a little. If the characters are careful and polite, they may be able to turn this dangerous situation to their advantage. An ally in the form of a dragon would be potentially very useful.

Conversely, since dragons are spirits, it is technically possible that a powerful player sorcerer could bind it and command it to leave the Chi Nexus. This will work, but it also angers the dragon, earning the characters a potent and imaginative enemy.



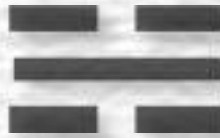
APPENDIX. THE I-CHING



Qian



Zhen



Kan



Gen

THE I-CHING has been a part of Chinese culture for centuries. It has informed nearly every facet of China, and it is fitting that it play a role in the Dragon Lines setting. However, a full discussion of this form of divination would take up much more room than the rest of this book, which is much more detail than is needed for the roleplaying context.

Game Masters who wish to use the I-Ching in their sessions may use the following system to simulate a divination attempt. As with all divination methods, the results are always open to interpretation. This is largely what makes them so useful.

Each use of the I-Ching involves randomly selecting two Trigrams, which are symbols composed of solid lines (yang) and open lines (yin). When taken together, the two Trigrams are considered a Hexagram. Once a Hexagram has been determined, the diviner reads the meaning of that Hexagram and determines what, if anything, the reading means.

The Trigrams

There are eight Trigrams. Each has a number of associated meanings. The most common are found on the table below.

Trigram	Meaning	Image	Direction	Relationship	Body Part	Attribute	Animal
Qian	Creative	Heaven	Northwest	Father	Head	Strong	Dragon
Dui	Joyous	Swamp	West	3rd Daughter	Mouth	Pleasure	Sheep
Li	Clinging	Fire	South	2nd Daughter	Eye	Live-Giving	Pheasant
Zhen	Arousing	Thunder	East	1st Son	Foot	Motion	Horse
Xun	Gentle	Wind	Southeast	1st Daughter	Thigh	Penetrating	Fowl
Kan	Abysmal	Water	North	2nd Son	Ear	Dangerous	Pig
Gen	Keeping Still	Mountain	Northeast	3rd Son	Hand	Resting	Wolf/Dog
Kun	Receptive	Earth	Southwest	Mother	Belly	Devoted	Cow

The Hexagrams

To derive a Hexagram during play, roll two d8s to determine the lower and upper Trigrams on the following table:

d8	1 Qian	2 Zhen	3 Kan	4 Gen	5 Kun	6 Xun	7 Li	8 Dui
1 Qian	01	34	05	26	11	09	14	43
2 Zhen	25	51	03	27	24	42	21	17
3 Kan	06	40	29	04	07	59	64	47
4 Gen	33	62	39	52	15	53	56	31
5 Kun	12	16	08	23	02	20	35	45
6 Xun	44	32	48	18	46	57	50	28
7 Li	13	55	63	22	36	37	30	49
8 Dui	10	54	60	41	19	61	38	58

APPENDIX. THE I-CHING



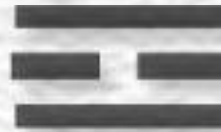
DRAGON LINES



Kun



Xun



Li



Dui

Interpretation of the Hexagram

Once you have determined the number of the Hexagram in question, look it up below and apply the meaning to the situation. The Lower Trigram represents the inner situation (attitudes, beliefs, ideas), while the Upper Trigram Represents the external situation. Taken together, they form the Hexagram, which is how the inner situation is influenced by the external circumstances.

Name	Meaning	Name	Meaning
1. Force	Possessing Creative Power and Skill	33. Retiring	Withdrawing
2. Field	Do Not Force Matters; Go with the Flow	34. Great Invigorating	Great Boldness
3. Sprouting	Difficulty at the Beginning	35. Prospering	Expansion/Promotion
4. Enveloping	Detained, Enveloped, and Inexperienced	36. Brightness Hiding	Brilliance Injured
5. Attending	Uninvolved. Wait for Now	37. Dwelling People	The Family
6. Arguing	Engaging in Conflict	38. Polarising	Division/Divergence
7. Leading	Teamwork. May also mean Army	39. Limping	Halting/Hardship
8. Grouping	Union	40. Taking Apart	Liberation/Solution
9. Small Accumulating	Gathering Resources	41. Diminishing	Decrease
10. Treading	Continuing with Alertness	42. Augmenting	Increase
11. Pervading	Pervading	43. Parting	Separation
12. Obstruction	Stagnation	44. Coupling	Encountering
13. Concurring People	Fellowship, Partnership	45. Clustering	Association/Companionship
14. Great Possessing	Freedom, Independence	46. Ascending	Growing Upward
15. Humbling	Modesty, refraining from action	47. Confining	Exhaustion
16. Providing For	Inducing, New Stimulus	48. Welling	Replenishing/Renewal
17. Following	Following	49. Skinning	Revolution/Abolishing of the Old
18. Corrupting	Work on the Decayed	50. Holding	Establishing the New
19. Nearing	Approaching the Goal; Arriving	51. Shake	Mobilizing
20. Viewing	Contemplation	52. Bound	Immobility
21. Gnawing Bite	Biting Through/Deciding	53. Infiltrating	Auspicious Outlook/Infiltrating
22. Adorning	Embellishing	54. Converting the Maiden	Marriage
23. Stripping	Flaying/Splitting Apart	55. Abounding	Goal Reached/Ambition Achieved
24. Returning	Returning	56. Sojourning	Travel
25. Without Embroiling	Without Rashness/Innocence	57. Ground	Subtle Influence
26. Great Accumulating	Accumulating Wisdom	58. Open	Overt Influence
27. Swallowing	Seeking Nourishment	59. Dispersing	Dispersal
28. Great Exceeding	Great Surpassing	60. Articulating	Discipline
29. Gorge	Darkness/Gorge	61. Center Confirming	Inner Truth/Staying Focused
30. Radiance	Clinging/Attachment	62. Small Exceeding	Small Surpassing
31. Conjoining	Attraction	63. Already Forging	Completion
32. Preserving	Perseverance	64. Not-Yet Forging	Incompletion

B a s i c R o l e p l a y i n g

DRAGON LINES

GUARDIANS OF THE FORBIDDEN CITY

A Martial Artist's power comes from life-giving Chi, which suffuses the land of the Dragon Empire. It is your duty to use your martial skills and amazing Chi powers to protect the Forbidden City from the hungry ghosts, hopping vampires and Foreign Devils who murder and steal from the innocent.

Use an expanded Martial Arts system that is compatible with any Basic Roleplaying game. Characters may employ real-life styles, like boxing or ninjitsu; mystical styles that stem from magic; or design their own styles with the tools provided. There are dozens of styles to choose from, and over one hundred Chi Powers.

Explore the expansive Dragon Empire, where beauty and culture are marred by corruption and decadence. Due to high concentrations of Chi, magical spirits live alongside mortals. Players can choose to be humans, spirits, or something in between.

Reap the rewards of piety: you might become Enlightened, find a position within the Celestial Bureaucracy, or even take a sip from the Elixir of Immortality.

Dragon Lines is a game of high flying action. Characters can wade through hordes of Lesser Foes, and then duel with another Martial Arts masters. You can survive dangers which would slay ordinary mortals. Walk on water, run up walls and along rooftops, and harness the very powers of Heaven to shoot lightning from your fingertips!



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