

FENG SHUI

Action Movie Roleplaying

ATLAS  
GAMESTHE **GUIDING HAND**  
SOURCEBOOKBY **CHRIS PRAMAS**  
WITH **KEITH BAKER**

E X P A N D E D • E D I T I O N



# Credits

## "BLOOD OF THE VALIANT"

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# Table of Contents

Chapter 1	5
<b>History</b>	
Chapter 2	17
<b>Philosophy</b>	
Chapter 3	27
<b>Sites</b>	
Chapter 4	42
<b>Operations</b>	
Chapter 5	55
<b>Personalities</b>	
Chapter 6	66
<b>Campaign Resources</b>	
Chapter 7	85
<b>Critical Shifts</b>	
Chapter 8	102
<b>My Master, My Foe</b>	
Appendix	121
<b>Filmography</b>	

## The Voice in Darkness

Qian Zheng awoke in darkness. When he tried to sit up, white hot pain shot through his head. He lay still for a few moments and then tried again. The pain came again, but, expecting it this time, he fought through it and sat up. A voice in the darkness addressed him, "Very impressive, Qian Zheng. Your will is strong."

He looked into the blackness, squinting in an effort to see who it was that spoke to him. The last thing he remembered was going to bed in his new quarters in Hong Kong. Now he was sitting against a wall – bound he realized – and seemingly at the mercy of this stranger.

"There must be some kind of error," Qian ventured. "Why am I bound?"

"There is no error, Qian Zheng," the voice said. "You are an important member of the Jade Wheel Society and I brought you here to find out the answer to a burning question." The stranger's voice was perfectly calm, and Qian could detect no movement at all. Who was this man?

"If you know that I am a member of the Jade Wheel Society, then you should know I am bound by oaths never to tell its secrets. You can do whatever you wish to me. I will tell you nothing."

There was silence for a moment and then quiet laughter. "What pride you have, Qian Zheng. There is little you could tell me that I don't already know. I know that you work with the British here in Hong Kong and elsewhere. I know that the British have a society such as yours called the Order of the Wheel and that your two groups work closely together. No, there is nothing you can tell me and there is nothing that I will do to you. I am content to watch and wait."

Qian was dumbfounded. How could this man know about the Order of the Wheel? It was a well-kept secret. For that matter, how had he penetrated a compound protected by

British guns and kidnapped him in the first place? And now, after all that, he is content to simply sit here?

"Tell me," began Qian. A fist flew out of the darkness, killing the question on his lips and knocking him unconscious again.

"I will tell you nothing," said the voice in darkness.

Qian woke up again and now it was light. He saw that he was in some kind of cave. The walls were covered with ancient script and paintings. Looking across the cave, he finally saw his adversary. By his robes and bald head, he looked to be a monk. He sat on the floor of the cave in the lotus position, apparently meditating. Qian rolled up to a sitting position and a wave of nausea swept over him. He felt very weak and seemed to have a fever. Every joint and muscle of his body seemed to ache. He could not recall ever feeling worse.

"Monk, what have you done to me? How long have I been here?"

The monk opened his eyes, "To answer your second question, you have been here for three days. As to your first, I have done nothing to you. I only watch and wait."

"Enough with your watch and wait!" he screamed. "I am a member of the Jade Wheel Society! You will release me now or know our wrath!"

"Your threats are quite hollow," the monk said calmly. "No one in your society knows where you've gone. As for my watching and waiting, I think I need only be patient for a little while longer. Can you not guess what is happening to you?"

Qian Zheng's retort remained unsaid. A look of horror crossed over his face.

"Yes," said the monk, "you are correct. This cave is a relic of the ancient days when the vile art of sorcery flourished in China. It's chi has been warped by such practices, but even warped chi can sometimes serve the





# History

*greater good. I needed to prove certain suspicions about those who run the Jade Wheel Society. I can see from the look on your face that I was correct."*

*"Please, take me away from this place," pleaded Qian. "You can't know what you are doing to me."*

*"I know that you have sullied your chi. I know that you have strayed far from your li. You can pretend to be human all you like. Now I know the truth."*

*"Nooooooooo!!!!!!!"*

*The monk watched as Qian Zheng began to change. His body shrank and his skin peeled away. His hands turned into claws and a tail began growing rapidly. As he continued to shrink, a hard shell covered his body. In ten minutes it was all over. The man known as Qian Zheng was gone. Amidst the wreckage of his body scuttled a scorpion.*

*Yung Chang, Shaolin Master of the Guiding Hand, looked down on the scorpion. Focusing his chi, he shot a gout of flame at the animal that once masqueraded as a human. He began to leave the cave, already planning for his long journey. Quan Lo, of course, would have to be notified immediately. At the mouth of the cave, Chang turned and looked at the smoldering remains of the Qian Zheng.*

*"You will poison our world no longer."*

## Intro

China in the 19th century is a country in decline. The Western Powers, kept at bay since the 17th century, have come knocking with opium and gunboats. The Manchu government is wracked with corruption as power cliques compete for the state's resources. Secret Societies like the White Lotus sow rebellion and discord and even bandits prove too much for the Manchu military to deal with. And behind it all, manipulating events from the shadows, are the Ascended. Through their control of the Imperial Court and the Western imperialists, they have taken control of the most potent feng shui sites in all of China. While the transformed animals of the Ascended control these feng shui sites, China is doomed to internal strife and Western domination. Only one group opposes the Ascended in this time: the Guiding Hand. But before looking at the Hand in closer detail, it is necessary to put China into some historical perspective.



# The Manchu Dynasty

The ruling dynasty in 1850 is the Manchu Dynasty, also known as the Qing Dynasty. Like many of China's rulers, the Manchus began as invaders. They swept down from the north in 1644, attacking the weak Ming Dynasty with their crack cavalry. By 1681, the Ming Dynasty had been fully deposed and the Manchus ruled China uninterrupted until 1911. The Manchus were of a different ethnic stock than the Chinese and spoke their own language. They were rightly viewed as outsiders by Chinese beholden of their traditional culture. The Manchus tried to combat their image as outsiders by adopting many standards of the Chinese imperial system, such as the state-sponsored exams that provided the government with its bureaucrats. Landlords who accepted Manchu rule were left in place, thus investing them with a stake in the new

regime. Manchu rulers became great patrons of Chinese art, painting, and literature. While the upper stratum of the government was always in the hands of the Manchu elite, the bureaucracy was full of Chinese products of the state exam system, many in extremely important positions. In short, the Manchus completed their conquest by assimilating to Chinese culture in some fundamental ways. There were always those, however, who never forgot that the Manchus were not true Chinese.

## The Manchus and the West

The first Europeans to have contact with the Chinese were the Portuguese. After a number of overtures, the Portuguese were finally given permission to set up base in Macau in 1557. Jesuit priests arrived with them and, in 1582, were allowed to establish themselves in Zhaoqing, a town near Canton. It was more than a century before the British could strike a similar deal. Finally, the city of Canton was opened to the Westerners (at this point only the Portuguese, French, and British) in 1685. Ships of the British East India company immediately began trading in Canton, although the restrictions placed on foreigners were quite strict. Over the ensuing century, other Western powers also won the right to trade in Canton (the Dutch in 1729, the Danes and Swedes in 1731, and the Americans in 1785).

During the first 200 or so years of trade with the West, China had the upper hand. The Manchus had goods that the Europeans wanted, like tea and

### The Mandate of Heaven

All Chinese Emperors since 1122 BC have claimed to rule because of the Mandate of Heaven. Heaven, one of the principle Chinese deities, gives his blessing to rulers and dynasties. As long as the Emperors reign justly and do not abuse the people, they retain the Mandate of Heaven. However, if they are lax in their duties, Heaven can withdraw his approval and charge a new claimant with the job of ousting the current Emperor and restoring just rule. The Duke of Chou used the Mandate of Heaven to justify the Chou ousting of the Shang in 1122 BC, and the Manchus did the same regarding the Ming in 1644. The concept has been a powerful in Chinese history. While its most obvious use has been the justification of base conquest, it has also provided inspiration for countless rebels throughout history.





silk, and the Europeans were forced to pay for these goods in silver. Canton was considered a backwater and the Europeans themselves barbarians. To limit the effect these foreigners might have on China, many restrictions were placed upon them. First, they could reside in Canton from only September to March. Second, they were restricted to Shamiam Island on the Pearl River. Third, their wives and families had to be left downriver at Macau. Fourth, they were forbidden to learn the Chinese language. Lastly, starting in 1757, they were to only deal with the Co Hong, a Canton merchants' guild that kept their exclusive right via a series of royalties, kickbacks, fees, and bribes.


Needless to say, the Europeans did not like the position they were in and longed to turn the tables on the Chinese. In 1773, the British unloaded 1,000 chests of pure Bengal opium. By the turn of the 19th century, China consumed 2,000 chests of opium a year. The Emperor, concerned about the

money pouring into British coffers and the new legions of addicts, tried to ban the drug trade in 1796. But, thanks to the Co Hong and corrupt Cantonese officials, trade continued. By 1816, the British were importing 5,000 chests of opium of year. Trade was no longer in China's favor. Soon, it would get much worse.

## The Opium War

In 1839 the Emperor decided to eradicate the opium trade once and for all. He appointed a new Commissioner of Canton, a man named Lin Zexu, and ordered him to fix the problem. In less than a week, Lin's troops surrounded the British in Canton, cut off their food supplies, and demanded the surrender of all opium in their possession. The British held out for six weeks, but eventually surrendered. Lin took the 20,000 chests of captured opium and had it publicly destroyed in the Pearl River.





A British expeditionary force arrived in June of 1840 and immediately blockaded Canton. It then sailed north, blockading a number of ports on the Yangtze River and ultimately threatening Beijing itself. The Emperor then sent a man named Qi Shan to negotiate with the British. Qi Shan convinced the British to sail back to Canton and continue talks there. The resultant document, known as the Convention of Chuan Bi, was immediately repudiated by both sides. Further military action followed and a second British force arrived in August of 1841. This fleet sailed north and threatened Nanjing. The Chinese were forced to accept the Treaty of Nanjing, which opened up five ports for the Europeans and ceded the island of Hong Kong to the British in perpetuity. This was the end of the Opium War proper. However, further British military actions in 1856, 1859, and 1898 expanded British territories to include Kowloon and the so-called New Territories. Interestingly, sale of opium continued to be technically illegal in China. In reality, however, there was little to stop the British from continuing their most lucrative business.

# Genesis of the Guiding Hand

The 19th century began in China with an anti-government uprising in full-swing. The White Lotus Rebellion raged from 1795-1804. The White Lotus was a secret society that practiced a form of folk Buddhism. They worshipped a deity known as the Eternal Mother and sought

to revive the Ming Dynasty by ousting the Manchu pretenders. The longevity of the rebellion had more to do with the corruption of the Manchu military than the ferocity of the White Lotus rebels themselves. Once the Emperor found honest commanders for his banners, the rebellion was quickly crushed.

The lessons of the White Lotus Rebellion were not lost on those who watched politics. Amongst these were a group of monks who were concerned about the degeneration of the Empire. These monks, a motley assortment of Buddhists, Taoists, and Neo-Confucians, came together in 1810 to see what they could do to aid China in its time of need. After the bloodshed of the White Lotus Rebellion, they rejected outright rebellion. Instead, they started their own secret society, known as the Guiding Hand, and began to study Chinese life at all levels in the hopes finding a way to reverse China's moral weakness. They quickly determined that the influence of the foreign devils was the root of China's problems, especially in the form of the demon drug opium. If the foreigners could be dealt with, China would once again be a power to be reckoned with.

The Guiding Hand recruited members into a front organization called the Golden Candle Society. Cells of the Golden Candle Society spread throughout Chinese society. They talked to peasants, merchants, bureaucrats, and landholders. They launched initiatives at court, put pressure on the Emperor to resist the foreigners, and even performed covert acts of sabotage against the opium runners. While there were some small victories for the Golden Candle Society, the sweeping changes that they sought proved elusive. Even when the Emperor could be convinced to act against the foreigners, his stands were ineffectual. It was clear that something was deeply wrong.





The Grandmaster of the Guiding Hand during these years was a Buddhist monk named Fung Shin. Although he was determined to reclaim China's lost glory, he was opposed to using violent means to do so. He thought that the cells of the Golden Candle Society could eventually solve the problem, especially through political maneuvering at the Imperial Court. He had the support of the Buddhist wing and of a sizable contingent from the Taoist wing as well. As the years continued to march by with no improvement (in fact, things got worse and worse), there was increasing discontent within the Guiding Hand. Leading the agitators was a young monk named Quan Lo.

## The Rise of Quan Lo

Quan Lo was a Kung Fu master of the Shaolin School. He differed from most Shaolin masters in embracing Neo-Confucianism instead of Buddhism. Nonetheless, he was well-respected in both the Buddhist and Shaolin communities. He had been one of the founding members of the Guiding Hand and had watched the society's failure with growing concern and outspoken criticism. In the early years, he ran the Hand's network of informers in Canton. He did so well in Canton that his responsibilities were increased, and soon he was running networks in all of China's most important cities. In this way, he came to control a great deal of information, and from his point of view the Guiding Hand was accomplishing nothing. He decided to do something about it.

In 1825 the leadership of the Guiding Hand met to celebrate their 15 year anniversary and to make plans for

the future. Quan Lo was asked to address the leadership and inform them of the Hand's progress. At the appointed time, Quan Lo rose up and told the leadership that he would now recite all of the glowing achievements of the Guiding Hand. Once on his feet, he stood in silence for ten minutes and then sat down. This caused quite a stir and was the beginning of Quan Lo's campaign to change the way the Guiding Hand worked. For the next five years, he continued to agitate for a change in tactics. He used his position to control the flow of information throughout the Hand, and continually placed members loyal to him in key positions. Things came to head in 1830 when Fung Shin died and the leadership of the Guiding Hand became vacant. While there were many in the Hand who still believed in Fung Shin's vision, especially the Buddhists, Fung Shin's death had caught everyone off guard. Except, of course, Quan Lo, who had been waiting for such an opportunity. With lightning speed, he organized his followers, called for a meeting of the leadership, and had himself elected Grandmaster before other factions could even coalesce. Change followed swiftly.

Quan Lo's first order of business was to reshape the leadership of the Guiding Hand. Over the following five years, he stripped some members of the responsibilities, transferred others to remote areas, and kicked some down to the Golden Candle Society. Meanwhile, he continued to appoint his own people to important positions. What this amounted to was a mass purging of the leadership that got rid of all the Buddhists and Taoists in important positions. From then on, the leadership of the Hand was to be strictly Neo-Confucian.

### The Next Step

Unlike most members of Guiding Hand, Quan Lo had studied the art of geomancy. While other members had scoffed at his superstition, Quan Lo secretly sent out his Shaolin students to investigate China's most potent feng shui sites. Time and again, his students found the same thing. The sites were either controlled by foreigners, Chinese allies of the foreigners, or a native secret society known as the Jade Wheel. Once he had completed his restructuring of the Guiding Hand, Quan Lo instituted a new strategy. There were to be no more diplomatic initiatives, and no more begging the Emperor to do the right thing. Now the Guiding Hand would liberate the feng shui sites from the foreigners and remake China as it had been.

Or so Quan Lo thought, anyway. He spent the next five years fighting a protracted military campaign. He sent out many groups of Shaolin warriors under the command of a Shaolin Master named Lui Man Wai. Unfortunately, Quan Lo found that while his kung fu fighters could take feng shui sites, they could not hold them against the army. It also proved impossible to take sites through intrigue. The resources of the foreign devils and the Jade Wheel Society seemed inexhaustible. This point was hammered home with startling ferocity in 1839, when an entire Manchu army descended on Quan Lo's Shaolin school and razed it to the ground. Many of his students were killed and Quan Lo himself barely escaped with his life. Clearly the Jade Wheel Society was more potent than even Quan Lo had thought. What was their secret? Quan Lo swore to find out.

### The Horrible Truth

When it became clear Quan Lo's Shaolin warriors could not liberate China alone, the Guiding Hand changed its tactics. Quan Lo sent his agents to investigate the Jade Wheel Society and the foreigners. What they discovered was almost too fantastic to believe. The secret masters of the Jade Wheel Society were all transformed animals. These animals, known as the Ascended, controlled all of the most powerful feng shui sites in China. They also had a brother organization amongst the foreigners called the Order of the Wheel. Together the two groups sought to colonize the rest of the world and industrialize it as quickly as possible. Only then would the Ascended be safe from the return of the magic that would undo them.

As if that revelation were not enough, Quan Lo's operatives stumbled across gateways to the Netherworld only a year later. Teams of warriors were sent through and what they discovered in other times was even worse. Confucian values were all but destroyed by communism and capitalism in the modern era, and an authoritarian world state kept in power by the unholy fusion of magic and technology ruled in the far future. It was clear that ejecting the foreigners from China was not enough. The entire time stream needed to be altered so that the world would enter a golden age of Confucian values and justice. Quan Lo had his work cut out for him.

The first thing needed was a safe base of operations. In 1844 construction began on two important Hand centers: the Temple of Boundless Meditation and the Temple of the Shaolin Dragon. The Temple of Boundless Meditation was shaped in the Netherworld around a gateway that led to 1844. The Temple of the





Shaolin Dragon, which was to be Quan Lo's secret headquarters, was constructed on the other end of the gateway. To protect the new temple from the fate of his old school, Quan Lo decreed that all travel to the Temple of the Shaolin Dragon was to be done via the Netherworld. Thus, as long as the Temple of Boundless Meditation remained standing, the Temple of the Shaolin Dragon would be safe.

Meanwhile, Quan Lo targeted the contemporary juncture as a promising sphere of activity. From what his agents reported, this era was lawless and chaotic and the Ascended who ruled there jaded and lazy. He decided to pursue a long range plan that aimed for ultimate victory in the future. To that end, operatives began to recruit members of families who would later become prominent into the Guiding Hand or the Golden Candle Society. After five years of such recruitment, the Hand had a solid base of agents in the contemporary juncture, many of them members of the communist bureaucracy. This, however, led to a new set of problems.

According to history, Quan Lo died in 1901, just as the Boxer Rebellion was being crushed, at the age of 111. After his death, leadership of the Hand passed to other Grandmasters, who tried to carry on his work. The upshot of this was that the Hand developed for over ninety years without Quan Lo in command. Many of the Grandmasters tried to pursue their own goals and this sometimes led to disaster. More importantly, the contemporary leadership of the Hand was used to being in charge of the whole operation. When Quan Lo's agents began to appear and give the contemporary leadership orders, friction developed. The Grandmaster at this time, Ho Shen, felt that the contemporary juncture should be left to him because he understood it in a way that Quan Lo never could. Quan Lo

felt it was not Ho Shen's place to question him and that he knew as much about the modern world he needed to. They particularly disagreed about what to do about America. Ho Shen advocated infiltrating America, since it was a stronghold of the Ascended, while Quan Lo continued to feel that only China mattered. In the end, Quan Lo ordered Ho Shen to go to America and begin operations there, effectively exiling him and giving him what he wanted at the same time. Ho Shen did as he was ordered, taking many of his best agents with him.

On Quan Lo's orders, the Hand and Golden Candle agents in the communist bureaucracy began to agitate behind the scenes to strip away some feng shui sites from the Ascended. Their main foes were Jade Wheel agents in the same bureaucracy. So far the Hand has had a fair amount of success with these backroom tactics, winning quite a few sites on mainland China. They have had less success in Hong Kong, but hope to change this now that it is back in China's hands.

## The Real Enemy

Two years ago, a new faction joined the Secret War. Gateways suddenly opened up all over China in 69 AD, a time when evil eunuch sorcerers enthralled the Emperor and ruled China by terror. Like all the other factions, Quan Lo sent agents back in time to investigate this new juncture. When reports came back, Quan Lo knew that he had found the missing piece of a puzzle that had been bothering him for many years.

According to Chu Hsi, a Neo-Confucian philosopher venerated amongst the Guiding Hand, the Sage-Kings of Antiquity knew a secret doctrine

that was the key to good government. Quan Lo believed that he had discovered this doctrine when he uncovered the importance of feng shui sites. He had never understood, however, how the Emperors had lost this secret and who was responsible for the state of the world. When his agents came back from 69 AD, however, he finally knew. It must have been the Eaters of the Lotus, those corrupt eunuchs, who had stolen the secret doctrine and used it to bring magic back into the world and to begin a corruption of China that would lead to the Ascended and eventually the Architects of the Flesh.

For the last time, Quan Lo changed his plans. Although he would continue operations in 1850 and the contemporary juncture, for there was much to gain in both times, he began to craft a plan to wipe out the Eaters of the Lotus and reshape history as it should have been. The Ascended and the Architects would be erased from history and the glory times of the Sage-kings would come again to China.

## Timeline of the Guiding Hand

- |           |  |           |   |
|-----------|--|-----------|---|
| 1810      | Guiding Hand founded by Buddhist, Taoist, and Neo-Confucian monks. | 1825      | Quan Lo delivers his famous "silent speech" and begins organizing his own faction.                                  |
| 1810-1830 | Fung Shin, first Grandmaster, runs the Guiding Hand.               | 1830      | Fung Shin dies. Quan Lo quickly gets himself elected to be the new Grandmaster.                                     |
|           |  | 1830-1835 | Quan Lo effectively purges the Guiding Hand leadership of non Neo-Confucians  |
|           |  | 1835-1840 | Guiding Hand assaults on Jade Wheel Society feng shui sites lead by Lui Man Wai. This campaign is a dismal failure. |
|           |  | 1839      | Quan Lo's Shaolin school destroyed by Manchu army. Opium War begins.  |
|           |  | 1842      | Yung Chang discovers that the Ascended are really transformed animals.  |
|           |  | 1843      | Hand agents discover the Netherworld and travel to the future.  |
|           |  | 1843-1850 | Ancestors program gives the Hand a large cadre of followers in the contemporary juncture.                           |
|           |  | 1844      | Temple of Boundless Meditation and Temple of the Shaolin Dragon constructed.  |
|           |  | 1847      | Climax of disagreement between Quan Lo and Ho Shen. Ho exiled to America.   |
|           |  | 1848      | Eaters of the Lotus enter the Secret War.   |
|           |  | 1850      | Present   |





## Anatomy of the Hand

Quan Lo modeled the organization of the Guiding Hand on that of the Shaolin Temple. Indeed, most Guiding Hand training centers are Shaolin Temples, so this is no coincidence. The lowest level of the Guiding Hand is that of student. Students, who can be male or female, are recruited by Hand operatives on the lookout for promising candidates. If the recruits are amenable, they are blindfolded and taken to the nearest training center. This journey, which can sometimes last for weeks, is the first test of the potential student's discipline. Those who take off the blindfold for any reason are not given a second chance. Once they make it to the Shaolin Temple, they are considered to be students. There they will study Quan Lo's Shaolin philosophy and medicine for between two and four years, depending on the aptitude of the student. They are also expected to perform all the menial tasks that are required at the temple (cooking, cleaning, etc.). Doing these tasks without complaint builds discipline and teaches the students to follow orders.

Students who successfully complete their studies graduate to discipleship. Now they learn martial arts for the first time. They are expected to pick one or more styles of martial arts and strive to master them. They are expected to live by the Shaolin precepts they learned as students. They also continue their studies of the Confucian classics, medicine, and other arts. Discipleship also usually lasts from two to four years.


When disciples demonstrate mastery of Neo-Confucian philosophy and one

or more martial arts, they become Masters. Masters are full monks of the temple and are expected to help teach both students and disciples. At this point, they are also initiated into the full knowledge of Guiding Hand, learning about the Ascended, the importance of feng shui sites, and the Secret War. The Masters are the principle operatives of the Guiding Hand. They are generally ranked by age, elder Masters being considered wiser in the ways of the world. Above all the Masters stands Quan Lo, the Perfect Master, the true leader of the Guiding Hand.

Quan Lo hands out assignments to those he considers fit for the job. Each Master has complete autonomy while working on a particular project and can requisition whatever operatives and supplies are needed. In the unlikely case of a dispute between two Masters, the younger Master is expected to defer to the elder. Quan Lo keeps a close eye on all Hand operations but only intervenes if the situation is critical. Hand operatives cannot expect that he will rescue them from any trouble they might get themselves into. Were he to act that way, it would encourage sloppy thinking and imprudent action.

## Discipline

The Guiding Hand follows strict Confucian rules of propriety. Members of all levels are expected to be courteous and humble at all times. Rudeness or poor humor are cause for punishment, as are violations of the temple rules. Punishment is meted out by the Masters, or rarely by Quan Lo himself, and are quite individual. One Master may make impudent students clean the latrines for a month, while another may make the students smash ten bricks



over their heads. The only certainty is that impropriety will be swiftly and severely punished.

### **The Golden Candle Society**

The Golden Candle Society still exists, and basically acts as a front organization for the Guiding Hand. Unlike the Hand itself, it is open to people who are not Neo-Confucian but still oppose the foreigners and the Manchus. Hand members watch Golden Candle cells and recruit heavily from those who have proved themselves. Extremely effective and dedicated members are occasionally invited to join the Guiding Hand without going to a Temple for training. Generally, these are people whose talents do not lie in the area of martial arts (especially spies) or older people with established places in society. Recruiting a government bureaucrat would not be much of a coup if he then had to give up his post and train in secret for four years. Those people, however, are rare. Most members of the Golden Candle Society do not know that they are puppets of a yet more secret organization. And Quan Lo intends to keep it that way.

### **Forms of Address in the Guiding Hand**

Courtesy and ceremony are very important in the Confucian tradition. Guiding Hand members must at all times show proper respect in addressing other members. Generally, other members of the same level are addressed as brother or sister, those of a lower level as niece or nephew, and those of a greater level as Aunt or Uncle. Strict teachers sometimes insist that their students call them Master at all times. Quan Lo is addressed as either Grandfather or Perfect Master.

### **Hand Members in Other Junctures**

Due to the Ancestors Operation (see Chapter 4), there are now members of the Hand who were born into the organization. These members, primarily in the modern juncture, are the descendants of people who were recruited in the 1850s. They were usually trained by their parents, or other members of their parents' cell. Due to the nature of time travel, the actual number of Hand devotees in the modern era is unknown. It is entirely likely that cells exist in distant parts of China and even America that have fallen out of contact with the Hand leadership and still await orders. It is even possible that some exist in the bleak future of the Architects of the Flesh, but so far none have been contacted.





## The Origins of Shaolin

The Shaolin Temple was built in 495 on Songshan Mountain in the Henan Province. It took its name from the forest that had recently been planted in the area (Shaolin means "new forest"). The original job of the Shaolin monks was to translate Buddhist texts into Chinese for the ruling dynasty. In the early Sixth century, a famous Indian monk named Boddhidharma visited the temple and was appalled by the physical condition of the monks there, some of whom were said to fall asleep at their translation desks. Boddhidharma offered to help the Shaolin monks, but at first they would not have him. He retreated to a cave on Songshan Mountain and spent nine years staring at a wall in meditation. So great was his chi that he reputedly drilled a hole in the wall with his piercing gaze. The Shaolin monks were mightily impressed and Boddhidharma was at last invited into the temple.

Once ensconced in the temple, Boddhidharma taught the monks a series of exercises to keep them fit. These routines are said to be the origin of kung fu. Future generations of Shaolin monks refined the art of kung fu and they soon developed legendary prowess. In the early Seventh century a group of 13 Shaolin monks saved future Tang Emperor Li Shimin by defeating a huge force of government troops and breaking him out of prison. When Li became emperor, the Shaolin were well-rewarded.

The involvement of the Shaolin monks in politics was to prove their undoing. Often a center of rebellion, the Shaolin Temple made the mistake of supporting the Ming after their deposition by the Qing. The temple was attacked and destroyed by a Manchu army in 1735 and the surviving monks scattered across China. These wandering monks helped to spread kung fu all over China and develop the Northern and Southern styles. The Guiding Hand spring from the Shaolin tradition, but differ from most Shaolin in that they practice Neo-Confucianism rather than Buddhism.

## Death of a Legend

The Shaolin Temple was eventually rebuilt but has suffered repeated ignominies. The 20th century in particular has been a time of trial. After surviving revolution, civil war, and Japanese invasion, the Shaolin Temple was finally forced to yield to the millions strong Red Guard during the Cultural Revolution. Guiding Hand bureaucrats in the Communist Party could do nothing to stop the flood of the revolutionary fervor that Chairman Mao had unleashed, and the Shaolin Temple was shut down in 1968.

Once the Cultural Revolution had run its course, Hand agents did have their revenge, however. They made sure that all the guilty Red Guards were declared counter-revolutionary and sent to remote locations for "political re-education." They were not strong enough, however, to prevent the Ascended from keeping the temple's doors firmly shut.

The 1970s saw a revival of the Shaolin Temple, this time on celluloid. Shaolin monks became the heroes of dozens of chopsocky flicks, most by the Shaw Brothers. The popularity of these films did not go unnoticed by the more savvy members of the Lodge, so they financed a movie of their own to be shot at the Shaolin Temple itself. The film was a huge success and launched the career of wu shu champion turned actor Jet Li. More importantly, the Lodge discovered the power of the Shaolin myth and decided to use it for their own ends.

So it was that the Shaolin Temple opened again, but not as a power base for the Guiding Hand. The temple, firmly under Ascended control and lead by a Transformed Fox martial arts master, became a tourist attraction of the worst kind. Now wide-eyed spectators can enter the 360 degree movie theater and experience what it's like to be attacked by monks from all sides. Sacred Songshan Mountain hosts a shooting range, where tourists can snipe with airguns at targets suspended over a ravine. And in Qufu, nearby hometown of Confucius, shops sell Shaolin Kung Fu chewing gum. Amidst the wreckage of communist hegemony and capitalist enterprise, the Shaolin Temple twists in the wind.



### A New Direction

Quan Lo sat in the great hall of the Temple of the Shaolin Dragon. Around him sat his most trusted advisors. Considering the news he had just given them, they were well-composed. Li Chung So, one of the younger masters in the room, was speaking. "Perfect Master, I do not understand your desire to change the focus of our great work. Surely, it is the animals of the Ascended who are our greatest foes. Why waste our energies on a gaggle of eunuchs in the past? I do not see what is to be gained."

"Nephew," began Quan Lo, "perhaps I have not been clear. Let me begin again."

"Yes, Grandfather."

Quan Lo cleared his throat. "We are the inheritors of an ancient tradition. Our wisdom goes all the way back to the Sage-Kings of Antiquity, who ruled China in the golden age that we strive to achieve again. Their wisdom passed down through the Duke of Chou to Confucius to Chu Hsi and finally to us. It is clear even to the lowliest peasant, however, that our world continues to decay. And what has caused this degeneracy? The Ascended are a symptom but they are not the root of the disease. No, the root lies deeper."

He stopped to take a sip of wine. None of what he was saying was anything new to a group of his Shaolin masters, yet they sat attentively as if he was dispensing the wisdom of the ages. He hoped his lesson was not being lost on Li Chung So.

"Chu Hsi, the Sung Master, tells us that the Sage-Kings knew a secret doctrine that allowed them to rule justly and properly. We also know that his doctrine was lost for many years, until I rediscovered the importance of feng shui. I used to wonder how the Emperors had lost this doctrine. Recently, however, it became clear to me. When reports came back from the new juncture in ancient China, I suddenly knew. Gao Zhang and his eunuchs had stolen the secret doc-

trine from the Emperors and sullied it with their magic and their evil."

He paused and looked at Li Chung So. "I will concede to one of your points, nephew. Our struggle now and in the 1990's is going well and we are stronger than ever before. We could continue our struggle against the Ascended and certainly defeat them, just as they defeated the Four Monarchs. Even if we did win that great victory, however, the Eaters of the Lotus would still control the past. Our past. No, curing one symptom will not do. We must get at the root of the infection, and its name is Gao Zhang."

There were murmurs of agreement around the table. Leung Mui looked particularly pleased. Quan Lo continued. "Lastly, I would like you to consider the Netherworld. A strange place indeed, and one mentioned nowhere in the Confucian classics. From that, we can deduce that the Netherworld did not exist in the days of Confucius or in the days of the Sage-Kings before him. And why didn't it exist? Because the ancients had no need for time travel. And why didn't they need time travel? Because they lived in a golden age of virtue and justice. We, however, are not so fortunate. Our China is threatened by foreigners, debilitated by opium, and ruled by animals. We need time travel to set things right. To find the root of China's sickness and cut it away. To remake China as it should have been, had not Gao Zhang and his eunuchs stolen what did not belong to them!"

Quan Lo found himself standing with both fists clenched. He relaxed himself and sat down again. "Nephew, do you see now why destroying the Eaters of the Lotus must be our first priority?"

Li Chung So bowed his head. "Yes, Perfect Master. I am as a blind man before you."

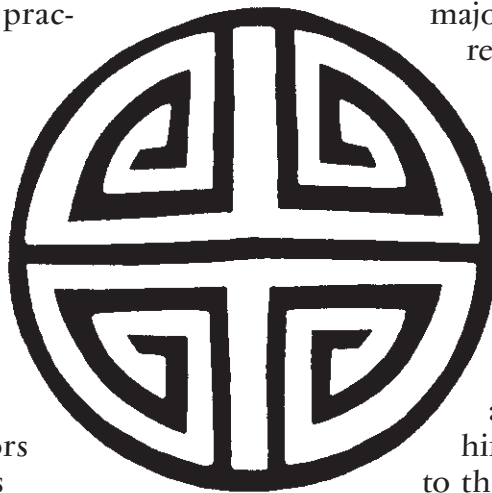
Quan Lo smiled. He could see that his lecture had not been wasted.



# Philosophy

## Intro


More than any other faction of the Secret War, the Guiding Hand is driven by philosophy. Quan Lo sees himself as the product of 3,000 years of philosophical development and his Shaolin students study the Confucian classics as ardently as they practice martial arts. For them, the Secret War is about more than power or feng shui sites. It is about establishing the Confucian Way in all junctures so the world can enter a golden age of virtue and justice. The faith that inspires the warriors of the Guiding Hand is nearly religious in quality. No attempt to understand what motivates the Guiding Hand would be complete without reckoning with their brand of Neo-Confucianism.



## The Three Masters

The Guiding Hand venerate three sages above all others. First, there is Confucius himself. Since he is a major figure in world history, he requires little introduction.

Second, there is Chu Hsi, a 12th century philosopher who helped found the Neo-Confucian school of thought. His brilliant commentaries on the works of Confucius became standard texts for all later Confucian scholars. Lastly, there is Quan Lo himself. His own contribution to the Neo-Confucian canon is the Six Principles of Light. These principles form the basis of Guiding Hand training. Together, the philosophy of the Three Masters offers a coherent and inspirational doctrine that gives the



Guiding Hand its moral strength. To truly understand the Guiding Hand, it is necessary to study the contributions of each sage and how Quan Lo combined them into his own form of Neo-Confucianism.

### Confucius: The Master

Confucius lived in the 6th century BC. At that time, China was divided into many feuding states. The rulers of these myriad states each had dreams of reuniting China under their rule. Consequently, warfare was frequent and life was often hard for the common people. Confucius found this situation appalling and longed for a return to the values of the Sage-Kings of Antiquity (see sidebar). His philosophy was designed make society just and peaceful. Although he had little success during his lifetime, his teachings became more influential than any other philosopher in Chinese — and perhaps world — history.

Confucius exhorted all men to follow the Way. The goal of the Way was happiness in this life for all mankind. The means of the Way included an ethical sys-

tem for the individual and a system of government that ensured the well-being and self-realization of every human being. Since it was in the nature of all human beings to desire happiness, Confucius saw no reason that everyone shouldn't be allowed to be happy. Unfortunately, most people were not happy due to warfare, starvation, greedy aristocrats, and bad government.

The ethical system described by Confucius for the individual was based on virtue, honesty, justice, truth, and courtesy. By striving to live by these ideals and pursuing education and understanding, anyone could become a gentlemen. In all these pursuits, the idea was not just to better the self, but in so doing to better society. Confucius said, "The truly virtuous man, desiring to be established himself, seeks to establish others; desiring success for himself, he strives to help others succeed. To find in the wishes of one's own heart the principle for his conduct towards others is the method of true virtue."

Achieving good government was a particularly thorny problem for Confucius. In his mind, it was clear that bad government was caused by

### The Superior Man

In his *Analects*, Confucius talks a great deal about the superior man, who can be identified as the exemplar of Confucian values. He gives much advice on how to become a superior man, and this advice contains the core of his system of individual ethics. Over two millennia later, the Guiding Hand still live by these words:

"The superior man does not, even for the space of a single meal, act contrary to virtue. In moments of haste, he cleaves to it. In seasons of danger, he cleaves to it."

"The superior man thinks of virtue; the small man thinks of comfort. The superior man thinks of the sanctions of the law; the small man thinks of favors which he may receive."

"The mind of the superior man is conversant with righteousness; the mind of the mean man is conversant with gain."

"The superior man is satisfied and composed; the mean man is always full of distress."

"The superior man has neither anxiety nor fear."

"The superior man is modest in his speech but exceeds in his actions."

"The superior man in everything considers righteousness to be essential. He performs it according to the rules of propriety. He brings it forth in humility. He completes it with sincerity. This is indeed a superior man."





## The Sage-Kings of Antiquity

There is a great deal of folklore surrounding the original Emperors of China. Although there is no historical record of these men at all, they are said to have ruled China in the third millennium BC. These three, Yao, Shun, and Yu, are known as the Sage-Kings of Antiquity and they are credited with many of the virtuous practices later promoted by Confucius and his disciples. Confucius talks a great deal about Yu in his *Analects*, although he did not rely solely on the idea of precedent for the advancement of his ideas. Nonetheless, the idea of restoring the practices of the mighty rulers of a bygone era continued to have an appeal to the Chinese mind, and later Confucians especially ascribed their own ideals to the Sage-Kings and argued that they passed down from the Sage-Kings to the Duke of Chou and then to Confucius. Foremost of these ideas was that the Sage-Kings were not born into their offices. They earned them by their virtue and found worthy successors when their reigns were done. The evil and corruption of many Emperors over the years was explained by the fact that they no longer followed the example of the Sage-Kings.

rulers who inherited their position. Of these men, he said, "It is difficult to expect anything from men who stuff themselves with food the whole day, while never using their minds in any way at all. Even gamblers do something, and to that degree are better than these idlers." In an ideal world, he believed that rulers should earn their place through study and hard work, and that anyone, no matter what their birth, could aspire to be the Emperor. However, he realized that he would not convince the nobles to give up their position merely by asking. Instead, he proposed that educated men do the work of running the government for the nobles. These men, advisors and bureaucrats, would be specially trained to provide good government for the people.

Some of the students of Confucius did achieve powerful positions in the courts of some nobles of the day. By and large, however, Confucius was ignored in his own time. Later, however, his ideas were adopted by the Emperor Wu and civil service exams based on merit only were held to fill the government bureaucracy. These exams were adopted by every dynasty from the Han to the Manchu and only ended in 1911 when China plunged into civil war.

## Chu Hsi: The Sung Master

Chu Hsi lived in the 12th century AD and was the leader of one of the two prominent factions of Sung Dynasty Neo-Confucianism. Widely regarded as the most influential Chinese philosopher of the last thousand years, Chu Hsi introduced many new ideas into Confucian doctrine. His commentaries on the works of Confucius became a standard part of the education of Chinese scholars, although there were always those who attacked his point of view. In particular, he was accused of corrupting Confucianism with Buddhist ideas. While some of his ideas do strike a very similar chord to Zen Buddhism, it is unfair to say that his Neo-Confucianism is Buddhism with a rational face.

The primary component of Chu Hsi's philosophical system was the concept of *li* and its relationship with *chi*. He affirmed that all existent things are made up of *li* and *chi*. *Li* are the principles, the unchanging and indestructible principles, that define everything. Man's nature is his *li* and in this all men are the same. What makes them different is their *chi*. If a man is foolish and degenerate, his *chi* clouds the true nature of his *li*. To recapture his original nature, he must get rid

of his cloudy *chi*. Chu Hsi compares this process to hunting for a pearl (*li*) in muddy water (*chi*). He can do this by pursuing the four fundamental virtues of benevolence, righteousness, courtesy, and wisdom. This view maintains that man's nature is inherently good and that the four fundamental virtues are part of man's *li*.

It is not just living things like animals and men that have *li*, however. Relationships and objects also have *li*. Leaves and flowers are different, he asserted, because their *chi* is governed by different *li*. More importantly, government also had *li*. Chu Hsi maintained that there was an ideal form of government. When government was true to its *li*, it was good; when it strayed, it was bad. True rulers, he said, should extend their knowledge until they become sages. He claimed that the Sage-Kings of Antiquity had handed down a doctrine that explained how to be a proper ruler, but that the Emperors of the previous 1500 years had ignored it because they had been fettered to human desire.

Chu Hsi did not limit himself strictly to the ideas of *li* and *chi*. Like Confucius, Chu Hsi was an uncompromising moralist. To gain moral understanding, Chu Hsi advocated extending knowledge through "the investigation of things." Simply meditating on the nature of reality cannot unlock its secrets, he asserted. Continued investigation and analysis are required. "When one has worked at this for a long time," he wrote, "a day will dawn when suddenly everything will become clear...and the mind and its operations will be completely enlightened." While this goal of enlightenment is similar to that of Buddhism, its means of attainment is purely Confucian.

## Quan Lo: The Perfect Master

Quan Lo began as a simple monk of the Shaolin School. Although his master was a Buddhist, Quan Lo embraced Neo-Confucianism, considering it to be more Chinese than the foreign doctrine of Buddhism. Having renounced the doctrine of his home temple, Quan Lo began to wander and sought understanding by the investigation of things, as Chu Hsi had taught. What he saw on his travels concerned him greatly and he decided to found his own Shaolin school to help fight all that was wrong with China. Over the years, he had developed his own ideas about Neo-Confucianism and martial arts and now, within the confines of his school, he had the time and means to implement them. The result was Quan Lo's lasting contribution to Neo-Confucianism: the Six Principles of Light.

The great innovation of the Six Principles is that they combine moral teaching, practical advice, and martial arts theory into one. They do not, however, replace the wisdom of Confucius, Chu Hsi, and other Confucian scholars; they supplement it. They also offer a disciplined and structured way for students to learn both philosophy and martial arts. What follows are the Six Principles and some comments on their meaning.

*The Orange Principle, the Principle of Diversity:* "The Crane flies across the mountains, over streams, through heavens. The elements are diverse; the Crane's wisdom furthers."

The Orange Principle is based on the Confucian idea of the "investigation of things." Although studying the Confucian classics is important, not all knowledge is contained in books. Confucius himself





suggested the following: "To hear much, select what is good, and follow it; to see much and remember it, these are the steps by which understanding is attained."

*The Green Principle, the Principle of Resistance:* "The Turtle knows who he is. The Turtle's shell knows what it is. He resists impure influence. Perseverance furthers."

While the investigation of things is important, having the wisdom to decide what is good is even more important. The Green Principle teaches strength of mind and body. Students of the Green Principle center themselves with the four fundamental virtues of benevolence, righteousness, courtesy, and wisdom. Once centered, they cannot be moved.

*The Red Principle, the Principle of Movement:* "The Tiger crouches, full of energy and stillness. When the prey approaches, stillness becomes action: the


Tiger strikes. The Superior Man knows when to act, and — with knowledge as his teeth and claws — does not hesitate."

The Red Principle is the principle of informed action. Action for action's sake leads to disaster. Once again "the investigation of things" is stressed, although this time as a preface to action. The Red Principle teaches patience, precision, and ferocity. It is not to be underestimated.

*The Blue Principle, the Principle of Obscurement:* "The Rat's home is shadow. The Rat's palanquin is fog. To sow confusion in the enemy is to reap good fortune."

The Blue Principle is an important one in the Secret War. It teaches guile and subterfuge and is the guiding principle of the Hand's undercover agents. Only the strong of will can learn the Principle of Obscurement because its use involves many moral dangers. The core values of Neo-Confucianism can never be





forgotten or the practitioner will truly become a liar and scoundrel. Although dangerous, its use is necessary for the Hand to survive.

*The Violet Principle, the Principle of Reversal:* "The Fox overturns the bowl of water, transforms hunter into hunted, uses the strength of the bully against him. A victory for the tyrant contains the seeds of the tyrant's destruction. Feed the Fox his wine, but do not trust him."

The Violet principle teaches that strength can be found in adversity. The hubris of the enemy is something to be exploited and also a danger to be avoided. It also teaches that sometimes there is wisdom in flight. Of what use is self-sacrifice if you cannot fight another day?

*The Yellow Principle, the Principle of Redirection:* "The Monkey capers, at the last moment seizing the incoming spear. He adds the spear to the fruit he juggles. He throws the spear at the spear thrower, piercing his armor. The superior man is resilient."

The Yellow Principle teaches the value of playing the fool. Practitioners occupy the attention of their enemies with stunts and ploys, pulling their gaze from the true threat. Although he might act like a fool, the practitioner of the Yellow Principle keeps a strong mind and knows when the game ends and reality begins.

*The White Principle, the Principle of Principles, the Six Principles Combined Into One:* "Crane, Turtle, and Tiger; Rat, Fox, and Monkey. Together they join to become the Dragon, to breathe death upon the enemy. Good fortune."

Those who master all of the Six Principles then learn to combine them into the frightening unity of the Dragon. Masters of the White Principle have attained true wisdom and knowledge.

They know the proper principle to apply to every situation. They are the heart and spirit of the Guiding Hand.

# The Three As One: The Hand's View of the World

Quan Lo has combined his own ideas, those of his Confucian predecessors, and the knowledge he has gleaned about the Secret War. His analysis of his world, the timestream, and the Secret War is comprehensive and somewhat grim. Nonetheless, there is hope for those who follow the ancient ways.

According to Quan Lo, the world was once as one. There was no Netherworld, no time travel, and no Secret War. These were the days of the Sage-Kings of Antiquity. When they ruled China, all was right with the world. Men were judged by their merit, all worked for the greater good, and courtesy and justice prevailed. The chi of the Emperors was pure and the true *li* of government was known in the world.

Sadly, this era passed. Greed came to the court of the Emperors, who began to care more about their own wealth than those they served. The Duke of Chou briefly reversed this policy, once again establishing peace and justice in China. Again, however, the government degenerated. Eventually, China split into many smaller kingdoms and it was during these years that Confucius lived and taught. He sought to revive the ancient teachings of the





Sage-Kings and the Duke of Chou. Although he could not alone unite China, his writings and teachings were made a part of China forever.

Confucius, however, lacked a fundamental secret of the Sage-Kings of Antiquity. This secret doctrine, which had only been passed down from Emperor to Emperor, explained how to be a true ruler and achieve the true *li* of government. Unfortunately, this doctrine passed into the hands of corrupt and greedy individuals. The Sage-Kings knew that good government and good life for the people could only be achieved by controlling all of the most powerful feng shui sites in China. In the early part of the 1st century AD, the degenerate eunuchs who ran the government learned this secret and used it to remake China according to their own infernal vision. Magic, a corruption of chi banished by the Sage-Kings long ago, came once again into the world, as did demons to serve the eunuch sorcerers who held China in thrall. The true *li* of government has not been known since.



Eventually, the eunuchs were chased from power in their own juncture. Magic, however, stayed in the world, a continuing corrupting influence. This led to the rise of the Four Monarchs. If the Monarchs can be believed, they once ruled the earth. However, they were driven from power by a new enemy: the Ascended. These animals in human form did the service of banishing magic from the world again, but they quickly established their own rule. These creatures, who twist their chi and make a mockery of their *li*, have been responsible for the evils of industrialization, capitalism, and communism. Their depredations have twisted the world's chi so badly, that the earth itself responded by creating the Netherworld. The Netherworld exists to allow time travel, and time

travel exists to allow servants of the Confucian Way to restore the world's chi and bring it into harmony with its *li*. The Architects of the Flesh, who rule the future with the twin jackboots of science and magic, only reinforce the point. The longer the world strays from the true path, the worse it will get.



### The Other Factions in the Eyes of the Guiding Hand

The Guiding Hand naturally sees itself as the only pure faction in the Secret War. Only they look to return the world to the Confucian golden age not known since the Sage-Kings ruled China. Their views of the other factions are summarized below.

#### The Architects of the Flesh

The future ruled by these mad tyrants is truly a nightmare. Magic and technology, each bad enough individually, have been combined with unnatural results. The chi flow of the entire planet has been warped and the world has strayed farther from its *li* here than in any other juncture. While the society of the Architects is an orderly one, it is an order based on repression, conformity, and cruelty. The abominations, horrific children of science and magic, are the means by which the Buro maintains its order. The Architects must be prevented from establishing footholds in any other juncture. Furthermore, the timestream must be altered so that this terrible future is completely washed away in a flood of purifying chi.

#### The Ascended

The Ascended have done an excellent job at ruining the world. This is not surprising considering that they are merely animals. They can deny their *li*, but they can never escape from it. They

were animals once and they will be animals again. Unfortunately, the Ascended are firmly entrenched in two junctures and this makes them formidable opponents. Until two years ago, when the Eaters of the Lotus entered the Secret War and showed themselves to be the true root of all that was wrong with China, all Hand operations were directed against the Ascended. Now they remain an immediate concern, but rank second behind the Eaters of the Lotus as enemies of the Hand.

#### The Dragons

Of all the factions, the Dragons are the only ones the Hand would even consider allying with. They have good impulses, but their chi is unfocused. They are also far too beholden of the secular humanism of the 20th century. They lack discipline and obedience and think that they can rely on their guns to carry the day. Someday they will learn what true justice is.

#### Eaters of the Lotus

These foul sorcerers have sullied the secret doctrine of the Sage-Kings. They have used the knowledge granted by the ancients to bring magic and demons back into the world. They have made a mockery of the Emperor and of China itself. They also have the advantage of occupying the high ground of the timestream. For all these reasons, the Eaters of the Lotus are the number one target of the Guiding Hand. If the Hand can take over this juncture, the world would be right again.





## The Four Monarchs

These powerful sorcerers claim to have been pushed from the world by the Ascended. If this is true, as it seems to be, the one thing the Ascended can be thanked for is driving magic out of the world. Unfortunately, the Four Monarchs were the first to discover the secrets of the Netherworld. Now an established power there, they impede the true use of the Netherworld and still threaten the world with their magic. Someday soon, they will need to be dealt with.

## The Jammers

These deluded fools are proof positive that the world of the Architects is hopelessly flawed. These ruffians, who are what pass for rebels in the 21st century, are so deluded that they seek to destroy the very instruments of their salvation: the feng shui sites. Their minds are addled by technology and a naive hope for "freedom." Still, they may make useful pieces in the greater game.

### Back to the Front

Caesar Mack zipped up his jacket and stepped out of the van. Behind him, his students piled out and looked at him expectantly. Once everyone was out, Caesar began walking into the schoolyard. It was 2 am, and the wind cut like a knife. Walking over to the basketball court, Caesar looked around. He didn't expect the meeting to go well, but the punks could at least be on time.

Across the way, headlights clicked on. It looked like the gangbangers were here after all. Soon enough a whole posse of homeboys was heading Caesar's way. Their pistols, usually hidden under baggy clothes, were prominently stuck into their belts. No mistaking that message, thought Caesar. Still, he'd seen much worse.

Caesar's students fanned out behind him as the gangbangers approached. Caesar could see that Luther, the main man of the Bronx Gangstas, was here himself. From the bulge under his coat, it looked like he had brought along an Uzi as well. Luther stopped and flashed a mouthful of gold at Caesar. "All right old man, I'm here. What the fuck you want?"

Mack pulled off his gloves. "I'm here because of the rock, my man. That shit you peddle is killing our community and I want you to stop."

The gangstas laughed coldly. "Yeah, right, old man," said Luther, "I think I'll get me a job at Mickey D's instead." More laughter.

"Look, Luther, I know it's nice to have money and it's not your fault that the Man has set us up to lose, but crack is tearing the black community apart. The British did the same goddamn thing to the Chinese with opium. Opium, crack, it's all the same thing. And it has to stop."

Luther stopped laughing. "Now you're bustin' out with all this gook shit. What the fuck is up wit' you anyway? Look, I'm gonna

make it real simple. Me and my boys got the guns, and we got the rock, and that's the way it's gonna stay. You and your Bruce Lee brigade over there wanna end up on the wrong end of a nine, we'd be happy to oblige."

Caesar tried to remain calm, tried to remember the Six Principles. But he couldn't, not today, not in his neighborhood. "Look, you piece of shit, you think a bunch of preteens with guns they don't even know how to use are going to scare me? I lived through Nam, you punk, so take your best shot!"

Luther pulled out a Glock and leveled it at Mack. "You talk tough, but I bet you ain't so tough now." The Glock barked twice and two bullets streaked towards Caesar. A second later, Mack was still standing. Luther looked at him, searching for some kind of evidence that he'd just unloaded two bullets into an unarmed man.

Mack smiled and held up his hands. Then he opened them up, revealing a bullet in each of his palms. "Looking for these, Luther? Well, here, you can have 'em back." Mack threw the bullets at Luther, who backed away. The bullets clattered on the pavement. Luther's crew stared in stunned silence. None of them had gone for their guns. "Consider that a warning," spat Mack. "From now on, we're at war."

Caesar motioned to his students and they began walking back to the van. Across the schoolyard, Luther and his boys still skulked in the basketball court. Suddenly, Luther yelled, "It ain't over, old man. I'll see you on the street."

Mack got into the van. He was going to war again, but this time he had chosen his own fight. He hoped his students were up to it.

"Jesse, let's get the fuck out of here."



# Sites

## Intro

The Guiding Hand are at a disadvantage in the Secret War, since they do not control an entire juncture the way the Architects, Lotus, and Ascended do. Nonetheless, they have succeeded in seizing many feng shui sites. Most of these are in the 1850 and contemporary junctures, but some are in 69 AD and the Netherworld. While many of these sites are minor – often those the Ascended can afford to let slip – the Hand does control a number of major sites. Usually, these sites are a focus of Hand operations and are very important to Quan Lo's plan. The most important of these sites are detailed below.


## 69 AD

This is the only juncture which can be looked back on by Guiding Hand members in their native time. The perspective afforded on this juncture by history is unreliable and incomplete. Still, this is one of just two junctures where the Guiding Hand has a strong foothold.

## The Cave of a Thousand Banners

The Cave of a Thousand Banners is the Guiding Hand's primary base of operations in the 69 AD juncture. It is located in the mountains of the Huai-pei region, where the provinces of Henen, Anhui, Shandong, and Jiangsu meet. This mountainous border region has been a haven for bandits for most of China's history. The Nian Rebels of 1850 (see Chapter Four) make their bases in this same region, as did countless others in the intervening years. The terrain offers clear advantages to practitioners of irregular warfare and is eminently defensible. The area is also one to which disaffected men and women flee in times of trouble. In short, it was made to order for a small band looking to organize a rebel group.

The woman in charge of Hand operations in this juncture is Leung Mui. She and her team came into the Cave of a Thousand Banners two years ago from the Netherworld. One of the many side passages holds a portal, which Leung exploited in making a surprise attack on the bandit gangs that were the cave's previous occupants. After securing the cave



and recruiting the survivors of the defeated gang, Leung set about making a name for herself. She called herself the Black Flag, after her team's battle standard, and proceeded to defeat a number of small bandit gangs, each time adding to her own force. Soon recruits began to seek her out, especially political refugees attracted to the Black Flag's rebel stance. As her following grew, she sent out other members of her team to start up similar groups in other parts of China. She also began to coordinate the Wandering Teachers (see Chapter Four), the Hand's other operation in this juncture.

The Cave itself is actually a large series of caves. Many of the passages are dead ends which have been rigged with booby traps to hamper invaders. The two main caves of the network are the Hall of Banners and the Black Flag's Sanctum. The Hall of Banners is a huge cave decorated with the battle flags of defeated enemies. This is where Leung's troops muster and spend most of their time. Smaller caves off this one provide lodging for the bulk of the troops. The Black Flag's Sanctum is a smaller cave which serves as Leung's HQ. Usually, only Guiding Hand members are allowed to enter this chamber, the common rebels being ignorant of its true purpose.

Navigating in the caves is a risky business at best unless one is attuned to the site. Attuned characters (primarily Leung Mui and her Hand team) never get lost in the caves. All others must make Perception checks with a Difficulty of 13 to keep their bearings in the caves.

## Leung Mui

Leung Mui is a Shaolin Master from 1850. Although young, she was chosen to head up Hand operations in 69 due to her organizational capabilities, martial arts prowess, loyalty, and mastery of mili-

## Leung Mui

**Sample Dialogue:** "The tyranny of the Imperial Eunuchs must end! Join us and fight for your freedom!"

**Attributes:** Bod 5, Chi 9, Mnd 9, Ref 8

**Skills:** Info/Eaters of the Lotus 12, Info/Strategy and Tactics 14, Info/Neo-Confucianism 15, Leadership 14, Martial Arts 17, Medicine 11

**Schticks [Fu Powers]:** Blinding Mantis Strike, Clothed in Life, Eye of the Storm, Gift of the Storm, Hands Without Shadow, Inner Strength, Mantis Hook, Mantis Stance, Prodigious Leap, Strike of the Mantis, the Storm Reverses, Tornado of Shelter

**Weapons:** fist (6), kick (7), sword (9)

## Unnamed Hand Operatives

**Sample Dialogue:** "We are more than simple bandits. Of that, I can assure you."

**Attributes:** Bod 6, Chi 4, Mnd 5, Ref 7

**Skills:** Info/Ancient China 8, Info/Neo-Confucianism 10, Guns 8, Martial Arts 10, Medicine 7

**Schticks:** Claw of the Tiger, Tiger Stance

**Weapons:** bow (7/5/1), fist (7), kick (8), sword (10)

## Unnamed Black Flag Rebels

**Sample Dialogue:** "Death to the Eunuchs!"

**Attributes:** Bod 5, Chi 1, Mnd 4, Ref 6

**Skills:** Info/Bandit Gangs 8, Guns 8, Martial Arts 8

**Weapons:** bow (7/5/1), fist (6), spear (9)

tary tactics. So far Quan Lo has not been disappointed in her.

Leung was born in 1820 in Peking. Both of her parents were Golden Candle agents and, to safeguard their only child, they sent Leung to Quan Lo's Shaolin school when she was only five years old. Her father, who worked as a bureaucrat for the Manchus, was caught and tortured to death by the Jade Wheel Society two years later. Her mother escaped from Peking, made her way to Quan Lo's school, and stayed there as a teacher. Leung grew up a Guiding Hand member and knows no other life.





## 1850

Due to her strict upbringing and strong self-discipline, Leung Mui has almost no conception of how to have fun. She is all business all the time, and her idea of relaxation is a martial arts bout against a worthy opponent. Unbeknownst to her, most of her team are quite tired of getting beaten up all the time in these "friendly" matches and spend a lot of time grumbling behind her back. They remain quite loyal, however, because there is no one except maybe Fong Sai Yuk that they'd rather have on their side in a fight.

### Yim Chang

Yim Chang is typical of the wandering teachers that are based out of the Cave of a Thousand Banners. Usually, these teachers wander all over China, trying to instill Confucian values in a fearful populace. Sometimes they come to the Cave to report to Leung Mui or to rest up in a safe haven. Yim Chang has been in ancient China for almost a year now, mostly operating in the south. He takes special pleasure in freeing villages from the scourge of the supernatural creatures often used by the Lotus to spread terror. He's found that this simple lesson of strength and righteousness can go a long way in winning allies for the Hand.

### Yim Chang

**Sample Dialogue:** "The Master said, 'To lead a people who have not been educated to war, is to throw them away.'"

**Attributes:** Bod 7, Chi 6, Mnd 6 (Cha 9), Ref 6 (Spd 8)

**Skills:** Info/Ancient China 12, Info/Neo-Confucianism 16, Martial Arts 15, Medicine 12, Teaching 15

**Schticks [Fu Powers]:** Bite of the Dragon, Breath of the Dragon, Claw of the Dragon, Clothed in Life, Eye of the Storm, the Fox's Retreat, Inner Strength, Signature Weapon (staff)


**Weapons:** fist (9), kick (10), staff (13)

Like the other factions, the Guiding Hand enjoys a certain advantage in their era of origin. Unlike other factions, their advantages do not include control of their home juncture. These sites help the Guiding Hand maintain the advantages they do have.

## Madame Pei Pei's Pleasure Palace

Madame Pei Pei's Pleasure Palace is a rather notorious brothel in the city of Canton. It is somewhat unusual in that it is actually a large boat that floats up and down the Pearl River. It is run by Madame Pei Pei herself, a famous ex-Pirate who was formerly known as Pei Pei the Pistol. Unbeknownst to most of her clientele, which includes many western sailors and merchants stationed in Canton, Pei Pei is actually a high ranking member of the Golden Candle Society. She runs the Guiding Hands operations in Canton, and has proved both discreet and effective over the years. Few would suspect that the moralists of the Guiding Hand would use a brothel as a base of operations, or a former pirate as a chief of operations. Or so Quan Lo hopes anyway.

The Pleasure Palace itself is a large, three-decked barge. It is well known for its great number of mirrors, which cause it to shine like a star on the river. They also provide excellent feng shui, redirecting the chi flow in a most beneficial way. The top deck is used for dancing and drinking when the weather is nice, and usually provides a lovely view of the crowded Pearl River and



Honam Island, whose gardens, temples, and tea plantations are justly famous. The middle deck has a large cantina and several private rooms that host gambling and games of chance. Madame Pei Pei's office is also on this deck. The bottom deck is the brothel proper, and contains about 15 small rooms where the business takes place, and two larger ones for private parties. Some of girls live here, although most of them live in the city itself.

Much of what Madame Pei Pei does here is intelligence work. She entertains many westerners, and has gathered much information on the Order of the Wheel from them. She also coordinates the activities of a local secret society that was started during the Opium War. This society, the Red Hand, was one of many such groups that sprouted up in Canton to fight the British. During the war itself, and periodically since then, the Red Hand has organized militias of peasants and city-dwellers. These militias take to the streets whenever civil unrest erupts, which is rather frequent in Canton at this time. The Red Hand also performs acts of sabotage against western factories and ships. They keep a large cache of weapons, including firearms stolen from the British, hidden on Madame Pei Pei's Pleasure Palace. These are kept in a secret room next to Pei Pei's office that is also used for covert meetings.

## Unnamed Red Hand Member

**Sample Dialogue:** "Take that, British dog!"

**Attributes:** Bod 5, Chi 0, Mnd 4, Ref 6

**Skills:** Info/ Canton 8, Martial Arts 8, Sabotage 8

**Weapons:** spear (9) or sword (9), fist (6)

## Madame Pei Pei

**Sample Dialogue:** "Ah, captain, if you'll follow me, I have just what you need..."

**Attributes:** Bod 5 (Tgh 7), Chi 2 (For 7), Mnd 7, Ref 6

**Skills:** Deceit 12, Driving/Junks 12, Gambling 14, Guns 14, Info/Canton 13, Info/Order of the Wheel 10, Leadership 14, Martial Arts 12

**Schticks [Fu Powers]:** Friend of Darkness, the Fox's

Retreat, Eyes of the Fox **[Gun Powers]:** Both Guns

Blazing, Fast Draw (X2), Hair Trigger Neck Hairs (X2),

Lightning Reload (X3)

**Weapons:** 2 Black Powder Pistols (7/3/1), stiletto (7), fist (6), kick (7)

## Madame Pei Pei

When she was younger, Ng Pei Pei was a notorious pirate. This was partly because she was one of the few female pirate captains that sailed the South China Sea and partly because of her reputation for ruthlessness. Pei Pei the Pistol became a name that was both revered and feared on the docks of Canton. When the British fleet arrived in the wake of the Opium War and started methodically destroying the pirate fleets, however, Pei Pei decided that pirating was something best left to the young and impetuous. She sold off her ships and used the money she had saved to build the Pleasure Palace. She's been a regular fixture on the Pearl River ever since.

It may seem surprising that a brutal pirate and brothel owner is a member of the Golden Candle Society, but Pei Pei loves China as much as anyone else. She resents the British for ending her former way of life and killing many of her friends. If she can have some small role in kicking the westerners out of China, she will die a happy woman.

Pei Pei is a boisterous sort who tries to live up to her larger-than-life reputation. She talks loudly, gestures wildly, and drinks copiously. Her gambling skills are legendary. Because of her brashness,






many make the mistake of underestimating her intelligence. There is little that she doesn't notice, however, and she is a master of planning and manipulation. And although she can be ruthless to her enemies, she is generous and giving to her friends, a trait that engendered great loyalty when she was a pirate captain. The staff of the Pleasure Palace are well paid, especially the women who work in the brothel. Since her whole business is a cover for other activities anyway, she sees little reason to exploit her employees. Those who have worked in some of Canton's uglier brothels know how much of a blessing this is.

## **The Temple of the Shaolin Dragon**

This is Quan Lo's own Shaolin temple, the heart and mind of the Guiding Hand. To protect it from the fates of many previous Shaolin temples, this one

was constructed in secret and is zealously guarded. The Ascended would dearly love to find Quan Lo's headquarters, but so far they have been unable to do so. The temple is located in a wild wood in the Hunan Province. The locals will tell you that the wood is haunted and that no one who ventures in ever comes out. Only the second statement is true, and this is due to the vigilance of the Shaolin warriors who guard and patrol the wood. Quan Lo wants to be sure that his security is not compromised because he has so much important work to do. He realized early on that the Ascended would eventually infiltrate his organization or follow his couriers, so he decided to keep the actual location of the temple a strict secret, known only to his inner circle, and conduct all travel to the temple via the Netherworld. There is a portal at the temple that leads directly to the Temple of Boundless Meditation (see below), so those bound for the Temple of the Shaolin Dragon travel there first.





Once safely inside the Temple of Boundless Meditation, they travel to the Shaolin temple through the portal. So even if the couriers were waylaid somewhere else, they could not divulge the location of the Temple of the Shaolin Dragon. It could be anywhere in China as far as they know.

Needless to say, the center of the Guiding Hand has excellent feng shui. Attuning to the Temple of the Shaolin Dragon confers substantial benefits on dedicated Secret Warrior. Those attuned to this site gain two benefits. First, they can learn any Fu power for two less XP than normal. Second, they gain a +1 bonus to any relevant Attribute when resisting attacks or effects from Sorcery, Guns, or Arcanowave Gear.

The temple itself is quite large and is laid out in the traditional Shaolin pattern. Tall walls of artfully sculpted bamboo and pine protect the temple. The wall is broken by an enormous wooden front gate and a smaller side gate of stone. The woods around the walls have been cleared to a distance of 75 feet to prevent a surprise attack and to provide a clear line of fire for the archers on the walls. This area is also where the Shaolin students take their groups for weapons practice. The woods are full of lookouts and patrols at all hours of the day and night. The lookouts use birdcalls to pass information to the temple and to the patrols. The coordination of these forces is excellent and no one has ever penetrated the woods successfully.

The temple itself looks both tranquil and beautiful, and is full of ornamental gardens, carefully-raked paths, and benches for rest and meditation. A small pond provides some fish, an interior water source, and yet another spot for meditation. Details of the more important buildings follow.

**Temple of the Crane:** This is a small temple used primarily for teaching. Students and disciples train here during the day and meditate at night. Sometimes the training is philosophical, sometimes medical, sometimes artistic, and sometimes physical.

**Granary:** This stone building is a storehouse for grain, and also contains a small mill for grinding.

**Kitchen:** This large building contains the main kitchens of the temple. Many students labor here, helping the Master of the Kitchen (a large monk named Pi Ling) prepare food for all the monks. Most of the food is grown locally outside the temple, although the occasional specialty item is imported via the Netherworld.

**Dormitories:** The sleeping quarters for the monks; these consist of little more than a woven mat and a wooden chair.

**Library:** The temple is as much a university as it is a martial training center. This building houses the temple's substantial library. There are many tomes of philosophy and history, including multiple copies of the Confucian classics. Books about the secret war, primarily written by Quan Lo, are kept in the temple proper to hide them from unready eyes. The Master of the Library is an ancient monk named Li Shao.

**Training Chambers:** The training chambers of the Shaolin temples are rather legendary, producing as they have some of the world's greatest martial artists. The Temple of the Shaolin Dragon has twelve of these chambers in one long building. Each chamber focuses on a different aspect of martial arts. Seven of them correspond to the Six Principles and the Principle of Principles. The other five are more general and focus on footwork, handwork, willpower, self-control, and coordination. The contents of the chambers





vary, depending on what is being taught that particular day, but things like moving dummies, spring-loaded spears, and beds of hot coals are common. The chambers are connected via sliding doors, but these are only used when a disciple is attempting to become a Master. To win such an honor, the disciple must successfully pass through all twelve rooms in succession. Those who succeed (and also have passed a philosophical exam) become Shaolin Masters.

**Main Temple:** This enormous pagoda is the Temple of the Shaolin Dragon proper. Three flights of steps lead up to a set of ornamental doors. Two brightly painted dragon sculptures flank the doors and hold between their claws a sign with the temple's name. Inside is the main chamber, a cavernous temple to Confucius. Three foot candles illuminate the temple, and small statues line the walls that lead up to an enormous statue of Confucius himself. The statues on the left are of revered Confucian Masters such as Mencius and Chu Hsi and of Shaolin Masters such as Ng Mui and Yim Wing Chun. Those on the right depict various animals of Quan Lo's Principles in fighting stances. This temple is usually the exclusive domain of the Masters and is only opened to students and disciples for special ceremonies. The upper floors of the temple are for masters only. The second floor contains the Masters' library, the third floor contains meeting rooms for the planning of Hand operations, and the fourth floor contains the private chambers of Quan Lo himself. Here, at the very pinnacle of the Temple of the Shaolin Dragon, Quan Lo meditates and plans, confident of his eventual victory.

## Contemporary


The Guiding Hand's reach does not extend any farther into the future than 1996. That the Guiding Hand's influence in this juncture is exemplified by a pedestrian restaurant and low-rent martial parlor says something of the importance placed on the modern day by Quan Lo. If not for the dedication and skill of some stand-out individuals, there might be no Guiding Hand presence in 1996 at all.

### Chef Ho's

#### House of Dumplings

Chef Ho's House of Dumplings, located on Pell St. in New York's Chinatown, is the Guiding Hand's chief base of operations in America. It was founded by Ho Shen, former Grandmaster of the Guiding Hand, three years ago. Although Quan Lo does not place much importance on Ho's American operation, Ho has been quite industrious and has accomplished a great deal in a short time. His agents are now spread out across America and he coordinates the whole operation from a secret basement beneath Chef Ho's.

The restaurant is small and is always crowded. It has quickly garnered a reputation as having the best dumplings in Chinatown, and it is not uncommon to see white college students and Chinese elders rubbing elbows while they wait for the bamboo steamers of delicious dumplings to come out of the kitchen. Chef Ho can usually be found in the kitchen, cooking and scheming at a furious pace. When the restaurant closes, the action moves to the secret basement. Here Ho Shen uses computers and fax machines to communicate with his agents



in other parts of the country. They use a unique code based on the *I Ching*.

New York is a large and powerful city and a hotbed of Ascended activity. Ho Shen often sends his agents to the centers of power to see what they can find out. They leave from Chef Ho's with a bag full of food and pretend to be ignorant delivery men who speak little English. This allows them great freedom of movement, as few people think twice on seeing a Chinese delivery man. If caught in a sensitive area, they pretend to be lost and move on. Ho's agents have penetrated buildings ranging from the UN to the New York Stock Exchange in this way.

Although most of Ho Shen's work is intelligence gathering, there is an occasional need to bust some heads. For these types of operations, Ho Shen exploits two resources. The first is a Chinatown gang called the White Tigers, who are widely feared due to their martial arts prowess. Unlike most of the gangs in Chinatown, the White Tigers are not sponsored by the Triads. They are mostly young and idealistic teens who are trying to keep the underworld out of their neighborhood. Ho Shen helps them with information and contacts and they sometimes supply him with muscle when he needs it. Ho's second resource is the Black Dragon School. For info on the Black Dragon School, see below.

## Ho Shen

Ho Shen was born into the Guiding Hand. His ancestors were recruited by Quan Lo's agents in 1850 and fighting the Secret War became a family tradition. His family fled to Taiwan after the victory of the communists in 1949 and it was there

## Ho Shen

**Sample Dialogue:** "The Secret War cannot be won in China alone. Our work here is the foundation of a better tomorrow."

**Attributes:** Bod 5, Chi 10, Mnd 7, Ref 6

**Skills:** Cooking/15, Info/America 13, Info/Computers 10, Info/Neo-Confucianism 17, Info/Order of the Wheel 12, Leadership 15, Martial Arts 17, Medicine 10

**Schticks [Fu Powers]:** Backlash of the Turtle, Coil of the Snake, Corners of the Mouth, Eyes of the Snake, Flow Restoration, Healing Chi, Lunge of the Snake, Natural Order, Point Blockage, Prodigious Leap, Slither of the Snake, Strike of the Snake

**Weapons:** cleaver (7), fist (6), kick (7)

that Ho Shen grew up and trained. He became a Shaolin Master at the age of 21 and participated in many Hand operations on the mainland in the following years. Eventually, he was elected the Grandmaster of the Guiding Hand and he led the venerable secret society throughout the eighties. Unlike the previous Grandmasters, Ho Shen used some technology for what he considered to be the greater good, especially communications technology.

After over ten years of leading the Hand, it was a bit of a shock when agents from the 1840s began to show up and give him orders from Quan Lo. As related in Chapter One, the friction between the two Grandmasters erupted over the issue of Hand operations in America. In the end, Quan Lo ordered Ho Shen to begin operations there, effectively taking him out of the picture. Although allowed to keep his title of Grandmaster, Ho was cut out of the Hand's chain of command. Now all orders now come from Quan Lo himself, who prefers his own title of Perfect Master. A lesser man would be bitter about this turn of events, but Ho Shen





## Ho Wah Bo

**Sample Dialogue:** "To hell with Confucius, let's rock and roll!"

**Attributes:** Bod 6 (Con 8), Chi 2 (Fu 5), Mnd 5 (Cha 7), Ref 7

**Skills:** Deceit 12, Driving 10, Info/The Pledged 10, Info/Neo-Confucianism 12, Info/Liberal Arts 10, Intrusion 8, Martial Arts 14

**Schticks [Fu Powers]:** Aberrant Spasm, Claw of the Tiger, Drunken Fist, Drunken Stance, Eyes of the Fox, the Fox's Retreat, Spasmodic Leap, Wily Stupor

**Weapons:** bottle (7), fist (7), kick (8)

has treated his adversity as a fresh challenge and is determined to prove the importance of his American operation by scoring a stunning victory. Then perhaps Quan Lo take him back into his inner circle of advisors.

### Ho Wah Bo

Ho Wah Bo is Ho Shen's only son. He is currently in college in New York but does not have any contact with his father. Those in the know in Chinatown or at his school will tell a sad story about how father and son just don't get along. Wah Bo drinks too much and has no respect for his elders and Ho Shen expects too much from his only son. A year ago this conflict climaxed in a very public screaming match inside Chef Ho's. Since then, the two haven't spoken. In fact, this whole story is a ruse cooked up by Wah Bo himself. He hopes to infiltrate the Pledged by posing as the disaffected son of a secret warrior. It is a dangerous game, but one that both father and son are willing to play for the greater good.

Wah Bo is a rather impetuous youth. Despite his Shaolin training, he is remains a thrill-seeker at heart. The Secret War provides a convenient excuse

## Jimmy Kwan

**Sample Dialogue:** "It's time to sweep the scum off the street, boys!"

**Attributes:** Bod 7 (Tgh 9), Chi 2 (Fu 5), Mnd 4 (Cha 6), Ref 6

**Skills:** Info/Streetgangs 12, Info/Chinatown 12, Intimidation 13, Leadership 12, Martial Arts 14

**Schticks [Fu Powers]:** Bite of the Dragon, Breath of the Dragon, Clothed in Life, Signature Weapon (bike chain)

**Weapons:** bike chain (11), fist (8), kick (9)

## Unnamed White Tigers

**Sample Dialogue:** "The Guardian Angels are a bunch of wussies."

**Attributes:** Bod 6, Chi 1, Mnd 4, Ref 6

**Skills:** Intimidation 10, Martial Arts 10

**Weapons:** nunchucks (7), fist (7), kick (8)

for him to perform dangerous stunts. Ho Shen is concerned that someday his son will go to far, but the opportunity to infiltrate the Pledged was too great to pass up.

### Jimmy Kwan

Jimmy Kwan is the leader of the White Tigers. His father was a shopkeeper who could never make his business profitable because he had to pay too much protection money to the Triads. When he was 18, he decided to put his martial arts training to work and organized the White Tigers to fight the Triad-controlled street gangs that terrorized the neighborhood. Since then, he's been shot and stabbed repeatedly and put in the hospital at least four times. Each time he comes out with one more scar and one more chip on this shoulder. Ho Shen likes Jimmy because of the fire in his belly, but expects to see him die young.

## The Black Dragon School

The Black Dragon School is a martial arts school in the South Bronx run by a former black revolutionary named Caesar Mack. Mack grew up poor on the mean streets of the Bronx and learned to fight to survive. He pinned his hopes on making it as a boxer and racked up an impressive list of victories as an amateur. It seemed that it was only a matter of time before Bronx badboy Mack Truck hit the big time. Unfortunately, Uncle Sam had other plans, and Caesar was drafted and sent to Vietnam in 1968 just in time for the Tet offensive. Like many veterans, Caesar was radicalized by the war and came back dedicated to stopping the war and making revolution at home. He joined the Black Panthers, fought the Man, and agitated in his home community. By 1973 police and FBI harassment was so bad that he decided to leave the country for awhile. So he traveled back to Asia, first to North Vietnam and then to China. It was in China that he met an influential communist leader who was also a member of the Golden Candle Society. This man recruited Caesar and convinced him to stay in Asia for awhile to receive some training.

Caesar spent seven years in Asia, mostly in Taiwan. Here he met Ho Shen and received his first formal martial arts training from him. He eventually became a Shaolin Master and only then did he learn of the Secret War. Suddenly he understood how the Man had been able to crush the black revolutionary movement in the US so easily. He decided that he had to spread the word back home, so he returned to

### Unnamed Black Dragon Students

**Sample Dialogue:** "Sorry, G, but I'm gonna have to kick your ass now."

**Attributes:** Bod 6, Chi 1 (Fu 3), Mnd 5, Ref 6

**Skills:** Intimidation 8, Martial Arts 10

**Schticks [Fu Schticks]:** Bite of the Dragon, Hand Without Shadow

**Weapons:** fist (7), kick (8), nunchucks (7)

New York in 1980. For the benefit of those in power, he pretended to have converted to Buddhism and given up the cause of the revolution. He started the Black Dragon School with the stated aim of teaching kids self-discipline and keeping them off the street. In reality, the school was set-up as a recruiting area for the Guiding Hand. He has been training black and Hispanic kung fu fighters for the Guiding Hand ever since.

The school itself is humble and runs on a negligible budget. Mack usually has about thirty students at any given time. Sometimes Caesar and his students help out Ho Shen when he needs some muscle. Most of the time they work in their own community. Caesar is trying an experiment in the South Bronx. He figures that the Ascended can't much care about feng shui sites in the Bronx, so he and his students are slowly taking over the best of them. He hopes that owning these sites will empower the neighborhood to resist the war on the poor. As part of this plan, Black Dragon students sometimes take to the streets to fight gangs who sell drugs and guns. They are especially brutal to known crack dealers, since Mack has taught them how crack is today's opium. Ho Shen is watching Mack's operation with interest and may use it as a blueprint for action if it is successful.





## Caesar Mack

**Sample Dialogue:** "You've got to clean up your own backyard before you can change the world."

**Attributes:** Bod 6 (Str 8), Chi 3 (Fu 9), Mnd 6 (Cha 7), Ref 6

**Skills:** Guns 9, Info/Neo-Confucianism 12, Info/Secret War 10, Info/60's Revolutionary Movements 12, Intimidation 10, Leadership 14, Martial Arts 16, Medicine 8

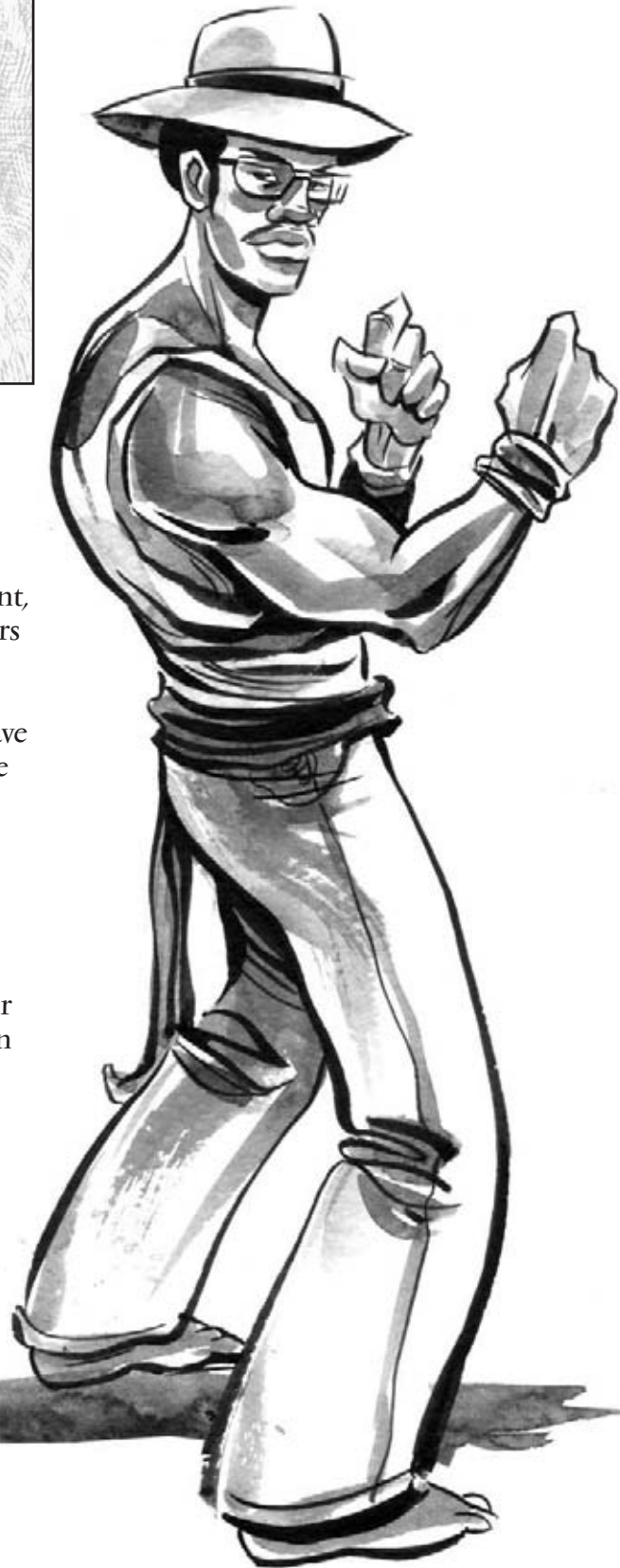
**Schticks [Fu Powers]:** Bite of the Dragon, Breath of the Dragon, Claw of the Dragon, Dim Mak, the Fox's Retreat, Eyes of the Fox, Hands Without Shadow, Inner Strength, Lightning Fist, Natural Order, Prodigious Leap

**Weapons:** fist (9), kick (10), nunchucks (9)

### Caesar Mack

Caesar Mack is a survivor. He lived through a life on the street, the war in Vietnam, the black revolutionary movement, the Golden Candle Society, and many years of the Secret War. Since he got back from Vietnam, his top priority has always been his community. He didn't want kids to have to struggle the way he did and fight in the Man's wars. He was won over by the Golden Candle Society because he felt an immediate attraction to the Confucian ideals of social justice and righteousness. That and his willingness to fight the good fight made him an ideal secret warrior.

He runs his school in a strict but fair fashion. He is an unusually blunt person and is honest almost to a fault. He will tell you just what he thinks about you in no uncertain terms, whether you want to hear it or not. While some see him as a symbol of the failed idealism of the sixties, others see him as a man who has not been beaten down by the system. Almost thirty years later, Caesar Mack is still stickin' it to the Man.





# The Netherworld

Like the other players in the Secret War, the Guiding Hand has its in-between places. Like the rest of the universe, these places exist outside time in the Netherworld.

## The Temple of Boundless Meditation

The Temple of Boundless Meditation is the Guiding Hand's most important stronghold in the strange realm of the Netherworld. It is an absolutely crucial link in Quan Lo's master plan, so it is heavily and zealously defended. Thanks to the nature of the Netherworld and the advantages of Shaping, the Temple is surrounded by a truly massive wall which is constantly patrolled by Hand archers trained by the late Sun Chen himself. Patrols of kung fu masters patrol the caves around the temple, detaining suspicious-looking passersby. Those who are not forthcoming about their business or who fail to show the Hand patrols the proper respect are dealt with harshly. Most of the Netherworld rabble know better than to trespass on the Hand's self-proclaimed territory.

The interior of the temple is a mix of functional and ceremonial. There are several thick-walled buildings that act as interior defense points in case the outer wall is breached. There are also typical temple buildings and pagodas made of wood and bamboo, some of which are used by the Hand couriers that come here so frequently. The central building of the complex is a five-story Confucian temple built in a most unusual way. The first story is shaped to

look like a crane, a turtle, and a tiger. Standing on their shoulders and making up the second story are a rat, a fox, and a monkey. Coiled on top of all the other animals and stretching up from the third to fifth stories is an enormous dragon, its scales painted in the colors of the Six Principles and its head the pure white of the Principle of Principles. This is the Temple of Boundless Meditation proper. Inside is a large temple to Confucius and the legendary *senshi* chambers of the Guiding Hand. These chambers, specially shaped to embody the Six Principles and the Principle of Principles, are where Shaolin Masters come to perfect their understanding of Quan Lo's teachings.

The Temple of Boundless Meditation is a feng shui site of major importance. Perhaps due to the nature of the Netherworld itself, the chi here is very pure. Those who attune to the Temple can learn any fu power for one XP less than normal. Those who meditate in the *senshi* chambers gain an even greater benefit. Each chamber has a fu path that corresponds to it (the Orange *Senshi* Chamber to the Path of the Passive Wings, the Blue to the Path of the Shadow's Companion, etc.). When meditating in a *senshi* chamber, anyone attuned to the Temple can learn fu powers from the corresponding path for three XP less than normal.

The Master of the Temple is a Shaolin Master named Lui Man Wai. He has three important jobs as the Master of the Temple of Boundless Meditation. First, he is in charge of gathering intelligence in the Netherworld. This includes scouting out gateways, especially to 69 AD, and preparing reports on the other factions' activities in the Netherworld. Second, he is in charge of training the Shaolin Masters that come to study at the Temple. Quan Lo requires that all Shaolin Masters come to the temple soon after they achieve mas-





tery. This is partly to train in the senshi chambers, but more importantly to become Innerwalkers so they can survive a critical shift with their memories and loyalties intact. Lastly, Lui is in charge of coordinating communication between Quan Lo and the rest of the Hand. Since all travel to the Temple of the Shaolin Dragon is done via the gateway in the Temple of Boundless Meditation, Quan Lo is reliant on Lui Man Wai to make sure the couriers get to where their going.

## Lui Man Wai

Lui Man Wai has been a member of the Guiding Hand for a very long time. Before Quan Lo became the Grandmaster of the Hand, he and Lui Man Wai used to butt heads frequently during the great debates of the early years. Quan Lo respected Lui's tenacity and honesty a great deal, so he chose Lui to lead the first Hand assaults on feng shui sites in the early 1830's. Lui proved to have a knack for organization and his plans were usually startling successes. Until the Manchu army was called in anyway, then his valiant Shaolin warriors were usually overwhelmed. Although the Hand lost most of the sites that it gained in those campaigns, some good did come out of them. Lui Man Wai would always attune to the sites after capturing them in battle and in the initial campaign many sites were taken. Even though these were lost since, Lui Man Wai had attuned to more sites than anyone else in the Hand. This proved crucial when the Netherworld was discovered and with it the link between site attunement and shaping. When it came time to appoint someone to construct an outpost in the Netherworld, there could be only one choice: Lui Man Wai.

Lui has been in the Netherworld longer than anyone else in the Guiding Hand. He knows a great deal about the Four Monarchs, the Jammers, and the Architects due to their activities there. He has politicked and intrigued with most of the factions in his time here, but always with the purposes of the Hand in mind. He tends to come across as an utterly honest monk who can't help but speak his mind. This, of course, is the Blue Principal at work, and he lies when he needs to. If he can keep the other factions distracted with his honest posturing, big walls, and heavy-handed patrols, he will be able to finish his most important work with little opposition. "Feed the Fox, but do not trust him."

## Lui Man Wai

**Sample Dialogue:** "Ally with the Queen of the Darkness Pagoda? I could never do such a thing!"

**Attributes:** Bod 4, Chi 9, Mnd 7, Ref 6

**Skills:** Deceit 12, Info/Neo-Confucianism 16, Info/Netherworld 14, Leadership 14, Martial Arts 15, Medicine 10, Shaping 15

**Schticks [Fu Powers]:** Backlash of the Turtle, Beak of the Crane, Bite of the Dragon, Clearing the Ground, Crane Stance, Creative Thunder, Dark's Soft Whisper, Friend of Darkness, Natural Order, No Medicine, Signature Weapon (three-section staff), Unexpected Harvest, Wandering Cow, Wings of the Crane

**Weapons:** fist (5), kick (6), three-section staff (10)

## Unnamed Hand Archers

**Sample Dialogue:** "Sun Chen lives!"

**Attributes:** Bod 5, Chi 1 (Fu 4), Mnd 5 (Will 6), Ref 7

**Skills:** Guns 10, Info/Archery 9, Martial Arts 8

**Schticks [Gun Schticks]:** Eagle Eye, Lightning Reload [Fu Schticks]: Natural Order

**Weapons:** Bow (7/5/1), fist (6), kick (7)

### The Black Flag

*Big Sword Shin was in a bad mood today. It used to be that he was the most notorious bandit chief in Huai-pei. Peasants went out of their way to cower when he was around, and even the Emperor's eunuch toadies had a hard time getting to him. All that changed a couple of years ago when a new bandit gang started muscling in on his territory. They called themselves revolutionaries, but Big Sword knew a bandit gang when he saw one. Their leader, a mysterious figure known only as the Black Flag, made a name for himself pretty quickly, defeating other bandit gangs and Imperial troops alike. Now the Black Flag, who few living people had even seen, was edging Big Sword out of his livelihood. So he'd come to meet this Black Flag at his home base, a show of brass Big Sword was hoping would pay off. A couple of other bandit chiefs had come as well, to keep the peace and see which way the wind was blowing. As if coming to Black Flag's base wasn't bad enough, Big Sword and the other bandit chiefs were now being kept waiting. He's going to pay for this, thought Big Sword.*

*Big Sword and the other chiefs were in a huge cave up in the mountains of Huai-pei. The Black Flag Rebels called their home base the Cave of a Thousand Banners. To illustrate the point, the main cave had dozens of banners captured in battle hanging from its jagged walls. Big Sword guessed that he was supposed to be impressed by this, but it took more than few flags to impress him. He'd teach that hard lesson to the Black Flag, if the upstart ever showed his damned face.*

*Fed up with the waiting game, Big Sword Shin grabbed one of the Black Flag's flunkies, lifting him off the floor with one hand. "Listen, you maggot," spat Big Sword, "I don't know where your boss is hiding, but I want you to go find him and tell him that he will see me now. Got it?"*

*The rebel nodded and Big Sword threw him to the ground. The other chiefs laughed as the rebel scurried away to find the Black*

*Flag. A few minutes later, he reappeared and motioned for the bandit leaders to follow him. As they followed the flunky, Big Sword quickly became disoriented. How big were these damn caves anyway? After far too many twists and turns, they were led into another large chamber. This one was mostly empty and had only one banner on the wall: a black one. Sitting underneath this banner was a slight woman in loose black peasant garb. Big Sword looked around for someone else, but no one was in here except the woman. "Is this some kind of joke?" screamed Big Sword. "Woman, if you don't take me to the Black Flag, I will cut your heart out and feed it to the dogs. Now where is he?"*

*The woman was suddenly standing. She took a moment to take in the bandit chiefs and then spoke. "I am the Black Flag."*

*The bandit chiefs burst out laughing. Big Sword said, "The Black Flag is an even bigger coward than I thought, hiding behind a woman." He pulled out his namesake and began to stroke the blade. "Unless you'd like to lose that pretty little head of yours, I'd suggest you take me to the Black Flag now."*

*Big Sword expected the woman to cower in fear. She did not. "As I said, I am the Black Flag and I have brought you here for a reason," said the woman. "I am tired of all the bickering amongst the bandit gangs. It only saps our strength and prevents us from defeating the real enemy, the Imperial Eunuchs. I asked you all here, and especially you, Big Sword Shin, to ask you to join me in my fight."*

*Big Sword laughed again and began pacing forward, sword in both hands. "Join you? Big Sword Shin doesn't need anyone, you hear me? And you just blew your last chance to take me to your boss. Say good-bye to your head!"*

*The woman remained motionless. "Shin, this is your only chance. If you do not join me now, I will kill you."*

*Her words were so matter of fact that Big Sword actually stopped for a second. But only*





for a second. Then he was on her, sword swinging in a deadly arc. "Die, you bitch!"

He had aimed his strike to take her head right off, but suddenly she wasn't there anymore. She leaped over him, a blur of motion, and kicked him the small of the back as she landed. Big Sword flew forward and smashed his face into the wall of the cave. He turned, nose and lips bleeding, to see the woman drawn up in some kind of bizarre stance. Her small hands looked like closed pincers and she was standing on one leg. She spoke again. "I have no real desire to kill you, Shin. If you submit to me, I will let you live."

Big Sword looked at the other bandit leaders. They had all stepped backed and it seemed he could expect no help from them. Still, he would not be humiliated in front of them, nor would he serve this impudent woman. He approached more cautiously this time, sword probing in front of him. Ready to thrust up if she jumped again, Big Sword was ill-prepared when she ducked under his blade

and drove both of her hands into his eyes. He staggered back screaming, his eyes a bleeding ruin. "You've blinded me, you filth," he shouted.

The woman stood back, as Big Sword slashed wildly around him. "If you think I'll give up now, you're wrong," he screamed. "Come and get me!"

She closed in and knocked his sword out of his hands with a casual kick. He pulled out a knife and backed up until he hit the wall. She leaped over to the sword and picked it up. Then she approached the blinded bandit leader, who was taking huge swings with his dagger, trying to fend off his undoing.

"You should have listened to me," said the Black Flag as the blade came down. Big Sword Shin's head flew off his shoulders. As his body collapsed, the Black Flag turned to the other bandit leaders.

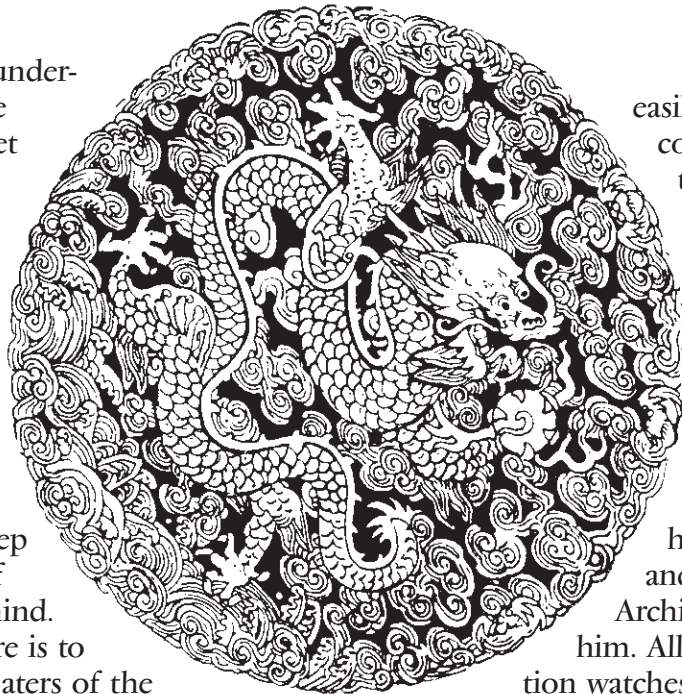
"Gentlemen, let's talk."



# Operations

## Intro

Few people truly understand the scope of the Secret War. Most secret warriors only need worry about a few times and places, or one juncture at most. Quan Lo does not have this luxury. He coordinates operations across four junctures and the Netherworld, all the while trying to keep the long-term goals of the Hand firmly in mind. His most fervent desire is to utterly eradicate the Eaters of the Lotus and take over the 69 AD juncture. He is wise enough to realize, however, that a strike now would be premature at best. For now, he knows that the Hand must gather strength slowly, never appearing to be too much of a threat, and ready for the day that a full scale attack on the Lotus can be launched. Most Hand operations work toward this end to one degree or another.



## 69 AD

This juncture is easily the most hotly contested juncture of the Secret War. Gao Zhang knows he can change history because he controls the past, and the other factions hate and fear him because of it. So Gao Zhang tries to alter history to suit him, and the Ascended and Architects try to stop him. All the while, each faction watches out to make sure that no one else can take over this juncture and cause a critical shift that would change the whole timestream. A tricky situation indeed.

As mention earlier, the Guiding Hand bears a special grudge against the Eaters of the Lotus, who they blame for the corruption of China and the sullyng of the secret doctrine of the Sage-Kings of Antiquity.





For Quan Lo, 69 AD represents not only a convenient key to winning the Secret War, but the very heart of the corruption that caused the war and the creation of the Netherworld in the first place. Quan Lo has a master plan for seizing enough feng shui sites in 69 AD to cause a critical shift. At the moment, his agents in 69 AD are busy laying the groundwork for future operations there. This work is absolutely critical to the success of Quan Lo's plan, so many of the Hand's best are to be found in ancient China. They are currently running two closely linked operations: the Wandering Teachers and the Seeds of Rebellion.

## The Wandering Teachers

When Quan Lo's agents first traveled to 69 AD, they found that most citizens of ancient China knew that the Imperial Eunuchs were a corrupt and power hungry lot. Gao Zhang, however, had done an excellent job of intimidating the populace with demons and other supernatural beasts and most people lived their lives in fear. While many were ready to resist the minions of Gao Zhang, few had the moral courage to do so. Quan Lo decided that this era was in desperate need of Confucian values, and hoped that spreading them here would set off long term effects that would ripple down to 1850 and beyond. So, he sent a cadre of Shaolin Masters back to 69 to become wandering teachers spreading the words of Confucius. These masters usually travel alone from village to village, speaking quietly about righteousness and justice. They try to maintain a low profile, so they do not stir up crowds and shout for change. They talk and they teach, and try to leave a little bit of themselves in every village they

pass through. Until recently, none of the other factions had even noticed these unassuming monks. Now, their lives have become much more dangerous, since they are hunted by Lotus dupes as well as certain Pledged operatives and Architect agents. Nonetheless, their work continues, and when the Hand comes here in force they will have many ready allies.

## The Seeds of Rebellion

Working alongside the teachers is another group of Shaolin Masters who have a slightly different job. While the teachers are there to give the people the moral strength to rebel, these masters are there to give them the capacity to organize. All over China, they are organizing small groups of rebels, usually in border regions or lawless territories. These groups have many names, and some are merely bandit gangs, but all of them are growing rapidly. Each day more peasants are driven from their homes by Gao Zhang's minions, more merchants are bankrupted by Imperial taxes, and more of the gentry have their rights trampled upon by the Imperial Eunuchs. All of these men and women are ripe for recruitment and it is the job of these masters to see to that they are organized.

While recruitment is a vital job, it is only the beginning of the work. If Quan Lo's plans for long-term social change are to come to fruition, the works of the Hand masters must be backed up by the seizure of at least a few feng shui sites. Unbeknownst to these rebel groups, many of their first targets are isolated sites belonging to the Lotus. As Quan Lo's plans progress, these attacks will continue at an increased pace in the hopes of spreading the forces of the Lotus thin.

# 1850

The home juncture of the Guiding Hand, 1850 remains a nexus of Hand activity. Operatives are to be found all over China, in all walks of life. At any given time, there are literally dozens of operations going on in different parts of the country. Most of these operations, however, are local in scope and do not have an important effect on the Secret War. These operations include infiltration of local chapters of the Jade Wheel Society and its subgroups, stings to catch Ascended and Lotus agents, and sabotage missions against the foreigners and Manchus. While important, these actions are usually the work of local Hand leaders and cadres and Quan Lo trusts them to follow his general instructions. Quan Lo concerns himself with three very important operations that are a major part of his grand plan: the Shaolin Sanctuaries, the Ancestors, and the Future Rebellions.

### Shaolin Sanctuaries

Over the years, Quan Lo has overseen the secret construction of Shaolin Sanctuaries in most of the provinces of China. It is at these sanctuaries that the Shaolin Masters of the Hand are trained in Neo-Confucianism and kung fu. Quan Lo would like to have at least one sanctuary in each of China's eighteen provinces by 1860. At the moment, there are sanctuaries in all of the provinces except Gansu and Qinghai in the west, and Hebei in the north. Great precautions are taken to ensure the secrecy of each sanctuary. Some are hidden in dense forests, others on mountaintops. A few try to hide in plain sight by posing as Buddhist or Taoist temples. When sanctuar-

ies have been located by the Ascended in the past, destruction has come swiftly. There is little even the kung fu masters of the Hand can do when an entire Manchu army comes knocking.

Inside the Shaolin Sanctuaries, the monks of the Hand train continuously. Recruiting teams are dispatched frequently to comb the countryside for candidates. In 1841, all across China, babies were born with the mark of the Hand on their palms. Most of these babies have been found and taken to Shaolin Sanctuaries, although the teams remain alert for nine-year-olds with the mark. This corps of kung fu kids is Quan Lo's great hope for the future. Their training is intensive and their kung fu is already quite impressive. By the time Quan Lo is ready to unleash his assault on the Lotus, he will have a crack core of kung fu masters at his disposal.

### The Ancestors

Quan Lo looks for new members of the Hand not only in the eighteen provinces of China, but also in the future. Before the Lotus entered the Secret War, the Hand had targeted the contemporary juncture as its primary theater of operations. They found the Ascended of our era to be much more complacent than those of 1850 and thought they would have greater success seizing sites in the modern world. To help Hand agents in their struggle in the contemporary juncture, Quan Lo decided to set them up with some native help loyal to the Hand. He did this by overseeing an operation that recruited the ancestors of important families of the contemporary juncture. If done properly, such recruitment created a family tradition of support for the Hand that passed down from 1850 to the present. While some





of these operations did not bear fruit due to the unpredictability of manipulating time, many more did succeed and gave the Hand a cadre of contemporary agents to choose from. Since the start of this program, the emphasis of the Hand has shifted somewhat, from the contemporary juncture to that of 69 AD. However, operations continue and most Hand agents in the communist bureaucracy were recruited in this way.

## The Future Rebellions

From history books brought back from the contemporary juncture, Quan Lo knows that 1850 heralds the beginning of 23 years of rebellion that nearly overthrows the Manchus. He has decided that these rebellions provide an excellent opportunity for action by the Guiding Hand, since the Imperial armies will be quite busy with the various rebel groups. These rebellions, the Taiping, the Nian, and the Muslim, are detailed below, followed by Quan Lo's plans. The Taiping Rebellion especially is ripe with roleplaying possibilities, since it was the greatest (and strangest) rebellion in China's long history.

## The Taiping Rebellion

There have been a few instances in world history when the vision and drive of a single individual have affected the lives of millions. The Taiping Rebellion was one of those instances. The individual in question was a man named Hong Xiuquan. Born to a hard-working rural family in the Guangdong Province, Hong tried to work his way into the local elite by means of the state exams. Although he passed the initial exams that qualified him for the licentiate's shengyuan degree,

he proceeded to fail that crucial exam three times. After his third failure, he fell into a delirium and had a strange dream. In his dream, he conversed with a golden-haired man who gave him a sword, and a younger man who instructed him on how to slay "demon devils." Hong addressed this younger man as "Elder Brother."

For the next six years Hong worked as a village school teacher, and didn't give much thought to his strange dream. He then tried to pass the licentiate's exam again and failed a fourth time. On returning home, he opened and read a number of Christian missionary tracts that he had picked up in Canton seven years earlier. Upon reading these tracts, Hong had the sudden realization that the two men in his dream must have been God and Jesus. He also realized that he also must be a Son of God and the younger brother of Jesus.

Filled with faith and a desire to rid China of the "demon devils" that infested it, Hong embarked on a lifelong quest to bring God to China. He began to preach publicly, converting people through his charisma and religious conviction. He and his followers also began to attack Confucian and ancestral shrines, acts which angered the Guangdong locals and caused him to flee to Guangxi Province. Although he left Guangxi briefly in 1847 to study the Bible with American missionaries in Canton, he returned late that year to continue his work.

The center of Hong Xiuquan's power in Guangxi was a place called Thistle Mountain. One of Hong's earliest followers, a man named Feng Yunshan, had been active there since 1844 and created a group called the God-worshipping Society. Thistle Mountain was a remote area which was effectively removed from government

### The Taiping and the West

It may seem curious that the Europeans did not help the Taipings. After all, they were a Christian sect, albeit a strange one, and were dedicated to converting all of China to their faith. In fact, there were some Europeans who advocated this very course of action, especially in the early years of the rebellion when little was known of Taiping doctrine. After Hong Xiuquan had situated himself in Nanjing, he did in fact invite a number of Christian missionaries to visit the Heavenly Kingdom. Without exception, these missionaries were driven away by Hong's insistence that he was the younger brother of Jesus and that they should pay homage to him. British and American envoys to Nanjing had similar problems. While Taiping doctrine did not stop many Europeans from running guns to the rebels, it did stop any official recognition of the Taiping by European governments. The Taiping never quite figured out what the problem was. When they attacked Shanghai, they sent a letter to the Europeans telling them that they were safe and to stay out of the battle. The Taipings were shocked when British troops helped defend the city. Later in the war, the British and French governments actually organized foreign-officered mercenary armies (the Ever-Victorious and Ever-Triumphant Armies) to help the Manchus defeat the Taiping. Far too late in the war, a relative of Hong Xiuquan's named Hong Rengan, who had spent many years in Canton working with European missionaries before going to Nanjing and becoming the Shield King, tried to "westernize" the Taiping. His efforts were too little and too late.

control. Here Hong Xiuquan and Feng Yunshan had great success gaining converts amongst the Hakkas, an ethnic group that had migrated south and come into conflict with local Chinese, and from the Zhuang and Yao, aboriginal tribesmen who lived in the Guangxi mountains. The fact that Hong and Feng were both Hakkas themselves certainly helped, and by 1849 Hong had over 10,000 followers.

At this point Hong quite specifically identified the "demon devils" with the ruling Manchu Dynasty and proposed the creation of a new Christian community to replace the corrupt Manchus. By 1850 Hong had over 20,000 followers and had

begun to drill troops and manufacture arms. He ordered all money and valuables to be pooled in a common treasury and laid down laws banning corruption, opium smoking, and sexual relations (even between married couples). The women were segregated in separate camps run by female officers. The women's camps also trained their own military units, who would later fight quite effectively. Husbands and wives would be reunited, Hong promised, when victory had been achieved. Punishments for breaking these laws were severe, especially for couples found having sex.

In December of 1850, the Manchus finally







decided to take action against these rebels. An army was sent to oust the God-worshipping Society from Thistle Mountain. This army was badly defeated and its Manchu commander killed. On January 11, 1851, Hong Xiuquan assembled his followers and declared himself the Heavenly King of the Taiping Tianguo, "Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace" (usually abbreviated to Taiping). Shortly after this declaration, the Taiping were forced out of Thistle Mountain by superior Manchu forces. They spent most of the next two years campaigning in Guangxi and Guangdong, but progress eluded them. Then, in December of 1852, the Taiping captured the prosperous town of Yuezhou on the shores of Dongting Lake. Mounted on 5,000 boats captured at Yuezhou, the Taiping then began a brilliant military campaign that led to the capture of Hankou and Wuchang, where they captured even more boats. Anqing fell in February, 1853, providing the Taiping with 100 cannon and huge stores of food. The campaign climaxed in March when the Taiping captured the great city of Nanjing, former capital of the Ming Dynasty. Every one of the 40,000 Manchus in Nanjing was killed. Those not killed in battle, including non-combatants of both sexes and children, were systematically killed by burning, stabbing, or drowning. This was how Hong Xiuquan dealt with "demon devils."

## **The Taiping Leadership**


Hong Xiuquan could not have organized the Taiping alone. He owed much of his success to the cadre of brilliant leaders he assembled around himself. Feng Yunshan has been mentioned already, but a few others deserve mention. First, there was Yang Xiuqing, a former charcoal burner with a natural grasp of military tactics. He also claimed to become possessed by the Holy Ghost and

would speak with the voice of God. This would cause Hong Xiuquan many problems after the capture of Nanjing. Then there was Xiao Changui, who claimed to speak with the voice of Jesus, the Heavenly Elder Brother. Lastly, there were Wei Changhui and Shi Dakai, who both proved themselves to be excellent military commanders.

After the capture of Yongan, Hong Xiuquan decided to formalize the leadership by giving his inner circle grandiose titles. He himself, already the Heavenly King, also became the Lord of 10,000 Years. Yang Xiuqing became the East King and Lord of 9,000 Years, Xiao Chaogui became the West King and Lord of 8,000 Years, Feng Yunshan became South King and Lord of 7,000 Years, Wei Changhui became the North King and Lord of 6,000 Years, and Shi Dakai became the Wing King and Lord of 5,000 Years. Unfortunately for Hong Xiuquan, the campaigns of 1852 and 1853 were hard on the leadership. Feng Yunshan was picked off by a Manchu sniper while the Taiping army sailed by Quanzhou and died of his wounds soon after, and Xiao Chaogui, the voice of Jesus, fell leading an attack on the city of Chenzhou in September of 1853. The death of these two men, early and influential followers of Hong Xiuquan, was a great blow to the Heavenly Kingdom.

## **The Heavenly Kingdom**

The Taiping ruled their Nanjing-based Heavenly Kingdom from 1853 - 1864. Although it was nominally ruled by Hong Xiuquan, it was effectively run by Yang Xiuqing, who used his position as the mouthpiece of God to good effect. Hong himself retreated inside the former Ming Palace, surrounding himself with worldly goods and concubines (as the son of God, he was not bound by the Taiping rule prohibiting sex) and studying the Bible and



working up correct, Taiping translations of crucial chapters that dealt with him and his mission. Although Taiping armies were to remain active until the fall of Nanjing in 1864, they never regained the momentum that they lost after the capture of Nanjing. Much of the blame for this can be placed at the feet of the leadership, who squandered much time and many resources fighting amongst themselves. Everyone lived in fear of Yang Xiuqing, who could ruin a man's life just by invoking the word of God. He was finally assassinated, on Hong's orders, in 1856. Shi Dakai, the Wing King, left Nanjing this same year and never returned because his family was murdered by scheming generals. He continued to lead Taiping armies in the field until his capture and execution in 1863 and was probably the greatest general the Taiping produced.

Throughout these years, the Manchus themselves were not idle. They were forced to raise new armies and adopt new tactics to deal with the Taiping rebels. They also worked hard to prevent the Taiping from allying with the Nian rebels in the north. The famous Manchu Banner generals proved unable to beat the Taiping and it was actually local Confucian-trained scholars who were able to turn the tide. The greatest of these was Zeng Guofan, a Hunanese official who raised an army to fight the Taiping in his homeland and eventually led the Manchu troops to ultimate victory by capturing Nanjing. But even during the final hours of Nanjing, the Taiping still tenaciously adhered to their faith. Zeng Guofan reported the fall of Nanjing to the Emperor thusly: "Not one of the 100,000 rebels in Nanjing surrendered themselves when the city was taken but in many cases gathered together and burned themselves and passed away without repentance. Such a formidable band of rebels

has been rarely known from ancient times to the present."

### The Nian Rebellion

While the Taiping were challenging Manchu power in the south, a very different rebellion was raging to the north. Most Nian activity took place in Huai-pei, a border region comprised of southwest Shandong, northwest Jiangsu, east-central Henan, and northern Anhui. This region was, and still is, the center of China's flood and famine zone. Life in this region was harsh and many turned to banditry to survive. Throughout the early 19th century, bandit gangs continued to proliferate in Huai-pei. These gangs tended to be mounted and highly mobile, which is the most probable origin of the word Nian. Although some of these bands had connections to the White Lotus Society and the Triads, most of them were ex-peasants trying to survive.

The outbreak of the Nian Rebellion proper is usually dated as 1851. In that year, serious floods in northern Jiangsu lead to sharp rise in Nian membership. Their numbers grew so large that the Manchus finally woke up and realized that the Nian were a real threat. The following year eighteen Nian groups gathered together and proclaimed Zhang Luoxing to be their leader. In 1855 the Yellow River flooded so badly that it broke out of its restraining dikes east of Kaifeng and carved a new channel into the gulf north of the Shandong peninsula. Again the Nian were swelled with recruits. In 1856 Zhang was elected "Lord of the Alliance" and given the title "Great Han Prince with the Heavenly Mandate." The Nian then reorganized their forces into five banners, each named for a different color.

The Nian were quite different from the Taiping in that they had no religious moti-






vation and seemingly no ideology at all. Their immediate concerns were finding food and keeping government troops and tax collectors out of Huai-pei. To this end, they established many fortified villages north of the Huai River. These villages had sturdy forts equipped with cannon and provided excellent base camps for Nian raiders. The Nian banners themselves were quite effective. Although they only numbered perhaps 50,000 at their peak, they consistently beat the Manchus because of their mobility and familiarity with the terrain. Many also had firearms. They were not truly challenged until 1860 when the Manchus sent General Senggelinqin, a Mongol Prince and Chamberlain of the Imperial Bodyguard. Senggelinqin led a crack army of Manchu and Mongol cavalry, whose repeated attacks wore down the Nian banners. After a long campaign he managed to corner Zhang Luoxing in northwest Anhui and kill him.

The Nian responded by developing new guerrilla tactics to combat the General. Instead of meeting the Manchu forces in a head to head battle, Nian would beat a fighting retreat and lead the Manchu forces further and further afield, isolating them into smaller and smaller units as the terrain got tougher. When the Manchus were disorganized and exhausted, the Nian would counter-attack with a strong force of long-speared infantry and sword-bearing cavalry. In 1865 General Senggelinqin pursued the Nian across three provinces before walking into a Nian ambush that cost him his life and destroyed most of his army. The Manchus responded by sending Zeng Guofan, hero of Nanjing, to finish off the Nian. Even Zeng could not defeat the Nian, however, and it was up to one of his protégés, a man named Li Hongzhang, to finish the job. Li fought a war of attrition against his now-divided foes and brought the rebellion to an end in August of 1868. Li

Hongzhang was ennobled for his efforts and became one of the most powerful officials in China for the next thirty-three years.

## Muslim Rebellions

As if the Manchu government didn't have enough trouble during the 1850's, yet another rebellion flared up in 1855. This one began in the Yunnan Province, which had been home to Muslim settlements since the Mongol conquest of the 13th century. Chinese law protected Chinese involved in violence with Muslims, which led to many religious riots and feuds over the years. This particular rebellion was sparked by heavy land taxes and extra levies placed specifically on the Yunnanese Muslims. It was exacerbated by a Chinese attempt to oust the Muslims from their gold and silver mines. Endemic rioting led to a concerted attack by the Chinese. The Muslims fought back and seized the important city of Dali in the west of Yunnan. They captured the capital, Kunming, for a brief time in 1863 but the Manchus quickly took it back. In Dali, the Muslim leader Du Wenxiu took the name Sultan Suleiman and created a new state called the Pingnan Guo, "the Kingdom of the Pacified South." This new state endured for a full ten years, only falling after a concerted Manchu campaign that used the always effective divide and conquer strategem, rewarding Muslims who became turncoats. A similar revolt broke out in the remote north in the Shaanxi and Gansu Provinces. This revolt, which had been encouraged by both the Taiping and the Nian, raged from 1862 to 1873. It was brutally put down by the Manchus and its leaders executed by slicing. After the Muslim



revolts were put down, China knew something resembling peace for the first time since 1850.

### **Guiding Hand Influence in the Rebellions**

Thanks to the wonders of time travel, the Guiding Hand leadership know how the history books recorded the great Chinese rebellions of the 19th century. However, Quan Lo knows that history is subject to change. From 1850 to 1873, the Ascended will have their hands full trying to quell these rebellions. The resources of the Manchu government will be stretched very thin, making this period an excellent arena for action. Quan Lo has come up with a two-part plan for the years ahead.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the Guiding Hand are aiming for ultimate victory in 69 AD. However, it is imperative that none of the other factions realize the Hand's true objective until it is too late. That means keeping the Ascended busy and keeping the other factions' attention elsewhere. Therefore, Quan Lo has decided that the Hand would best be served if the Taiping, Nian, and Muslim rebellions dragged on as long as possible. The history books say that they will all be snuffed out by 1873, but Quan Lo hopes to keep the fires of rebellion burning until the turn of the century. To this end, he has specially trained two teams and sent them to infiltrate the Taiping and the Nian. Two more teams are undergoing training and will be used in the Muslim rebellions (which don't start for five years yet) when the time is right. The special task of these teams is to safeguard the leadership of the rebellions from Ascended influence and to try to

weed out Ascended agents from amongst the rank and file. Quan Lo feels that if the Ascended can be kept out, the rebellions can provide the greatest diversion the Secret War has ever known. The leaders of the Taiping team are Hu Jiumei and Hu Jan and the leader of the Nian team is Chan Yu Jai. Details of these three can be found in Chapter Five.

The second part of Quan Lo's plan is much more straight forward. He knows that the Ascended will become suspicious if he does not take direct advantage of the chaos caused by the rebellions. He also knows that he must seize at least a few feng shui sites if his plan of lengthening the rebellions is to work. So, Quan Lo is also organizing strike teams of Shaolin monks and gardeners to capture or sabotage enemy feng shui sites in the contested regions. These teams will have a rough time of it, since they will need to outwit both the rebels and government troops. While he plans to send some of his more experienced secret warriors to lead these teams, Quan Lo also plans to send his most expendable troops. He will do this for two reasons: first, so that the Ascended will continue to underestimate the Hand, and second, because he wants to preserve his best fighters for the use against the Eaters of the Lotus. Quan Lo fully expects that many of his monks will die in this operation, but if that is the price of keeping the Ascended duped, he is willing to pay it.

### **Contemporary**

The contemporary juncture is home to the largest concentration of Guiding Hand and Golden Candle agents outside 1850. This is largely due to the Ancestors operation discussed earlier in this chapter. Most of these agents are in China, Hong





Kong, and Taiwan, although at least a few operatives can be found in most Asian countries. The Hand's plans for Hong Kong are discussed in the main rulebook in Chapter 17. The two other major Hand operations in this juncture are Bureaucratic War and Chinatown.

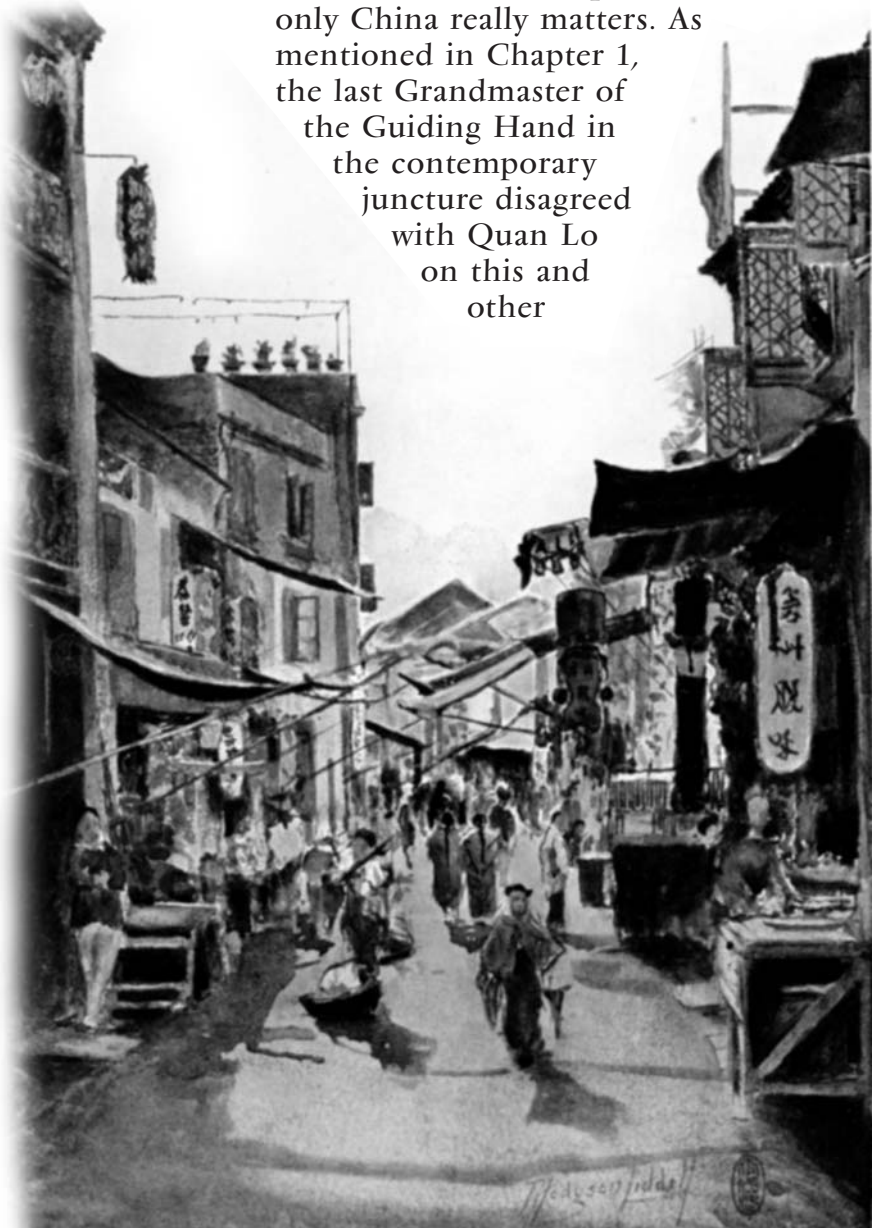
ing the Hand to expand its power in the Netherworld. So while memos and committee meetings may not be as heroic as gun battles and fu fights, these agents are doing more than their share to win the Secret War for the Guiding Hand.

## Bureaucratic War

The real struggle for China is being waged out of the public eye. Within the communist bureaucracy, Guiding Hand and Ascended agents are waging a war of paper to see who controls the new China. Each faction has many agents who agitate behind the scenes. These agents control subcommittees, army commands, and some of the new businesses that are springing up with government backing. They jockey for feng shui sites and only occasionally resort to the dirtier tricks of espionage. Assassination is frowned upon, but blackmail is a way of life. While Quan Lo no longer expects to win the Secret War this way, the operation continues. This is partly so the Ascended do not realize that the Hand has shifted its focus and partly because the acquisition of feng shui sites is always helpful. They have been especially helpful in allow-

## Chinatown

In general, the Guiding Hand tend to be very sinocentric. Quan Lo and most of the leadership think that only China really matters. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the last Grandmaster of the Guiding Hand in the contemporary juncture disagreed with Quan Lo on this and other



issues. Ho Shen, who had been Grandmaster of the Guiding Hand for 12 years before contact was reestablished with Quan Lo in 1850, was convinced that Hand action in America would be vital to defeating the Ascended. Not only was America a bastion of the Ascended, it was the only remaining superpower other than China after 1989. Quan Lo disagreed with Ho's assessment, and with his insistence that he was better suited to run operations in the contemporary juncture. So, Quan Lo sent Ho Shen to America to set up operations there, getting rid of him by giving him what he wanted. Ho was in no position to refuse, so he went as ordered.

Once in America, and with many of his best agents in tow, Ho Shen found that he was pretty much able to do as he pleased, since Quan Lo really didn't think that America was important. Even

though Ho Shen sent regular reports to Quan Lo about his advances, Quan Lo barely skimmed these because he was sure there was little of relevance in them. Meanwhile, Ho Shen had been busy.

Ho's first order of business was to contact the few Hand groups already in America. There were not many of these, but those that had lasted for years with little support were tough and skillful. He himself settled in New York's Chinatown and started a restaurant to serve as his cover (see Chef Ho's House of Dumplings in Chapter 3). From there, he began to put together an intelligence network to monitor the Ascended in important centers of American power: primarily New York City and Washington DC and to a lesser extent San Francisco and Chicago.

Reports come into Ho Shen via encoded e-mail messages and he







sends his reports to Quan Lo via Hong Kong the same way. So far, either the Ascended have not noticed Ho's operation or they don't care about it. As time passes, Ho's network is becoming more impressive. Now not all of his operatives are Chinese, nor do they all speak with an accent. Someday, Quan Lo might realize what an asset Ho Shen and his operation could be to the Hand if would only pay attention to something outside of China. Until then, Ho Shen toils in obscurity.

## The Netherworld

Most Hand activity in the Netherworld is centered around the Temple of Boundless Meditation (see Chapter 3). Here Hand masters come to meditate and use the famed senshi chambers to further their understanding of

Quan Lo's Six Principles of Light. The monks who travel here try to keep a low profile because the Netherworld is full of the Hand's enemies. They also try to make everyone in the Netherworld believe that the Hand does little here except meditate. As usually, the truth is somewhat different.

The Temple is actually a key part of Quan Lo's plans. An impressive intelligence ring is run out of the Temple and keeps the Hand apprised of most developments in the Netherworld. They also have two special missions. First, Hand agents are trying to locate and map all of the portals to the 69 AD juncture. These portals will be used when Quan Lo launches his great offensive on the Eaters of the Lotus. Second, the Hand is gathering intelligence on the Four Monarchs in case a conflict with them ever develops. Luckily, they seem to spend most of their time bickering amongst themselves, but it is best to be cautious with beings of such power, especially corrupt sorcerers.

### Killer's Night Out

*Some days it just doesn't pay to be a killer. Now don't get me wrong, the money's great and the hours ain't bad either, but sometimes it's just too much. Especially when you're one of the Pledged. At least the freelancers get the chance to decline their hits. Not so for the Pledged. You've got to be ready to move on a moment's notice, ready to drop what you're doing and go blow someone's head off no matter how you're feeling.*

*Which leads me to last night. I was just getting ready to go pick up May for a night on the town when my special beeper goes off. When that beeper sounds, it only means one thing. So out comes the cellular, and I have to explain to May I've got an emergency situation at work. She hangs up on me, of course, but at least I'm not lying to her for once. So I get into my car and go meet my contact man. He tells me to go catch a certain flick and await target orders. So, it's to be a night at the movies after all.*

*Four hours later, I'm sitting in this revival theater and they're having a Tsui Hark retrospective. I've already sat through Once Upon a Time in China and part two is winding to a close. Both movies are about Wong Fei Hong, whose some kind of Chinese folk hero, or so I'm told. With Jet Li playing the man himself, Fei Hong sure is a badass. Of course, he didn't have to worry about Uzis and shot-guns, did he?*

*The movie finally ends and I still haven't gotten ID on the target. You try sitting through practically five hours of movies waiting to find out who you're supposed to kill. It's more than a little nerve-racking. So anyway, the lights go up and people start filing out. Up ahead of me I see some guy who looks like a monk, except he's carrying an old time doctor's bag and an umbrella. He's commenting to some other guy with buck teeth that the*

*movies were highly fanciful and not at all accurate. Well, no shit, doc. If you're looking for historical accuracy, Tsui Hark is not your man.*

*So I'm hanging back, waiting to find out which unlucky slob's number is up when the transmitter in my ear finally crackles to life. "Target is now leaving the sixth row. Chinese male, robes, doctor's bag, and umbrella." I look over and sure enough, it's Mr. History who I'm supposed to cap. Are they serious? He looks pretty mild mannered to me, but then again I'm just a killer. Judging 'em is someone else's job.*

*In a heartbeat I've got a Beretta in either hand and I'm drawing a bead on the good doctor. Suddenly, he spins around and opens up the umbrella. I pop off three shots and he responds by spinning the umbrella and holding it up like a shield. Like that's going to deflect my bullets. Only problem was, that's exactly what it did. Then, before I know it, he's cart-wheeling over the chairs in the theater and heading right at me. That's when I notice that there are other gunshots going off in here. Looked like I wasn't the only one of the Pledged in the house. Thank god.*

*Well, I'm not about to let this guy hit me, so I dive over a couple of rows of chairs myself and try to get a mark on my man. I see him all right, leaping right over me. I unload two more shells as he passes over me, but he's damn quick and I don't connect. Then I see why he's leaping over me. There's another killer with an HK not five feet behind me. He gets his neck broken by a flying kick before he can even unlock his safety. Did I say he looked mild mannered? Nevermind.*

*Despite the fact that I'm impressed as all hell, I aim for the guy's back. I've still got a job to do after all and you take 'em down however you can. Which must be exactly what the fat fuck who came up*



# Personalities

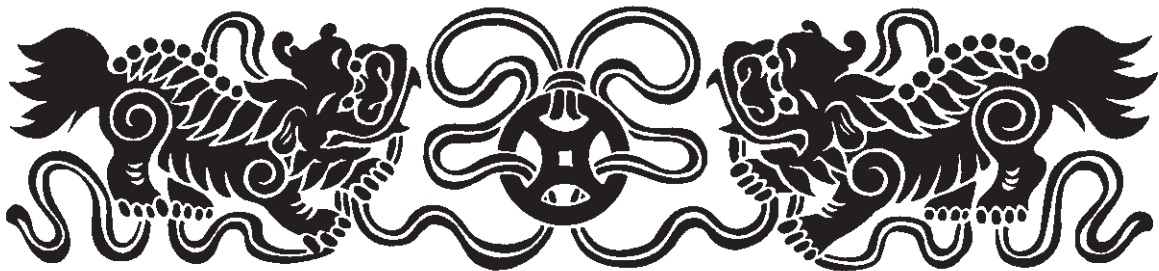
*behind me and wrapped his tree trunk arms around me was thinking. One minute I'm getting ready to take down my mark, the next all the air is being crushed out of my lungs. I struggle with this guy but he's just too strong for me. I try to bring my guns to bear but the angle's all wrong. Then the good doctor is right in front of me, yanking the pistols out of my hands. "I'd ask you who sent you," he says, "but I'm sure that I already know."*

*The bastard holding me eased up his grip a bit so I could breathe. I should have been polite. Or just kept my mouth shut. Instead, in typical idiot fashion, I blurt out, "Who the fuck are you, man?"*

*"Me?" he says. "I'm Wong Fei Hong." Then he knocks my lights out.*

## Intro

The Guiding Hand is home to some of the most famous of the Secret Warriors. There are few Innerwalkers who have not heard of Quan Lo, Wong Fei Hong, or Fong Sai Yuk. Until recently, this list also included Sun Chen, mightiest of archers, but he was killed in Operation Killdeer. Despite his loss, the Guiding Hand still counts many powerful fighters amongst its best. For the most part, those who are associated with a particular site can be found in Chapter 3 and the rest can be found in this chapter. This is not meant to be a comprehensive list, but a sample of the best or most characteristic members of



the Guiding Hand. Following the named characters are stats for the various kinds of unnamed monks. While they may be mooks, their Fu powers may surprise overconfident characters.

## Quan Lo

Quan Lo was born in 1790 to a simple peasant family. His parents already had many children and could not really afford to feed another one, so they left him outside the gate of a Shaolin temple when he was only days old. He was found the next day by the monks of the temple and taken in. He spent the rest of his youth in the temple, learning philosophy and martial arts. He became a Shaolin Master at the age of 15, a feat that is still remembered in the Shaolin community. After achieving mastery at the temple, young Quan Lo decided that he should travel around China and see what could be seen. He spent the next four years traveling the length and breadth of China. He quickly became appalled at the state of the country and blamed the obviously corrupt rule of the Manchus for the country's ills. He also became increasingly concerned over the growing power of the foreigners and their demon drug opium. Clearly something needed to be done.

He began with himself, rejecting the Buddhism of his home temple and embracing the doctrine of Neo-Confucianism. Buddhism, he thought, focused too much on the hereafter and Quan Lo was concerned with the here and now. It was also a foreign doctrine at root, despite its long history in China, and Quan Lo found the home grown logic of Confucius much more appealing. He proceeded to found his own Shaolin school, one that taught the ideas of Confucius and Chu Hsi, in 1809. He

### Quan Lo

**Sample Dialogue:** "You did not receive permission to speak. You will receive 20 lashes with a bamboo switch for your disrespect."

**Attributes:** Bod 4, Chi 12 (For 6), Mnd 9, Ref 5

**Skills:** Info/Buddhism 15, Info/Geomancy 15, Info/Neo-Confucianism 17, Info/Secret War 14, Leadership 17, Martial Arts 16, Medicine 12

**Schticks [Fu Powers]:** Armored in Life, Backlash of the Turtle, Beak of the Crane, Bite of the Dragon, Breathe of the Dragon, Claw of the Dragon, Clothed in Life, Crane Stance, Eye of the Storm, Eyes of the Fox, the Fox's Retreat, Gift of the Storm, Inner Strength, Laughter of the Turtle, Laughter of the Fox, Mirror of the Turtle, Natural Order, Signature Weapon (staff), the Storm Reverses, Tornado of Shelter, Walk of a Thousand Steps, Willow Step, Wing of the Crane

**Weapons:** kick (6), punch (5), staff (10)

began corresponding with other monks he had met in his travels who shared his political views. In 1810, Quan Lo was invited to meet with a group of monks from all over China who wanted to do something about the Manchus and the foreigners. Quan Lo and a cadre of students from his school attended and joined the new secret society. They spent the next twenty years trying to make the Hand work, but Quan Lo was continually frustrated by the ineffectiveness of their tactics. As far as he was concerned, too many of the monks of the Guiding Hand were only interested in proposals and initiatives. As related in Chapter 1, Quan Lo decided that he must take over the organization and give it proper focus. He was ultimately successful in 1830, and proceeded to mold the Hand into the organization it is today.

Although he is now 60 years old, Quan Lo is still an imposing presence. Many a student has nearly fainted under his hard-eyed stare, and his quiet pronouncements carry the weight of the ages. His command of Neo-Confucian doctrine is unmatched, and he is always





ready with a saying or parable. While many leaders spout any rhetoric required to hang on their position, Quan Lo is utterly convinced of the essential moral correctness of his views. This certainty can be unnerving and sometimes frightening, especially in the coldness with which he sends out his followers to be martyred for the greater good. He believes that any sacrifice that leads to the ultimate victory of the Hand is worthwhile. The loss of Sun Chen is only the most recent reaffirmation of this view.

As a leader, Quan Lo is also uncompromising. He treats failure harshly and has no time for excuses. He also does not tolerate challenges to his authority. In the Guiding Hand, Quan Lo's word is law, as Ho Shen learned to his cost. He believes that only he can save China, and that he is fated to do so. It was he who discovered the Six Principles, he who rediscovered the secret doctrine of the Sage-Kings of Antiquity, and he who uncovered the Ascended as the animals that they are. He does not expect everyone to understand his historic role, for he does not require understanding, only obedience. Woe to those who forget this simple truth.

## Yung Chang

Yung Chang is Quan Lo's oldest friend, and one of his few childhood friends. They were both students at the same Shaolin temple and developed quite a rivalry from a very early age. As students, they constantly competed with one another. Yung Chang had the more powerful kung fu, but Quan Lo surpassed Chang in his understanding of philosophy. Despite — or perhaps because — of their rivalry, the two remained fast friends throughout the years. When Quan Lo embraced Neo-Confucianism, Chang

### Yung Chang

**Sample Dialogue:** "Who can tell me the three most effective ways to sabotage an enemy feng shui site?"

**Attributes:** Bod 6, Chi 10, Mnd 6, Ref 7

**Skills:** Info/Ascended 12, Info/Buddhism 13, Info/Geomancy 18, Info/Neo-Confucianism 14, Leadership 14, Martial Arts 17, Medicine 12


**Unique Schtick:** Yung Chang can use the Harvest Chi, Observe Chi, Steal Chi, and Restore Chi special effects of the Fertility Sorcery Schtick. This is not magic, but works instead off Yung's Info/Geomancy score and uses Chi points instead of Magic points.

**Schticks [Fu Powers]:** Armored in Life, Claw of the Tiger, Clothed in Life, Corners of the Mouth, Eyes of Fire, Fire Fist, Fire Stance, Fire Strike, Flow Restoration, Gathering of Fire, Healing Chi, Point Blockage, Shadowfist, Storm of the Tiger, Tiger Stance, Unyielding Tiger Stance, Vengeance of the Tiger, Walk of a Thousand Steps, Willow Step

**Weapons:** fist (7), kick (8)

joined his friend and brought many of his own students with him. Later, he provided crucial support for Quan Lo's takeover of the Guiding Hand. Since that time, he has remained one of Quan Lo's most trusted Masters. In the early years of Quan Lo's leadership, Yung Chang headed up the investigation into the state of China's feng shui sites and the true nature of the Ascended. It was he who discovered the Ascended's secret, a feat for which he is still revered in the Guiding Hand. Since then, he has increased his mastery of the art of feng shui, and now he is the Master of the Gardeners, a crucial job at the Temple of the Shaolin Dragon.

Although the focus of his work these days is geomantic, Yung Chang still practices kung fu every day and is quite fit for a man in his 50s. His jet black hair is only now beginning to gray and he still carries himself with the vigor of youth. He is well-loved in the Hand for his wisdom and a strong streak of benevolence that many find lacking in Quan Lo. His good



nature vanishes, however, when he is on the job. Then he achieves a detached grimness that some find at odds with his normal personality. Yung knows, however, that a good Confucian knows the proper way to act in all circumstances and that one should approach important work with due seriousness. He also knows that his Gardeners are crucial to Quan Lo's plans, so he trains them vigorously and accepts no failure. Quan Lo expects no less.

# Wong Fei Hong

Wong Fei Hong is one of the few secret warriors who has achieved widespread fame in mundane society. Tales of his good deeds have spread all over China, and just the whisper of his presence gives hope to Chinese patriots of all stripes. Unlike many important members of the Guiding Hand, Fei Hong was not trained in a Shaolin temple. Rather, his father Wong Kei-ying, a fearsome fighter and patriot in his own right, trained him as they wandered China. Wong's father taught him the arts of medicine and kung fu, and

impressed upon young Fei Hong the dire nature of China's current situation. At first Fei Hong was more interested in fighting, and learned Drunken Boxing in an attempt to make his kung fu more powerful. Eventually, he realized the foolishness of his actions and swore to his father that he would drink no more. Over the years father and son were associated with many secret societies, but eventually joined the Golden Candle Society. It was not long before they were invited to join the Guiding Hand itself, and since then Wong Fei Hong has proven his worth a thousand times over.

Wong Fei Hong is very concerned with the idea of justice. While Quan Lo thinks only of victory, Fei Hong lives for justice, and it is this quality that has endeared him to Chinese people everywhere. Unlike many Hand members, he does not dismiss wholesale everything the West has to offer. While he would be the first to decry the opium and gunships of the British, he also believes there are things to be learned from them. He has met on many occasions with western doctors to compare techniques, unmoved by the criticism of his tradition-







## Wong Fei Hong

**Sample Dialogue:** "How can you see the just course with hatred in your eyes?"

**Attributes:** Bod 7, Chi 10, Mnd 7, Ref 7 (Spd 9)

**Skills:** Info/Neo-Confucianism 13, Info/Secret Societies 12, Leadership 13, Martial Arts 21, Medicine 17

**Unique Schticks:**

**Folk Hero:** Wong Fei Hong is so famous in China that he can always find willing allies wherever he goes there. People will provide whatever aid they can, even if it is only a barn to sleep in and a bowl of rice to eat. Often, this is enough.

**No Shadow Kick**

*Chi Cost: 5 Shot Cost: 5*

This is Wong Fei Hong's trademark maneuver, a leaping series of kicks that drives his opponent backwards with near unstoppable force. It works the same way as a Flying Windmill Kick, but each successful attack knocks the recipient back five feet. Those who are still conscious after a No Shadow Kick must make a Martial Arts check with a Difficulty of 15 to stay on their feet. Those who fail must spend a shot getting up and shaking it off.

**Schticks [Fu Powers]:** Abundant Leap, Awesome Downpour, Clearing the Ground, Claw of the Tiger, Clothed in Life, Corners of the Mouth, Creative Thunder, Dim Mak, Flying Sword, Flow Restoration, Flying Windmill Kick, Gathering of the Clouds, Hands Without Shadow, Healing Chi, Integration of the Clouds, Lightning Fist, No Medicine, Point Blockage, Prodigious Leap, Rain of Fury, Torrent of Fury, Unexpected Harvest, Vertical Charge, the Wandering Cow

**Note:** While Fei Hong also knows the Path of the Empty Bottle, he has sworn an oath to his father that he will not drink again.

**Weapons:** fist (8), kick (9)

bound colleagues. He also thinks there may be disaffected Westerners that could provide allies for the Hand in their struggle with the Ascended, but Quan Lo has rejected this idea and Wong Fei Hong does not have the resources to pursue it himself.

Like many famous masters, Wong Fei Hong has attracted a cadre of followers. They travel with him and add their own talents to the Guiding Hand. Usually, they accompany Fei Hong

## Fong Sai Yuk

**Sample Dialogue:** "You'll never defeat me, I am the prodigious youth!"

**Attributes:** Bod 7, Chi 5 (Fu 11), Mnd 5 (Cha 7), Ref 8

**Skills:** Deceit 12, Info/Neo-Confucianism 8, Info/Fu Fighters 12, Intimidation 12, Martial Arts 19

**Schticks [Fu Powers]:** Abundant Leap, Awesome Downpour, Contract of the Fox, Dance of the Monkey, Dim Mak, Eyes of the Fox, Flying Windmill Kick, the Fox's Retreat, Gathering of the Clouds, Hands Without Shadow, Laughter of the Fox, Laughter of the Monkey, Lightning Fist, Luck of the Fox, Natural Order, Prodigious Leap, Taunt of the Monkey, Vengeance of the Fox

**Weapons:** fist (8), kick (9)

when he is sent on a mission and provide him with a trustworthy core of operatives. Quan Lo sends Wong Fei Hong on the most important of missions, and, despite their differences, he trusts Fei Hong to succeed with discretion and intelligence. So far he has not been disappointed.

## Fong Sai Yuk

Fong Sai Yuk is every Shaolin master's worst nightmare, a young loudmouth braggart who thinks he knows everything. Unfortunately, his kung fu is very good and he can back up his claims. This has made it rather difficult to teach him about discipline and obedience, and for that he is not beloved by the Guiding Hand's leadership. However, there are few who can match him in a fight, so Quan Lo turns a blind eye to Sai Yuk's worst excesses. The only person who can really rein him in is his mother, a kung fu whirlwind in her own right and the person who taught Sai Yuk in the first place. She has bailed out her son on few occa-





## Hu Jan

**Sample Dialogue:** "Heavenly Brother, I will spite your foes with the strength of the Heavenly Father himself!"

**Attributes:** Bod 6, Chi 7, Mnd 5 (Wil 7), Ref 6

**Skills:** Deceit 14, Info/Taiping Rebellion 15, Info/Neo-Confucianism 12, Intrusion 12, Martial Arts 15, Medicine 10

**Unique Schtick:** Jan and Jiumei always know how the other is feeling. In addition, they can communicate mentally if within five miles of each other.

**Schticks [Fu Powers]:** Backlash of the Turtle, Bite of the Dragon, Blade of Darkness, Clothed in Life, Dark's Soft Whisper, Friend of Darkness, Gathering of Darkness, Natural Order, Shelter of Darkness

**Weapons:** fist (7), kick (8), sword (9)

## Hu Jiumei

**Sample Dialogue:** "You did the right thing coming to me first. I will be sure that Hong Xiuquan hears of this."

**Attributes:** Bod 5, Chi 7, Mnd 6 (Wil 8), Ref 6

**Skills:** Deceit 13, Detective 14, Info/Taiping Rebellion 15, Info/Neo-Confucianism 12, Intrusion 11, Martial Arts 15, Medicine 10

**Unique Schtick:** See Hu Jan, at left

**Schticks [Fu Powers]:** Blade of Darkness, Coil of the Snake, Dark's Soft Whisper, Eyes of the Snake, Friend of Darkness, Gathering of Darkness, Lunge of the Snake, Shelter of Darkness, Slither of the Snake, Strike from Darkness, Strike of the Snake

**Weapons:** fist (6), kick (7), spear (8)

sions and keeps a close eye on his activities. When mother and son fight together, they are practically unstoppable.

Quan Lo puts up with a great deal of insolence from Sai Yuk because he is an excellent tool. When Quan Lo can only spare one operative for a critical situation, it is Fong Sai Yuk who gets the job. Although Wong Fei Hong is more reliable, Sai Yuk works better on his own. His dynamic presence has turned more than one Hand operation from a dismal failure to an unqualified success. Tales of his deeds have spread across China, which has only increased his braggadocio. Many Shaolin masters have predicted that his impetuosity and his weakness for a pretty face will be his undoing. Sai Yuk, of course, thinks otherwise.

## Hu Jan and Hu Jiumei

Hu Jan and Hu Jiumei are twins who were specially recruited by the Perfect Master himself. Quan Lo needed opera-

tives to infiltrate the Taiping and he thought it best to place his agents while the Taiping were just beginning. Since the bulk of the early Taipings were Hakkas, a Chinese ethnic group originally from northern China, Quan Lo began looking for Hakka recruits. The turtle shells lead him to a small village with two orphaned Hakka children. He took them back to the Temple of the Shaolin Dragon and began to train them. They trained in martial arts and self-discipline for many years, and then spent three years preparing for their special mission. For this, they made a special study of the Blue Principle, the Principle of Obscurement, and read extensively from history books brought back from the future to learn of the Taiping.

Recently, Jan and Jiumei began their mission, successfully infiltrating the Taiping and gaining the trust of Hong Xiuquan himself through the use of a fabricated story about a vision from the Heavenly Father. As deep agents, their lives are constantly in danger, and they realized that their mission will last for at least thirteen years, and more if they do their jobs well. They are counting on their knowledge, training, and self-discipline to see them through.





Brother and sister are both short and dark haired. They wear their hair long as the Taipings do, in violation of Manchu law. Of the two, Jan is more emotional. Sometimes he spouts the Taiping rhetoric so convincingly that he worries his own sister. Jiumei is more calculating, and is the planner and logistical expert of the pair. Due to the Taiping segregation of the sexes, the two rarely see each other. Due to their special bond (see page 60), they can communicate despite being isolated. Jiumei fights with one of the women's battalions and Jan with one of the men's. They have special orders from Hong Xiuquan to root out demon infiltrators, which they are happy to carry out. They also are slowly building up a network of Hand agents that Quan Lo is sending to join the Taiping. When the Taiping reach the zenith of their power, Jan and Jiumei will be well-placed to carry out their real mission. For details of this, see Chapter 4.

## Chan Yu Jai

Chan Yu Jai is the leader of the team that has been sent to infiltrate the Nian Rebellion. His job is similar to that of the Hu's: monitor the Nian for Ascended agents, neutralize them, and make sure the rebellion lasts as long as possible. He was chosen for this mission due to his unique background. When he was a young man, he served the Manchus as a soldier and learned many harsh lessons about warfare. After repeated persecution by his commanding officer, Chan killed the man and deserted the army. He then spent many years in a bandit gang, ambushing Manchu patrols and anyone else that was in the wrong place at the wrong time. One day, Chan's gang

### Chan Yu Jai

**Sample Dialogue:** "I say we take their heads and leave 'em as a present for the next Manchu patrol that happens by."

**Attributes:** Bod 6 (Tgh 8), Chi 4 (Fu 8), Mnd 6, Ref 6

**Skills:** Deceit 13, Detective 14, Driving/Horses 14, Info/Bandit Gangs 12, Info/Neo-Confucianism 12, Info/Nian Rebellion 15, Leadership 12, Martial Arts 15, Medicine 11

**Schticks [Fu Powers]:** Abundant Leap, Awesome Downpour, Dim Mak, Drunken Fist, Drunken Stance, Flying Sword, Gathering of the Clouds, Hands Without Shadow, Inner Strength, Lightning Fist, Loyal Steel, Natural Order, Prodigious Leap, Rain of Fury, Signature Weapon (saber), Wily Stupor

**Weapons:** fist (7), kick (8), saber (12)

attacked a merchant caravan. Unfortunately for them, this caravan was escorted by a group of Guiding Hand monks, who quickly defeated the bandits and wounded Chan Yu Jai terribly. He was brought back to a Shaolin Sanctuary and healed. Then he was forced to do hard labor around the temple to learn respect and humility. When the monks declared his punishment finished, he asked if he could stay and become a Shaolin monk. Impressed with his humility, the Master of the Temple agreed and began to train Chan Yu Jai himself. Since then, his unique knowledge and fighting prowess have proved invaluable.

Chan Yu Jai has already infiltrated the Nian, using his former bandit background to good effect. He appears to the world as a grizzled old bandit with piecemeal armor and scavenged weapons. He drinks as hard and fights as ferociously as any other bandit, but behind that façade his mind is always at work. He keeps track of new recruits and always has an eye out for suspicious newcomers. His team is dispersed throughout the different Nian groups and he receives reports on a monthly basis from them. So far a number of Ascended agents have met with unfortunate "accidents." Many more are sure to follow.

# Instant Monks

The focus of the martial arts training that most monks receive at Quan Lo's Shaolin Sanctuaries is based on the Six Principles. Monks meditate on a particular principle and practice kung fu that embodies that principle. While studying this way, many students wear robes or a sash of the appropriate color, which has led to them being known as Green Monks, Violet Monks, etc. Below are examples of characters based on the Six Principles. All you need to do is give them a name and you are good to go. Green Monks and Orange Monks were covered in *Back for Seconds* and are not repeated here.

## Red Monks

Monks studying the Principle of Movement learn many defensive moves designed to bring the enemy to a desired location. They also learn many powerful kicks and the "tiger claw" punch to deliver an unstoppable assault when the time is right.

### Red Monk

**Attributes:** Bod 6, Chi 2 (Fu 4), Mnd 5, Ref 5 (Spd 8)  
**Skills:** Info/Neo-Confucianism 12, Martial Arts 13, Medicine 10  
**Schticks [Fu Powers]:** Claw of the Tiger, Prodigious Leap, Tiger Stance  
**Unique Schtick:**  
**The Red Principle:** So long as the Red Monk moves over his MOV in meters on each of his shots, he can substitute his MOV for STR when making martial arts attacks.  
**Weapons:** fist (7), kick (8), sword (10)

## Yellow Monks

Monks who study the Principle of Redirection learn to move and act like Monkeys. They keep low to the ground, hopping and spinning about and making quite a spectacle of themselves. Their attacks, timed to catch the enemy off-guard, are quick and effective.

### Yellow Monks

**Attributes:** Bod 5, Chi 2 (Fu 4), Mnd 5 (Cha 6), Ref 6  
**Skills:** Info/Neo-Confucianism 12, Martial Arts 14, Medicine 10  
**Schticks [Fu Powers]:** Dance of the Monkey, Laughter of the Monkey, Taunt of the Monkey  
**Unique Schtick:**  
**The Yellow Principle:** The Yellow Monk can force an opponent targeting him to choose a different target if his CHA roll beats the WIL roll of his attacker. The Yellow Monk cannot actively dodge while using this ability.  
**Weapons:** fist (6), kick (7), spear (8)

## Violet Monks

Monks who study the Principle of Reversal can be infuriating opponents. They wait to be attacked and then use the enemy's strength and momentum against them.

### Violet Monks

**Attributes:** Bod 5 (Mov 6), Chi 3 (Fu 4), Mnd 5, Ref 6 (Spd 7)  
**Skills:** Deceit 8, Info/Neo-Confucianism 12, Martial Arts 13, Medicine 7  
**Schticks [Fu Powers]:** Clothed in Life, the Fox's Retreat, Prodigious Leap  
**Unique Schtick:**  
**The Violet Principle:** If an opponent uses a Fortune Die, the Violet Monk can spend 1 Chi to steal the die away, denying its use to his foe. The Violet Monk has until the end of the sequence to use the Fortune Die himself, but he can only use it on an attack against his original opponent.  
**Weapons:** fist (6), kick (7), sword (9)





## Blue Monks

Monks also study the Blue Principle, since it is useful for confounding opponents. They study bits and pieces of many styles and learn to mix and match them for unpredictable attacks. More than one Shaolin monk has won a fight because they started with a crane stance but attacked with the tiger's claw.

### Blue Monks

**Attributes:** Bod 5, Chi 4, Mnd 6, Ref 6

**Skills:** Deceit 10, Info/Neo-Confucianism 12, Martial Arts 14, Medicine 10

**Schticks [Fu Powers]:** Dark's Soft Whisper, Friend of Darkness, plus either Crane Stance or Willow Step, and either Hand Without Shadow or Claw of the Tiger

**Unique Schtick:**

**The Blue Principle:** Instead of using an active dodge, a Blue Monk can attempt to confuse an opponent into attacking a different target. The Blue Monk makes a martial arts check and compares it to that of the attacker. If the Blue Monk's AV is higher, the incoming attack is redirected to a nearby combatant of the Blue Monk's choosing. Resolve the strike against the new opponent as normal. If the Blue Monk's AV is beaten, he is hit as normal and this stunt counts as his dodge.

**Weapons:** fist (6), kick (7), knife (7)

## White Monks

Those who have mastered the Six Principles are fearsome opponents indeed. They know many different styles of martial arts, and their grounding in the principles allows them to adapt to nearly any situation. White Monks should always be important members of the Guiding Hand. Make them opponents to remember.

### White Monks

**Attributes:** Bod 6, Chi 6, Mnd 5, Ref 6 (Spd 7)

**Skills:** Info/Neo-Confucianism 12, Martial Arts 15, Medicine 12

**Schticks [Fu Powers]:** Backlash of the Turtle, Bite of the Dragon, Breath of the Dragon, Claw of the Dragon, Dim Mak, Hands Without Shadow, Lightning Fist, Natural Order

**Unique Schtick:**

**The White Principle:** White Monks have fully mastered the Six Principles. They can use any of the Six Principle schticks, but must choose which one they will use at the beginning of each sequence and cannot combine them or use more than one at the same time. If you don't mind the additional book-keeping, it makes sense to give this schtick to named characters such as Wong Fei Hong and Quan Lo.

**Weapons:** fist (6), kick (7), spear (8)

### The Heavenly Brother

*Hu Jiumei stood passively amongst the Taiping guards, outwardly an image of calm. As she stood waiting for her first glimpse of Hong Xiuquan, a man who would in a few short years be known as the Heavenly King and command zealots by the thousand, she felt the cold touch of fear. Despite the fact that she and her brother Jan had trained at a Shaolin Sanctuary for over three years for this mission, she could not help but feel apprehensive now that the moment was upon her. She tried to center herself by thinking of all those who had martyred themselves for the Guiding Hand already. The fear was already dissipating when her brother's voice burst into her mind. "Sister, you seemed scared. Are you all right?"*

*Half expecting contact, she did not flinch. "Yes, Jan, I am fine, and you don't need to contact me every time you feel that I'm scared. If all goes according to plan, we won't be seeing each other for months at a time. You must trust me to do my job. Now remember the plan and I'll see you inside."*

*"I'm sorry, sister," came the reply, "I will not do it again." Silence.*

*Jiumei continued to look bored for the benefit of her guards. She could feel that Hu Jan, Shaolin Master, was more than a little scared himself. The curse of twins. Or the blessing, depending on how you looked at it. For their whole lives, Jiumei and Jan had always known how the other was feeling. At first they had taken it for granted, assuming that all brothers and sisters shared the same bond. As they grew older, they learned better and did their best to hide their special bond. Until they went to the Shaolin Temple, that is. There, Wong Fei Hong had sensed their union and taught them how to deepen it through the purification of their chi. Where they formerly shared feelings, now they shared*

*thoughts. And it was surely no accident that Quan Lo had sent them to infiltrate the Taiping, those strange Christians who segregated husband and wife, sister and brother, into separate camps. Blessing or curse...*

*One of the guards, a Hakka woman with a homemade spear, grabbed her and pushed her inside the tent. The tent, an enormous affair set up just outside the village of Pingshan, served as Hong Xiuquan's temporary headquarters. Inside were at least thirty men, most of them standing. On the opposite side of the tent she could see a makeshift dais with a lacquered sedan chair mounted on it. Sitting in the chair was a composed middle-aged man wearing yellow robes embroidered with dragons. This surely was Hong Xiuquan. Who else would dare to wear the yellow robes reserved for the Emperor alone?*

*As Hong turned to regard her, she threw herself on the dirt floor and intoned, "Heavenly Brother, blessed be the day on which I see your face." She stayed prostrate as a hush came over the tent. Finally, she heard Hong Xiuquan speak for the first time. "You may approach, daughter."*

*She got up and walked toward the dais. To her left, she could see her brother and more guards, these with rifles. She stood before Hong Xiuquan and he addressed her. "Daughter, you have traveled far by all accounts. Feng Yunshan tells me that you and your brother have a message and that you would deliver it only to me. Tell me, what message could be so important?"*

*Hu Jiumei tensed. This was the moment she had trained so long for. Glancing once at her brother, she began to speak. "Heavenly Brother, my brother and I are from the great city of Nanjing. Until three months ago, we worked on the river hauling rice. At that time, both of us fell sick with a fever and we feared that we*





would die. Then a golden-haired man appeared in our dreams and he spoke to us."

Hong Xiuquan looked shocked. He looked at Jan and asked, "What did the golden-haired man say?"

Jan stepped forward. "He said that he was the Heavenly Father and that he had sent his second son to Earth to cleanse it of the demon devils. He said that even now you struggled in his name but he warned that you were in grave danger from demons who had taken on the shape of men. Then he cured us of our fevers and bade us come find you."

The crowd was silent, and all eyes were on Hong Xiuquan. He sat in his chair, seemingly stunned by what he had just heard. Jiumei remained silent as well, letting the story sink in. It had been carefully crafted by Hand agents from the future to mirror Hong's own fever dream and designed to make him trust the Hu's.

Just a little more, sister!

"Heavenly Brother," ventured Jiumei, "it is as my brother says. The Heavenly Father sent us to you to protect you from the demon devils hidden amongst your own followers. Surely, you have caught men smoking opium, or having congress with their wives. These men have been tempted by the demon devils here at Thistle Mountain. If you are to fulfill the mission of the Heavenly Father, you must be protected. We are yours to command." She prostrated herself again, as did Jan.

Hong Xiuquan seemed to have recovered. From the radiant look on his face, it seemed that he had been convinced.

However, he then turned to the man on his right and said, "Heavenly Father, is what they say true?"

Jiumei looked up at the man Hong had addressed. This must be Yang Xiuqing, she thought. A former charcoal burner, he claimed to speak with the voice of the Heavenly Father. According to the history books from the future, he would later cause much trouble in the Heavenly Kingdom, so much so that he would be assassinated on Hong Xiuquan's orders. For now, however, he was Hong's respected advisor and the one man who could ruin their carefully laid plan.

Yang, a rugged looking Hakka, looked intently at Hu Jiumei and Hu Jan, probing them both with his sharp eyes. Jiumei tried to remain calm, and put thoughts of what would be done to them if Yang denied their story out of her mind. The minutes ticked by, the tent now enshrouded in silence. He was looking for something, perhaps something in himself that just wasn't there. Finally, Yang turned to Hong and spoke, "Yes, my son, these two have come at my bidding. Receive them with great joy, for your future is now assured."

Hu Jiumei looked at her brother in relief. Their long journey had begun.

# Campaign Resources

## Intro

Shaolin Masters, exotic chi powers, and corrupt enemies, what more could you want out of a campaign? While the Guiding Hand is generally cast in a villainous role in the world of *Feng Shui*, it is a simple matter to design a campaign which casts Guiding Hand members as heroes. So many Hong Kong films have Hand-like protagonists that inspiration is easy to find. Some players may be turned off by the extreme morality and rigidity of the Hand, but these problems are easy to work around. So shave your head and dust off your robes, it's time to kick some butt.

## Guiding Hand Types

The types in the *Feng Shui* rulebook are a varied lot. Amongst them, you will find a number of types that fit in with the concept of the Guiding Hand. Primary amongst these are the Old Master and the martial arts version of the Scrappy Kid. Others of the original types can be tweaked to fit into a Hand campaign with your GM's permission. However, there is still a great deal of room to expand the current choices, especially with types that are designed for specific factions of the Secret War. Below, you will find a number of brand new types for your *Feng Shui* game. These are designed for use in a Guiding Hand campaign, but could be added to a normal *Feng Shui* game with your GM's permission.



# Gardener

*"Do not attune to this site! It is corrupted with sorcery and needs to be cleansed."*

You are one of Quan Lo's gardeners, an expert in the art of feng shui. While you have been trained in martial arts, your real duties lie elsewhere. When a feng shui site needs to be found, purified, or protected, Quan Lo calls on you. You have spent the better part of your life studying the Wind and the Water. You know thousands of rules that govern feng shui. If an enemy geomancer is ruining the chi flow of a Guiding Hand site, you know how to restore the correct flow. Since you are also an expert on ruining the chi flow of sites, you are often sent on covert missions of sabotage. You know that your knowledge is vital to the cause of the Guiding Hand in the Secret War. Quan Lo will not be disappointed in you.

**Juncture:** 1850, contemporary

**Attributes:** Bod 5, Chi 5, Mnd 5, Ref 5

Add 3 points to one primary attribute, 2 points to a second, and 1 point to a third.

**Skills:** Info/Calligraphy +5 (10)  
Info/Geomancy=15  
Info/Confucian Classics +5 (10)  
Martial Arts +5 (10) [Max 13]  
Medicine +3 (8)

Add 3 skill bonuses.

**Schtick:** 1 HTH weapon, 2 Fu schticks

**Unique Schtick:** The Gardener can use the following effects of the Fertility sorcery schtick: De-attunement, Observe Chi, and Restore Chi. These powers are not magical and are based on the Gardener's Info/Geomancy skill.

**Quick Schtick Pick:** staff, Claw of the Tiger, Flow Restoration

**Wealth Level:** poor



# Golden Candle Agent

*"Another Manchu patrol has been ambushed?  
If I could get my hands on the rebels that did this, I'd kill them myself."*

You are a member of the Golden Candle Society, one of China's many anti-Manchu secret societies. While most Golden Candle agents think they know the true nature of the society, you know the truth: the Golden Candle Society is actually part of the Guiding Hand. When you were first recruited into the Golden Candle Society, you could think of no greater goals than kicking the Manchus out of power, kicking the Westerners out of China, and setting up a new government. Now you know that these are only the first of many tasks left to be done. Unlike the Shaolin monks of the Hand, you have stayed a part of normal Chinese society. You may be a government bureaucrat, a riverboat captain, or a noodle lady. By day you work your normal job, keeping your eyes and ears open for useful information. By night, you do the Hand's work, be it surveillance or sabotage. If the day comes when your cover is blown, you will simply assume a new identity and start the process again. If you live in the contemporary juncture, you may well be a bureaucrat in the communist party.

**Note:** If you prefer, you can begin play as a Golden Candle agent who doesn't know about the Guiding Hand. You would then have to prove yourself before finding out who your true masters are.

**Juncture:** 1850, contemporary

**Attributes:** Bod 5, Chi 2, Mind 5, Ref 5

Add 2 to two primary attributes, and 2 to one secondary attribute.

**Skills:** Deceit +4 (9)  
Info/Your Choice +2 (7)  
Intrusion +2 (7)  
Martial Arts +5 (10) [Max 13]  
Sabotage +2 (7)

Select two Info skills at +5 (10) related to your profession.

Add 6 skill bonuses.

**Schticks:** 1 weapon, 1 Fu Schtick

**Unique Schtick:** You are such a well-respected member of your community that your neighbors will come forward and vouch for your patriotism and benevolence if you are ever under suspicion.

**Quick schtick pick:** dagger, Friend of Darkness

**Wealth Level:** working stiff





# Guiding Hand Archer

*"You may keep your guns. My bow is all I need."*

You are one of the crack archers of the Guiding Hand. While most monks at Quan Lo's Shaolin Sanctuaries focus on martial arts, there are some such as you who strive to master the bow instead. You have found that the Six Principles of light are as applicable to archery as they are to martial arts. Since the Manchus often come armed with firearms, Quan Lo has learned to value the skill of his archers. The greatest of you was Sun Chen, but he was recently killed in Operation Killdeer, a great blow to the Guiding Hand. You still mourn for him, and have sworn vengeance on those who killed him. Even in death, however, Sun Chen continues to lead you. He provides an example of what you could be, and you strive to live up to his great name. In the hierarchy of the Guiding Hand, you are considered to be a Shaolin Master, and thus are privy to the details of the Secret War. More than once, you have had to pit your skill with the bow against opponents from the future with automatic firearms. In the end, it is always you that are left standing.

**Juncture:** 1850

**Attributes:** Bod 5, Chi 4 (Fu=6), Mnd 5, Ref 5

Add 2 to one primary attribute and 1 to another. Add 2 to one secondary attribute.

**Skills:** Guns +9 (=14)  
Info/Neo-Confucianism +7 (12)  
Info/Secret War +3 (8)  
Martial Arts +4 (10) [Max 12]  
Medicine +3 (8)

Add 3 skill bonuses.

**Schticks:** Two fu schticks, three gun schticks

**Weapons:** bow

**Unique Schtick:** You have learned how to project your chi energy through your arrows. You may use the following Fu schticks with your bow, using Guns instead of Martial Arts for all relevant checks. You must already know the relevant Fu schtick and Chi is paid as normal. Permitted Fu powers include: Bite of the Dragon, Breath of the Dragon, Claw of the Dragon, Dark's Soft Whisper, Fire Strike, Shelter of Darkness, Strike From Darkness.

**Quick Schtick Pick:** Bite of the Dragon, Fire Strike, Hair-Trigger Neckhairs, Lightning Reload, Signature Weapon

**Wealth Level:** working stiff



# Redeemed Pirate

*"You killed my friends, imperialist dog! Now taste my steel!"*

You used to be a member of one of the many pirate gangs that sailed the South China Sea. Back in those days, the sea belonged to you and your friends and there wasn't a thing the Manchus could do about it. Then the British came to Hong Kong after their victory in the Opium War. With them came the British fleet, which took it upon itself to rid the South China Sea of pirates. The junks of your gang were no match for the British ironclads and your gang was wiped out. You were lucky enough to survive but you swore vengeance on those who killed your friends. Eventually, you met others who shared your sentiments and you joined the Golden Candle Society. You have been exposed the teachings of Quan Lo and have embraced them. You no longer fight for booty and booze, you fight for China and the way China should be. Although Quan Lo frowns on the use of firearms, you just haven't been able to give up your trusty pistol. Maybe you will lay it down the day that the British are finally kicked out of China. Until then...

**Juncture:** 1850

**Attributes:** Bod 5, Chi 0 (Fu 4), Mnd 5, Ref 5

Add 3 to one primary attribute, 2 to a second, and 1 to a third.

**Skills:** Driving/Junks +5 (10)  
Gambling +2 (7)  
Guns +4 (9) [Max 12]  
Info/Heaven & Earth Society (Triads) +5 (10)  
Info/Pirate Gangs +5 (10)  
Intimidation +4 (9)  
Martial Arts +5 (10) [Max 13]

Add 4 skill bonuses.

**Schticks:** 2 weapons, 1 fu schtick, 1 gun schtick

**Unique Schtick:** You're an old hand when it comes to the sea. You don't suffer any penalties when fighting aboard a ship, no matter what the conditions. Stunts you perform on ships also suffer a lesser penalty than normal. The final penalty, as always, is assigned at the discretion of the GM.

**Quick Schtick Pick:** black powder pistol, sword, Lightning Reload, Prodigious Leap

**Wealth Level:** working stiff





# Shaolin Disciple

*"Yes, master. I will not do it again."*

You are a disciple at one of the Guiding Hand's Shaolin Sanctuaries. You have been there for seven years, four as a student and three as a disciple. You feel that your kung fu is strong and that you are ready to do battle with the enemies of the Hand. However, your master does not think that you are ready to become a master yet, and you defer to his age and knowledge. You are always obedient and courteous, as a good Confucian should be. You do not yet know about the Secret War, since that knowledge is reserved for masters. In your mind, the enemies of the Hand are the decadent Manchus and the Western imperialists. They will learn to fear your kung fu.

**Juncture:** 1850

**Attributes:** Bod 5, Chi=4, Mnd 5, Ref 5

Add a total of 4 points, divided however you prefer, to your primary attributes. Add 2 to a secondary attribute.

**Skills:** Info/Neo-Confucianism +5 (10)  
Info/Your Choice +2 (7)  
Leadership +2 (7)  
Martial Arts=13  
Medicine +2 (7)

Add 3 skill bonuses.

**Schticks:** 1 hand-to-hand weapon, 2 fu schticks

**Unique Schtick:** For the purposes of determining if good things happen to you only (i.e. not for Fortune dice), your Fortune score is considered to be 10.

**Quick Schtick Pick:** staff, Crane Stance, Bite of the Dragon

**Wealth Level:** poor



# Shaolin Master

*"If you start a fight, you have already lost the battle."*

You are a Shaolin Master of the Guiding Hand. You were trained at one of the Shaolin Sanctuaries of Quan Lo, and there you learned martial arts, medicine, and the doctrine of Neo-Confucianism. You have embraced Quan Lo's Six Principles of Light and mastered at least one style of martial arts. When you became a master, you were also taught about the Secret War. You had thought China's position difficult due to the Westerners and Manchus, but you had no idea the situation was so bad that transformed animals ran the world and crazed sorcerers ruled the past. It is up to you bring about the victory of Confucian values. You are the strength of the Guiding Hand, groomed and trained to complete the task at hand. You will not fail.

**Juncture:** 1850

**Attributes:** Body 5, Chi=7, Mnd 5, Ref 5

Add 2 points to one primary attribute and 1 to another. Add 2 to one secondary attribute.

**Skills:** Info/Neo-Confucianism=15  
Info/Secret War +3 (8)  
Leadership +5 (10)  
Martial Arts=15  
Medicine +3 (8)

Add 3 skill bonuses.

**Schticks:** 1 weapon, 4 fu schticks

**Quick Schtick Pick:** sword, Abundant Leap, Clothed in Life, Flying Sword, Hands Without Shadow

**Wealth Level:** poor







# New Fu Powers

There are hundreds of different martial arts styles in China alone. While the basic *Feng Shui* rules provide a wealth of fu powers to choose from, there is always room for more.

## Path of the Praying Mantis

### Mantis Stance

**Chi Cost:** 2      **Shot Cost:** 1  
Add 1 to your passive dodge for the remainder of the sequence. *Prerequisite:* none

### Strike of the Mantis

**Chi Cost:** X      **Shot Cost:** 3  
Make a martial arts attack against an opponent. If successful, add +X to your damage. *Prerequisite:* Mantis Stance; *Path:* Blinding Mantis Strike, Mantis Hook

### Blinding Mantis Strike

**Chi Cost:** 1      **Shot Cost:** 3  
Make a barehanded martial arts attack. If successful, your opponent is blinded for a number of shots equal to your Outcome. *Prerequisite:* Strike of the Mantis

### Mantis Hook

**Chi Cost:** 2      **Shot Cost:** 0  
You hook your hand on to your opponent's arm after he has attacked you. As he returns to his stance, he unwittingly pulls your punch to him. Your next attack adds half your opponent's Strength (rounded down) to its damage. *Prerequisite:* Strike of the Mantis

## Path of the Leaping Monkey

### Laughter of the Monkey

**Chi Cost:** 2      **Shot Cost:** 0  
When an opponent throws a weapon at you, make a Martial Arts check. If your Action Value is greater than your opponent's, you pluck the weapon out of the air and throw it back at your attacker or another opponent. Make a Martial Arts check with a +3 bonus to your Action Value to see if you hit. *Prerequisite:* none

### Taunt of the Monkey

**Chi Cost:** 3      **Shot Cost:** special  
You caper, roll, and jump, taunting your opponents with a seemingly easy target. Any opponent who can see you and has a Will less than your Charisma must attack you on their next shot. Your Dodge value is increased by 3 versus these attacks. This maneuver lasts until all opponents have



taken their attacks.  
*Prerequisite: none*

## Dance of the Monkey

**Chi Cost: 3**    **Shot Cost: 3+**

You leap into the air and execute a flying kick with both feet. If your attack is successful, you kick off your opponent's body and leap away up to a number of meters equal to your Outcome. If another opponent is in range, you can continue the attack on the next shot, leaping from opponent to opponent in this way. *Prerequisite: Taunt of the Monkey*

## Path of Flying Steel

### Hail of Steel

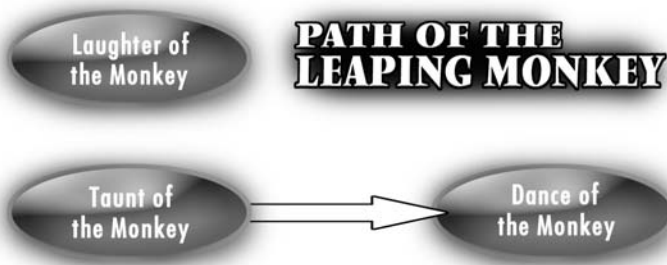
**Chi Cost: 1**    **Shot Cost: 3**

Throw a pair of daggers or shuriken or a handful of darts or needles at an opponent within range. Base damage of this attack is 10. *Prerequisites: none; Path: Bite of Steel*

### Bite of Steel

**Chi Cost: 2**    **Shot Cost: 3**

Make a Martial Arts attack with a thrown weapon that ignores any armor your opponent may have. *Prerequisites: Hail of Steel; Path: Prison of Steel, Teeth of Steel*



### Prison of Steel

**Chi Cost: 2**    **Shot Cost: 3**

Nail an opponent's limb of your choice to a convenient wall or other surface by making a normal Martial Arts attack. Damage is resolved as normal, and the limb is useless until freed. Anyone can pull the weapon out and free the limb by making a Strength task check with a difficulty of 5 plus the Outcome of the attack. *Prerequisite: Bite of Steel*

### Teeth of Steel

**Chi Cost: 3**    **Shot Cost: 3**

Spit a mouthful of needles into your opponent's face. The base damage of this attack is 7, and your opponent suffers 1 point of impairment for each five wound points suffered. Impairment lasts until the needles are removed, which is a 5 shot action. Loading your mouth with needles is a 3 shot action best done before combat. *Prerequisite: Bite of Steel*







# Firearms in 1850

As the 19th century opened in Europe, firearms were as they had been for the past 100 plus years: muzzle-loading, flintlock muskets. These were the weapons that were used throughout the Napoleonic Wars. Having smooth bores and limited range, they relied on the volley for their effect. Marksmanship, at least militarily, counted for little. It was the mass volleys of well-ordered regiments that won the day at Waterloo, not the skilled shooting of individual soldiers.

But the 19th century was the heyday of the Industrial Revolution and gun-makers across Europe strove to improve the design of the matchlock musket. Three important developments were to change the way wars were fought. First, the percussion cap provided a reliable and effective way to ignite the black powder that propelled the musketballs. Second, rifling provided an enormous increase in effective range and accuracy. Rifling, the process of cutting slow spiral grooves in the bore of the weapon to spin the ball, had been known for some time, but only came into widespread military use in the 1840's. Lastly, the development of breech-loading rifles, pioneered by Prussia with its famous needle-gun, allowed for easy reloading and an increased rate of fire. Pistols and revolvers generally benefited from these same innovations, especially that of the percussion cap.

By 1850 all of these developments have been introduced to varying degrees in European armies. England and France are still a few years away from designing their own breech-loaders, but by and large the age of the smoothbore musket is over. In Europe anyway.

China is a different story entirely. Despite the presence of Europeans in the treaty ports, firearms in China are at a very early stage of development. They still use the out-dated and sometimes dangerous matchlock system of ignition and all the weapons are both smoothbored and muzzle-loading. Interestingly, Chinese firearms differ from Europeans in the way they are loaded. Chinese musketmen do not ram the bullets down the muzzle. Rather they slam the butt of the weapon to the ground to settle them. While this does reduce range drastically, it has the advantage of a faster reload time. Chinese muskets also use different ammunition, taking six to ten cylindrical slugs over the ball of their European counterparts. These lack the penetrating power of the ball, and many Chinese generals find well-trained bowmen more useful than matchlockmen.

## Muskets and Rifles


### **The Baker Rifle** 8/5/1

This flintlock rifle, the first officially adopted by the British army, was used by the Light Companies of Wellington's armies in the Napoleonic Wars. It was in service for nearly forty years, and is just the kind of outdated weapon that would have been sold in China in the 1850's. It takes 9 shots to reload.

Its replacement, the Brunswick, shares the same stats, though the introduction of the percussion cap and special ammunition gave it an increased range.

### **Chinese Musket** 7/5/1

The basic matchlock musket as described above, this weapon is found in most Manchu armies. It takes 6 shots to reload, and those longing to bust out with *Last of*



*the Mohicans* maneuvers will be thrilled to find that it has a pistol-grip.

### **Colt Revolving Rifle** 8/5/6

Samuel Colt, best known for his revolvers, also invented a number of rifles based on the same concept. A number of his 1839 model were purchased by the US Navy and Marines and may have made their to China in that way. While it had a rate of fire that no other rifle could match at the time, the Colt proved unpopular with troops due to its tendency to discharge multiple barrels at once, sometimes bursting a cylinder and injuring the user. Reloading each barrel takes 7 shots.

### **The Heavy Brunswick** 10/5/1

One hundred heavier versions of the Brunswick were constructed for the Royal Navy. These had a larger caliber and an increased range, and were used to combat enemy marksmen. British ships in the treaty ports of China might well have a couple of these onboard. It takes 9 shots to reload.

### **Jingall** 13/5/1

The Jingall is a large caliber matchlock musket used in Chinese armies. With a barrel up to ten feet long, it requires a crew of two to five and must fire from a rest (often the backs of the crewmen in the heat of battle). Known as a *t'ai-ch'iang* in China, the Jingall uses a shot that weighs up to two pounds and has a range of up to 1000 yards. It takes 9 shots to reload with two crew, 8 with three, etc.

### **The Minié** 10/5/1

Named after it's designer, Captain Claude-Etienne Minié, this rifle was introduced in France in 1849 and soon swept Europe. Minié's genius was to invent a bullet that expanded into the breech of the rifle without the use of spikes, ledges, or ramrods. By 1851 the British had devel-

oped their own version of the Minié rifle and they would use it to deadly effect in the Crimean War. In 1853 the Enfield, basically an improved Minié, entered service and soon replaced its predecessor. All three weapons have the stats above and take 8 shots to reload.

### **The Pillar-Breech Rifle** 9/5/1

A French rifle introduced in 1846 and used extensively by the French army. It was one of the first rifles to use an elongated bullet instead of a spherical ball. It takes 9 shots to reload.

### **The Prussian Needle-Gun** 9/5/1

The first breech-loading rifle adopted by a major military, the Needle-Gun was the brainchild of Johann Nikolaus von Dreyse. While production began in 1841, it was not issued to the army until 1848. It's construction was so secret that it was a major coup when the British acquired one for testing in 1850. Basically, the Needle-gun was the first successful bolt-action rifle and it benefited from a much increased rate of fire, though it lacked the range of the Minié. It's name comes from the needle-shaped striker used to ignite the percussion cap of its special ammunition. A Needle-Gun in China in 1850 would be extremely rare. It takes 5 shots to reload.

## **Pistols and Revolvers**

### **Colt Revolver** 8/3/6

Invented in 1835, this is the gun that made Samuel Colt famous. Now the standard system for revolvers, the rotating chamber was revolutionary in its day. It was also designed for mass production, having interchangeable parts. Reloading each barrel takes 7 shots (that's 42 for the whole gun, for those keeping track). In





other words, there's a reason Mosby's Rangers carried two of these into a fight during the Civil War. Colt produced a number of different pistols over the years, such as the Walker and the Dragoon. 1850 saw the introduction of two of his most popular revolvers, the mis-yeared 1849 Pocket and 1851 Navy. You can use these same stats for all the Colt models, as well as for later revolvers from other manufacturers like the Le Mat and the Adams Dragoon.

### **Double-Barreled Pistol** 7/3/2(4)

Although pistols are used primarily in close combat, reloading once the fighting starts has always been a problem. With the advent of the percussion cap, double-barreled pistols became common. While having two separate hammer mechanisms added some weight, the additional shot was an attraction few could resist. Four-barreled versions also became popular. These had two barrels on top and another two on the bottom. When the top barrels were discharged, the whole mechanism could be rotated around a spindle, bringing the bottom barrels into firing position. Reloading each barrel takes 7 shots.

### **Dueling Pistol** 7/3/1

Dueling remained common in England throughout the 19th century, and wise gentlemen ensured that they had the finest pistols money could buy. As a result, dueling pistols are usually prime

examples of the gun-making art and they are maintained with meticulous care. Despite advances in ignition systems, dueling pistols remain flintlocks and are usually purchased in pairs. Because of their fine balance and careful construction, dueling pistols receive a +1 AV when used for stunts reliant on accuracy. They take 9 shots to reload.

### **Pepper-Box Pistol** 6/3/4 – 6

A precursor of the revolver, the Pepper-Box pistol solved the quandary of reloading by having four to six separate barrels that rotated around a central spindle by the action of the trigger. Due to the weight of so many barrels, these pistols tended to use a smaller caliber of ammunition, though larger models did exist. And hey, they do look cool. Reloading each barrel takes 7 shots.

## Shotguns

### **Lefauchaux Shotgun** 9/5/2

In 1836 Casimir Lefauchaux invented this hinged-frame, breech-loading shotgun. The ancestor of all modern double guns, the Lefauchaux Shotgun was rather crude. Nonetheless, it got the job done and was widely copied throughout the 19th century. It takes 5 shots to reload each barrel.

## Optional Combat

### Rule: Mook Bowling

Oftentimes in martial arts movies, the hero finds himself arrayed against a legion of mooks (for instance, the scene in *Drunken Master 2* in which Jackie and the old general are attacked by about 50 axemen). If you watch these scenes, you'll notice that mooks often are sent sprawling, only to get up again and rush the hero and few seconds later. This isn't reflected in the *Feng Shui* rules. Additionally, types like the Techie and the Big Bruiser, with their low AVs, can have real trouble with mooks if the dice don't go their way. There's nothing more lame than spending half of a fight trying to take out one mook.

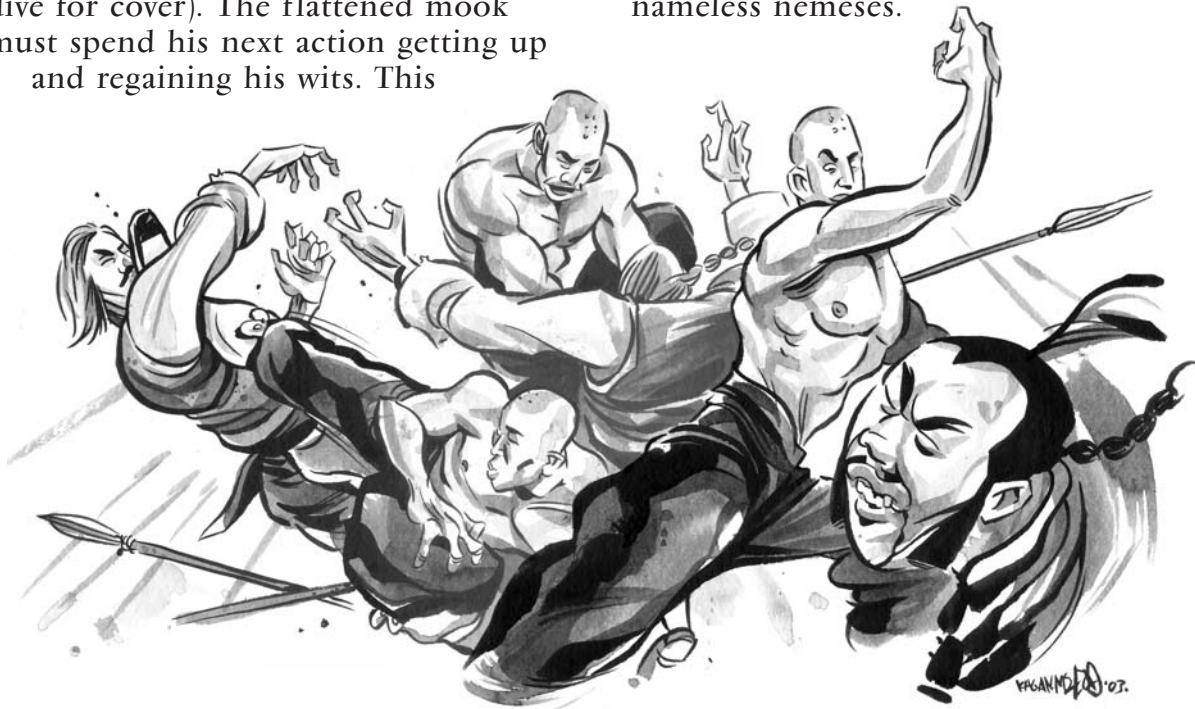
An option to correct these problems is mook bowling. Basically, if you hit a mook but fail to exceed his AV by 5, you knock him down instead (or, if you are shooting guns, you force them to dive for cover). The flattened mook must spend his next action getting up and regaining his wits. This

#### Rules Clarification:

##### Reloading Bows

The rules for reloading bows in the *Feng Shui* rulebook are a little unclear. It looks like an archer might have to spend 3 shots reloading after each shot he takes. This is not the case. As long as the archer has arrows in his quiver, he does not need to spend any shots reloading. Yes, this means that one schtick of Versatile Ammo (from *Thorns of the Lotus*) ensures that bowmen need never spend time reloading. A bow's got to have some advantage over guns, right?

allows PCs to have some meaningful effect in a fight, even if they aren't killing the mooks outright. It's also excellent for getting mooks out of the way or buying time. If you're really generous, this rule can be used to knock mooks into more dangerous positions, like underneath an enormous temple bell, which gives the PCs an advantage on their next attack. Now those potentially frustrated characters just have to come up with two- or three-step moves to knock out their nameless nemeses.







# Campaign Frameworks for the Guiding Hand

While it is certainly possible to run a Guiding Hand campaign in an episodic fashion, players tend to appreciate campaigns with a larger story in the background. This makes the players feel that their characters are participating in an ongoing story, and not some kind of self-contained TV show. The Guiding Hand lends itself naturally to certain campaign frameworks, some of which are described below. This is not meant to be a comprehensive list, merely a starting place for your own ideas. For more inspiration, motor down to your local video store and rent away.

## Save the Shaolin Temple!

This framework is a true classic. In it, the PC's find out about an imminent threat to the Shaolin Temple that they were trained in. This might be a Manchu army, pirates, or the British, if you want to remain traditional. It could equally be a eunuch sorcerer from the Eaters of the Lotus and his demonic minions, or a strike team of Abominations from the far future. Whatever the threat, it is up to the PC's to save the temple from destruction.

The other members of the temple cannot help because they are either unaware of the threat or caught up with their own difficulties. Saving the temple may involve a long quest to find a potent artifact, a search for allies, or the location of a long lost Shaolin master. For the characters of this framework, the only certainty is that they will fight for the honor of their temple again and again.

## Kick Out the Foreign Devils

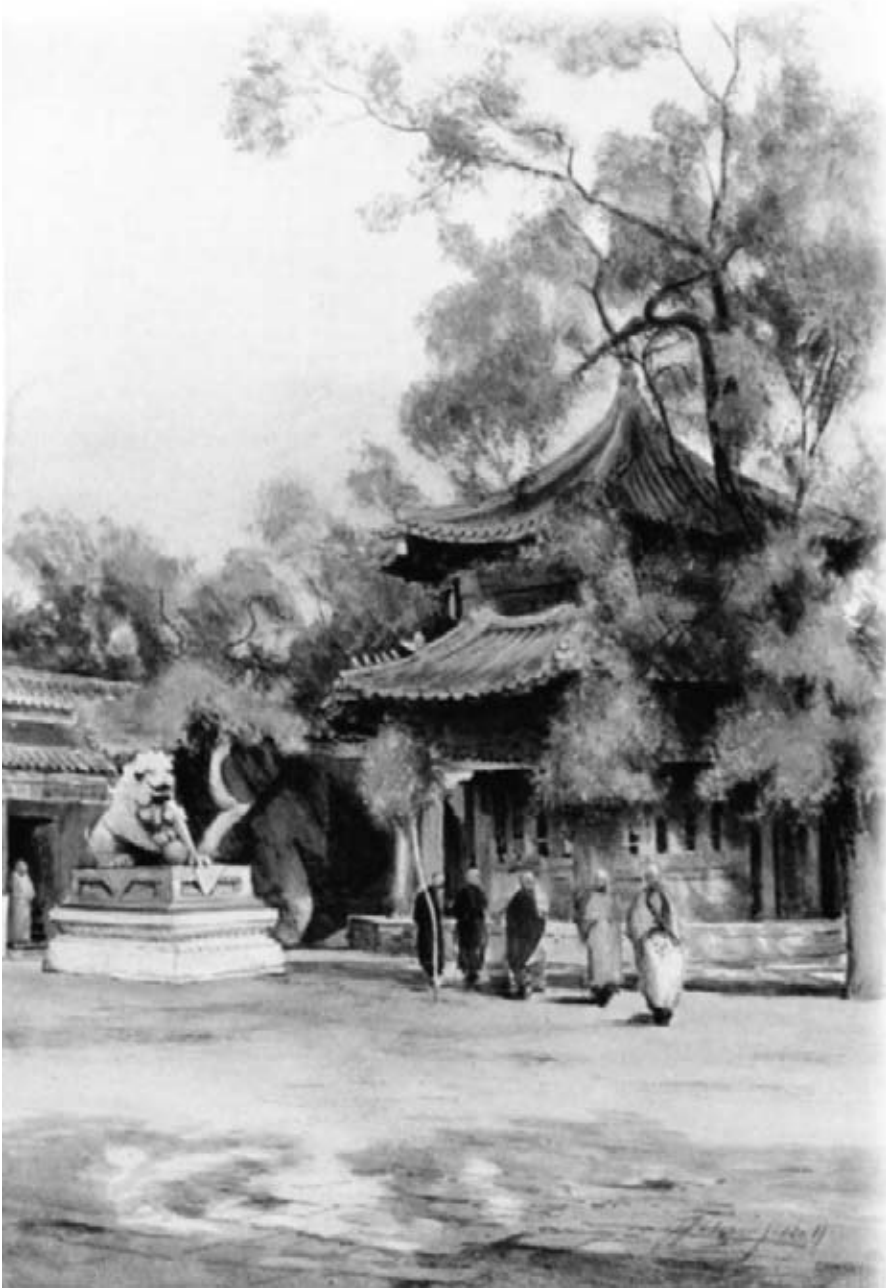
This framework pits the courageous kung fu fighters of the Guiding Hand against the full might of Western imperialism. A good framework for characters who don't yet know about the Secret War, this one focuses on the corrupting influence the European powers are having on 19th century China. The *gwai lo* (foreign devils) have run roughshod over China. Their opium and their missionaries, both equally poisonous, must be stopped, no matter how many gunboats steam their way east. A campaign such as this should be set in or near one of the foreign ports, Canton before the Opium War or Shanghai after. The new colony of Hong Kong also makes a fine choice. During the course of the game, stalwart members of the Hand may find out that Jade Wheel Society and the European Order of the Wheel are working together. They may even uncover the existence of the Ascended. Those less interested in the Secret War can concentrate on beating European guns with powerful kung fu.

## The Master and his Entourage

The Guiding Hand is the home of many powerful Kung Fu Masters. These strong and charismatic individuals tend to attract followers, who are usually quite competent in their own right, who want to learn from the Master or share in his adventures. In this frame-

work, one the players takes on the role of the Master and the rest make up his entourage. It was inspired by the *Once Upon a Time in China* series of Tsui Hark, which features Wong Fei Hong and his followers. In the films, Wong Fei Hong wanders around China performing good deeds and getting involved in many of the conflicts of the time. As the series progresses, his followers really start to work together and their complimentary talents help Wong Fei Hong defeat the enemies of China.

As long as your players are mature enough to handle one person playing the Master, this idea translates seamlessly to *Feng Shui*. Since it focuses on one Master and his entourage, it also neatly sidesteps the problems of dealing the Guiding Hand hierarchy. While the Master may receive orders from Quan Lo from time to time, he is generally free to wander around China and get into all sorts of trouble.







## Trapped in Another Time

Only a very few people really understand how time travel works in the world of *Feng Shui*. The Netherworld is full of people who stumbled there by accident and can't get home. In this framework, a group of Shaolin Students and Golden Candle Agents (i.e. those who don't know about the Secret War) stumble through a gateway to the Netherworld and end up in another juncture. Once there, they must figure out what happened to them and find a way home. Since they are uninitiated into the secrets of the Hand, they will not realize that the Hand has operatives in most other junctures. They will be cut off the Guiding Hand hierarchy and left to fend for themselves. Depending on what juncture they end up in, they may be in immediately danger. The best junctures for this framework are 69 AD and the contemporary juncture. Ancient China is close enough culturally that it won't pose too many problems of that kind to the travelers. They will, however, have to deal with the eunuch sorcerers of the Lotus and many supernatural creatures. Hand students lost in the contemporary juncture will have a much harder time of it. They will find capitalism and communism run rampant, deadly guns on every streetcorner, and a complete lack of Confucian values. By the time they get home, however, they may just miss what the 20th century has to offer.

## Quan Lo's Victory

There are many references in this book to Quan Lo's master plan. In this framework, the PCs start off as loyal agents of the Guiding Hand. They take part in the great assault on 69 AD and help overthrow the eunuchs of the Eaters of the Lotus. As Quan Lo predicted, all of time is reshaped in the glorious tradition of Confucian values and a new era dawns on mankind. After victory is won, however, the PCs notice that all is not as it should be. Quan Lo's vision is too narrow and rigid. He has not reshaped the world as a place of justice, but as a place fit for his own tyranny. Now the PCs must find allies to topple the monster they helped to create. This may lead to some interesting alliances, especially with DPs in the Netherworld. A Critical Shift such as this requires a great deal of work on the part of the GM, so be prepared. Your first stop should be the *Feng Shui* rulebook, which gives some ideas on what would happen if the Hand took 69 AD. Your second stop should be Chapter Seven of this book, which examines several possible outcomes of a Critical Shift involving the Guiding Hand.

# The Hand As Villains

Of all the non-Dragon factions in the Secret War, the Guiding Hand is the least sinister. It hardly takes a brain surgeon to see that the Lotus and the Architects are evil with a capital *E*. The Hand, however, seem rather tame by comparison. Sure, they are uptight and uncompromisingly moral, but they seem to want a better world too, and one without such evils as imperialism and consumerism. PCs may have a hard time seeing how the Guiding Hand represents a real threat to them. There are a few ways to deal with this.

The first is simply to make them the main villains of your campaign,

at least for awhile. For one reason or another, the PCs and the Hand come into head to head conflict. Maybe they are struggling for the same feng shui site, maybe Quan Lo's divination has pegged the PCs as a future threat that must be eliminated. Whatever the reason, the PCs — who may have expected to be fighting demons and abominations — are soon up to their eyeballs in ass-kicking monks. These Shaolin Masters don't ask questions and they don't get intimidated by things like guns and sorcery. They've got a mission and a motivation and the PCs cannot reason with them. Your players will soon learn that the Guiding Hand have a vision of the future and the PCs are not part of it.

Those looking for a subtler approach can cater to their players' expectations ... and then hose them. Hong Kong cinema is full of the exploits of Shaolin monks.

Players may very well assume the







Shaolin monks are the good guys. It does follow, right? A crafty GM can begin the campaign with the Hand cast as an ally. The PCs have frequent interaction with the Guiding Hand and together they fight the good fight. But the Shaolin monks are ever on the PCs cases about their lack of discipline and righteousness. They are forever trying to get them to embrace Neo-Confucianism. As the campaign progresses, the GM can strip away more and more of the Hand's friendly face until the ugly truth is revealed: Those who do not embrace Quan Lo's ways are tools to be used or enemies to be destroyed. The inevitable confrontation between the former friends is bound to be bitter and brutal.

Yet another way to drive the point home is to develop a relationship between the party and a famous Hand personality such as Wong Fei Hong. They might begin as opponents and become some-time allies. As time goes on, a mutual respect should grow, and this can lead to an interesting exchange of ideas. The PCs may never have heard the world view of the Guiding Hand expressed in a coherent way. Here is their chance. In debate (and, since this is *Feng Shui*, action), the PCs may sow the seeds of doubt in the Hand member's mind and cause him to have a crisis of faith. This is a great opportunity for roleplaying and storytelling. Imagine what a coup it would be to win Wong Fei Hong over to the Dragon cause.

### Broken Mirror

*The Buro bastards had us pinned down but good. They did a job when they rebuilt me, but even my cyborg body wouldn't stand up to a barrage of hellharrower shells. Still, I had a few spirits left in my generator, so I was the only one who even stood a chance in the open. I gestured to Fox and Kai – hopefully they'd be able to flank the Reconstructed while I drew fire. With a last prayer, I released the howling spirits from their ARB prison and went over the top.*

*I expected shells slamming into my chest. Instead, there was ... nothing. The three Reconstructed soldiers were nowhere to be seen. The checkpoint itself had vanished. Instead, there was an orchard of cherry blossoms flanked by low buildings of green marble and glass. Fox and Kai came up on me from either side, and I saw their clothing had changed. Fox was wearing a green-and-white silk jumpsuit with badges on the shoulders and chest: a dove superimposed over the palm of an open hand. Her sword had been replaced with some sort of odd club. Kai was wearing a blue silk robe over a pinstripe shirt and suit pants.*

*It wasn't until I saw their looks that I realized I had changed as well. I was wearing a uniform like Fox's, but*

*mine was covered with some sort of ceramic armor. Then the kicker: I had my arm back! The ARB claw had been replaced by a limb of flesh and blood; it was covered in a shell of bright red resin and ceramic, but I could feel the weight of the armor against my skin all the same. Stunned, I clenched my fist, felt my fingers press against my palm. But there was something else – a strange rushing sensation, followed by a burst of flame around my fist!*

*The fire vanished the instant I opened my hand. Fox and I gaped at each other, and I staggered back a step or two, only to bump into someone. I spun around – I don't know where my cyborg systems vanished to, but my reflexes seemed just as sharp as ever. But this was no Buro trooper I had stumbled into. It was a teenager – a boy wearing a red silk robe over a t-shirt emblazoned with the face of an elderly man. I expected a smart remark, but the boy simply took a step back and bowed slightly. "Thank you, warden," he said, with a strong Bronx accent. "There is no greater gift than the peace that you preserve." With that, he walked around me into the garden.*

*What the hell had happened to the world?*



# Critical Shifts

## Intro

The Secret War is a battle for control of reality itself. The Guiding Hand seeks to reshape the world in its own image. So what happens if it succeeds? The concept of the critical shift — a catastrophic alteration of history — is one of the most intriguing elements of *Feng Shui*, but it can be one of the most difficult aspects to incorporate into a campaign. What changes? How does it affect the PCs? What about the forces currently fighting the Secret War? How do they fit into the new world?

## Using a Critical Shift


Before you bring on the chaos of a critical shift, review Chapter Sixteen in the *Feng Shui* rulebook. Once you've wrapped your brain around those core concepts, there are a few key questions that need to be answered.

### When Should the Shift Occur?

A critical shift is a dramatic event that will have a major impact on an episode — or potentially on an entire series of episodes, depending how hard it is to restore the original timeline (or a reasonable facsimile of it). A shift can be very disorienting for the PCs. You need to decide if you want to make it even worse, or if you want to minimize this confusion.

If you want to go easy on the PCs, introduce the shift at the very beginning or very end of an episode. Perhaps the PCs are emerging from the Netherworld after a successful campaign against the Architects of the Flesh only to discover that the world is no longer the place they left behind. Or perhaps they wake up one morning to discover that history has changed overnight. In either case, the PCs are not burdened with other issues and can immediately concentrate on the shift.

If you want a more dramatic effect, the shift can occur in the middle of other action. The PCs may be engaged in a fire-fight with an army of Pledged mooks when their guns suddenly turn to bows and swords. Perhaps they are about to be put to death by an arch-enemy when suddenly the hidden base becomes a temple,



and the villain becomes a peaceful monk. Only innerwalkers will recognize that a shift has occurred. In the example above, the former villain might no longer have any recollection of his clashes with the PCs or the evil deeds that he committed in the past. Of course, the heroes will remember — how will they react?

### How Does the Shift Affect the PCs?

While innerwalkers keep their memories after a critical shift, everything else can change. Personal history will be adjusted to fit the new reality, although the timeline will attempt to keep things as close to the previous reality as possible. If a PC is a killer who used to work for the Lodge but the Ascended never existed in this version of history, the PC can still be a former hitman; however, his employers will have changed. Or he could have followed a different path that involved the same skills, learning archery as a form of meditation instead of a means of dealing death.

You also need to consider family, former friends, and wealth. If the killer is driven by a desire to avenge his murdered sister, and in the new reality his sister is alive and well, what sort of impact will that have on the character? Can he fight to restore the previous timeline if it means condemning his sister to death?

Three shifts are described in this chapter, and each one includes an outline of how the shift may affect characters of different types. Just remember that a PC's memories don't shift to fit the new reality — so he won't know anything about his new past until it smacks him in the face!

## The Absence of the Architects

For the most part, a critical shift does not affect a character's abilities. She keeps her

memories, skills, fu powers, gun schticks, and the like. However, all three of the critical shifts described in this chapter remove the Architects of the Flesh from history — and that means that arcanowave devices go with them. Characters that rely on these devices will need to be altered to account for their absence:

- Abominations become full-fledged supernatural creatures. In the absence of the architects, the base creature would never be captured and modified. Decide what sort of creature the PC is, and replace its arcanowave devices with appropriate creature powers.
- Cyborgs and Monster Hunters are more difficult to deal with. One option is to transform a cyborg PC into a big bruiser for the duration of the shift; she possesses pure natural power instead of artificial enhancement. This provides the character with a useful power to make up for her lack of gadgetry, without requiring her to possess any new knowledge or skill. For monster hunters or cyborgs with less of a focus on physical power, you may have to give the character Fu or Gun schticks, mirroring his arcanowave powers as closely as possible. This is difficult to justify: because the character doesn't possess the memories of the shifted universe, he shouldn't possess new skills. As a result, the character should not realize that he has these abilities until he gets into a fight. At this point he will discover his new abilities by instinct; when he dodges he finds himself performing The Fox's Retreat, when he fires his bow he discovers his Lightning Reload schtick, and so on.





These changes will not affect an inner-walker until he leaves the Netherworld. It is up to you to decide whether he will regain his original form if he returns to the Inner Kingdom, or whether he is trapped in his new identity until history is restored. The Netherworld is weird and often misunderstood, after all.

The Architects possess the ability to create new abominations and arcanowave devices in the Biomass Reprocessing Center, their Netherworld fortress. A critical shift only affects arcanowave technology created over the course of history. If a weapon was created outside of time, it survives the transition into the new world.

## In the Beginning: 69 AD in the Power of the Hand

The Perfect Master has brought much of the power of the Guiding Hand to the 69 AD juncture. While the Wandering Teachers spread Confucian values throughout the land, the Seeds of Rebellion seize control of feng shui sites and struggle to eliminate the Eaters of the Lotus. Through these actions Quan Lo hopes to create a new, perfect realm: a China guided by Confucian wisdom and the ancient teachings of the Sage-Kings. This chapter presents three critical shift scenarios, and two of them are directly tied to the Hand seizing control in 69 AD. If the PCs want to restore history,

they will have to go back to the beginning and face the Hand on the battleground of ancient China.


### Building Power

If the PCs have never visited the 69 AD juncture, you don't have to worry about foreshadowing the critical shift that affects the future. But if the PCs spend a lot of time in ancient China, there should be a few warnings about what's to come.

As the Seeds of Rebellion take root, dozens of bandit gangs appear around the country. If the heroes are battling the Lotus or defending feng shui sites, they may discover that the so-called bandits are humble warriors dedicated to the cause of justice and freedom. Most of these soldiers are locals of the 69 AD juncture who know nothing of the Secret War and have never heard of the Guiding Hand. As a result, they appear to be innocents fighting a just war. Even if adventurers are concerned about the Guiding Hand, will they take up arms against these idealistic rebels? If you want an interesting twist, innocent villagers could beg the PCs to help them destroy an outpost of vile Lotus demons – incidentally giving the Hand access to the feng shui site the creatures were guarding.

### Seizing Control

Slowly, the power of the Hand grows. Neo-Confucianism begins to spread across the land and into the imperial court. Finally the Hand gains control of enough sites that it can shift the balance of spiritual power, draining away the power of magic. Stripped of their mystical power, the surviving eunuchs flee into the Netherworld. Having achieved his greatest dream, Quan Lo is determined not to let



other forces interfere. All other inner walkers are hunted down and executed, and all known passages to the Netherworld are placed under heavy guard. A new golden age has begun – but how will it end?

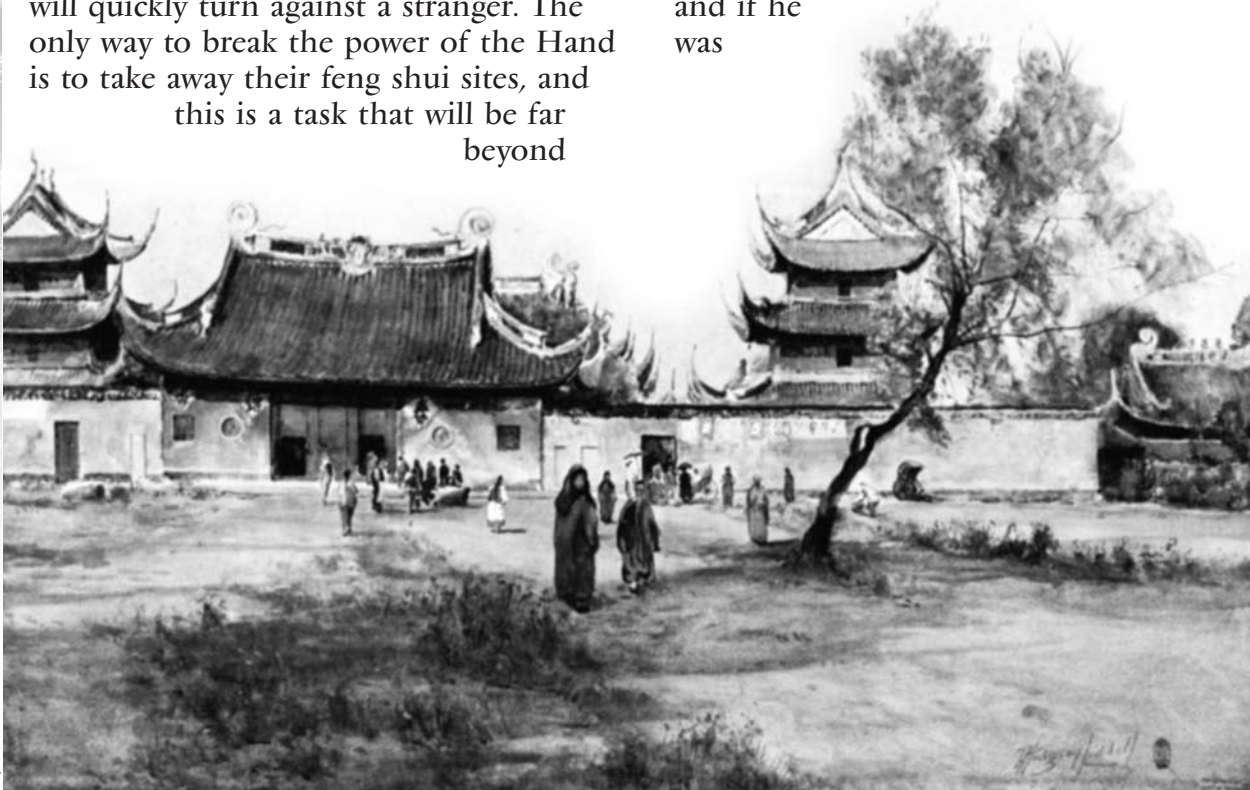
### Restoring the Lost World

The following sections look at worlds that could emerge as a result of Quan Lo's actions. But how do the PCs restore the vanished world they know and love? It won't be an easy task. The paths to 69 AD are watched by Hand monks (use the instant monks provided in Chapter Five), and the guards have been warned to watch for people wearing strange clothes or speaking in an unusual manner. The villagers remember the horrors of the Lotus, and they have been told that these strangers wish to bring back the nights of monsters and ghosts. As a result, all hands will quickly turn against a stranger. The only way to break the power of the Hand is to take away their feng shui sites, and this is a task that will be far beyond

even the most capable group of PCs; a handful of people simply don't have the manpower required to guard a dozen sites, even if they can capture them in the first place. The PCs will need to find allies. But who can they trust? Is the devil you know truly better than the devil you don't?

One possible path is to convince the agents of the Hand that their actions have caused more harm than good. A scenario like "Crouching Tiger, Mad Max" (later in this chapter) will be just as horrifying to the monks of the Hand as it is to the PCs. But the monks are fanatics, and can't always be expected to listen to reason. Can the PCs find forces within the Guiding Hand willing to work with them to try to restore some sort of balance to the world? Or do the monks believe that 1,800 years of peace and prosperity justify the horrors that lie in the future?

There is one final possibility: Kill Quan Lo and his closest circle of advisors. The vision of the Perfect Master guides the Hand, and if he was







lost that structure would collapse. But while this might help to disrupt the Guiding Hand's stranglehold on the future, it would have dire consequences of its own. Directed by the wisdom of Quan Lo, the Hand works to quietly create a world of discipline and justice. If the Perfect Master becomes the Perfect Martyr, the subtle actions of the Hand could be replaced by brutal strikes and vengeful death squads. PCs rejoicing about the successful restoration of the contemporary juncture may start to look at things another way after kung fu masters begin to systematically destroy everything they care about...

## Critically Shifted

Even similar actions in the same juncture can result in wildly different consequences. In the Secret War, this means futures unfold that turn history, philosophy, and reason on their ears. Here are three very different examples of how the Guiding Hand's good intentions can screw up the future.


## The Harmonious Kingdom

In this critical shift scenario, Quan Lo's dream has come to fruition. Following the feng shui coup the forces

of the Hand consolidated their hold over China, ensuring that Neo-Confucian values were firmly entrenched in society. Then the Wandering Teachers and Seeds of Rebellion spread out across the entire world. Whenever possible civilizations were peacefully integrated into the Harmonious Kingdom, but chi-wielding monks and the Virtuous Legion were always prepared to remove obstacles to the spread of Confucian values. Ultimately the entire world fell under the dominion of the Perfect Emperor. As magic never dominated the world, the Four Monarchs never rose to power and the transformed animals never joined forces to vanquish them. With no need for technology, the dark future of the Architects never came to be. For a thousand years the world has been a place of peace and discipline – and there is no reason to assume that it will change in the next few days or the next few centuries.

## Description

The rulers of the Harmonious Kingdom place great value on tradition. What need is there for guns or engines when the hand and heart are strong enough? As a result, there are few differences between 69 AD and the future junctures. Initially PCs may believe that they are in the 69 juncture; architectural style, building materials, and fashions are the same, and the few guards to be seen on the streets are armed with staves or tonfa. The greatest difference is the sheer size of cities and villages. The second key difference is demeanor and attitude. With only a few exceptions, the people of the Harmonious Kingdom are devoted to the Neo-Confucian traditions of the Guiding Hand. Consider the precepts of the Superior Man presented in Chapter Two. All citizens – from the peasant, to the



craftsman, to the courtier — strive to act with modesty and with virtue. Each is satisfied and at peace, free from anxiety and fear, knowing his place in society and devoted to fulfilling this duty. This can be quite unsettling to someone from the anarchic future. A society without violence, where everyone is working together for the common good, may seem unnatural. PCs may suspect mind control or other nefarious forces at work, but in fact people simply know no other way of life.

With that said, there are still pockets of darkness in paradise. Everyone knows the laws of the land, and everyone is expected to abide by them. Any infraction, from murder to rude speech, will be harshly punished. Technological research and mystical dabbling are both outlawed; the powers of the Hand have no intention of letting the forces that once ran wild corrupt their perfect realm. A few people have broken free from the system to explore science or magic. Their hidden communities are scattered across the world. Due to their extreme isolation and lack of resources, these scholars and mystics have made little progress over the centuries. In order to survive, many become bandits and prey on the Harmonious communities. This is the one discordant note that occasionally disrupts the peace of the realm.

The kingdom is ruled by the Perfect Emperor. His governors and ministers are selected through Confucian tradition, and government is highly efficient. As the world is largely at peace, there is no army as such. However, there is a police force — the Wardens of Peace — to deal with bandits and improper behavior of any sort. The typical warden is armed with a staff or club, trained in martial arts but without any chi abilities. Usually the Wardens can handle the minor problems of daily life (driving away bandits, lashing an impudent stranger, and so on). When

troubles arise that are too great for the Wardens of Peace — like innerwalkers — the monks of the Guiding Hand emerge from the shadows. Few citizens even know that the Guiding Hand exists, but whenever the Secret War threatens the security of the realm the Hand will come to its defense.

The Harmonious Kingdom stretches across the entire world. However, travel is not encouraged; most people spend their entire lives within the span of a few miles. Thus the strange appearance of PCs is noted but does not immediately draw suspicion. They are assumed to be citizens from a distant province, who have chosen to travel for some reason. Any sort of behavior that strays from tradition, however, not only calls attention to the PCs, but also brings on the Wardens of Peace and — potentially — the monks of the Hand.

### Junctures

The Harmonious Kingdom covers the 1850, Contemporary, and 2056 junctures. By its nature, it is an extremely stagnant setting. The only major differences are in the forces that the Hand maintains in each era and the innerwalkers who seek to interfere with their operations.

#### 1850

Quan Lo remains in the 1850 juncture, basking in the beauty of the kingdom and coordinating the defense of the timeline. The world at large has no idea of his importance; Quan Lo prefers to live in obscurity. In the Temple of the Shaolin Dragon, Quan Lo trains the innerwalkers who guard the 69 AD juncture and monitor the other time periods. Quan Lo and the other innerwalkers of the Hand remember the world that went before,





and are determined to preserve the Harmonious Kingdom.

## Contemporary

Ho Shen oversees the operations of the Hand in the Contemporary era. While Shen has embraced the new world, his son Ho Wah Bo finds the stagnant nature of the Harmonious Kingdom to be stifling; he has occasionally helped the rebel scholars and spends a great deal of time in the Netherworld. It is possible that he could be recruited to help the PCs, although this will take some doing; despite his distaste for the new world, he is still loyal to his family.

## 2056

Although the dark future of the Buro has been completely erased from history, the innerwalkers of the Architects continue to haunt this era, seeking to raise the spirit of rebellion among the rogue scholars. As the 1850 juncture is quite secure, Quan Lo has dispatched many of his most gifted agents to this realm. In particular, Wong Fei Hong has been tasked with locating and eliminating the remnants of the Architects before they can cause any further harm to the people.

## Power Players

The factions — or what's left of them — continue to operate within the Harmonious Kingdom. Like everything else, though, they've changed. Here's how.

### The Guiding Hand

Quan Lo and his agents are pleased with the world that they have created. Now they simply need to ensure that no


one interferes with it. The 1850 juncture remains the center of Hand training operations, while the bulk of its forces are directed towards maintaining the security of the feng shui sites and Netherworld portals in the 69 AD juncture. Quan Lo considers all innerwalkers (aside from agents of the Hand) to be threats to the kingdom, and any Secret Warrior found by the Hand can expect harsh treatment.

### The Architects of the Flesh

Although the Buro has been erased from history, the Architects are still a force to be reckoned with. The Biomass Reprocessing Center in the Netherworld has become the fortress of the Architect innerwalkers, and the scientists there are building a new arsenal of arcanowave weaponry. They are trying to restore the corps of abominations lost in the shift and rebuild a power base in the 2056 juncture, but with the heavy security blocking access to 69 AD, it's a difficult task. Many of the top Buro agents have been laterally reincarnated as rebellious scientists and bandits, and the Architect innerwalkers are attempting to organize these dissidents into a force that can help them move against the Hand in 69 AD.

### The Ascended

The innerwalkers of the Ascended mourn the loss of power and influence, but they would rather see the world in the hands of Quan Lo than under the thumb of Gao Zhang or Bonengal. The majority have accepted the situation and settled in their native time periods, living quiet lives. However, a few impetuous innerwalkers are determined to restore the world to what it once was — and these agents could become valuable allies for the PCs. If the heroes have any old enemies among the Ascended, this is an



excellent opportunity to force the PCs to work with their hated foes!

### **The Dragons**

Wong Fei Hong has tried to make peace with the surviving Dragon innerwalkers, but most of the Dragons are disturbed by the stagnation and harsh discipline that dominates the Harmonious Kingdom. Some work within the kingdom, striving to protect the free thinkers from the Wardens of Peace. Others try to maintain order within the Netherworld, protecting the new wave of displaced people from the many dangers of the Inner Kingdom. The Dragons could help the PCs to break the power of the Hand in the 69 AD juncture, but their resources are stretched to the limit and it falls to the PCs to do the heavy lifting.

### **The Eaters of the Lotus**

In the battle for control of 69 AD, the Hand crippled the eunuchs of the Lotus. You have to decide whether the Lotus still exists as a significant force. If not, its agents may have dispersed, joining forces with one of the Four Monarchs or the surviving Architects of the Flesh. The eunuchs desperately want to reclaim their former power, but few people are willing to help them achieve this goal.

### **The Four Monarchs**

Some of the Monarchs are taking advantage of the chaos by recruiting agents from the displaced innerwalkers; former members of the Lotus, Architects, or even the Dragons or the Ascended may decide to seek shelter in the service of one of the Monarchs. But this provides many opportunities to disrupt the balance of power between the Monarchs themselves, and the PCs may be caught in

the middle of a complex scheme of these powerful sorcerers. With the reduced influence of magic in the outer world, the power of sorcery has surged dramatically, making the Monarchs even deadlier foes.

### **The Jammers**

For the Jammers, everything has changed and nothing has changed. The technological nightmare of the Buro has vanished, but the strict discipline of the Harmonious Kingdom is just as bad. This simply reiterates the fact that feng shui sites are the key to the enslavement of reality and that they must be destroyed. One difficulty is that many of the Jammer innerwalkers are now trapped in the Netherworld. With the Architects erased from history, anything derived from their science — like Battlechimp Potemkin — was lost if it wasn't in the Inner Kingdom. A second problem is that powerful weapons and explosives are far more difficult to acquire in the Harmonious Kingdom. But that won't stop the Jammers!

## **Personal History**

One of the key elements of a critical shift is the fact that the personal history of a PC changes to match the new world. In extreme cases, she may actually suffer lateral reincarnation; as far as everyone else in the world is concerned, she has a different name, different parents, and so on. This section provides general guidelines as to how characters of various types might fit into the Harmonious Kingdom. These are only guidelines, and do not cover every type — use your own judgment to make the best choice for your PCs.





## **Abomination, Ghost, Supernatural Creature**

As they hail from either the Netherworld or the 69 AD juncture, supernatural creatures and ghosts will not suffer any sort of altered history; the 69 AD juncture is the source of change, and is thus unaffected by the critical shift. However, the removal of the Architects from history causes abominations to revert to supernatural creatures.

## **Ex-Special Forces, Karate Cop, Maverick Cop, Monster Hunter**

These characters have served with the Wardens of Peace, and may still be a part of the organization. Monster Hunters and Ex-Special Forces characters are tied to special units that deal with transformed animals and rogue sorcerers.

## **Magic Cop, Sorcerer**

Magic is a corruption of chi, and the Guiding Hand persecutes anyone who dabbles in the mystic arts. These characters have rebelled against the doctrines of the Perfect Emperor and fled the cities to study the ancient arts in seclusion. A magic cop may have once been a Warden of Peace who turned to the study of magic to battle rogue sorcerers; a noble goal, but still a violation of the laws of the Hand.

## **Martial Artist, Ninja, Old Master**

Only members of the Guiding Hand are taught fu powers. These characters are most likely agents of the Hand. This could be a useful connection, or it could be very dangerous, as the other Hand agents are always alert for innerwalker activity.

## **Techie**

This character is a member of one of the rebellious communities that have abandoned the kingdom to pursue science. Of course, this “science” is extremely limited; a flintlock rifle would be an astonishing innovation in this world.

## **Transformed Animal**

While the Guiding Hand no longer fights the Ascended, transformed animals still deny their *li*, and the Hand forces the reversion of any that they capture. As a result, transformed animals do everything in their power to avoid drawing attention to themselves. A PC who had been fighting the Ascended has now been fighting the Hand instead, rebelling against the force that would destroy his people.

## **Game Effects**

The primary effect of the shift is the loss of all modern technology. Guns are replaced with bows or throwing stars (although a techie might possess a home-made black-powder pistol). If they do not possess actual gun schticks, PCs may find their firearms have been replaced by swords or tonfa. A fancy sportscar will become a horse. Other technology — cell phones, explosives, arcanowave devices — simply evaporate. If the shift occurs while the PCs are in the Netherworld, they keep their equipment until they leave; you have to decide if it reverts back when they return to the Inner Kingdom.

Magic has been suppressed in all junctures. This imposes a juncture modifier of  $-2$  to all four junctures, with an astonishing  $+8$  modifier in the Netherworld itself.



# Crouching Tiger, Mad Max

In the Harmonious Kingdom, the study of Chi and Fu powers is limited to members of the Guiding Hand, and these abilities are strictly used to defend the timeline against enemy innerwalkers. But some members of the Hand believe that all people should learn to harness the power of chi. Initially this reality was identical to the Harmonious Kingdom. But over the course of centuries, the study of chi spread throughout the populace. And this proved to be the undoing of the kingdom. How do you maintain order and discipline in a world where half of the citizens are armies of one?

## Description

The reality of this shift is superficially similar to the Harmonious Kingdom. Technological development has been suppressed, and at a quick glance it still looks like ancient China. The world is in a state of constant warfare, and PCs may discover

burnt-out or abandoned cities. Behavior and culture varies by juncture, as described below. One of the key differences that can be found across all junctures is the prevalence of chi powers. At least half of the population has some ability to manipulate chi energy. The instant monks presented in Chapter Five are examples of everyday citizens, while dedicated monks and warriors have abilities to match Leung Mui or even Wong Fei Hong. Exceptionally gifted warriors can have up to 30 fu powers; even Quan Lo can find himself outmatched by the inhabitants of the world he has created.

## Junctures

Crouching Tiger, Mad Max covers the 1850, Contemporary, and 2056 junctures.

### 1850

Tensions have been building for centuries and there have been a number of minor wars, but today the kingdom is finally on the verge of collapse. People are dividing based on schools of thought, national borders, skin color, and almost any other difference that

can be imagined. The Guiding







Hand itself has fractured into dozens of competing schools, each with its own views about the proper interpretation of Neo-Confucian principles. And with the feng shui sites divided among the sects, no single group has the power to enforce its rule on society.

Quan Lo maintains control of the Temple of the Shaolin Dragon, and the Hand innerwalkers are loyal to the original Perfect Master. But the Guiding Hand and the study of neo-Confucian principles have been a part of society for almost 1,800 years, and many other masters have come and gone. The people of the present do not recognize Quan Lo as the founder of the Hand. And as impressive as Quan Lo's powers are, he and his followers are no match for the fu masters of other sects.

Quan Lo is doing what he can to hold the world together, but even he sees the futility of his actions. He is furious with his failure, especially when he sees the anarchy that is to come. At the same time, he refuses to let the other forces of the Secret War steal his original victory. As a result, his loyal warriors continue to defend this reality and the 69 AD juncture from other innerwalkers, as the Perfect Master tries to devise a way to draw victory from the ashes.

This juncture is dramatically fractured. Westerners are uncommon in China, and Western characters draw immediate hostility. PCs get in trouble for rude behavior, statements that go against the local school of thought, or use of magic, technology, or a style of kung fu that is not common in the region. Any sort of infraction results in a severe beating, potentially followed by imprisonment or a humiliating execution.

## Contemporary


In the last century, society has utterly collapsed. Most cities are burnt-out ruins. The world is dominated by gangs wielding mighty fu powers, which engage in never-ending battles over philosophical differences that are now almost forgotten. Anyone who can master chi manipulation can find a place in one of these bands; anyone else must cling to the ruins and hide from the predators. Authority is based entirely on fu power, and the warlords dominate their gangs with an astonishing array of chi abilities. Few of the warlords have any knowledge of the Secret War, but they are extremely territorial and fiercely protect their feng shui sites — and few innerwalkers have the power to compete with these gangs.

Strangers find this to be an extremely dangerous world. PCs who encounter a warband will be expected to offer homage and tribute to the local warlord — if they fail or show any signs of insolence, they may be beaten to death or brought to the warlord's camp to serve as entertainment.

While feng shui sites are well protected, the inhabitants of this juncture have little knowledge of the Netherworld itself, and it is fairly easy for an experienced innerwalker to slip in and out of this period.

## 2056

This period is virtually identical to the Contemporary juncture. There are even fewer people, but their mastery of fu powers is even greater. Those refugees without fu powers have begun to devise weapons to battle the warlords, and a few have developed black powder firearms. As in the Harmonious Kingdom, the Architect innerwalkers have started working with these rebels, arming them with weapons produced in the Biomass Processing



Center and trying to regain a foothold from which to fight the Hand.

## Power Players

Most groups play the same role in this reality as in the Harmonious Kingdom. The Eaters of the Lotus have been shattered and defeated; the Architects are building their power at the Biomass Processing Center; and the Jammers are still trying to destroy the feng shui sites to prevent yet another horrible reality.

### The Chi Warlords

There are hundreds of warlords scattered across the world, each wielding massive fu powers and holding at least one feng shui site. Most of these warlords know nothing about the Netherworld or the Secret War; they are only interested in maintaining their own personal power, promoting their own philosophy, or proving the superiority of their own style of kung fu.

### The Guiding Hand

As noted earlier, Quan Lo is furious with the state of the world. However, following the critical shift he lost almost all of his followers, retaining only his corps of innerwalkers. For now, he is simply defending the timeline from other Secret Warriors and trying to devise a solution. It is possible that he could be convinced to willingly relinquish his hold on the 69 AD juncture. Such an act would need to involve an argument appealing to Quan Lo's own beliefs — a brilliant thesis showing how the Superior Man has no choice in this situation.

### The Ascended

The transformed animals already in the world have formed their own warbands, using chi powers and their own innate abilities. Initially these gangs fought one other, along with everyone else in the world. But the former innerwalkers of the Ascended are striving to unite these powerful warbands. If they succeed, they may be able to seize enough of the feng shui sites belonging to other gangs to gain control of a juncture. They may also attempt to bring the super-powered fu warriors of future junctures back to fight in 69 AD. Among other things, this means that even if the timeline reverts there will be new innerwalkers possessing the massive chi powers of the lost timeline.

### The Dragons

Those Dragons who were not innerwalkers are all members of chi warbands — but unlike the Ascended, there is no common bond that the innerwalkers can use to rekindle old alliances. The Dragon innerwalkers are concentrating their efforts on 69 AD, trying to find some way to break the power of the Hand and undo the horror of the future.

## Personal History

For the most part, the PCs are refugees in this world. Lacking the chi powers of the warlords, they have hidden in the ruins and struggled to survive. Friends and loved ones are probably dead, although a few may now be deadly enemies. Characters with significant chi abilities could be part of a warband; if you take this approach, the other party members have been captured by the PC's gang,





leaving the heroes to find a way to free the other PCs from their newfound “comrades.” An even stranger approach would be to make all of the PCs part of a warband. In this scenario, the PCs are expected to possess fu powers that they can no longer remember how to use — which can lead to difficult situations.

Feuds and enemies from previous lives can easily be translated into enemy gangs in this world. A character once on the run from the Ascended may be pursued by a gang of transformed animals. A former hitman may have abandoned a gang to try to help refugees. This world has been at war for centuries — provide the PCs with a history that ties into this.

## Game Effects

As with the Harmonious Kingdom, there is no advanced technology in this world. The Juncture Modifier is  $-2$  in all eras, and  $+8$  in the Netherworld.

# The Confucian States of America


*Think Confucian™.*

This shift occurs not as a result of actions in 69 AD, but in the contemporary era. To the shock and surprise of many, Ho Shen’s actions in the Contemporary era proved to be even

more successful than Quan Lo’s work in the past. By gaining control of a number of feng shui sites and tapping into the fad-based mentality that drives the United States, Ho Shen managed to make Neo-Confucianism the Next Big Thing. Soon there were Neo-Confucian boy bands, Neo-Confucian clothing lines, and ultimately a Neo-Confucian party that successfully won the presidency of the United States. With the power of Chi swaying the course of history, the new president instituted sweeping changes in government policy. Positions would be held based on pure tests of merit as opposed to the will of the people.

One of the first effects of this was for “Grandfather” to be appointed President For Life. The new CSA closed its borders, having no desire to interact with corrupt outer world. A chi-based defense shield was developed at what was once NORAD; a corps of dedicated monks raised a barrier of pure harmonious thought around the continent. And none too soon. International tensions continued to grow in the world beyond, ultimately resulting in a terrible nuclear war. The Harmony Shield protected the CSA from the devastation that has all but eliminated the rest of humanity, and the Confucian States continue their peaceful, disciplined existence.

Of course, there is a darkness at the center of this harmony. There is a force even greater than that of Confucian thought: money. Within years of its foundation, the CSA was corrupted by corporate interests. Grandfather has actually been dead for almost a decade; his televised appearances are artificially generated images. On the surface, it’s a



more pleasant world than the Buro, but underneath the veneer it still comes down to Consumers and Control.

### Description

Unlike the first two shifts, the CSA was developed in a world of advanced technology. Architecture, transportation, and communication are all ultramodern, although a pleasing, unifying sensibility underlies all forms of industrial design. Pollution has been brought under control and gardens, groves, and pools have been spread throughout urban areas to help restore the wounded chi of the land. The first impression that PCs have of the world is how fresh and clean it is, how vibrant the colors are and how full of life the people appear to be. People dress in odd outfits that combine elements of traditional Chinese clothing with modern power suits and daring fashions. Just as in the Harmonious Kingdom, the citizens are unfailingly courteous and polite, and strive to live by Confucian ideals. Personal property is kept to a minimum; people spend most of their income on products designed to help them better understand the principles of the Perfect Master and the Superior Man. Studying the Blue Principle? Then you should be drinking berry-blasted Popsi Blue™, fortified with 10 essential herbs that will open your mind to the true meaning of the Principle of Obscurement! Everything from clothing to food to antiperspirant has been connected to Confucian philosophy. If you don't have the latest goods, you'll never truly understand the Master's words — and heaven forbid that the neighbors should have a deeper understanding of the principles than you do.

A few of the other major differences in this world are the lack of private transportation and personal firearms. Long distance travel is discouraged, and within cities people travel from place to place on environmentally safe hoverbuses and jitneys. The Presidential Guard and the Wardens of Peace (who serve the same role here as in the Harmonious Kingdom) have access to guns and chi-powered weaponry, but these are only brought into play to deal with great threats. Shock-tonfa, tasers, and other less lethal weapons are preferred options. As with the other realms, discipline is of primary importance in the CSA. Rude behavior or similar infractions result in painful shock therapy. Serious violators are brain-wiped and sent to reeducation centers, ultimately returning to serve society in menial roles.

Television and animated billboards are very common in the CSA. These are primarily used to deliver educational programs teaching Neo-Confucian virtues, and advertisements for new products the viewer needs to help him down the path to enlightenment. Often the two are indistinguishable. The kindly face of Grandfather can be seen everywhere, dispensing wisdom on spiritual and philosophical matters and hocking a vast array of merchandise.

The true leaders of the CSA are only beginning to learn about the Secret War. They understand the power of feng shui, and their sites are kept under heavy guard. But the Netherworld is a new discovery, and one they wish to exploit. With most of the world a nuclear wasteland, the past is the only new market left for the corporate masterminds of the CSA, and they intend to exploit it. The Wardens of Peace have been instructed to keep a close eye out for possible innerwalkers, and any





Secret Warriors who are captured can expect painful interrogation.

are the Ascended (who they fight on the corporate battlefield) and the Guiding Hand itself.

## Junctures

This critical shift affects only the 2056 juncture. It is based on Ho Shen's actions in the Contemporary juncture; the question is what the critical trigger was. It may be as simple as Shen obtaining a certain number of feng shui sites, or it may be based on an ill-considered corporate alliance — a deal that Shen believed would provide him with vital resources but that truly took control out of his hands. Grandfather may turn out to be Ho Wah Bo, or he may be some unknown stooge; it makes little difference, as he's already dead by the time the PCs arrive in 2056.

## Power Players

The Four Monarchs and the Eaters of the Lotus have no interest in this future; the Monarchs are wrapped up in their own games, and the Lotus need to maintain their position in the past. The Jammers still see a world manipulated by feng shui, and only wish to destroy it. The other groups are described below.

### Grandfather

"Grandfather" is actually a cabal of powerful corporations hidden in the shadows of the CSA. In addition to selling all kinds of Confucian crap, Grandfather has been researching ways to use technology to funnel Chi or to reproduce natural Chi abilities. Their scientists are very interested in studying the traditions of the past, and also wish to expand their operations beyond the 21st century and into the past. Their greatest enemies

### The Architects of the Flesh


Once again, the Architects have been wiped from history. The Architect inner-walkers are hiding at the Biomass Reprocessing Center, rebuilding their arsenal from the stuff of nightmares and plotting their return. As a result of the critical shift, most of the other Architect scientists and agents have actually ended up working for Grandfather. Instead of developing arcanowave devices, they are developing the technolochi™ that fuses fu power and traditional science.

### The Ascended

The Ascended have no real interest in the CSA itself. They are more concerned with controlling the past; if they can maintain their power in the Contemporary juncture, the CSA will never come to pass. Of course, it is entirely possible that Grandfather is a splinter group of the Ascended — and that one of the major factors leading up to the creation of the CSA is an alliance between Ho Shen and this Ascended cabal. In this case, Grandfather agents can include transformed animals armed with technolochi devices.

### The Guiding Hand

The Guiding Hand is split on the subject of the CSA. Quan Lo and his followers consider it to be an abomination — especially the hideous fusing of technology and chi. On top of that, China has been atomized! But Ho Shen may see the CSA as an acceptable future. People are happy, the world is prosperous, and the populace is dedicated to the principles of



Confucius. It's certainly better than the Buro — why try to destroy it? Mind you, this assumes that Shen does not realize the true hypocritical nature of Grandfather; by the time that he learns about the corporate masters, they may have established their own beachhead in the past.

In general, Quan Lo continues to focus his efforts on the past; if he can affect changes in 69 AD, that should wipe out the abomination that Ho Shen has created. But if Grandfather begins to threaten the past, the Guiding Hand devotes its full power to destroying the aberration.

## Personal History

The only characters affected by this critical shift are those who hail from the 2056 juncture.

### Abominations

Abominations become supernatural creatures, as described earlier in this chapter. Grandfather has yet to venture back to the 69 AD juncture.

### Cyborgs

These characters become bizarre creations of technolochi, Grandfather's attempt to artificially recreate the powers of spiritual masters. See the game effects section for a more detailed description of technolochi.

### Monster Hunters

Monster hunters receive technolochi devices in place of arcanowave counterparts. They're an initial strike force created by Grandfather to travel through the Netherworld and capture chi masters

from other time periods, allowing the scientists in the future to discover new techniques that they can adapt using technolochi.

### Martial Artists, Ninja, and Old Masters

Adepts of the ancient arts work for a branch of the government — the Presidential Guard, for example — or they may be private citizens. Martial arts competitions are a major part of the entertainment industry, and a skilled fighter could be a professional athlete.

### Other Characters

Characters of other types should simply be adapted to the new world. A spy, a thief, or a scrappy kid can still have fundamentally the same background, you may just have to change a name or two. There are few straight-up criminal organizations, but there are a number of competing corporations within Grandfather; the killer who used to work for the Mob or the Lodge is now a corporate hitman instead.

## Game Effects

This shift does not take technology away. It does remove any sort of arcanowave device; which is instead replaced by technolochi, a form of technology that channels and manipulates chi energy. Technolochi can have extremely powerful effects, such as the Harmony Shield that protects the CSA from nuclear fallout. On a personal level, a technolochi device can duplicate any single Fu power. A technolochi device plugs into a socket, just like an arcanowave device. While it has the lim-





itation of being an object, a technolochi device has the power to gather and store chi energy. Each device can store 3 points of Chi or the amount required to use it's fu power once, whichever is greater. This chi can only be used to power the device, and it regenerates at a rate of one point every 8 hours.

Other common devices include the shock tonfa (Str +5 damage, all damage is recovered after an hour has passed) and chi guns. These latter devices convert the wielder's Chi into lethal projectiles. Chi blasts have no effect on non-living targets. There are two standard models, the Red Tiger handgun (12/2/8) and the White Dragon rifle (15\*\*/8/25).

Reloading one of these weapons uses 1 point of Chi and 2 shots; the wielder must possess a technolochi port to accomplish this task.

Technolochi devices are extremely beautiful. They are smooth and curved, formed from ceramics and tough resins. They are generally bright colors; the color of an object matches that of the principle it is most closely connected to.

Grandfather has no interest in supporting the power of magic, and as a result this version of the 2056 juncture has a Juncture Modifier of -2 for Sorcery effects.

# MY MASTER, MY FOE

by Chris Pramas





# My Master, My Foe

**Premise:** The PCs accompany Kar Fai, co-founder of the Dragons, on a diplomatic mission to the Darkness Pagoda.

**The Twist:** The Guiding Hand has also sent a mission to the Darkness Queen. Its leader is Yim Ning Yee, Kar Fai's former master who has sworn to kill him.

**The Climax:** The PCs and Yim's team fight it out in a ritual combat, with the threat of human sacrifice over the losers' heads.

## Backstory

In the wake of Operation Killdeer, the Dragons are in a bad way. Ideally, the PCs will be stepping forward to fill the shoes of Dragon legends like Mad Dog McCroun and Jack Donovan, but the Dragon leadership is scrambling to recoup their losses in the meantime. Previously, they had tried to stay away from the Queen of the Darkness Pagoda, despite her avowed hatred of the Ascended, because of her brutality and penchant for human sacrifice. Recently,

however, Kar Fai decided that a temporary alliance with Ming I might be worthwhile, and that he should go himself to feel her out about such an arrangement. On his way to the Darkness Pagoda, Kar Fai and his few followers were ambushed by Ascended agents and all of his team were killed. Kar Fai now finds himself in need of rescue and of a new team to bring to the Darkness Pagoda. Hopefully, the PCs fit the bill.

## About the Story

This story begins in the Netherworld, so your PCs by necessity must already be Innerwalkers. It also helps if they are already members of the Dragons, perhaps working for the Prof, although this is not necessary. This adventure could be used as a way to get them involved with the Dragons, but may require a bit of tweaking. It largely depends on your players and how willing they are to roll with the punches. In true cinematic style, they

should just be willing to go with the story. If not, it may be best to wait until later in your campaign.

## GMC Notes

Here are descriptions of the two main GMCs: Yim Ning Yee and Ming I, Queen of the Darkness Pagoda.

### Yim Ning Yee

Yim Ning Yee is a Shaolin Master of the Guiding Hand. He was pushing forty when Quan Lo came to power, and now is in his sixties. Nonetheless, his kung fu remains strong and his chi flow pure. He is known in the Guiding Hand as a superlative teacher, and many of his students have gone on to renown. The past few years, however, have found him increasingly obsessed with his one great failure: Kar Fai. He had considered Kar Fai to be his greatest student and probable successor, but Kar Fai threw it all back in his face when he left the Guiding Hand and co-founded the Dragons. Now Yim cannot seem to escape from his failure. He swore to kill Kar Fai himself and has spent much time searching for his renegade protégé. As a result, his remaining students have suffered and his teaching is not what it used to be. This has not gone unnoticed within the Hand, and Yim's duties have been adjusted accordingly. The primary reason that Yim Ning Yee is leading the mission to the Darkness Queen is that Quan Lo expects it to fail. Still, the waters must be tested, and Yim reputation makes him an excellent emissary.

Yim Ning Yee usually dresses in white robes with a golden sash. His

### Yim Ning Yee

**Sample Dialogue:** "Loyalty is like a sword. Once broken, it cannot be mended."

**Attributes:** Bod 5, Chi 8, Mnd 6, Ref 6

**Skills:** Info/Neo-Confucianism 15, Info/Secret War 10, Leadership 12, Martial Arts 18, Medicine 13, Teaching 15

**Schticks [Fu Powers]:** Awesome Downpour, Backlash of the Turtle, Beak of the Crane, Clothed in Life, Coil of the Snake, Crane Stance, Eyes of the Snake, Flying Windmill Kick, Gathering of the Clouds, Lunge of the Snake, Natural Order, Prodigious Leap, Signature Weapon, Slither of the Snake, Strike of the Snake, Talon of the Crane, Wing of the Crane

**Weapons:** kick (7), punch (6), three-section staff (11)

long white hair is pulled back and tied with a black cord. Although quiet, Yim is exceptional intense. His calm pronouncements carry an indisputable moral weight and he can win screaming matches without ever raising his voice. Most of the time he is composed and courteous. Only when the topic of Kar Fai (or Kar Fai himself, as we'll soon see) comes up does he lose his demeanor. He simply carries too much anger and resentment towards his former student to keep it locked up. His inability to come to terms with his one great failure may cost him more than he bargains for.

### The Queen of the Darkness Pagoda

Ming I, the Queen of the Darkness Pagoda, is a figure well-known to denizens of the Netherworld. Although few people have anything good to say about her, everyone fears her. A full description of her can be found on page 183 of the *Feng Shui* rulebook, but a few items bear repeating. Most impor-





tantly for our purposes is that she enjoys manipulating people, which is what she spends most of this adventure doing. She usually doesn't care how a situation turns out, unless it directly affects her. She derives great pleasure, however, from setting up situations and watching her victims react, especially when it involves scheming and backstabbing. Perhaps because of her own betrayal and murder of her father, she has a special fascination with backstabbing. In the Darkness Pagoda, it's certainly a way of life.

If the PCs have already played the adventure "The Shape of Guilt" in *Marked for Death*, then it is possible that the Darkness Queen already dislikes the PCs. If this is the case, you might want to modify the adventure a bit to take her enmity into account.


You should not need statistics for Ming I for this adventure. Even if PCs decided she was a manipulative schememistress, attacking her in the Darkness Pagoda would be a colossally stupid idea. If it does come up, you can pretty much let Ming I do as she pleases to the PCs. They simply cannot match her power level, at least not yet.

Not to mention the hundreds upon hundreds of minions she commands in the Darkness Pagoda. Of course, having a limb of pure darkness driven through your heart sure would be an interesting way to die...

## Opening Scene

The PCs are traveling through the Netherworld for reasons of their own when they hear gunshots up ahead. Rushing forward to investigate, they find a grim scene. The PCs are on the edge of a Netherworld graveyard. There is a bewildering array of graves here, spanning times and cultures too many to count. Traditional Chinese ancestor shrines sit next to Louisiana bayou mausoleums. The graveyard itself is quite large, and many of the graves are deteriorating due to the nature of shap- ing. What draws their attention immediately though, are the dead bodies all over the place. There seem to be at least





ten deaders draped over various graves, some with guns still in their hands, others with assorted martial arts weapons. On top of a large mausoleum, two men are dueling furiously while other gun-armed men look on. One man is dressed in the robes of some kind of monk, while the other wears a form fitting suit of black and gray camo, including a mask, and fights with a knife. PCs who might know recognize the robed man as Kar Fai, co-founder of the Dragons. Despite the fact that the two seem to be dueling, the gun-armed men continue to shoot at the robed man, who is bleeding heavily. Most of the gun-armed guys look like off-the-shelf mooks: suits, dark glasses, and shotguns. Two, however, stand out. One is a big, bear of man with a full beard and a pistol in either hand. He is keeping watch while the mooks have their fun. The other man is in a black commando uniform and carries a submachinegun.

Impetuous PCs will help Kar Fai now. If your players require more prodding, the masked man will say something like, "Kar Fai, your time has come." The masked man is a transformed rat and Ascended agent named David Hughes, and he has orders to kill Kar Fai. As soon as the PCs get involved, he hits Kar Fai with a Disorienting Strike that takes him out of the fight. It is now up to the PCs to save him and deal with Hughes and his henchmen. Mayhem ensues.

## Ascended Assassins

David Hughes has been sent by the Unspoken Name to take care of Kar Fai. He is an efficient assassin but he is no martyr. If the fight is going against him, he will use his Lurk and Squeeze abilities to escape. Hughes is accompanied by Grigorei

### Cool Things That Can Happen During the Netherworld Grave Yard Fight

- Some of the gravestones are definitely heavable. Characters with a Str of 6 or better can pick these up and hurl them at a -2 AV penalty for damage of Str+6. Ouch.
- Some of the more elaborate grave have statues of angels and gargoyles on them. These could be Blasted or shot off, or knocked on people's heads.
- Fighting while leaping from grave to grave is a must. Prodigious Leap anyone?
- PC sorcerers unconcerned with morality could reanimate the corpses interred here. Always sure to liven things up.

### David Hughes

**Sample Dialogue:** "There is no escape; you've been marked for death."

**Attributes:** Bod 6, Chi 8 (For 10), Mnd 5 (Per 8), Ref 8

**Skills:** Deceit 12, Guns 12, Info/Secret War 10, Intrusion 13, Martial Arts 16

**Unique Schtick:** Hughes knows a more potent version of the Infect schtick that slowly debilitates the victim. If he hits with a unarmed attack and scores an outcome of 5 or better, the victim is infected. Within a few hours, they will fall unconscious and develop a fever. Each day they will lose one point of Bod until healed with Magic. Victims whose Bod reaches 0 are dead. This schtick has a shot cost of 3 and a chi cost of 7.

**Schticks [Transformed Animal Powers]:** Disorienting Strike (x2), Infect, Lurk (x6), Squeeze [Fu Powers]: Friend of Darkness, Dark's Soft Whisper, Signature Weapon (knife)

**Weapons:** punch (7), kick (8), knife (11)

### Unnamed Pledged Mooks

**Sample Dialogue:** "This ain't your fight, pal, so move along."

**Attributes:** Bod 6, Chi 0, Mnd 5, Ref 6

**Skills:** Guns 10, Intimidation 8, Martial Arts 8

**Weapons:** Mossberg Special Purpose shotgun (13/5/9), Glock 17 (10/1/17 + 1)





## Grigorei Zhukov

**Sample Dialogue:** "If you're interested in perestroika, I'd be happy to restructure your face."

**Attributes:** Bod 6 (Tgh 8), Chi 0 (For 3), Mnd 5 (Wil 7), Ref 6

**Skills:** Deceit 11, Guns 15, Info/Russian Mob 12, Intrusion 12, Martial Arts 12

**Schticks [Gun Powers]:** Both Guns Blazing, Fast Draw (X2), Lightning Reload, Signature Weapons (a pair of Makarov autoloaders)

**Weapons:** two Makarovs (13/2/8 + 1), punch (7), switchblade (8)

## Zack Bray

**Sample Dialogue:** "Look out, mack, I'm made in the USA."

**Attributes:** Bod 6, Chi 0 (Fu 6), Mnd 5, Ref 6 (Spd 7)

**Skills:** Driving 13, Guns 14, Info/Anti-terrorism 12, Martial Arts 14, Sabotage 12

**Schticks [Fu Powers]:** Claw of the Tiger, Tiger Stance [Gun Powers]: Both Guns Blazing, Eagle Eye Hair-Trigger Neck Hairs, Signature Weapon (H&K MP5 K)

**Weapons:** Heckler & Koch MP5 K (13/3/30), Ruger K89 (10/2/15 + 1)

Zhukov, a Pledged hitman from Russia, and Zack Bray, a Pledged Delta Force soldier on loan from Uncle Sam. Also present are four Pledged mooks per PC.

## Friends of the Dragon?

After the fight, Kar Fai thanks the PCs and gratefully accepts any healing they might be able to offer. Unbeknownst to him, he has been infected by David Hughes and his body has already begun to degenerate. No matter how much he is healed, he still looks slightly fevered. He insists that

he's all right, however, and that he must be on his way. He does, however, have one further favor to ask the PCs. You knew it was coming, didn't you?

Kar Fai sits down on a grave and addresses the PCs. He tells them that he was on his way to the Darkness Pagoda to meet with Ming I. After the disaster of Operation Killdeer, he feels that he needs some new allies and her hatred of the Ascended is well-known. He fears, however, that showing up wounded and alone would not make the best impression on her, and since his entourage has been killed, would it be too much trouble for them to accompany him to the Darkness Pagoda and act as his entourage?

PCs who are members of the Dragons already should leap at the chance to help Kar Fai. Others may need to be convinced. Kar Fai tells them that they don't really need to do much, they simply need to accompany him and look good. Unless trouble starts, of course, but Ming I is notorious for her draconian safety measures, so the Darkness Pagoda should be safe. If the PCs need further inducement, he can offer them money or equipment or training after the mission is over. No reasonable request will be refused. If this still isn't enough to entice them, tell your players to retire their characters and try again.

Kar Fai wants to leave as soon as possible, although he does insist on burying his friends. Once they set out, it is only a four hour journey through the Netherworld to reach the Darkness Pagoda. They are met by one of Ming I's patrols, who seem to be expecting them. The patrol leads them to the Pagoda.

# In the Darkness Pagoda

The Darkness Pagoda is truly impressive. Only someone who has been attuned to hundreds of feng shui sites, as Ming I was, could possibly hope to shape something so large. It looks like a cross between a traditional Chinese pagoda and an Aztec temple. The pinnacle is hundreds of feet in the air, and the structure looks quite imposing.

The patrol takes the PCs and Kar Fai inside and hands them over to the pagoda staff. Staffers in Aztec dress take them to their rooms, which are quite sumptuous and hold three people each. They are given a chance to wash and rest, and then are summoned to meet the Queen herself.

The Queen receives them in her great hall. The room is full of her warriors, many in the Eagle and Jaguar costumes of Aztec knights. The PCs are escorted forward to Ming I's throne, an enormous construction of silver and black lacquered wood. Resting atop the throne is the Queen of the Darkness Pagoda herself. She is a severe looking Chinese woman with long black hair, wearing an elaborate black dress hemmed in gold. Her right arm is made of pure darkness and looks rather imposing. Rumors say that she can level cities with that arm.

She will smile as the PCs approach and address Kar Fai. "Kar Fai, welcome to the Darkness Pagoda. You should have visited me long ago, but I promise not to hold that against you."

Kar Fai bows and thanks the Queen for her generous reception. The PCs

can see that he is sweating profusely and looks decidedly unwell. Ming I goes on. "You have come at a fortuitous time. I am entertaining another emissary and his entourage. Kar Fai, may I introduce Yim Ning Yee of the Guiding Hand."

An elderly looking man in white robes and a gold sash steps forward. When he and Kar Fai see each other, they both instantly move into martial arts stances. Yim Ning Yee sneers at Kar Fai, "I have waited too long for this moment, traitor!"

Just when it seems that a fight is going to break out in the middle of the throne room, Kar Fai begins to sway back and forth and then collapses to the floor, sweating and shaking.

Assuming no one does anything rash, like attack Yim Ning Yee, the Queen summons her healers and has Kar Fai attended to. When Kar Fai collapses, obviously quite ill, Yim drops his stance and relaxes. PCs who question him find out that he was Kar Fai's former master in the Guiding Hand and that he has sworn to kill Kar Fai. He is quite open about his desire to kill Kar Fai because he wants all to know what happens to those that betray the Guiding Hand. He does not plan to take advantage of a sick man, however, and is willing to postpone his vengeance to another day.

## What Now?

Unless the PCs strenuously object, Ming I has her healers take Kar Fai back to his room and attend to him. After an hour or so, they report that he has some kind of wasting disease. They were able to stop the infection with magic before it spread too far but Kar Fai will be out of it for a couple of days. If left unattended, he would have died in less than a week. If





the PCs insist on healing Kar Fai themselves, only magical healing has any effect. The Medicine skill is useless for this infection, coming as it does from a Transformed Animal.

After the her rather savage looking healers deliver their prognosis, the Queen comes to see the PCs in Kar Fai's room. She asks that they stay and enjoy her hospitality for a few days while Kar Fai recovers. She tells them that there are some rituals tomorrow that they are sure to find amusing and insists that they attend. Although phrased as an invitation, this is actually more of an order and she will not take no for an answer. After securing their promise to attend her the following, she retires to her chambers and suggests the PCs do the same. She also vouches for the safety of Kar Fai and the PCs. They can take whatever precautions they like concerning Kar Fai's safety. No one disturbs him that evening.

## The Intrigues of the Queen

Ming I likes to play games with those she considers to be her inferiors. Unfortunately for the PCs, they have just gotten caught up in one of her schemes. She had planned to set Kar Fai and his former master against each other, but cannot due to Kar Fai's current condition. So, she has turned her attention to the PCs. The following day she plans to set up a number of situations to test the mettle of the PCs. She tells herself that this is a practical exercise, since it is prudent to find out as much as possible about potential allies. However, she really just enjoys manipulating people and watching their response. In all of her little tests, she really doesn't care how they turn out, she only wants to watch how the action unfolds. Perhaps the

PCs actions will inform her decision about a possible alliance, but then again maybe not.

## The Feast of Three Rivers

The next day the PCs are woken at 9 am. The servants have brought them some exotic feathers and jewelry to wear to the festival, if they so choose. The servants explain, if asked, that today is the Festival of Three Rivers, which commemorates Ming I's first great victory in her wars of conquest. The battle took place at the juncture of three rivers, and Ming I's army swept the opposition away. This is commemorated by ritual duels between her favored warriors.

At 10:30 am the PCs are escorted into the great hall, where a sumptuous feast has been prepared. The PCs are seated at the Queen's left, while the Guiding Hand delegation is seated on her right. Today, Ming I wears a dress of darkest red with gold stitching. Yim Ning Yee again wears simple white robes with a gold sash. He is accompanied by four other monks, one of whom is a woman, who wear simple robes of green, yellow, and red. Other members of Ming I's court are also seated at the head table. Some of them wear Aztec style clothing and others wear embroidered Chinese robes. Her chamberlain introduces all the guests, including the PCs. The other Guiding Hand members are Wong Wah So (in green), Ma Hin (in yellow), Liu Jian Ping (man in red), and Li Wing Chun (woman in red). The list of Ming I's retainers is long, and the unfamiliar Aztec names all start to sound the same. For our purposes, their

names are unimportant and can be glossed over.

The feast itself lasts for two hours and includes such delicacies as peacock and sea turtle. The Queen engages in small talk and Netherworld gossip, and conveniently avoids any discussion of alliances or politics. The Guiding Hand members are willing to talk, but do so guardedly. PCs notice that Li Wing Chun drinks rather heavily while other Hand members do not drink at all. She seems to take her liquor quite well, however.

At noon the dueling begins. It begins simply enough, with warriors fighting with blunted weapons to earn the Queen's favor. Winners of each match receive a gold earring of a sword, which she pokes through the winners' ears herself, often drawing blood. Some of the warriors are Chinese and fight with spears and swords, while others are Aztec warriors who wear outlandish costumes bedecked with feathers and animal skins and wield Macauitl, wooden Aztec swords edged with obsidian. After an hour or so of martial contests, it is the sorcerers' turn. Chinese and Aztec sorcerers duke it out with flying flames and spectacular pyrotechnics. Sorcerers amongst the PCs notice that the spells cast, while looking quite impressive, are powered down versions of more powerful magics. Finally, the martial artists get

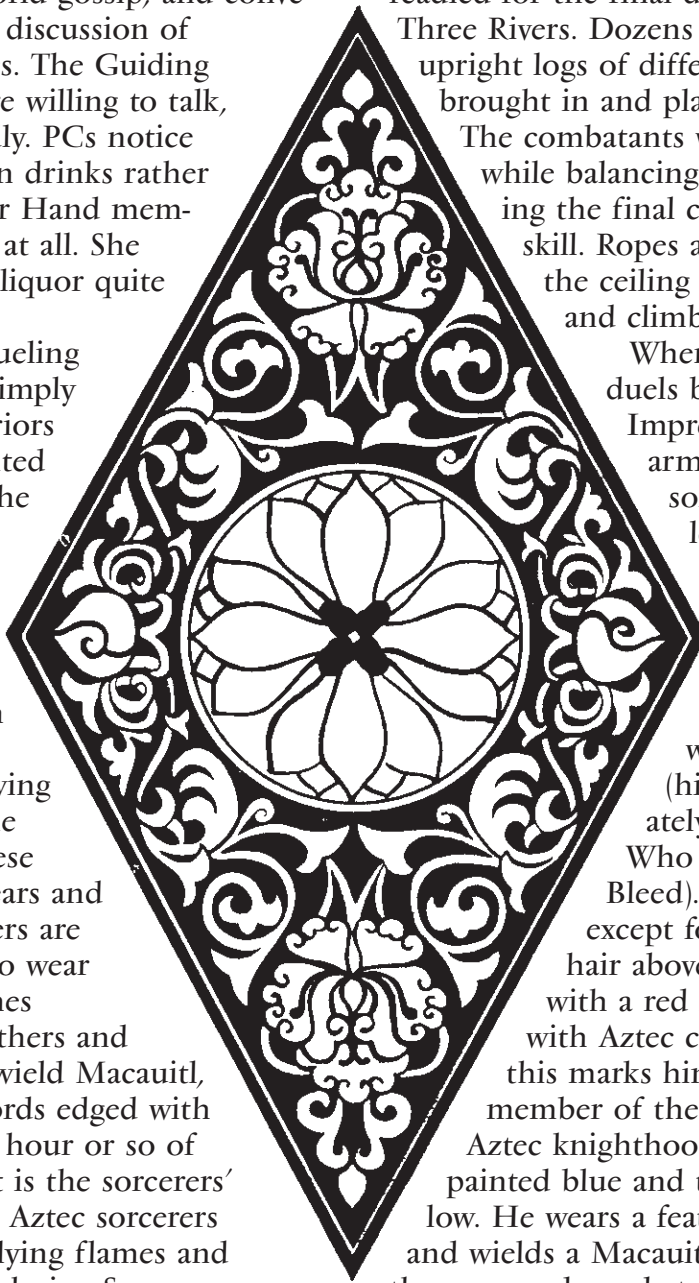
their turn, and an hour of unarmed combat follows.

After the initial contests, there is an hour break in which even more food is served and the floor of the Great Hall is readied for the final duels of the Feast of Three Rivers. Dozens and dozens of upright logs of different heights are brought in and planted into the floor. The combatants will have to fight while balancing on the logs, making the final contest a true test of skill. Ropes are also hung from the ceiling to allow swinging and climbing.

When all is prepared the duels begin again.

Impressive displays of armed, unarmed, and sorcerous combat follow. In the end, three combatants stand triumphant.

The winner of the armed combats is an Aztec warrior named Tízoc (his name, appropriately enough, means He Who Made People Bleed). His head is shaved except for a single tassel of hair above the left ear tied with a red ribbon. PCs familiar with Aztec culture realize that this marks him as a Shorn One, a member of the highest order of Aztec knighthood. Half his head is painted blue and the other half yellow. He wears a feathered war costume and wields a Macauitl. The winner of the unarmed combats is named Liang Ming, a giant of a woman who won many combats by crushing her victims. She wears a black martial arts outfit with a red sash. The winner of the sorcerous combats is an Aztec woman named Tiacpan.







She wears a hideous ceremonial mask made of wood and wears a sacrificial dagger at her belt.

The three winners approach the Darkness Queen after the duels are over. She praises their deeds and gives each a crystal lip piercing to commemorate their victory. Ming I personally pierces each of their lips, causing much blood to spill in the process. As she punctures their lips, she intones, "Blood for the gods, in memory of their sacrifice." The winners repeat the invocation, step back, and bow deeply. Tizoc then addresses the Darkness Queen. His speech, while seemingly spontaneous, is of course delivered on Ming I's orders.

"Great Queen, I thank you for your gift. Long may your reign endure. Although it may not be my place, I have something to say. Forgive me if I presume too much.

"Great Queen, your power and majesty are unmatched in the Inner Kingdom. Why then do unproven warriors sit at your high table? The monks of the Guiding Hand we know and

## Tiacpan

**Sample Dialogue:** "Your feeble magics cannot protect you from my Pulsing Heart of Scarlet Flame!"

**Attributes:** Bod 6, Chi 2 (Mag 9), Mnd 7, Ref 5 (Spd 7)

**Skills:** Deceit 12, Info/Aztec Theology 14, Info/Netherworld 10, Intimidation 11, Leadership 12, Sorcery 16

**Schticks [Sorcery Powers]:** Blast (base damage 11, special effects Conjured Weapons, Fire, and Transmutation), Heal, Movement, Summoning

**Cool Effect Names:** Blades of Smothering Darkness (Conjured Weapons), Searing Kiss of Life (Heal), Wings of Ever-Present Darkness (Movement), Puppets of the Omnipotent Power (Summoning)

## Neat Things That Could Happen During the Duel

- Fighting on the logs is tricky. Keeping balance counts as a continuous action, adding 1 to the shot cost of all actions. The logs can be knocked over, blasted out from under people's legs, or ripped up and used as weapons. There will probably be lots of Martial Arts checks once the logs start falling.
- Lighting the logs on fire is also an option. If some enterprising sorcerer does this, the fire naturally spreads incredibly quickly and the rest of the fight takes place amidst a blazing inferno. Ming I uses her own magic to prevent the fire from spreading to the rest of the Pagoda, but lets it burn on for the duration of the fight.
- The ropes can also be used for climbing, swinging, and tying people up. Swashbuckling PCs could swing out into the crowd and grab hot pots of food and other improvised weapons.

## Liang Ming

**Sample Dialogue:** "Little boys shouldn't play at kung fu."

**Attributes:** Bod 11, Chi 0 (Fu 8), Mnd 5, Ref 6 (Spd 5)

**Skills:** Info/Inner Walkers 9, Intimidation 14, Martial Arts 15

**Schticks [Fu Powers]:** Claw of the Tiger, Inner Strength, Prodigious Leap, Tiger Stance, Unyielding Tiger Stance, Vengeance of the Tiger

**Weapons:** kick (13), punch (12)

## Tizoc


**Sample Dialogue:** "Your blows are as weak as your spirit."

**Attributes:** Bod 7, Chi 2 (Fu 6), Mnd 5, Ref 7

**Skills:** Info/Netherworld 10, Intimidation 12, Martial Arts 16

**Schticks [Fu Powers]:** Abundant Leap, Flying Sword, Gathering of the Clouds, Loyal Steel, Prodigious Leap, Signature Weapon (Macauitl), Vertical Charge

**Weapons:** Highly ornate Macauitl named Shield-Cleaver (14), punch (8)



respect, but what of these other outsiders? Who are they to sit at your right hand? What deeds have they accomplished? Great Queen, I submit that they are not worthy and I ask that they prove themselves as we have: in battle. Let them come and fight with us now. We will show them the true glory of the Darkness Pagoda."

The PCs can react to this challenge however they'd like. Ming I gives Tízoc a non-committal reply while waiting for the PCs to make a decision, whispering to them that they are under no obligation to fight her minions. Ming I's champions happily fight any and all of the PCs. They can be challenged to one on one combats or it can be a group affair. Fighting takes place on the logs used for the final contests, and the crowd howls with delight. If the PCs agree to a non-lethal fight, keep track of damage normally but only half of it is real. The rest they get back after a couple of hours of rest.

### **The Champions of Darkness**

The three champions are amongst Ming I's best minions. They have been instructed to taunt the PCs and goad them into a fight. Once the fight has begun, they continue to mock the PCs mercilessly. Their mockery is not just hot air, however. They are very tough opponents. They have been instructed not to kill the PCs though, since that is hardly the point. If the PCs toss aside all restraint, however, they will respond in kind.

### **After the Fight**

The Darkness Queen lets the fight run its course, unless someone is about to get whacked. After the fight, she praises the winners and offers them golden sword earrings as a token of her favor. She also offers healing to those who need it. She then tells the PCs to attend on her in her sitting room in two hours. The PCs are free to do what they please in the interim, but nothing much is going on after the feast. The Guiding Hand monks, who watched the fight in silence, retreat to their chambers.

PCs who showed restraint and did not fight with Ming I's minions also are asked to meet her in two hours. They will have lost face in the eyes of the Darkness warriors though, and will receive many contemptuous looks for the remainder of their stay in the Darkness Pagoda.

### **The Chambers of the Queen**

Servants of the Queen find the PCs two hours later, wherever they are, and lead them to her sitting room. Although it sounds small, the sitting room is predictably enormous. She reclines on a divan and sips some kind of liqueur. Behind her is a waterfall of pure darkness





that pours out of the wall and seems to flow down through the floor.

Comfortable chairs have been arranged for the PCs and servants are ready with drinks and candied fruits. Ming I greets the PCs warmly and asks them to sit.

What follows is part interview and part grilling. Ming I questions them on their personal histories and their plans for the future. If the PCs try to actively promote the Dragons, she listens attentively and asks penetrating questions. Primarily, she wants to know what the PCs and/or the Dragons have to offer her. She doesn't ally with just anyone, even against the Ascended, and wants to know what she can expect. Play her as a cool and commanding personality, with smarts and candor. The candor part is, of course, an act, which lays the groundwork for the real purpose of the PCs visit. Spring it on them when the conversation has run its course.

As the interview is winding down, she comments on the "unfortunate situation" between Kar Fai and Yim Ning Yee. She then goes on about the PCs own role, saying something like the following: "It's a shame that Yim Ning Yee wants to kill Kar Fai. Their both such interesting men, although I take it you're more partial to Kar Fai. I understand their conflict though. It's all about loyalty, which for me is the most important virtue. I prize loyalty above all, as my warriors well know. Why, if my master was being threatened with death, I would consider it my duty to take care of the problem for him. Especially if my master was defenseless in his sickbed. Yes, I would certainly take matters into my own hands."

After dropping this large hint, she waits to see how the PCs react. She refrains from getting into an extended

conversation, however, and soon cuts the interview short. She tells the PCs that she must meet with Yim Ning Yee now. She continues, "You could do me a favor, however. Yim Ning Yee is meditating alone in one of my indoor gardens. It's one of those places here that no one ever goes to, and perhaps you'd like to see it yourself. So, if you could be so kind, would you go the garden and tell Yim Ning Yee to come see me now." If the PCs agree, she adds, "One remarkable feature of that particular garden is that no sound escapes from it. You could yell all day and no one could hear. Try it, I'm sure you'll be quite amused."

## To Whack or Not To Whack

The PCs now have a rather large choice on their hands. The information Ming I has given them is all true: Yim is alone and the garden is soundproof. They could kill Yim and save Kar Fai some trouble. Of course, ganging up on a old man and whacking him is definitely not a nice thing to do, even if he has sworn to kill Kar Fai. If the PCs do decide to take Yim out, they are going to have a much tougher fight on their hands they think. Yim Ning Yee is a very skilled opponent and he has access to a large number of Fu Schticks. Make sure you're familiar with exactly what he can do and use his Fu powers to full effect, paying special attention to Wing of the Crane, Lunge of the Snake, and Awesome Downpour. The PCs will probably take him out in the end, but they're certain to take their licks.

# In the Garden

Any of the Darkness Queen's servants can direct the PCs to the garden. While easy to find, it is off the main byways of the Darkness Pagoda. An aged oak door opens into the garden, which is a most impressive sight. Although indoors, the garden is spacious and beautiful. Vines and creepers cover the walls and rise almost fifty feet to the ceiling. In the center of the garden is a small pyramid of Aztec design (flat-topped with a staircase leading up the front). To the right of the pyramid is a small but deep pond, and to the left is an aviary full of chirping birds. The rest of the garden is chock full of plants, trees, and artfully arranged rock formations.

## Fun Things That Could Happen During The Garden Fight

- There are lots of trees to Vertical Charge up or Prodigious Leap into. A running fight high in the trees would be pretty cool.
- The aviary is quite large. While currently locked up, it could be smashed open, releasing hundreds of birds into the garden. This would reduce the AV of missile attacks by at least 1, as frantic birds winged around the place. Feel free to increase the penalty if gun armed PCs are taking Yim down too quickly.
- The aviary can also be used as cover. Yim might also decide to jump inside and fight the PCs in its closed confines. Then only a couple of PCs could get at him at once, and his Awesome Downpour would prove quite useful.
- Trees can be knocked down, branches can be used as clubs, and hanging vines can be used for swinging.
- That pond is handy for drowning and for the old lightning in water trick.
- If the PCs leave the door unguarded, Yim may try to flee to get reinforcements. The fight could then be continued through the halls of the Darkness Pagoda. If this happens, start improvising!







## If the PCs Don't Take the Bait

It's possible that your PCs will show entirely too much restraint. They might decline to fight Ming I's champions, decline to kill Yim Ning Yee, and decline to fight for Kar Fai in the final battle. This is entirely their prerogative, but does take away some from the fun of the adventure. If this happens, it's time to bring back David Hughes (this is why it's important to keep him alive in the opening scene). Hughes still has orders to take out Kar Fai and he's not going to let a little thing like the Darkness Pagoda stand in his way. At some dramatically appropriate moment, and especially if the PCs are actively guarding Kar Fai's room, Hughes will reappear and try to take out Kar Fai again. If some poor PC has been stuck the whole adventure guarding Kar Fai, then spring this combat on him while the rest of the group is fighting someone else. Then cut back and forth between fights in true cinematic style.

Grigorei Zhukov and Zack Bray will be with Hughes if they survived the opening encounter. If you think Hughes needs some backup, you can whip up some more Pledged agents or just use the stats of Zhukov and Bray and change the names. If you enjoy reoccurring villains, then by all means let Hughes survive again and bring him back to haunt the PCs during other adventures.

As the PCs enter, Yim Ning Yee is seated atop the pyramid, deep in meditation. His eyes snap open when the door opens and he assesses the PCs coolly. If they have come simply to deliver Ming I's summons, he thanks them courteously and leaves. If the PCs engage him in conversation, Yim proves quite willing to talk. He questions them about their relationship with Kar Fai, expresses his disappointment with his former student, and then tells the PCs that they should consider returning with him to 1850 and joining the Guiding Hand. He can offer them real training, he says, and a place on right side of the secret war. This may be the first time the PCs have been exposed to the ideas of the Guiding Hand, so give them a full dose of Hand philosophy. Yim takes rejection by the PCs in stride, shaking his head in sorrow, and leaving for his meeting with the Darkness Queen.

If, on the other hand, the PCs have come to lay Yim low, then it's time for a big old fight. This should be run like one of those movie scenes where one villain manages to stymie a whole group of heroes despite the odds. The PCs should find the fight frustrating and far too long for their tastes. Take time to relish the looks on your players' faces when they are on the receiving end of some nasty fu powers. Have Yim play dead and then jump up again and hurt them real bad. Have him seemingly disappear and then reappear and kick much butt. In short, make the PCs pay for the ignobility of killing a lone old man who has done nothing to them thus far.

## Aftermath

If the PCs don't whack Yim Ning Yee, skip to the section entitled Kar Fai Awakes. The adventure will end up in relatively the same place but take a different route to get there. If the PCs did whack Yim, then proceed to the next section after they decide what they're going to do with the body and what alibis, if any, they are going to come up with. Unbeknownst to them, of course, Ming I has watched the whole encounter via magic and knows exactly what happened and exactly where they might have hidden the body. But she wouldn't give this information to the rest of the Guiding Hand delegation, would she? Of course she would.

# Vengeance of the Tiger

Within an hour of the PCs deed, one of Ming I's servants "accidentally" uncov-

ers Yim Ning Yee's body. Another servant comes forward to say she saw the PCs go into the garden and saw them fighting there. Convenient, huh? Soon enough the PCs are ushered under heavy escort into the throne room. Ming I awaits them, as does the rest of the Guiding Hand delegation. The Hand members are clearly furious and shoot savage looks at the PCs. What follows is a big frame-up in which Ming I's servants point the finger at the PCs and the Guiding Hand members demand justice. Attempts by the PCs to implicate the Darkness Queen fall on deaf ears, and the Hand members will have none of it. They know who killed Yim Ning Yee and they demand justice from the Darkness Queen. The Darkness Queen hears both sides out and then makes a ruling. She says:

"While I cannot condone the murder of Yim Ning Yee, I hesitate to simply execute the perpetrators, for reasons I'm sure you all appreciate. I think, however, that I have come up with a solution acceptable to all. If both sides agree, I suggest that the murderers and their accusers fight it out in my arena. I must admit that I've borrowed this idea from my brother Huan Ken, the Thunder King, but it seems to be appropriate for the situation. If the Guiding Hand wins the combat, one of the Dragons will be executed by me by a method of my choosing. If the Dragons win, the Guiding Hand members will leave the Darkness Pagoda immediately and swear to refrain from further attacks for one year. Are these terms agreeable?"

The Guiding Hand members confer amongst themselves and eventually agree to the terms. They are confident of their kung fu and sure they will teach the PCs a lesson. The PCs can try to dicker around a bit but the truth is that they are in a bad situation. A relatively fair fight

should seem more agreeable than trying to fight their way out of the Darkness Pagoda. Once the terms are set, skip up to the section entitled The Big Brawl.

## Kar Fai Awakes

If the PCs declined to kill Yim Ning Yee, the plot takes a slightly different course. About an hour after their meeting with Ming I, the PCs are approached by servants of the Darkness Queen who tell them that Kar Fai has woken up. Rushing back to Kar Fai's sickbed, they find him sitting up in bed and eating a bowl of fishcake noodle soup. He greets the PCs warmly and assures them that he is feeling better. Although he does feel weak, he says the worst is past. He then asks to be filled in on what's gone on since his collapse. Before the PCs can say anything, however, the door flies open and Ming I and Yim Ning Yee walk in. Kar Fai stops eating.

What follows is a tense standoff, with Ming I asking about Kar Fai's health while Kar Fai and his former master glare at each other. Yim then says, "Just tell me when Kar Fai will be well enough to fight me." Kar Fai announces that he is ready now, but the Queen will have none of it. She says that Kar Fai is far too weak to fight a kung fu duel today. She does, however, have another suggestion, if they are interested. The PCs no doubt will groan at this point, but Ming I goes on:

"It seems to me that the bad blood between the two of you has more to do with teaching than with fighting. You each see yourself as a great teacher of





## The Big Brawl

kung fu, do you not? Well, why not test your abilities as teachers and not fighters? I propose a martial contest between Yim Ning Yee's students and Kar Fai's students. The losing teacher will be turned over to my Darkness Priests for sacrifice, so much more than honor would on the line, and your feud would end one way or another. Do you accept?"

Kar Fai and Yim Ning Yee stare at each other. PCs may try to interject that they are not, technically, Kar Fai's students, or come up with other excuses. Neither man is listening, and after a heartbeat they both say, "I accept." Ming I looks pleased, and turns and issues a stream of orders to her servants about the preparation of the arena. Yim Ning Yee spins about and heads back to his chambers. Ming I says the contest starts in two hours and then follows.

Once Ming I and Yim Ning Yee are gone, Kar Fai turns his attention to the PCs. He apologizes for getting them involved in his feud, but assures them that their lives are not in danger. The fight is not to the death, and he encourages them to withdraw from the arena if they are severely wounded. Only his life should be at stake, he insists.

He also now wants to hear about what happened during his absence. After listening to what the PCs tell him, he shakes his head. "Quite a manipulator, that woman. Perhaps someday her cleverness will get the best of her." Kar Fai can also fill the PCs on his history, focusing on his reasons for leaving the Guiding Hand. If unchecked, he will go on at great length about how the moral vision of the Guiding Hand is extremely narrow and rigid. Even now, it seems, he is trying to justify breaking his oath to an organization he lost all respect for a long time ago.

One way or another, the PCs find themselves in Ming I's arena with a life or death fight on their hands. The arena is quite huge and is filled with minions of Ming I. It's not every day that the Guiding Hand and the Dragons fight it out in a grudge match, and even the lowest of servants want to check it out. Ming I herself sits in a private booth with an excellent view of the arena. If Yim is still alive, both he and Kar Fai are in the booth with the Darkness Queen. Otherwise, she sits alone above the battlefield.

The battlefield itself is about 50 meters long and 30 meters wide. In its center is a large wooden platform that rises 10 meters in the air. It is built of heavy logs and looks somewhat like an oil derrick. The rest of the battlefield is covered with sharpened wooden stakes. Suspended above the stakes on posts is an enormous netting made of thick rope. The combat is to take place on the netting, and it's entirely possible to fall through the gaps in the netting and get impaled on the stakes. Ouch. Also of note is a ring of burning braziers that surround the battlefield. It is early evening after all.

The PCs and the monks square off at opposite ends of the netting. Ming I stands up and the crowd hushes. She then addresses the crowd: "Today a most grievous feud will be settled. Let the combatants fight with valor and honor and do their teachers proud. The match begins when I clap my hands."

She pauses for a minute while everyone gets ready and then claps her hands. A sorcerously fueled sonic boom



echoes across the arena. As one the Guiding Hand monks leap off the ground, execute somersaults, and land standing on the netting and ready for action. Time for the big brawl.

## Li Wing Chun

**Sample Dialogue:** "Give me another drink!"

**Attributes:** Bod 7 (Con 9), Chi 7, Mnd 5, Ref 6

**Skills:** Info/Neo-Confucianism 12, Info/Secret War 8, Martial Arts 15, Medicine 10

**Schticks [Fu Powers]:** Aberrant Spasm, Drunken Fist, Drunken Stance, Signature Weapon (jug), Spasmodic Leap, Wily Stupor

**Weapons:** jug (12), kick (9), punch (8)

**Special Note:** Before the fight, Li Wing Chun consumed the equivalent of 12 beers.

## Wong Wah So

**Sample Dialogue:** "Your guns are useless against the Resistance Principle."

**Attributes:** Bod 10 (Tgh 12), Chi 6, Mnd 5 (Wil 7), Ref 5

**Skills:** Info/Neo-Confucianism 13, Info/Secret War 9, Intimidation 14, Martial Arts 14, Medicine 9

**Schticks [Fu Powers]:** Backlash of the Turtle, Bite of the Dragon, Inner Strength, Eye of the Storm, Mirror of the Turtle, Natural Order

**Weapons:** kick (12), punch (11)

## Ma Hin

**Sample Dialogue:** "Bet you can't hit me!"

**Attributes:** Bod 6, Chi 6, Mnd 5, Ref 6 (Spd 9)

**Skills:** Info/Neo-Confucianism 14, Info/Secret War 8, Intrusion 12, Martial Arts 16, Medicine 10

**Schticks [Fu Powers]:** Bite of the Dragon, Clothed in Life, Dance of the Monkey, the Fox's Retreat, Gathering of the Clouds, Laughter of the Monkey, Prodigious Leap, Taunt of the Monkey

**Weapons:** kick (8), punch (7), throwing knives (6)

## Neat Things That Could Happen During the Big Brawl

- Fighting while staying balanced on the netting is a continuous action. It's even harder to maintain your balance when someone is knocking you around, so the GM should call for Martial Arts checks often when PCs get hit hard. Characters that fail their checks fall part way though the netting and must spend 2 shots pulling their legs out. Characters that fumble their rolls fall all the way through and get impaled on the stakes (taking 15 points of damage).
- The netting can be both cut and burned. No doubt much of the action of this fight will be trying to impale the other side.
- The wooden platform provides a safer place to fight. The logs, however, have not been nailed in place, so they can be sent flying by well-aimed kicks. Flying logs cause 13 points of damage and may cause the structure to shift. Think of all those HK movies where characters fight and while holding up a teetering structure and you're cooking with gas.
- The braziers can be picked up and used as weapons. Their damage is Str+4, plus they ignite flammable objects. Due to their bulk and ill-balance, however, characters using one suffer -1 AV.
- If the PCs whacked Yim Ning Yee, the Guiding Hand monks will be pissed to the max. They will be so filled with righteous anger that all their attacks get a damage bonus of +1.

## Liu Jian Ping

**Sample Dialogue:** "Surrender or be destroyed."

**Attributes:** Bod 6, Chi 5, Mnd 7, Ref 9

**Skills:** Guns 15, Info/Neo-Confucianism 14, Info/Secret War 11, Leadership 12, Martial Arts 12, Medicine 11

**Unique Schtick:** He can use his Fu schticks with his bow, projecting his chi into the arrows as they speed to their target. This is the same power as the Guiding Hand Archer archetype.

**Schticks [Gun Powers]:** Both Guns Blazing, Fast Draw, Signature Weapon [Fu Powers]: Bite of the Dragon, Breath of the Dragon, Claw of the Dragon, Fire Strike

**Weapons:** bow (10/3/1), kick (8), punch (9)





## Yim Ning Yee's Students

Calling these monks students is a bit deceptive, since they are all full Shaolin Masters. As a general rule, they are efficient but not vicious. If Yim has been slain, however, courtesy falls by the wayside as they try to ice the bastards who killed their teacher.


Wong Wah So is a large and imposing man who wears robes of emerald green. His bulging muscles and big hands don't exactly scream subtle. Ma Hin, on the other hand, is a slight man who hardly looks threatening. His bright yellow robes are garish by Hand standards, and but his demeanor is reserved. Liu Jian Ping wears dull red robes and carries an exquisite looking bow. He is tall and commanding and looks like he is used to giving orders. Li Wing Chun, the only woman amongst the Hand delegation, looks out of place in more ways than one. She shows up to the fight drunk and carrying a big jug of wine. Unlike her more reserved comrades, she is loud and raucous and insults the PCs with abandon. The other monks do not seem fazed by her antics.

Running four GMC's with Fu powers may seem daunting at first, but a little prep work goes a long way. If you familiarize yourself with their primary Fu powers before the fight, it should run pretty smoothly.

## The Sacrifice

After the big brawl, it's entirely likely that somebody (Kar Fai, Yim Ning Yee, or one of the PCs) is going to get human sacrificed. In case the PCs were wondering, that is Ming I's favored method of execution. The lucky victim is taken to Ming I's main temple area, which is another scaled down Aztec temple. This one has an altar on it and it looks rather well-used. The victim is held down by four savage looking Darkness Priests while another priest produces an obsidian dagger and cuts the victims chest open. Then out comes the still-beating heart, which is plopped into a stone basin. The victim's body is then kicked down the steps of the pyramid. If the victim is either Kar Fai or Yim Ning Yee, they go to the altar without a fight. Despite their differences, they are both men of their word. If it's one of the PCs, however, prepare for the worst. No one likes to have their heart cut out, after all.

If you find the idea of human sacrifice a little too much, there is another option. Sometimes Aztec sacrifices, especially warriors captured in battle, were allowed to choose death by combat. In this case, the victim is tied to a pole on a platform and given a bladeless Macaitl. He then has to fight four fully armed warriors one at a time. If victorious, he then has to fight a left-handed warrior. Once incapacitated, the priests then take the heart out and offer it to the gods. If the victim survive the fight, he is released. If you'd like to continue the fun between Yim Ning Yee and Kar Fai, this is the better option. It's also good if you really don't



want to kill one of your PCs. And if you need stats for these warriors, use a slightly toned-down version of Tizoc.

# Wrapping Up

After the fight and the sacrifice are finished, the adventure is over. The PCs are free to leave the Darkness Pagoda, hopefully with Kar Fai in tow. Depending on their actions, they may have some new enemies. The Ascended are sure to be pissed that the PCs foiled their assassination of Kar Fai. The Guiding Hand will probably be angry about the death of Yim Ning Yee, which is bound to happen one way or the other. They may or may not blame the PCs for this, deepening on how events played out. And then there is the Darkness Queen. It's up to you to decide just how Ming I reacts to all this. If the PCs acted with sense and fought well, she might well consider an alliance at this point (assuming the PCs would even want that after the grief they suffered at her hands). If they acted impudently or killed any of her minions, however, she will not pass up an opportunity to mess with the PCs down the road. Lastly, there is Kar Fai himself. If the PCs killed Yim Ning Yee, Kar Fai will not be happy with them at all. He might send them on a difficult quest to atone for the actions or just kick them out of the Dragons (or deny them entry if they are not members already). He will, however, honor any deal he cut with them at the

beginning of the adventure. He is a man of his word, after all.

## Further Adventures

- Ming I may approach the PCs with offers of alliance. Is she sincere or is she just itching to play more games with the PCs?
- Other former students of Yim Ning Yee may come looking for the PCs if they killed him. Remember, the Guiding Hand monks did not promise that other Hand members would keep the peace.
- David Hughes may hatch a new plan to kill Kar Fai. He also might decide to remove the PCs from the equation beforehand. As a Lodge member, his resources are considerable.
- If Yim Ning Yee lived and the PCs impressed him, he might invite them back to 1850 to learn more about the Guiding Hand. His aim would be to recruit more warriors for the cause, but it might be interesting for the PCs nonetheless.
- If any of the PCs were killed in the Darkness Pagoda, their ghosts may begin to haunt the Netherworld. Maybe they feel betrayed by their friends, or maybe they just need help finishing their life's work.



# Filmography

## Burning Paradise

**Director:** Ringo Lam  
**Starring:** Willie Kwai, K.K. Wong

A rockin' good movie from Ringo Lam, who usually makes crime 'n' guns flicks like *City on Fire* and *Full Contact*. This one stars Willie Kwai as Fong Sai Yuk. At the start of the movie, Fong's master is killed by Manchu soldiers and he is imprisoned with other Shaolin monks in the notorious Red Lotus Temple. The rest of the movie is about Sai Yuk's struggle to get out of the temple, which is full of death traps and vicious soldiers under the command of the evil Kung. Cool sets, great fights, a gloating villain — what more could you ask for?




## Drunken Master 1 & 2 (1978 and 1994)

**Director:** Yuen Woo Ping,  
 Lau Kar Leung with Jackie Chan  
**Starring:** Jackie Chan, (and in 2) Anita Mui, Ti Lung, Johnny Lo

Jackie Chan stars as Wong Fei Hong, in a very different interpretation of the character. The first movie is old school HK, but quite fun. Troublesome Fei Hong is sent off to study kung fu with his wacky uncle and learns how to master drunken boxing. The film, which combined great kung fu with the kind of physical comedy that Chan is a master at, was a breakthrough film for Jackie and

did much to further his career. Part 2, shot sixteen years later, has Chan reprising his role, and bringing along Ti Lung as his stern father and Anita Mui as his



fun-loving step mom. This film is great from start to finish, as Wong Fei Hong uncovers a plot to smuggle Chinese art treasures out of the country by British imperialists who are exploiting Chinese laborers. The fight scenes are amazing, especially the climax in a steel factory. Johnny Lo kicks some serious ass as the Western-garbed heavy employed by the British. The film also stars its director Lau Kar Leung, a former Shaw Brothers actor whose martial arts pedigree stretches back to the real Wong Fei Hong. How's that for wacky?

### **Five Masters of Death** (1975)

**Director:** Chang Cheh  
**Starring:** Ti Lung, Alexander Sheng

As you can tell from the year, this is old school chopsocky. It is one of the many movies by director Chang Cheh to deal with the Shaolin Temple. If you like the old Shaw Brothers flicks, you'll dig this. It has a great sequence that shows the destruction of the Shaolin Temple by the Manchus.

### **Fong Sai Yuk 1 & 2** (both 1993)

**Director:** Corey Yuen  
**Starring:** Jet Li, Josephine Siao, Sibelle Hu

Lots of comedy mixed in with the action in this one, but hell if it doesn't work. Jet Li plays Fong Sai Yuk as an

impetuous youth and here he tries to win a beautiful wife with his kung fu skills by defeating bride-to-be's mother (Sibelle Hu). Wackiness ensues with all kinds of mixed up identity and gender bending. Josephine Siao is great as Fong Sai Yuk's worldly mom and she proves that her kung fu is also very good! Eventually Fong's father is revealed as a member of the Red Flower Society, an anti-Manchu group, and this forces a showdown with the Manchus to free dear old dad. Part 2 gets more into the Red Flower Society, and has Fong Sai Yuk trying to steal some important papers by getting involved with the Emperor's daughter. Somehow, his wife and his mother don't think this is a great idea.

### **Green Snake** (1993)

**Director:** Tsui Hark  
**Starring:** Maggie Cheung, Joey Wang

Another visually stunning film from Tsui Hark, *Green Snake* tells the story of two sister snakes who have learned how to take on human form. White, the elder sister (played by the always lovely Joey Wang), seduces and marries a human to find out about this whole love thing. Green (Maggie Cheung) is far more rambunctious and the two clash over White's hubby. The sisters' real enemy, however, is a moralistic monk who finds the idea of a snake and human mating repulsive. I highly recommend seeing this film if you are having trouble envisioning the *Guiding Hand* as villains. This monk just won't budge, and he hounds the sisters until the typically-spectacular climactic showdown puts the monk in his place.





## **Iron Monkey (1993)**

**Director:** Yuen Woo Ping

**Starring:** Donnie Yen, Yu Rong Guang  
Boston's own Donnie Yen stars as Wong Kei Ying, the father of Wong Fei Hong. He is tricked by corrupt officials into hunting for Iron Monkey, a Robin Hood-esque hero who is plaguing the Manchus. Kei Ying is accompanied by his young son (who is actually played by a prepubescent girl) and the two of them have many adventures while hunting Iron Monkey. Eventually, all the good guys stop fighting each other and team up to whup ass on the baddie in a terrific final fight sequence fought on top of burning logs. Director Yuen Woo Ping also directed the original Drunken Master.

## **Last Hero in China (1993)**

**Director:** Wong Jing

**Starring:** Jet Li, Gordon Liu

Jet Li left the Once Upon a Time in China series after part three, apparently due to conflicts with the studio. He then went to another studio and reprised his role as Wong Fei Hong in this film. This time out, Wong Fei Hong moves into a new school in Canton, only to find out it's next door to a brothel. Uh oh. He also gets mixed up the Boxers, who he and students fight with in a Lion Dance competition. And of course there are some corrupt officials and a slave ring to bust up. The Lion Dancing sequences are cool, and the Boxers use a gigantic centipede costume that breathes fire. However, when Wong Fei Hong dresses

up like a rooster to defeat the centipede the influence of Wong Jing is all too obvious. Jet Li returned to the OUATIC series for part 6.

## **New Legend of Shaolin (1994)**


**Director:** Wong Jing

**Starring:** Jet Li, Chingmy Yau, Tsu Miu

Despite an opening bit lifted directly from Lone Wolf and Cub and heavy doses of director Wong Jing's patented wackiness, this flick is well-worth seeing. Once again Jet Li is playing a character out of martial arts lore, this time Hung Shi Kwan. Hung returns home to find his family slaughtered at the hands of his former friend, and he and his young son are cut loose to wander China. The two get involved with a bunch of young Shaolin disciples, who escaped the destruction of their temple and each have a section of a map that leads to the Ming Dynasty treasure tattooed on their heads. The Heaven and Earth Society needs to money to finance a revolution against the Manchus (say, do I smell Triad money in this movie?) so Hung and son must kick some righteous ass. The climax has Tsu Miu on Jet Li's shoulders and the two fighting as a team. Normally, I don't like scrappy kids much, but Tsu Miu is freakin' great as the grim little kung fu whirlwind.

## **Once Upon a Time in China, Parts 1 – 6 (1991-1996)**

**Director:** Tsui Hark, except part 4 by Yuen Bun



**Starring:** Jet Li, Rosamund Kwan, Max Mok, Kent Chang, Yuen Baio and many more.

If you're looking for Wong Fei Hong, look no further. This seemingly unstoppable series, helmed by the irrepressible Tsui Hark, stars Jet Li as the folk hero par excellence of Chinese legend. Part 1 is still the best, with Wong fighting English imperialists. In part 2 he takes on the White Lotus Society in a nice glimpse at secret societies in China (that also teams up Wong Fei Hong with Sun Yat Sen!). Parts 3 and 4 I haven't seen, and I seem to be nearly alone in liking part 5 (which has Elaine Lui as an ass-kicking pirate). Part 6 takes Wong Fei Hong to the Old West and is a good starting point for GMs interested in giving that spin in their campaigns. Shot in Texas and featuring gringo actors of dubious skill, the film nevertheless is quite fun despite its Star Trek treatment of Native Americans and lack of a villain as nasty of some of the Fei Hong's previous foes.

### **Shaolin Popeye** **(1995)**

**Director:** Chu Yin Ping

I'm putting this film in here as a warning. Just because an HK flick has Shaolin in the title, that doesn't mean it's any good. Under no circumstances

should you see this movie! I can hardly believe I sat through the whole thing. It's about two teenage brothers, one of whom is in love with a beautiful girl with a rich and mean boyfriend. Half the movie is like an episode of 90210, with all this high school angst and frustrated sexuality. Then, for some reason, the two brothers are shipped off to China to live in a Shaolin Temple for awhile. They then return home, all the romance and nonsense starts again, and in the end they are saved by a six year old Shaolin monk who came from China just to help. And no, I'm not making this up.

### **Shaolin Temple** **(1980)**

**Director:** Chan Hsin Yeh  
**Starring:** Jet Li

This was the first martial arts flick made in the PRC, and featured young wu shu champion Jet Li in his debut role. The film is well worth renting for the location shots alone, since it was filmed at the actual Shaolin Temple on Songshan Mountain. You can tell the cameramen aren't used to shooting martial arts scenes because sometimes they just can't move fast enough to keep up with the action. And action there is, as Jet Li struts his stuff as a young wannabe monk getting in all kinds of trouble. The film also has a





strong anti-Buddhist undercurrent, which is no big surprise considering the nature of the PRC.

## **Tai Chi Master (1993)**

**Director:** Yuen Woo Ping

**Starring:** Jet Li, Michelle Yeoh, Chin Siu Ho, Samo Hung

Kicking martial arts flick from ace director Yuen Woo Ping. Jet Li and Chin Siu Ho play two students at the Shaolin Temple. There are some excellent training sequences and this is a good guide to what a Shaolin Sanctuary should look like. However, the two friends are expelled from the temple after they push the elder monks too far. Jet Li joins a rebellious group lead by Michelle Yeoh, who is sadly underused here. Chin decides that power is his only master and he joins the corrupt eunuchs and uses his

powerful kung fu for evil. After some big battles and a bout with amnesia, Jet confronts his former friend in a vicious battle featuring some amazing kung fu action. Highly recommended.

## **Wing Chun (1994)**

**Director:** Yuen Woo Ping

**Starring:** Michelle Yeoh, Donnie Yen, Waise Lee

Michelle Yeoh stars as Wing Chun, a famous Shaolin disciple who invented the style of kung fu that bears her name. As always, Michelle is great, especially in the amazing tofu scene. Sadly, the story doesn't focus too much on the real Wing Chun's contributions to martial arts, but rather on romance and gender humor. Still, there are bandits and bad guys aplenty and it's always a pleasure to watch Michelle Yeoh kick some ass.

# Index

- ancestors project 44  
 Black Dragon School 36  
 bows, reloading 78  
 bureaucratic war 51  
 Caesar Mack 37  
 Cave of a Thousand Banners 27  
 Chan Yu Jai 61  
 character types 66  
   gardener 67  
   golden candle agent 68  
   guiding hand archer 69  
   redeemed pirate 70  
   shaolin disciple 71  
   shaolin master 72  
 Chef Ho's Dumpling House 33  
 chinatown 51  
 Chu Hsi 19  
 combat rule, optional 78  
 Confucius 18  
 Confucian States of America 97  
 critical shift 85  
 Crouching Tiger, Mad Max 94  
 David Hughes 106  
 Factions, Other 24  
   Architects of the Flesh 24  
   Ascended 24  
   Dragons 24  
   Eaters of the Lotus 24  
   Four Monarchs 25  
   Jammers 25  
 firearms 75  
   muskets and rifles 75  
   pistols and revolvers 76  
   shotguns 77  
 Fong Sai Yuk 59  
 fu powers, new 73  
   path of the leaping monkey 73  
   path of flying steel 74  
   path of the praying mantis 73  
 GMCs, named  
   Caesar Mack 37  
   Chan Yu Jai 61  
   David Hughes 106  
   Fong Sai Yuk 59  
   Grigorei Zhukov 107  
   Ho Shen 34  
   Ho Wah Bo 35  
   Hu Jan 60  
   Hu Jiumei 60  
   Jimmy Kwan 35  
   Leung Mui 28  
   Liang Ming 111  
   Lui Man Wai 39  
   Madame Pei Pei 30  
   Quan Lo 56  
   Tiacpan 111  
   Tizoc 111  
   Wong Fei Hong 59  
   Yim Chang 29  
   Yim Ning Yee 104  
   Yung Chang 57  
   Zack Bray 107  
 GMCs, unnamed  
   Black Dragon Students 36  
   Black Flag Rebels 28  
   Hand Archers 39  
   Hand Operatives 28  
   Monks, Blue 63  
     Red 62  
     Violet 62  
     White 63  
     Yellow 62  
   Pledged Mooks 106  
   Red Hand Member 30  
   White Tigers 35  
 Golden Candle Society 14  
 Grigorei Zhukov 107  
 Guiding Hand  
   anatomy of 13  
   as villains 82  
   discipline 13  
   forms of address 14  
   genesis of 8  
   in other junctures 14  
   timeline 12  
   types 66  
   worldview 22  
 Harmonious Kingdom, the 89  
 Heavenly Kingdom, the 47  
 Ho Shen 34  
 Ho Wah Bo 35  
 Hu Jan 60  
 Hu Jiumei 60  
 instant monks 62  
 Jimmy Kwan 35  
 Leung Mui 28  
 Li Wing Chun 118  
 Liang Ming 111  
 Liu Jian Ping 118  
 Lui Man Wai 39  
 Ma Hin 118  
 Madame Pei Pei 30  
 Madame Pei Pei's Pleasure  
   Palace 29  
 Manchu Dynasty, the 6  
   and the West 6  
 Mandate of Heaven, the 6  
 Ming I 104  
 mook bowling 78  
 Muslim Rebellions 49  
 Nian Rebellion, the 48  
 Operations, 1850 44  
   69 AD 42  
   Contemporary 50  
   Netherworld 53  
 Opium War, the 7

## The Final Test

Unbeknownst to Quan Lo's Shaolin Disciples, there is a final test to endure before they can become a full Shaolin Master. When a Disciple has passed the philosophical exam and successfully navigated the training chambers, he is taken to see Quan Lo. The Perfect Master awaits in his chamber, wrapped in a robe adorned with a white lotus. When the Disciple enters the room, Quan Lo says nothing. He waits to see the reaction to his robe, which might be a symbol of history or a mark of the enemy. Will the Disciple take Quan Lo to task, ask the Perfect Master about it politely, rant and rave, or show proper Confucian respect for his elder? There is no right answer, but Quan Lo's opinion of the new Master is colored by this encounter. He finds that it tells him much about the character of his new Masters.

- Quan Lo 20, 56  
   rise of 9  
 Queen of the Dark Pagoda 104  
 Sage-Kings of Antiquity 19  
 Shaolin  
   end of 15  
   origins of 15  
 Shaolin Sanctuaries 44  
 Sites, 1850 29  
   69 AD 27  
   Contemporary 33  
   Netherworld 38  
 Superior Man, the 18  
 Taiping and the West 46  
 Taiping Rebellion, the 45  
 Taiping, leadership 47  
 Temple, Boundless Meditation 38  
 Temple of the Shaolin Dragon 31  
 Three Masters, the 17  
 Tiacpan 111  
 Tizoc 111  
 wandering teachers, the 43  
 White Tigers 34  
 Wong Wah So 118  
 Yim Chang 29  
 Yim Ning Yee 104  
 Yung Chang 57  
 Zack Bray 107