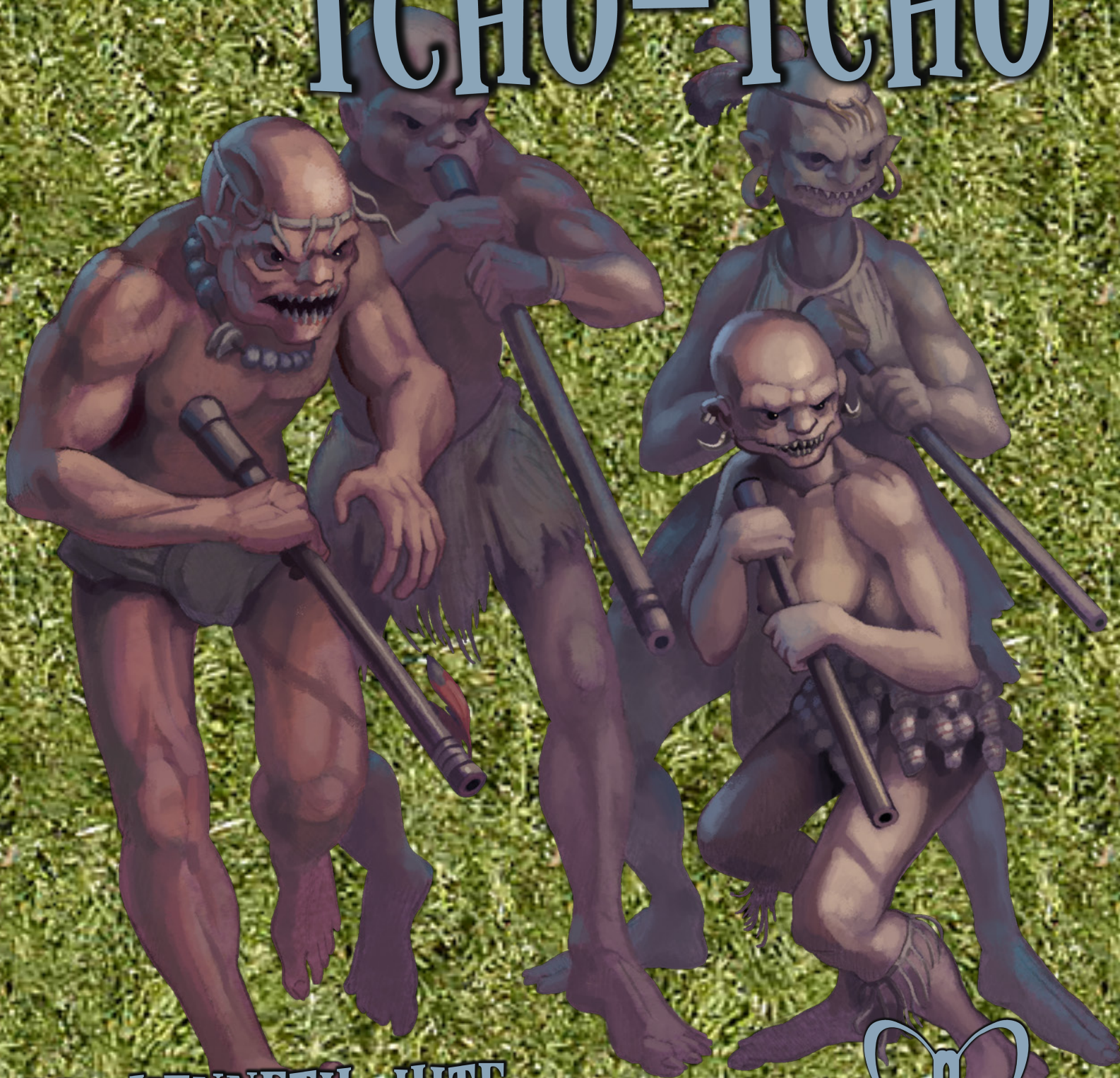


HIDEOUS CREATURES

TCHO-TCHO

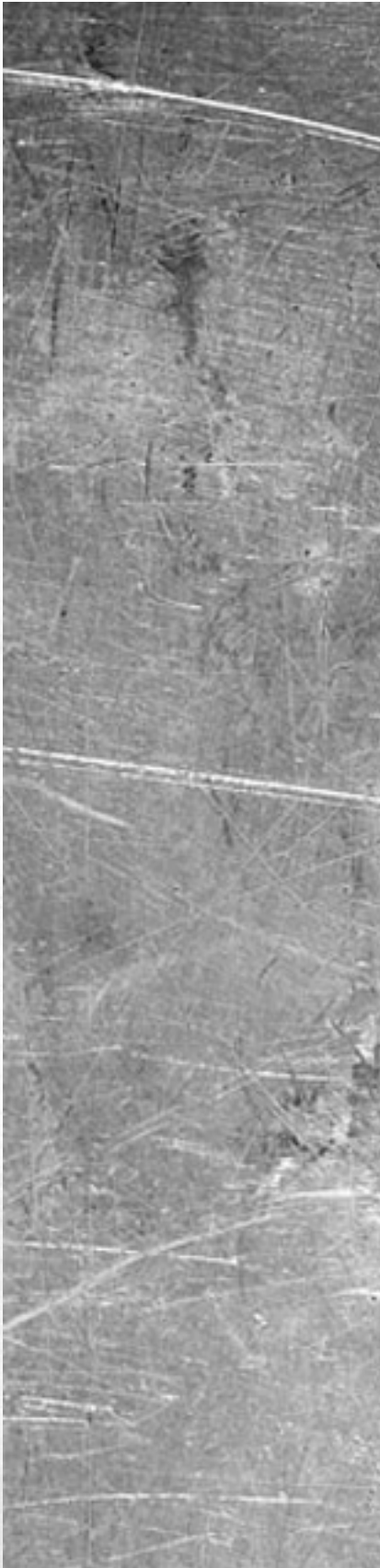


BY KENNETH HITE

TRAIL OF CTHULHU



Pelgrane Press



TCHO-TCHO

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KEN WRITES ABOUT STUFF

Hideous Creatures: Tcho-Tcho is part of the Ken Writes about Stuff subscription series, featuring new and original Hite goodness every month for twelve months. A subscription costs \$24.95 and as well as giving you a generous 30% discount on the individual article price of \$2.95, we'll be offering an exclusive extra later in the year to all subscribers.

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Hideous Creatures: Introduction

Lovecraft created his various “shadowy congeners” because the stories of vampires, werewolves, and even ghosts had become too familiar and too formulaic to evoke true horror. Almost a century after he wrote, his own monstrous races have likewise begun to seem like comfortable story furniture rather than unnerving signals that the world is horrible and wrong.

Our goal with this series is to present a comprehensive look at Lovecraft’s hideous creatures, from as many angles as we can. Our goal is contradiction, surprise, and most especially the uncanny: the recognition of something familiar as something weird. As in the “Gods and Titans” section of the *Trail of Cthulhu* core book, this series deliberately contradicts itself, blurring boundaries and erasing certainties in the name of the uncanny. In your campaign, these variant truths might be misunderstandings, legends, heresies, or deliberate lies spread by the creatures to lull their foes into a false sense of familiarity.

Change anything and everything in these pages, most especially the ability scores. If you need a terrifying assassin, a brief but survivable fright, or a sanity-shattering horror, just add or subtract points at will.

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Tcho-Tcho

“THEY WERE A HORDE OF LITTLE MEN, THE TALLEST OF THEM NO MORE THAN FOUR FEET, WITH SINGULARLY SMALL EYES SET DEEP IN DOMELIKE, HAIRLESS HEADS.”

-- AUGUST DERLETH AND MARK SCHORER, “LAIR OF THE STAR-SPAWN”

The pygmy Tcho-Tcho dwell primarily on the borderlands of the dread plateau of Leng, with known colonies in Thibet, the Andaman Islands, Indo-China, Malaya, and the plateau of Sung in Burma. They delight in cannibalism, torture, drug-induced rituals, human sacrifice, infanticide, and vendetta against all outsiders. The Tcho-Tcho have raised poison to a high art, having mastered the deadly Black Lotus of ancient Khitai. Hated by every people in Asia, they kidnap those humans they need for breeding, scientific or philosophical lore, or food.

Aside from those details, what are your Tcho-Tcho? There are three broad answers to that question, and your answer drives your story.

Cult: The Tcho-Tcho are a religious sect, like Bön-pa or Gnosticism (both of which show signs of Tcho-Tcho influence). Thus, anyone in the world might be a Tcho-Tcho – although most Zen Buddhists are Japanese, for instance, many aren't. Though most Tcho-Tcho are Thibeto-Burmese, many aren't. This implies (though it doesn't mandate) that Tcho-Tcho share a cosmology, perhaps one in which all the gods and titans are one or another form or avatar of Zhar-Lloigor. If not, a religious war between rival Tcho-Tcho traditions sounds like a wonderful, terrible backdrop for a campaign.

Tribe: The Tcho-Tcho are an ethnically distinct human population, like the Ainu or the Irish. They may still be widely dispersed, like the Jews or Armenians or Irish are. If some portion of the British “Lascars” (Malayan sailors) are ethnic Tcho-Tchos, they

could be in any port from Aruba to Athens. Not all Tcho-Tchos are necessarily Mythos cultists, any more than all rural Massachusetts whites are – but they had the bad luck of living right on Zhar-Lloigor for centuries. Surprisingly enough, this seemingly ethnically reductive option allows for deeper nuance in NPCs, working truly Lovecraftian themes of identity and social isolation.

Species: The Tcho-Tcho are a different species. Like Deep Ones, they appear human or involve humans in their reproductive cycle; or like ghouls, they were once human but changed through Mythos taint. Perhaps they are a separate line of hominid descent from Java Man, or an entirely alien species given humanoid form by convergent evolution. Add some creepy non-human markers – eyes all pupil, backwards joints at shoulder and hip, blackish-green membranes, genitalia in the mouth and prehensile tongues – to avoid simply conflating “inhuman” with “foreign.”

Tcho-Tcho

Abilities: Athletics 8, Health 6, Missiles 6, Scuffling 7, Weapons 5

Magic: 5+ for shamans, 10+ for sorcerers; spells always include Contact for the relevant deity and Summon for its characteristic servitor being, as well as Voorish Sign, Dread Curse of Azathoth,

Hit Threshold: 4

Alertness Modifier: +1

Stealth Modifier: +2 (in native countryside), +1 (elsewhere)

Weapon: -2 (blowgun dart), -1

Abominable and Problematic

The Tcho-Tcho began as Yet Another Yellow Devil, a Mythos riff on Conan Doyle's Andaman hunter, Fu Manchu's dacoits, and the ubiquitous “dangerous savage natives” in archaeological pulp fiction. Using them in that reflexive, unconsidered way today, however, risks offense while also wasting the Tcho-Tchos' potential.

To avoid the worst Tcho-Tcho toxicity, make sure they aren't the only non-white people on stage. The other Southeast Asian peoples also hate them, for good reason; give the Investigators some local allies – or even a wise and powerful Asian patron.

Don't emphasize the Tcho-Tchos' “Asiaticness” – instead, emphasize their sheer inhumanity. Even if, perhaps especially even if, the Tcho-Tchos still have some humanity left.

(kris), -1 (arrow); needless to say, all Tcho-Tcho weapons are poisoned; see p.6.

Armor: none

Stability Loss: There is no Stability loss for seeing a Tcho-Tcho, until you get to know them better.

Firearms: Tcho-Tcho outside their native jungle (and even some inside it) adapt quickly to contemporary killing

Tcho-Tcho

methods; add Firearms at 6. Like most native peoples, they buy or loot their obsolete rifles (+1 damage; misfire on an unmodified Firearms roll of 1 if the Tcho-Tcho didn't spend) from soldiers of one or another colonial power: Britain (Lee-Enfield MkIII .303), France (Lebel 1886 8mm), or China (Hanyang Type 88 7.92mm). And guess what – with a tiny hollow needle, a small awl, a fire, and some patience, you can fill the hollow tip of a bullet with poison! Hollow-point bullets increase damage by +1 and increase armor effectiveness by -1 (e.g., Armor -1 becomes -2). And deliver poison.

Possible Tcho-Tcho Abilities

Lin Carter suggests that the pygmy Tcho-Tcho are only one warrior caste of the fiends; they might come in any sort of human -- or humanoid – form, with weird abilities to match. Their mastery of alien biotech, herbalism, or the Rites of Shub-Niggurath (assuming there's a difference) means they can grow, graft, or ingest all the Black Lotus abilities (poison on elbow bone spurs?) and any other sorts of abilities they might need or dream of.

Entangle: In their native, unnatural jungles, Tcho-Tcho can spend 2 Magic to command nearby vines or creepers to entangle foes within 10 yards (Close range). Entangled victims lower their Hit Threshold by 2, and can *either* try to pull free (Athletics test against Difficulty 4; Tcho-Tcho can spend Magic to increase that Difficulty) *or* attack.

Immunity to Poison: Tcho-Tcho cannot be poisoned.

Inner Growth: If the Tcho-Tcho can get even so much as a spore colony or patch of algae into a victim (by forcibly pouring or injecting, poisoning the canteen, or just tainting the dew and mist in the local jungle) it sprouts into a horrible plant-form in his stomach. The only chance to resist covert implantation is a Sense Trouble test at

Difficulty 8, which becomes Difficulty 7 with Outdoorsman or another relevant ability. (Truly kind Keepers may allow a Preparedness test to have “never filled the water bottle” or “always boiled everything always” at Difficulty 6, or 5 with Outdoorsman.)

The plant does -4 damage the first day (or week), -3 the second day, -2 the third, and so forth. Its vines emerge from the mouth and anus on day six, triggering a 6-point Stability test. X-rays will spot the growth, but it can only be removed by surgery and heavy-metal toxotherapy (half Health for two months).

Jungle Apportation: In their native forests, the Tcho-Tcho can travel a day's journey in less than an hour. Tcho-Tcho can bring reinforcements or melt away to safety in 1-6 rounds unobserved.

Tcho-Bando: Between their uncanny strength and small size, Tcho-Tcho are devils in hand-to-hand fighting. They refresh 3 Scuffling after every Scuffling roll of 6, and can spend 2 Scuffling points to throw a human foe five feet away, into Close range instead of Point-Blank. Thrown foes take -1 damage.

Telepathy: A Tcho-Tcho shaman can read the mind of, and send its thoughts to, any Tcho-Tcho, hybrid, or dreaming human within a mile. (Stability test against the shaman's Magic pool to resist; the shaman may add +1 to his Magic pool for every five Tcho-Tchos assisting.) Drugs such as the Black Lotus may amplify or (with a healthy Pharmacy spend and some experimentation) muffle these sendings.

Toxicompositor: A Tcho-Tcho master poisoner has a Poisons ability of 8+ that he can use to develop toxins for (and from) anything organic, quicken the onset of poisons, replicate seemingly innocent symptoms, or make use of other Mythos creatures' natural poisons. Each formula costs 1 point from the shaman's Poisons ability. By

spending Poisons points, he can increase the Difficulty (+1 for 1 point spent) for all tests against his own toxins, natural poisons, or those brewed by other Tcho-Tcho.

Black Lotus

In addition to Liao (*ToC*, p. 111), the gifted and cruel herbalists of the Tcho-Tcho compound, tap, grind, or distill the black lotus into many other formulations. In its varying quantities and states (resin, perfume, pastille, liquid, tar, incense, tea, oils, seeds, etc.) black lotus has the following possible effects:

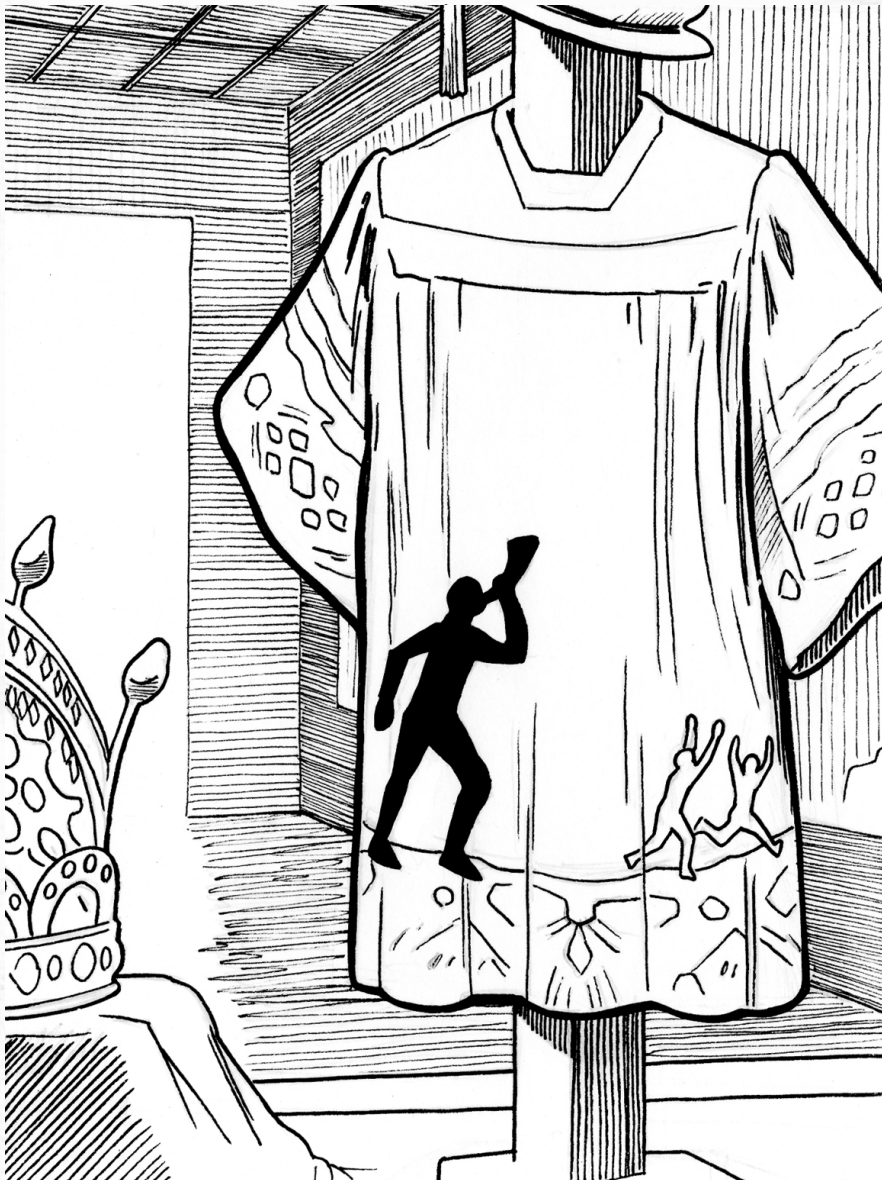
Soporific: The user becomes highly suggestible or goes to sleep for 4-24 hours, at the Tcho-Tcho's discretion. Successful resistance with a Difficulty 6 Stability test merely lowers her Hit Threshold to 2 and slows the user; she can act once every other round.

Ecstasy: The user experiences a transcendent bodily and spiritual ecstasy that is instantly addictive. He must make a Stability test (Difficulty 6) to act in any way (harm the source, harm Tcho-Tcho interests at all, leave Burma, etc.) that might endanger his lotus supply; if presented; if presented with lotus, the test is Difficulty 8 to avoid promising or doing anything for another hit.

Dream Portal: The user enters Leng in the Dreamlands. Users with a rating in the Dreaming ability can make a test (Difficulty 5) to enter the Dreamlands at another location (Difficulty 4 for Sarkomand or Inganok).

Berserk: The user doubles his Scuffling pool and immediately attacks the nearest human he knows best (-1 damage for mania) and then devours the body. Resisting the lotus requires a Difficulty 7 Stability test; a success allows (non-homicidal, but combat-useless) frenzy for 1-6 rounds. The berserk effect is permanent in NPCs; an Investigator becomes a berserk cannibal

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for a number of rounds equal to twice her margin of failure. After that, the user may make a Difficulty 7 Stability test to snap out of the frenzy every round.

Shamanic Contact: This creates the equivalent of a Contact Deity spell; the user must still pay the cost in Stability for the casting. Users with Magic may choose whether to spend Magic, Stability, or Athletics. A first-time shamanic contact might also grant the user 1 rating point in Cthulhu Mythos. Successful resistance with a Difficulty 6 Stability test halves the cost and inspires

only horrible dreams (3-point Stability test, Difficulty 5).

Glossolalia: The user speaks and writes only in indecipherable tongues; he cannot make himself understood for 1-6 days. Listening to the user babble requires a 3-point Stability test. Successful resistance with a Difficulty 6 Stability test still causes aphasia, but the user can spend 1 Interpersonal point per conversation to be understood.

Panic: The user must resist with a Difficulty 6 Stability test or surrender

to unmastering panic. The Keeper decides whether he flees into the jungle, cowers catatonically, fires off all the ammunition uselessly, etc.

Paralytic Poison: Any Tcho-Tcho attack that breaks the skin (or a covert application of lotus to an Investigator's food or clothing) triggers a Health test against Difficulty 7 (or worse). In combat, onset is near-immediate (1-3 rounds); in other circumstances, the poison takes effect between 15 minutes and an hour after administration. If the victim successfully resists, he takes +1 damage and becomes Hurt (and takes -1 to Hit Threshold) for the rest of the day (-1 damage only if treated immediately with Pharmacy or First Aid). If she fails, she takes three instances of neurotoxic damage (+1) and becomes Hurt (actually paralyzed), losing 1 Health and 1 Athletics point every 30 minutes until dead or treated in a hospital.

Shugoran

The Tcho-Tcho epopts send these monstrous killers after those who profane their secrets. Tall and web-footed, its black skin wrinkles and sheens like catfish hide. Its small wings drive it through the water (brackish, salt, or fresh) at high speeds. It has no facial features excepting a long, curving proboscis similar to a widened elephant's trunk or fleshy saxophone.

Abilities: Athletics 8 (10 in water), Health 11, Scuffling 10

Magic: If shugoran are intelligent rather than mere constructs animated by Tcho-Tcho sorcery, they have Magic 10 and Contact Nyarlathotep.

Hit Threshold: 4

Alertness Modifier: +0

Stealth Modifier: +1

Weapon: +1 (claw), suffocation attack

Armor: -3 (slime and hide, no vitals)

Stability Loss: +1

Suffocation Attack: A shugoran

Tcho-Tcho

sucks the air – and eventually the lungs – out of its victim. If it hits with a Scuffling attack, it fastens its trumpet-like proboscis over the victim’s face and does +1 damage to her Athletics, then begins suffocating her (*ToC*, p. 68). She resists at a beginning Difficulty equal to the total of the shugoran’s roll and spend, incremented up by 1 per round.

She can attack the shugoran while suffocating, at a Hit Threshold of 3. Tearing the shugoran’s proboscis loose requires a *separate* contest of Athletics.

If the shugoran wishes to suck the air from a target (or the whole room) without Scuffling, it must spend 2 Health (or Magic) per target. The targets begin suffocating as above, resisting at a Difficulty of 3, incremented up by 1 in each round that the shugoran spends another 1 Health (or Magic) to continue. While suffocating at range, its Hit Threshold drops to 3.

VARIATIONS

“BUT THEY WERE NOTHING LIKE WHAT THEY SEEMED. YOU COULDN’T GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THEM. THEY’D BEEN LIVING WAY UP IN THOSE HILLS, I DON’T KNOW HOW MANY CENTURIES ... I THINK THEY WEREN’T PRIMITIVE AT ALL. THEY JUST KEPT THOSE RITUALS BECAUSE THEY ENJOYED THEM!”

— T.E.D. KLEIN, “BLACK MAN WITH A HORN”

As with the “Gods and Titans” section in the corebook, this compendium is intentionally self-contradictory. Its facts and theories come from Lovecraft, from later writers, and from the universe of possibilities opened up between them.

- The Tcho-Tcho legends claim they were created from black salamanders called *mirinigr* by the god Chaugnar Faugn in the beginning of time.
- The Tcho-Tcho are serpent folk, changed by Tsathoggua into stunted servitors for his pleasure.

- Tcho-Tcho spawn like amphibians; a newt-like queen pupa swims into a human host’s uterus or stomach and lays thousands of eggs. Most Tcho-Tcho hatch as infertile male “drones,” as the queen bloats into an obese mass and dies.
- According to the *Unaussprechlichen Kulten* of von Junzt, the Tcho-Tcho came to this world from the “lost city of Sarkomand, which is found now only in dreams,” and venerate Hastur.
- The Burmese Tcho-Tcho on the Plateau of Sung harvest the oneirically active black lotus plant and worship the Twin Obscenity (variously called Zhar-Lloigor and Nug-Yeb).
- From ca. 5,000 B.C. to 1905, the center of the Tcho-Tcho cult was Alaozar (“the pain of the Ai Lao”), the City of Dreams in the Lake of Stars.
- Alaozar restores itself from Dream.
- The Malayan Tcho-Tcho, or Chaucha, worship and fear Nyarlathotep in his avatar as Shugoran, literally “elephant-trunk man.”
- The red-robed Tchortchas of the Mongolian-Tibetan border defend the lamasery of Yian-Ho with ferocity and the “Song of Thirty Thousand Calamities.”
- The Tcho-Tcho of Leng serve Ithaqua, Atlach-Nacha, and Nyarlathotep. Their lama wears a mask of yellow silk and rules a mighty empire in Dream and in secret passages of Inner Asia.
- Tcho-Tcho priests and adepts can live for thousands of years.
- Tcho-Tcho lichens can shapeshift into winged hounds and fly between Dream and waking Earth.
- Tcho-Tcho priests wear a “green five-pointed star” tattoo; they are a shoggoth-caste created by the Elder Things for irregular warfare against the mi-go and Deep Ones. Their “default caste” takes the form of the currently most numerous

sapient, which has been humanity for the last million or so years.

- Possible cognates include: the Tsou, an indigenous tribe of Formosa; the Tochoa, an Aryan tribe driven out of Turkestan in the 1st century B.C.; the Tukungun, a mountain tribe of northern Thibet.
- Possible etymologies include: Thibetan *so-só* “separate, apart”; Burmese *kyokyom* “savage”; Cochinese *tcho-tcho* “flowering” or “glowing”; Yi (language spoken on the border of Yunnan and Szechuan) *tcho-tcho* “to eat”; Basque *txoko* “cuttlefish, angle.”
- Tcho-Tcho is the Ryukyu goddess of the sea; the immortal, dreaming, psychic Tcho-Tcho are yet another breed of Deep Ones, shrunk down to inland size.
- The Tcho-Tcho originated in the Pyrenees Mountains and migrated across Eurasia during the Neolithic. Their Pyrenean remnant are the shunned caste of “Chagots” or “Cagots.”

MYTHIC ECHOES

“IT IS TRUE THAT STRANGE LEGENDS HAD REACHED US EVEN BEFORE WE HAD LEFT HO-NAN PROVINCE OF A WEIRD RACE OF LITTLE PEOPLE, TO WHOM THE NATIVES APPLIED THE ODD NAME, ‘TCHO-TCHO.’”

— AUGUST DERLETH AND MARK SCHORER, “LAIR OF THE STAR-SPAWN”

As with the variations and possible powers above, the Tcho-Tcho might more closely match their various mythic depictions than they do their various Mythos fictions.

Hmin (Burma)

A class of Burmese nature-spirit (or *nat*), the hmin lurks in wastes and forests. It attacks travelers, inflicting ague, malaria, or other shaking diseases on them. Occasionally, the hmin shakes

Hideous Creatures

a victim into outright madness. When leaves move without wind, the hmin is nearby. Offerings of food sometimes avert its attentions long enough to escape.

Orang Pendek (Sumatra)

The “short man” of the East Indies, the orang pendek stands between 2-1/2 and 5 feet tall, with a prominent forehead ridge and canine fangs. Slender and covered in gray hair, the orang pendek can rip up vines or uproot trees with prodigious strength. A Dutch planter named Van Heerwarden saw the orang pendek in 1923.

Penunggu (Malaya)

Also called the genderuwo or dukun, the penunggu is literally the “inhabitant” (also “guardian, watcher”) of strange ruins or stones, deep caves, isolated lakes, uncanny trees, or disturbing animals (especially poisonous ones such as cobras, frogs, or lizards) and other weird intrusions into the Malay jungle. A sudden feeling of cold, or a sickly sweet smell, heralds the penunggu’s presence. Some penunggu are hairy, all have fangs and cruel habits. A penunggu can take human form, and be placated with respectful mantras or bribed to harm one’s enemy.

Sorgina (Basque Country)

The sorginak (plural) are a cross between witches and lamiak (Basque nymphs), connected with sorcery in high places, poisons, and water. They fly to their sabbats with a spell, where they worship the goddess Mari Urraca. The sorginak raised the megaliths in the Basque country. A major witchcraft persecution in 1609-1611 burnt the sorginak out of their cave homes near Zugarramurdi.

Sri (Thibet)

Also spelled hri, these underground demons dwell in secret caves, hidden fissures, and old tombs. Sri eat corpses and travelers, and even hunt down children. Sri bring death in an instant if

angered or hungry. Sri can possess the unwary, who must be exorcised with a ritual of dizzying complexity and great power. The lama or wizard makes an effigy of the sri, then soaks it in poison, cuts it up, and folds it inside a skull. He then wraps, binds, seals, stamps on, exorcises, and abjures the skull before burying it beneath a heavy stone on which he must light a fire. The Thibetan sri is likely the same as the Cambodian demon called the srey, which is also a corpse-eater hovering around tombs and the dying.

INVESTIGATIONS

Keepers should treat this section, and use these elements, even more idiosyncratically.

Clues

Perforce, the clues in this section mostly point to “conventional” Tcho-Tcho as painted in Derleth and Schorer’s “Lair of the Star-Spawn” and T.E.D. Klein’s “Black Man With A Horn.” Feel free to adjust them at will.

Accounting: He claims to make his money from rubber plantations, but rubber is not planted in the area of Malaya he claims to farm, and there’s not enough arable acreage in his holdings to account for his income even if it were. He must cultivate some other plant: opium ... or Black Lotus, perhaps?

Anthropology: The greatest living expert on Malaya’s tribes is Walter William Skeat, author of *Malay Magic* (1900) and *Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula* (1906). A lecturer at the British Museum after 1914, he retires in 1932 and lives in London.

Archaeology: The last known attempt to excavate the Plateau of Sung in Burma was the Hawks Expedition, on which Geoffrey Hawks died in 1905, slaughtered by bandits. Its only survivor, Eric Marsh, died in Madison, Wisconsin,

in 1906, a year after emerging in Shansi Province in China, thousands of miles from Burma.

Architecture: These tunnels aren’t large drainage works at all, but full-fledged passages intended for very small men – a few inches of clearance above four feet!

Art History: The “man with a horn” motif, also superstitiously called the “Death’s Herald,” is a common image in Malay and Javanese art. The horn player is always much larger than the small human figures in the piece. Burmese rebels against British rule have begun to paint it on village tax officials’ houses as protest or warning of attacks.

Assess Honesty: In everything else, she’s reacting normally and telling the truth as best she remembers. But whenever we touch on the disappearance of Dr. Pentherby, her pupils dilate and she seems weirdly distracted or even drugged. How is that possible?

Astronomy: “Another clipping from the same [1905] issue of the [*Asahi Shimbun*] tells of a curious electrical display witnessed from several observatories in the Orient, seemingly centered in its elemental force somewhere in Burma.”

Biology: The stems and fragments of leaf matter we found in the gutters of the warehouse are definitely from lotus plants, and probably from south-east Asia. But it’s no variety of genus *Nelumbo* I know of, and that sap is so toxic that it bleached the rotten wood where it rested.

Bureaucracy: Ownership of real estate in River Street is deliberately obscure – too many members of the WASP establishment get rich off opium dens, slave brothels, and smugglers’ warehouses to want these records to be publically available. But with patience (or a *Bargain spend*) we can find out who

Tcho-Tcho

may have brought the Tcho-Tcho into the city, or at least who profits from their actions.

Chemistry: The smell is reminiscent of what my old professor Dr. Simcoe called “The Great Burma Stink of ‘15.” It was apparently due to a mass animal die-off somewhere in the Burmese hinterland, although a pilot overflowed the site and claimed the rotting carcasses looked more like those of two enormous beasts. Not quite sure why it smelt so very much like resin and orchid, though. (Biology)

Cop Talk: The case bears striking similarities to that of the eminent Dr. Fo-Lan of Peking, who was thought murdered in his home in 1902. Somehow his brother’s corpse had been substituted for his own (aided by prodigious swelling and bruising of the face), and Fo-Lan eventually reappeared in a remote Shansi village in 1906 saying he had been kidnapped.

Credit Rating (0-1): The derelicts and junkies of River Street can sense a copper like a rat can sense a dog. They won’t talk to respectable folk at all, just rob or run. So it’s a good thing we’ve got you here to go down among them, into the Alley of Silence, and see who’s killing and eating all those derelicts and junkies.

Evidence Collection: The flue in the chimney has been opened from above. That, combined with the smears of ash in the room, tells us how the killer got in – though not how he fit down a chimney shaft barely 16 inches wide!

Forensics: The victim died in horrible agony, the back arched almost into a circle, the fingers and toes ankylosed almost into claws, and the face twisted into a sardonic rictus of unimaginable gruesomeness. On the third search, we found the puncture wound in the palm of his left foot – the dart was apparently hidden in his shoe while he slept.

Geology: The descriptions of the Tcho-Tcho are eerily similar to reconstructions of Java Man, a divergent species of Pithecanthropus which emerged in southeast Asia over a million years ago. The German paleontologist G.H.R. von Koenigswald discovers similar, even older, fossils in Sangiran, Java, between 1931 and 1939 alongside those of 8-foot giants. (Anthropology)

History: Medieval European travelers describe the corpse-eating cult of Tsang (possibly related to that of Leng): Joannes de Pian (ca. 1245) mentions their cannibalism and calls them “deformed” and “beardless,” William of Rubruck calls them “misshapen individuals” (1253), Marco Polo (1295) says they have “the best enchanters and astrologers that exist in all that quarter of the world; they perform such extraordinary marvels and sorceries by diabolic art, that it astounds one to see or even hear of them. So I will relate none of them in this book.”

Languages: What if Albuhiira Algebar isn’t a person, but a place? In Arabic, *al-Buhira al-Gebar* would be “the lake of the Great One,” a lake somehow connected with Rigel – called Elgebar in medieval times -- or with Orion as a whole. (Astronomy)

Law: Filing through legal records from Malaya uncovering patterns of resistance to British control centered in the highlands of Negeri Sembilan, you note the term “Carcosa” – the name of the residence (built 1896-1897) of the British High Commissioner in Kuala Lumpur. Arcane bargain? Influence of the *King in Yellow* on the architect? Spoor of Hastur? (Library Use, Architecture)

Library Use: The oldest Thibetan texts, the Men-Gagde terms of the Nying-ma tradition, are held in the immense library of the Mindrol-

Ling Monastery in Lhoka province. Perhaps the *Tsang-skor* (“Cyle of Tsang”) text contains the truth about the “monkey men” -- but it has never been translated. (Theology)

Medicine: Miss Delahunt isn’t flirting – her eyelid is drooping involuntarily. Such ptosis is a symptom of opiate use; perhaps Miss Delahunt knows more about these matters than she lets on. (*0-point spend*) Ptosis is also triggered by over-exposure to nuciferene, an alkaloid found in lotus leaves and flowers. (*1-point spend*)

Occult: Thai legend claims that the *Ghlong-Keow*, the “Box of Emerald,” the lost basalt city of Gelanggi or Linggiu, lies in the heart of Malaya. Occultist and explorer Gerald Gardner (living in Malaya and the East from 1911 to 1936, and in London thereafter) claims to have found the city.

Oral History: The locals in River Street have seen plenty of strange killings and disturbing shapes, but with patience and a strong liver you can discover which specific alleys and opium dens they *don’t* mention – those are likely your true targets.

Outdoorsman: “Trees which I now noticed were different from any others I had ever seen, having a strange reddish-green foliage and green-black trunks ... There had been no wind of any kind; yet the leaves had moved continually!” (Biology)

Pharmacy: It’s opium, laced with something that – well, it’s as addictive as morphine, and as mind-altering as mescaline, and possibly as poisonous as belladonna.

Photography: Here in this shot of the crime scene, you can see two tiny reflections, eyes glittering in the sewer grate – the devils were watching us the whole time!

Hideous Creatures



Physics: For that “electrical display” to be visible from such widely spaced observatories, the energies must be simply immense – far more powerful than a mere lightning bolt. Not to mention hundreds of miles in height, reaching to the very edge of the atmosphere. (Astronomy)

Sense Trouble: “A moving shadow crossed my vision ... for an instant ... At the same moment my horse neighed suddenly, wildly, and shied away,

tearing at the rope which held him.”

Streetwise: The killings by the waterfront are the work of a new tong cutting out territory. (0-point spend) They’re a Malay Chinese (not mainland Chinese) tong called the Hei Luan, the “Black Twins” tong. (1-point spend) Some say they have a real name, or a second name at any rate: the Hei Lien, the “Black Lotus.” Maybe because they move the drug -- or because they’re the underground, corrupt version of the White Lotus triad. (2-point spend)

Theology: The “holy twins” or “divine twins” motif doesn’t just occur in Burma, Viet-Nam, and Korea. The kings of Funan (ancient Cambodia) worshipped a four-armed, two-faced (twinned) Lord of the Mountain. The mytheme extends from Rome (Romulus and Remus) to India (Nakula and Saha) to Russia (Volos and Veles) to New Guinea (Manup and Kilibob). Certain primal deities may have been twins (*yama* in Sanskrit) including Ymir, Yama (Thibetan lord of death), Yima (ancient Persian lord of the world and underworld), and Yeb or Yebu (Egyptian elephant-god).

SCENARIO SEED

The standard Tcho-Tcho scenario either pits them against Western intruders into their jungle (or mountain) temples, or sends them to the seamy underside of a Western city to stir up Fu Manchu-style “yellow peril,” usually involving the drug trade. Every so often, a Tcho-Tcho comes into the Western city to wreak a domestic revenge on the profaner of his distant fane, as in Klein’s story. The narcotics theme touches on motifs natural to the Tcho-Tcho such as dreams and poison, but Derleth leaves plenty of underused mythemes in the mix: twins, telepathy, and ancient astronauts.

Surprisingly few adventures present the Tcho-Tcho as active plotters of their own evil designs, as dangerous sorcerers with their own agenda independent of European concerns. Consider instead taking scenarios involving mi-go, Deep Ones, or serpent folk, and re-skinning them as Tcho-Tcho stories.

The following seed presents a Tcho-Tcho cult in either a Western city or an Asiatic port – outside the jungles of Sung (or Leng or Tsang) the Tcho-Tchos are strangers in Asia and America both.

Tcho-Tcho

A Tchoice of Dooms

The Tcho-Tcho in the city have been here for a few decades now – they arrived shortly after the destruction of Alaozar in 1905. (In Asia, they might have arrived in the 1880s, just after the British or French invaded and stirred things up.) They’ve killed and eaten enough of the local criminal element that their claim to a few blocks of “turf” is unquestioned. While they may eventually seek to awaken Zhar-Lloigor (or whoever they worship) they are gun-shy since the catastrophe of 1905. Instead, they import their Black Lotus from the homeland and step on it enough to keep the money coming in ... and the dreams coming on.

To the Tcho-Tcho, the city is an anchor for Sarkomand, gateway to Leng in Dream. Their opium-clients slowly dream the city’s reality away, starting down on the docks in the Tcho-Tcho neighborhood. Fogs roll in thick or fade buildings around them, alleys twist and warp unlike their mapped depictions, and things come out of the sea and up from the sewers. Investigators who have been to Kingsport recognize the effect. Eventually, the Tcho-Tcho plan to spread enough Black Lotus through enough narcotized dreamers to shift the city’s lighthouse (or skyscraper, or radio mast) into the Elder Pharos of Leng. True, that will take decades, but the Tcho-Tcho lamas are immortal.

As long as no meddling Investigators – and no rival cults -- screw it up for them, that is. Investigators in the city eventually hear of the Tcho-Tcho tong (Cop Talk, Streetwise), or notice the warped-reality effects. But they have bigger worries than Tcho-Tcho dreams: another Mythos cult plans an apocalypse now.

Present a cult opposed to whichever entity the Tcho-Tcho serve:

- Ghatanothoa’s worshippers come from the same peoples who hate the Tcho-Tcho: Burmese,

Vietnamese, Malays, Indians, etc. Ghatanothoa also opposes Shub-Niggurath in “Out of the Aeons.” His cult stares out of the eyes of all the dead, using mi-go ontogenic poisons to paralyze reality itself long enough to connect primal Mu and modern Main Street.

- If you can’t add Derlethianism to a Tcho-Tcho setting, where can you add it? If the Tcho-Tcho are as Hasturian as Carter suggests, or as Ithaquan as Derleth hints, their enemies include Cthugha and Cthulhu. Fire or flood, the stars are “right enough” for ten thousand sacrifices.
- Best of all, perhaps the Orion “Elder Gods” didn’t leave after 1905, and Fo-Lan has weaponized them for Chinese warlord struggles. Or possibly the cold, sterilizing power of Orion is set to wipe out every human city with a Mythos cult in it, from London and New York all the way down to Arkham.
- The Investigators must make common cause with the Tcho-Tcho – ideally holding the negotiations in Dream – against this urgent danger. Only the spawn of Leng have the knowledge and the ruthlessness to find the soft underbelly of a Great Old One. Turn this into a full Yojimbo, or leave the Tcho-Tcho and the Investigators uneasy partners -- until the next rising of Zhar, anyway.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

August Derleth introduced the Tcho-Tcho in his story “The Thing That Walked on the Wind” and expanded on their Burmese plateau of Sung in “Lair of the Star-Spawn” with Mark Schorer, most easily available in *Tales of the Lovecraft Mythos*. Lovecraft mentions the “wholly abominable Tcho-Tcho” in “Shadow Out of Time” and adds an “oblong swimmer” to their environs in “Horror in the Museum.” In a letter

to Robert Bloch, HPL signed his own death warrant as the “Tcho-Tcho Lama of Leng.”

Lin Carter riffed on Derleth, blending the Tcho-Tcho and the Bargain of Hastur in “Behind the Mask.” In Chaosium’s *Xothic Cycle*, Robert M. Price completed Carter’s unfinished sequel to that story as “The Strange Doom of Enos Harker,” cementing the Tcho-Tcho as guardians of Leng and Dream, rather than mere pygmy jungle raiders. Price then crossed over Carter’s Zarnak and Robert E. Howard’s Steve Harrison in “Dope War of the Black Tong,” which is just what it sounds like.

While “Lair of the Star-Spawn” remains the seminal Tcho-Tcho text, “Black Man With a Horn” by T.E.D. Klein is the best of their tales by far, keeping them distant and terrifying throughout the metafiction. “Suicide Watch” by Arinn Dembo, in *Delta Green: Dark Theatres*, brings the tribal sorcerer-cannibals into the immediate background, tying them into the *Delta Green* mythos’ Vietnam War. David Conyers riffs on the same theme in “Made of Meat,” moving the setting up to the War on Terror.

Pierre Comtois’ “Goat-Mother” actually puts a new spin on the fiends (and their horrid horrid reproductive cycle), while Robin Laws’ “Inscrutable” (in *Madness on the Orient Express*) flips the colonialist Derleth-Klein-Price-Dembo script with gusto.