

THE CALL of CTHULHU[®] CHILDREN OF FEAR

— A 1920s CAMPAIGN ACROSS ASIA —



Lynne Hardy and Friends

THE CHILDREN OF FEAR

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The Children of Fear was devised and written by Lynne Hardy. The dakinis were adapted from *Secrets of Tibet*, written by Jason Williams, as was the Mi-Go Matter-Dissolving Horn. Our thanks go to our play testers, artists, proofreaders, and others who helped bring this grand adventure to life. Public domain images from Wikimedia Commons. Kampa Dzong (page 10) Author: John Claude White, used under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic License. Ruined desert watchtower (page 88) Adapted from the original image by the Real Bear (author) under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic Licence. Surya Kund, Rajgir (page 170) Adapted from the original image by juggadery (author) under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic Licence. Tibetan Manuscript (page 191) Author: Wellcome Collection, used under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license. Camel carriage (page 354): used under the terms of the Creative Commons License CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication.

Thanks

We would like to thank the campaign's playtesters: Russell Angeledes, Adelaide Blair, Io Blair-Freese, Aaron Burke, Sean Callahan, Paul Crame, Scott Dorward, Elina Gouliou, Matt Hawkes, Jema Hewitt, Morgan Hua, David Jones, Joe Lowdon, Kirsty Lea Lowdon, Mike Mason, Rosul Mokhtar, Matt Nott, Crazy Sheep, Rebecca Swainston, Sean Toland, David Villa, and Ross Williams. Thanks also to Tim Wiseman and Maria Pettersson for assistance with Russian language translation, and to Jo and Cris Watkins for their insights into Vajrayana Buddhism.

This supplement is best used with the *Call of Cthulhu* roleplaying game and, optionally, with the *Pulp Cthulhu sourcebook*, available separately.
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Chaosium Publication 23173
ISBN: 978-1-56882-421-5
Printed in Lithuania



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FOREWORD

It's been a few years since *The Children of Fear* first started to take shape—in fact, it was during the first GenCon after Moon Design Publications joined the ownership of Chaosium (2015). I was working opposite in the Modiphius booth, but was far too shy to wander over and introduce myself. Thankfully, Robin D. Laws took matters in hand and marched me over to meet Jeff Richard, and the two of us sat down to chat about the sort of work I'd like to develop for them. I had so much research material left over from the *Shadows of Atlantis* campaign (Modiphius Entertainment), the first thing that came to mind was a campaign set in India. (Why do I do these things to myself?) After a bit more research, I submitted a pitch to Mike Mason and Jeff, and, after a little revision, Mike gave me the go ahead. And now, after many years and a lot of other *Call of Cthulhu* projects (that pesky *Masks of Nyarlathotep* for one), here it finally is.

As ever, thanks go to my sounding board and lovely husband Richard, Heidi, and everyone who helped playtest this campaign—your feedback was very much appreciated, as always. Special thanks go to Jo and Cris Watkins for their immensely helpful comments on the intricacies of Vajrayana Buddhism. Thanks also go to Mike for guiding me in becoming his Assistant, then Associate, Editor as this book was taking shape, and to Chaosium for letting me run amok with their game. And, if any time soon you hear me mentioning that I want to write another epic campaign on my own, please take me to one side, put a stiff gin and tonic in my hand, and tell me to stop being so daft.

Tashi delek!

— Lynne Hardy, May 2020.

INTRODUCTION

There have long been stories of two rival kingdoms, hidden from the world in ages past. Their names: Agarthā, the City of Fear, and Shambhala, the City of Peace. Although their legends have become confused over time, there is one constant: that opening the gates of the hidden kingdoms shall herald the end of this epoch and usher in the new. And, whoever prevails wins the right to shape the new age in their image, for good or ill...

The Children of Fear begins in September 1923 and continues through 1924, with the investigators crossing vast distances in Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent in pursuit of their goals. Often following in the footsteps of the famous Chinese Buddhist monk and explorer Hiuen-Tsiang (Xuanzang), they will visit looted temples in the Tarim Basin; lost lakes, dusty museums, and charnel grounds in northern India; and venerable monasteries and hidden valleys in Tibet.

The campaign is designed for up to six investigators and contains a mixture of both action and investigation. The Keeper may wish to adjust the balance between these two styles depending on the nature of the investigators in play, and advice is provided throughout on where it may be necessary to do so. These hints and tips, along with other useful campaign-related material, can be found in various Keeper notes and asides throughout the text.

Six pre-generated investigators have been included for use in this campaign (**Appendix G**). If *The Children of Fear* is used with existing characters, some tie to either Peking (Beijing) and/or Langdon Warner (**Chapter 2: Dramatis Personae (Part Two)**, page 74), or an excuse for the characters to be traveling in the region of Tun-huang (Dunhuang) and the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas (**Chapter 2: The Blazing Beacon**, page 72) should be considered. The same applies to newly created investigators. Further advice can be found in **Investigator Motivations** (page 17).

Keepers are advised to read the campaign through before running, as there are numerous and potentially unfamiliar terms (locations, people, items), as well as the nature of the overall plot, to understand. A **Glossary** (page 24) is provided, and explanations are included throughout the main text. The **Campaign Overview** (page 9) presents the key factors and agendas at play during the events of the campaign.

Lastly, *The Children of Fear* may be played as regular *Call of Cthulhu* or run with *Pulp Cthulhu*, with guidance for the latter given in Keeper notes and boxed asides as necessary. In addition, the Keeper can choose to present the plot fully within the sphere of the Cthulhu Mythos or, instead, run the campaign using a non-Mythos occult basis, which may be of interest for those desirous of a change of focus away from the Mythos.

MATURE CONTENT WARNING

Some of the material in this campaign deals with mature themes—primarily cannibalism and sex in the context of religious and cultural rites. While advice is provided at points, Keepers are advised to adjust their presentation of this subject matter in accordance with their own and their group's comfort levels.



CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

The **Campaign Overview** chapter provides the Keeper with an overview of the setting and background for campaign. It relates the history of Shambhala and Agartha before offering several possible options for how they are linked to the Cthulhu Mythos. The origins of the in-game Children of Fear—alternatively known as the Tokabhaya—are also discussed, as are their plans to open the Gates of Agartha and release the King of Fear (ruler of the dread city) and thus usher in the new age before the stars are truly right.

Chapter 1 brings the investigators into the action by recruiting them to assist the American explorer and adventurer Langdon Warner at the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas in Tun-huang, at the point where the Old Silk Road from China branches out toward the West. Already world famous for the discovery of a hidden library of ancient manuscripts at the beginning of the 20th century, Warner seems to have stumbled onto something equally important—if not more so.

Chapter 2 presents the investigators with an unusual request from a strange *lama*: to help him save reality as they know it. Due to the rising chaos and evil in the world, the Gates of the mythical kingdom of Agartha are opening before their time. The Gates must be closed, and the *lama* is convinced the investigators are just the right people to perform the necessary ritual; however, secretly the *lama* has been deliberately misled by the Tokabhaya and, if he and the investigators succeed in their mission, they will not close the entrance to the City of Fear but open it instead!

Chapters 3 to 5 can be attempted in any order the players choose, as their investigators travel with the *lama* across India and Tibet to gather the items they will need to “close” the Gates of Agartha.

Chapter 3 deals with the investigators’ journey to the forgotten kingdom of Gandhara, hidden in the provinces of British India’s Northwest Frontier (Pakistan). A minor setback while attempting to locate a set of precious “alms”

bowls from the birthplace of Tibetan Buddhism’s greatest *guru* leads the investigators to Peshawar, and a delicate retrieval operation that, if it goes sideways, could land them in serious hot water with the British authorities. Imperial bureaucracy is not their only worry, though, as the Tokabhaya send their allies to harry the investigators in an attempt to convince them that the threat of Agartha is real.

Rajgir in Bihar and Orissa, British India, is home to Sitavana (the Cool Grove), one of the most historic and most famous charnel grounds in India. Sitavana has ties to Tibet’s great Guru Rinpoche, also known as Padmasambhava. And, it is in Sitavana that the events of **Chapter 4** unfold, with the investigators facing the grisly task of assembling some unusual musical instruments essential for the ritual’s success. Dancing skeletons, scorpion creatures, and cannibalistic holy men only add to the investigators’ problems.

Chapter 5 deals with a visit to Kham, Tibet, where the investigators must acquire a copy of the rite to “seal” Agartha’s Gates from one of Tibet’s most famous printing houses. Unbeknownst to them, the Children of Fear have already replaced the manuscript with their own warped version. While visiting the printing house, the investigators are asked to perform a task to aid its monks and must face a most unusual test of their faith and commitment to the *lama*’s seemingly bizarre plans.

Chapter 6 brings the investigators to the hidden Valley of the White Ape in Pemakö, Tibet, where they must perform the Gate “closing” ritual under the *lama*’s direction. Too late, the investigators realize that they have been duped and have, instead, caused the very cataclysm the now-dead *lama* sought to avert. Whisked away to Shambhala, the investigators are given a stark choice: put right what they have done or face oblivion as the King of Fear destroys the universe.

Returned to the real world, the investigators begin **Chapter 7** with a visit to Nalanda University, a lost seat of Buddhist teaching and wisdom in Bihar and Orissa. There, they must

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locate a copy of the *real* ritual that can keep the King of Fear from escaping Agartha. To enact the plan, they must visit the fabled Hell Chambers in Patna, built by the legendary Indian Emperor Ashoka before his conversion to Buddhism. Once a fiendish collection of death traps and torture chambers, the Hell Chambers are now the resting place of two very auspicious ritual implements. The investigators must retrieve both of these artifacts before journeying on to the namesake of the lake they visited in **Chapter 3**. Once there, they must carry out the true ceremony to prevent the City of Fear from establishing itself on Earth (**Chapter 8**). But, will the Tokabhaya just stand idly by while they do so?

A series of appendices contain support material for the campaign: **Appendix A: Non-Player Characters** (page 325); **Appendix B: Spells** (page 340); **Appendix C: What Your Investigator Knows** (supplementary player handouts detailing the accepted knowledge for each region in the 1920s (page 347); **Appendix D: Travel** (page 354); **Appendix E: Resources** (page 362); **Appendix F: Collected Player Handouts and Maps** (page 363); and **Appendix G: Pre-Generated Investigators** (page 399). There is also a **Glossary** (page 24) of frequently used terms.

NAMING CONVENTIONS

The names of several of the locations mentioned in *Children of Fear* have changed over time, as have those of a number of the historical figures involved. As this game is set in the 1920s, we have chosen the names most commonly in use during that era or the ones that are the most instantly recognizable. Modern or alternative names are provided wherever possible to help the Keeper with any additional reading they may wish to carry out before running this campaign. A short list of resources can also be found in **Appendix E** (page 362).

We have used the BCE (Before Common Era) and CE (Common Era) convention to denote historical periods rather than BC (Before Christ) and AD (*Anno Domini*), except for in-character investigator handouts, where the modern system would be unknown to our adventurers.



Kampa Dzong

CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

DARK MATERIALS

Some of the topics covered in *The Children of Fear*, such as the use of human remains and ritual sacrifices, may be challenging for your players to handle, let alone their investigators. As Keeper, always be sure to take your players' comfort levels (as well as your own) into account when dealing with these and other mature themes found within this book and adjust the scenarios accordingly, scaling back such depictions or fading to black as necessary.

BACKGROUND

Hindu myths convey that time is cyclical in nature—what has happened before will happen again, in one form or another. As the great god Brahma breathes out, his day begins and the universe is created anew; when Brahma breathes in, he falls asleep and the universe dissolves into nothingness, ready to be remade again when next he wakes. Of course, the length of one of Brahma's days is far longer than a mere human's, stretching (according to most calculations) across more than four billion years apiece in human reckoning.

Each of Brahma's days is divided into 1,000 great ages, known as *Mahayugas*, and each of these is divided into four smaller epochs: the *Krita* (or *Satya*) *Yuga*, or Golden Age; the *Treta Yuga*, or Silver Age; the *Dvapara Yuga*, or Bronze Age; and the *Kali Yuga*, or Iron Age, during which tyranny reigns and natural disasters abound. At the end of the *Kali Yuga*, some say Vishnu appears as his tenth and final avatar, Kalki, to destroy the world so that the universe may begin again. In other stories, it is Shiva's dance that eradicates and reforms the Earth. Regardless, some esoteric scholars believe that humanity is nearing the end of our own *Kali Yuga*.

THE TWIN CITIES

There has been much argument in esoteric circles regarding the true nature of the twin cities (or kingdoms) of Agartha and Shambhala. Their names have been intertwined throughout history, although Agartha's only came to the West's attention in the late 19th century.

To some, they are one and the same, be they good or evil. To others, Shambhala is Agartha's capital city, a gleaming beacon of knowledge and learning where the best and greatest of humanity's achievements are safely stored,

OF GODS AND MEN

While the Hindu faith is often thought—by those in the West—to encompass millions of deities, many consider these as being avatars of the one central, universal power: Brahman, the absolute truth. Brahman's three main avatars are usually represented as Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Protector, and Shiva the Destroyer, who together form the Trimurti, or triple godhead

protected from the coming storm. Others believe these places to be diametrically opposed: one good, one evil; one with humanity's best interests at heart, the other determined to lead mankind astray and bring about the downfall of civilization as we know it. Nevertheless, all agree that they are home to powerful spirits who monitor and direct the course of history, although whether they intervene for their own benefit or for that of humanity very much depends upon your personal point of view.

As with their nature, the general locale of the cities is also hotly debated. In some legends, one is above ground, while the other extends through subterranean caverns reaching to the four corners of the Earth. In some versions, both may have started on the surface but were subsequently driven underground by some great cataclysm, or else by the wickedness of those who dwelt around them. In either case, the two are now hidden from the world's prying eyes—perhaps the result of their location or due to powerful shielding magic—and only individuals with the necessary “qualifications” or skills may gain entry.

As for their physical location, like that of the lost civilizations of Atlantis and Lemuria, many different geographical regions have been posited as the sites of Agartha and Shambhala. In several variations of the myths, it is settlers from Atlantis and Lemuria who are responsible for founding Agartha and Shambhala in the first place. When the legendary Mughal Emperor Akbar sent explorers out in search of the source of the River Ganges, they returned with stories of Shambhala, placing it beyond the Himalayas. The Theosophists placed Shambhala in the Gobi Desert—either along the shore of the long-lost Gobi Sea or on a mysterious White Island at its heart.

Huc and Gabet, two French Catholic priests traveling in Tibet in the mid-19th century, heard stories that set the fabled land beyond the Kun Lun Mountains that form Tibet's

CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

northern border. Giuseppe Tucci, the Italian archaeologist famed for excavating the lost Kingdom of Guge in western Tibet in the 1930s (often suggested as a potential home to Shambhala), claimed the fabled city could be found along the River Sita in the Tarim Basin, best known as home to the feared Taklamakan Desert.

Dr. Lao Tsin, writing for the *Shanghai Times* in 1925, claimed to have visited the “Tower of Shambhala” in a warm valley in the Tibetan highlands, where he marveled at the inhabitants’ advanced scientific laboratories. Nicholas Roerich, the famed Russian mystic, artist, and philosopher, was also convinced that Shambhala lay in Tibet. He journeyed through Tibet with his wife and son on an ill-fated expedition between 1924 and 1928. During the trip, Roerich spotted an unidentified flying object, which the *lamas* traveling with him proclaimed as a good omen—a sign of Shambhala’s blessing.

Agartha’s location is equally tenuously defined. Roerich believed that a vast network of caverns beneath the Himalayas was home to the Agharti (or Chud) people, a peaceful and forgotten tribe driven underground by the Mongols. French occultist Alexandre Saint-Yves d’Alveydre, one of the foremost writers on Agartha, likewise believed it to be hidden beneath the Himalayas’ mighty peaks. Others place it somewhere below the T’ien Shan Mountains (to the north of the Taklamakan Desert), although the Gobi Desert and the Tsangpo Valley in Tibet have also both been mentioned as possible sites.

Shambhala

The Land of Living Fire and the Northern City of Peace are just two of the many names associated with the supposedly mythical kingdom of Shambhala. While an earthly paradise akin to Shambhala is described in the 4th-century Chinese poem “The Peach Blossom Spring,” it was not until 1933, when James Hilton wrote his novel *Lost Horizon* (later a Frank Capra movie of the same name), that Shambhala acquired possibly its most famous appellation: Shangri-La.

One of the oldest known texts to discuss Shambhala is the *Kalachakra Tantra*. The legend goes that Suchandra, the first King of Shambhala, asked Sakyamuni Buddha (an alternate name for the former Prince Siddhartha Gautama, the founder of Buddhism) to teach him the ways of *dharm*a without forcing him to renounce all worldly practices. Miraculously, not only did Sakyamuni Buddha deliver the sermon of the *Kalachakra Tantra* to Suchandra and his followers at Dharanikota, in what would later become the Madras Presidency under the British (Andhra Pradesh), *at exactly the same time* he also taught the *Prajnaparamita Sutras* at Vulture’s Peak in Bihar and Orissa (Bihar)—over 930 miles (1,500 km) away—somehow managing to appear in both places at once.

Keeper note: Vulture’s Peak lies just outside Rajgir. Like many places in the province of Bihar and Orissa, Rajgir is an important location for Buddhists, as the investigators will find out in the course of their journeys (**Chapter 4: Old Bones**; page 153).

Sakyamuni Buddha then charged Suchandra and his descendants with guarding the written version of the *Kalachakra Tantra*, keeping it safe until the world was ready to accept its teachings. For the most part, they did, and later returned the manuscript to India in the mid-10th century CE via Nalanda University (**Chapter 7: A Dangerous Gift?**, page 270), from whence it traveled to Tibet in the 11th century. Although the transcript of the original sermon was lost, the rulers who followed Suchandra wrote their own, shorter versions of the tantra, as well as accompanying commentaries on how to apply the teachings contained therein.

As with most things concerning Shambhala, its leadership is subject to different interpretations. In some Buddhist traditions, Vishnu’s avatar Kalki (**Background**, page 11) is an incarnation of the Buddha who rules the kingdom of Shambhala. The particular Buddha in question (as there is more than one) is often stated to be Maitreya, the Future Buddha, who, just like Kalki, is the final incarnation who will bring the *Kali Yuga*—and thus the world—to an end. Other traditions, as previously mentioned, describe a line of monarchs named in honor of Kalki, the so-called Kulika Kings. During the reign of the 25th and final Kulika King, it is prophesied that the inhabitants of Shambhala will ride forth when the world descends into chaos, war, and madness to defeat a great evil and usher in a new Golden Age.

Even the Hindu version of the *Kali Yuga*’s end is tied to Shambhala, as it is here (or, at least, in a village with the same name) that, according to the *Vishnu Purana*, the protector god’s final avatar will be born.

DHARMA: THE RULE OF LAW

Dharma, a Sanskrit word roughly translated as “law,” is recognized by Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains alike. Buddhists use it as both a name for Sakyamuni Buddha’s teachings and for their religion as a whole. In Hinduism, the word represents, among other things, “duty,” and covers an individual’s responsibilities toward their friends, family, and community.

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Agartha

The first reference to Agartha in Western occult circles comes in the 1870s from French occultist Louis Jaccoliot, who served in India as a barrister and judge. He claimed to have discovered details in Brahmin folk tales of a prehistoric solar city called Asgartha that had once been ruled by a powerful theocracy. The stories related that the Aryans fought Asgartha's founders for control of the city for centuries before its destruction at the hands of two Brahmin brothers (or the Norse, according to some other interpretations).

Jaccoliot, being no fan of the clergy, cast Agartha in a less than flattering light. His fellow countryman Saint-Yves d'Alveydre, however, believed the highly advanced city was full of enlightened scholars guarding and guiding world history. Driven underground to protect itself from the *Kali Yuga*, it was ruled by a high priest called the Brahatmah, the Master of the Universe, aided by two assistants: the Mahanga and Mahatma. D'Alveydre, who claimed to have visited the underground fastness through a form of astral projection, believed that Sakyamuni Buddha was a refugee from the fabled city, having been banished for stealing knowledge from Agartha's vast archives in order to prepare humanity for the war at the end of times.

Despite his apparent belief in Agartha as a noble establishment with the world's best interests at heart, Saint-Yves d'Alveydre destroyed all but one copy of his book, *Mission de l'Inde en Europe* (in which he described his dreaming visits to the city), immediately after its publication in 1886. No one is entirely certain why. His publisher retained a copy without Saint-Yves d'Alveydre's knowledge or permission, and the book was eventually brought to the light of day in 1910 after Saint-Yves d'Alveydre's death, when it was published posthumously by his acolyte, Papus (the pseudonym used by the physician and hypnotist Gerard Encausse).

A very similar description to Saint-Yves d'Alveydre's later appeared in a novel by Polish explorer and writer Ferdynand Antoni Ossendowski (**Appendix A**, page 327). Allegedly written about his travels in Central Asia in the early 1920s, it claimed that Ossendowski learned of Siberian and Mongolian myths regarding a place called Agartha, ruled by the Brahytma, the King of the World. Uncharitable souls denounced the book as a work of plagiarism, but René Guénon (another noted French occultist) believed otherwise. He went on to expound and expand on both Saint-Yves d'Alveydre's and Ossendowski's writings in his own book *Le Roi du Monde* in 1927, in which he claimed Agartha was an older and more venerable civilization than that of Shambhala.



Chud Departed Beneath The Earth by Nicholas Roerich



Other occult avenues of contact between Agartha and the outside world existed, methods unlike the dream expeditions of Saint-Yves d'Alveydre. One, the Oracle of Astral Energy, was given to a young man called Mario Fille in 1908 by a hermit he met while traveling in the hills outside Rome. This Oracle, which relied on complex numerical manipulations, permitted the user to directly ask questions of the three Supreme Sages of Agartha, although Fille and his friend, Cesare Accomani, did not realize this fact until around 1920 (when they first tried to use it). The Oracle's proclamations helped further embed Agartha in the occult consciousness, particularly in Paris, the pair's new home. (For how the Triumvirate used the Oracle to pervert perceptions, see **The Tokabhaya**, nearby.)

UNCOVERING THE TRUTH

Given the actual nature of Agartha and Shambhala, it is hardly surprising that so many dabblers in the occult have drawn erroneous conclusions about them or have been seduced into hypothesizing about what the lords of the twin cities most desire. Both are utterly alien to Earth and are, therefore, unfathomable to the human mind.

Regardless of the way they have been interpreted, one thing appears to hold true: that the two cities are locked in an endless cycle of war and destruction. Agartha is not, as believed by Saint-Yves d'Alveydre and his followers, a benign theocracy whose aim is to protect the riches of human civilization and preserve them, come what may. The beings from Agartha, whatever they might be, have no interest in humanity and ultimately seek to destroy the world once and for all, purely to spite their enemies in Shambhala, whom they know to have a strange fascination with the otherwise insignificant little blue-green planet.

Shambhala is little better than its rival when viewed on the cosmic scale. The creatures inhabiting the city defend the Earth out of a sense of detached curiosity rather than compassion; the rise and fall of our planet's civilizations amuses them, and they like to play games with the fate of humanity to while away the eons. Regardless of who wins the war, the inhabitants of our planet suffer annihilation in one form or another, although Shambhala prefers to delay the inevitable for as long as possible in order to continue its curious experiments.

As odd as it may seem, there are complex and ineffable rules by which the conflict is waged and, up until now, both sides have largely abided by them. During the kingdoms' last war, many eons ago, the City of Peace could not secure a final victory because it was not yet the time ordained for the world's rebirth. Instead, they satisfied themselves with sealing the Gates of Agartha and trapping the King of Fear

and his minions inside. Unfortunately, three of the King's generals remained at large in the world after the gateway was closed, an unforeseen and unexpected complication that provides the basis for this campaign.

Knowing they did not have the strength or resources to openly take on Shambhala or reopen the way to Agartha at that point in time, the three generals instead decided to play the long game. And so, they set about stacking the odds in Agartha's favor for the day when the Gates would swing open once again.

THE TOKABHAYA

Although their lives extended far beyond those of mortal men, the King of Fear's generals knew they would not live long enough to see the way to Agartha reopened. Determined to ensure that their plan to defeat their hated rivals would bear fruit, they founded a cult of followers devoted to their cause: the Tokabhaya (the Children of Fear).

While they still lived, the generals controlled the Tokabhaya as a council of three, known as the Triumvirate, which mimicked the ruling hierarchy of their lost home. As the Triumvirate, they recruited and guided many acolytes from all around the world, gathering power and engineering events to suit their purposes, all with one goal in mind: to flout the decrees that had previously bound them and launch a preemptive strike to open the Gates before the appointed time. An act that would plunge the world into darkness and chaos before the Lords of Shambhala were ready to stop them.

Although the cult, the Children of Fear, has taken many subtly different forms over the intervening years, at its core it always resembled a warped version of Vajrayana (Tantric) Buddhism, one which revels in the darker, cannibalistic aspects of the old shamanistic Bön and Kapalika practices. The reason for this is simple: eating the brains and flesh of learned scholars gave the cult's members access to their knowledge, power, and memories. Using the skills and understanding gleaned from the minds of their victims, and through casting auguries, horoscopes, and divinations based on their stolen expertise, the Triumvirate determined the most auspicious moment to launch their daring plan.

While such practices enabled the original Triumvirate to directly pass on their intentions to their successors—as each new member of the ruling three was forced to consume their predecessor as the final act of their own ascent to power—humans have proven to be imperfect vessels for carrying the thought patterns of such wholly alien beings, not to mention the vast quantities of knowledge and emotion carried over from their human forerunners. As a result, the power of the Triumvirate (and the cult as a whole) has steadily degraded

over time, further complicated in places by Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, a transmissible human brain disease first officially described in the early 1920s by German neurologists Hans Creutzfeldt and Alfons Jakob.

Consuming their victims' mortal remains has not been the only way the Tokabhaya have sought to gain power and influence. They also sent their agents out across the world to



VARIETY IS...

Buddhism is not one religion (or philosophy) and comes in differing forms. Mahayana, the Great Vehicle, is generally practiced in northern parts of Asia (China, Japan, and Central Asia), while Theravada, the Doctrine of the Elders, sometimes seen as a more conservative form, is found in southern Asia (particularly Thailand and Sri Lanka). Another tradition, Vajrayana Buddhism, is often referred to as Tantric or Esoteric Buddhism, which some consider to be a school of its own, while others regard it as an offshoot of the Mahayana tradition.

Tibetan Buddhism developed from Vajrayana Buddhism after its introduction to Tibet during the 7th and 8th centuries CE. There, the practice incorporated elements of the pre-Buddhist, animistic folk religion, Bön, with its belief in vengeful gods and demons, guardian spirits, and sorcery. Bön has gone through several evolutions of its own throughout Tibet's history and, in its current form, is considered by many to be another school of Tibetan Buddhism.

The tradition known as Kapalika began with men forced to carry out a fixed term of penance for inadvertently killing a Brahmin (a member of India's highest caste; see **Chapter 3: The Caste System**, page 122). Such "Kapalikas" had to identify themselves by carrying an alms bowl made from the skull of their victim (hence their name, which literally means "skull-bearers"). Over time, the tradition developed into an extreme form of tantric Shiva worship, pursued by ascetics who, in general, refused to abide by the impurity rules imposed on Vedic and Hindu society.

Forms of tantrism that break such taboos are sometimes referred to as the "left-hand way," with esoteric practices that abide by a particular moral or religious code forming the "right-hand way." In Western occultism, the term "left-hand path" is frequently associated with harmful "black" magic, and the right with beneficial "white" magic—although tantric practitioners do not recognize such distinctions between "good" and "evil."



prepare the way for the coming of the King of Fear, waging an ongoing war of propaganda against the kingdom of Shambhala by muddying its reputation in occult circles. One such agent was the apparently saintly priest encountered by Mario Fille in Italy, who sought to manipulate perceptions through the Oracle of Astral Energy.

Another agent was Hardjji Scharipf, a specialist in East Asian languages, who captivated and ensnared Saint-Yves d'Alveydre during the latter's Sanskrit lessons. Scharipf teased the Frenchman with hints about Agartha, leading d'Alveydre to seek out and spy on the King of Fear and his countrymen through his dream projections (**Agartha**, page 13). Conditioned by Scharipf's teachings, d'Alveydre saw what he was supposed to see: an allegedly benevolent and powerful Brahatmah leading a peaceful society of scholars and academics. Perhaps d'Alveydre realized he had been deceived shortly after the publication of his book, hence its destruction at his own hands; however, its release and the attendant obfuscation of the facts surrounding Agartha were only delayed by a matter of decades—the mere blink of an eye in the grand scheme of things.

Opening the Way

The ritual created by the Tokabhaya (the Children of Fear) to break the Gates' seal is based on a twisted version of various tantric liberation ceremonies and requires the willing sacrifice of a pure spirit, one of serene power and influence. The Children of Fear have seen to it that such a holy man is ready, albeit unwittingly, to step forward. The *lama* Tenzin Kalsang (**Dramatis Personae**, page 75) is under the carefully cultivated misapprehension that his sacrifice will be purely symbolic, and that it will close the Gates and preserve the Earth (at least until the designated time). Unfortunately, his sacrifice is all too real, aided and abetted by the investigators, and is set to unleash chaos and evil upon the world—unless the investigators can do something to reverse their foolish actions.

KEEPER CONSIDERATIONS

Although **Uncovering the Truth** (page 14) describes the general gist of the conflict between Agartha and Shambhala as presented in *The Children of Fear*, the exact details of each city's origin and background is left up to the Keeper. In the following sections, we offer several suggestions for the Keeper to consider in respect of their campaign.

THE STUFF OF NIGHTMARES

The Dreamlands are a vast, surreal dimension lying parallel to our own. Conjured from the sleeping minds of humanity and other creatures capable of dreaming, it is both familiar and terrifying in its scale and nature. Agartha and Shambhala, dreamt into being at the dawn of mankind, may lie in the frozen territories in the Dreamlands' North, echoing their snowy rumored locations on Earth, or else far to the east of the Plateau of Leng in the Unknown Lands. Then again, the cities may be locked in their own pocket realms within the Dreamlands, accessible only to those who know the correct techniques to bypass the Seventy Steps of Light Slumber and the Cavern of Flame and step directly through their otherwise sealed Gates (one such method being the tantric Buddhist practice of lucid dreaming: *mi-lam*).

If the Keeper wishes to use the Dreamlands as the location of the twin cities, the King of Fear, Lord of Agartha, could be an avatar of the Outer God Ubbo-Sathla, whose dank, lightless caverns can be reached via the Cold Waste. Believed by some to be the progenitor of all earthly life, the deity could have been transformed by dreamers into the insanity-inducing ruler of an underground kingdom. This could also explain why the "yetis" of Tibet (actually high-altitude-dwelling *mi-go*; **Chapter 6: Abominable Mi-go**, page 232) congregate in the Valley of the White Ape in Pemakö (**Chapter 6: The Lotus Displayed**, page 225), as certain members of their race are known to worship the Unbegotten Source.

It is also possible that the ruler of either Agartha or Shambhala is the Great Old One Nyogtha, another subterranean-dwelling blasphemous god, worshipped in the Dreamlands by certain sects of ghouls living beneath the Plateau of Leng. If Nyogtha is the ruler of Agartha, it could potentially explain the willingness of India's *pisachas* (a type of ghoul also found in Tibet) to work with the Children of Fear (**Chapter 3: Pisachas**, page 122).

UNKNOWN DIMENSIONS

There are more dimensions than just the Dreamlands—ones that lie beyond the influence of humanity. Agartha and Shambhala reside in separate realities running alongside our Earth, intersecting with it at physical locations where the barriers between the dimensions are thinnest. While these weak spots remain sealed for the majority of the time, certain adepts have been able to peer through the veil and discern a little of what lies beyond. But, due to the human mind's inability to fully comprehend what it has witnessed, the warped nature of these worlds and the beings dwelling there

have been filtered through the prism of myth and fairytale, arriving at a description more palatable (and less sanity-shaking) to their observers.

The walls between the three realities can only be fully breached when the Earth's polar alignment or magnetic fields change dramatically. During such times, the inhabitants of the two alien dimensions can cross over to Earth to continue their age-old struggle for supremacy, with our planet acting as a neutral—and utterly disposable—battlefield, conveniently chosen to ensure the continued pristine nature of their own realms. The King of Fear and his generals lead the Agarthan forces, with the Kulika King and his lords commanding Shambhala's troops.

And, while their brutal conflict may lay waste to the Earth and everything on it, it doesn't completely destroy the planet. There's plenty of time between each epoch-shattering battle for human society to rise again from the ashes of the previous *Kali Yuga* before the next round commences.

Of Flesh and Blood

A variation on the ideas described above is that, instead of being separate realities, Agartha and Shambhala are individual entities, Outer Gods so vast they are perceived by those that see them as entire worlds with their own complex ecosystems. The creatures' organs, through which they interact with the dimensions surrounding them, are perceived as individual beings by observers, and both gods are able to bud off parts of themselves to carry out their bidding, similar to Ubbo-Sathla and its spawn (although Agartha and Shambhala's hideous offspring are far more intelligent and wilier than those belonging to the Unbegotten Source).

THE STARS ARE UNFORTUNATELY RIGHT

Far from being individual dimensions, Agartha and Shambhala may be distant ghost planets, as yet unknown to astronomers. Their orbits periodically bring both planets into alignment with our own, during which time their inhabitants can travel between the worlds to wrestle for control of the Earth. Those people sensitive to such matters are often aware of the shadowy presence of Agartha and Shambhala in the heavens, gaining confusing and conflicting glimpses of these other planets from across the void.

In both this option and **Unknown Dimensions**, the denizens of Agartha and Shambhala could be alien races worshipping their own particular Elder God: the King of Fear for Agartha, and the Kulika King for Shambhala. Both could be shape-shifting deities obsessed with death and strengthened through ritual sacrifice, with one or other

being an avatar of the charnel god, Mordiggian. Whether this is true or not, the Tokabhaya are not above using this potential link to coerce India's pisacha (ghoul) population in aiding and abetting their plans, particularly those residing in in Peshawar (**Chapter 3**) and Patna (**Chapter 7**).

Alternatively, the Keeper may wish to position both monarchs as merely the most powerful (or cunning) member of each race. The two races may originally have derived from the same stock, having separated millennia ago over some religious, political, or philosophical schism, or they may be of completely independent origins, locked in an ongoing and irreconcilable clash of ideologies.

AGENTS OF CHANGE

Azathoth sits at the very center of the universe, surrounded by the gyrating, gibbering forms of myriad Outer Gods and their piping servitors. It is said Azathoth gave birth to the universe, and will one day destroy it. If the Keeper chooses, the denizens of Agartha could be Azathoth's agents, locked in a never-ending struggle with those representing Shambhala over the manner in which the universe is eradicated and then rebuilt.

Given the deity's incomprehensibility, it is entirely possible that *both* sides in the struggle embody Azathoth's own discordant desires for the form the new universe should take (the conflicting ideologies of the Daemon Sultan made manifest). Alternatively, the agents of Shambhala could enact the whims of another equally powerful god with links to time and the cosmos, such as Yog-Sothoth (one possible explanation for Roerich's flying saucer sighting) or another "deity," all of which are limited in their ability to interact directly with the Earth.

ALTERNATIVES TO THE MYTHOS?

If the Keeper would prefer not to connect any Cthulhu Mythos entities with Agartha and Shambhala and their ongoing war, *The Children of Fear* can be run as a purely occult campaign, free from the activities of meddling Elder Beings, and relying instead on relatively more mundane threats such as ghouls, skeletons, and ghosts.

Alternatively, if you are already running a campaign which features a particular Mythos deity and their rivals, then the twin cities' internecine conflict may be just another aspect of your chosen antagonists' dysfunctional relationship. Should you wish to follow this option, the relationships between the creatures and cultists mentioned previously should be adjusted to fit in with your ongoing storyline.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The main non-player characters (NPCs) for each specific location are described in the chapter in which they appear, along with their game statistics; however, there are several major NPCs who appear throughout the campaign, either directly or as an implied threat. These are described briefly below (full profiles and their accompanying statistics are presented in the chapter where they are first encountered by the investigators). Other characters with whom the investigators may interact can be found in **Appendix A** (page 325). Historical personages may also be presented in boxed text in relevant locations.

Tenzin Kalsang: a devout and pious Buddhist tantric master who believes the investigators can prevent the premature arrival of the King of Fear. Unbeknownst to him, the *lama* has been groomed by the Tokabhaya to act as their stooge and sacrificial victim. (**Chapter 2**.)

The Tokabhaya: the cult of the Children of Fear, whose members are secretly directing Tenzin Kalsang and the investigators' footsteps, orchestrating them through means fair and foul to carry out the liberation ritual to open the Gates of Agartha. They derive a grim satisfaction from perverting the *lama's* true purpose and enmeshing the investigators in their vile plans. (**Chapters 6 and 8**.)

The Triumvirate: the ruling council of the Tokabhaya; corrupt humans who host the memories of the original alien Triumvirate and all their successors, and who care nothing for the world or anyone in it. Their only goal is to carry out their forebears' plan to open the Gates of Agartha, whatever the cost. (**Chapters 6 and 8**.)

The Lords of Shambhala: the regents of Agartha's opposing kingdom, who rule in the Kulika King's stead until he comes into his majority (i.e. at the time when the Gates to the twin cities are destined to re-open according to the cosmic timetable that the perpetual conflict formerly adhered to). (**Chapters 6 and 8**.)

INVESTIGATOR MOTIVATIONS

The Children of Fear begins in Peking, so the essential first step for every investigator is to have a reason to be living in, visiting, or traveling through the city in September 1923, putting them in the right place at the right time to become

IN THE KNOW

The following skills are very useful for existing or new investigators to have: Archaeology, Anthropology, Appraise, First Aid, History, Language (Chinese), Language (Hindustani), Language (Russian), Listen, Medicine, Natural World, Navigate, Occult, Psychology, Ride, Science (Biology), Science (Botany), Science (Geology), Science (Pharmacy), Spot Hidden, Stealth, Survival (Desert, Jungle, Mountain), and Track.

Lore (Buddhism) is also a useful skill, but don't worry if none of the investigators start with it, as there will be ample opportunity for them to learn it in the course of their travels. The same goes for Language (Tibetan). Of all the Language skills, Russian is probably the most important, as it will permit the investigators to solve clues to the location of the secret cave at Tun-huang (**Chapter 2: Lost in the Translation**, page 76). Even if investigators lack certain skills, there will always be NPC experts available to help them, as required. These experts are either provided in the relevant chapters—like Russian translator Demyan Ilarivich Babanin in **Chapter 2**—or can be selected from the archetypes described in **Appendix A** (page 325).

THE BATTLE OF THE SEXES

The 1920s were a time of increasing freedom for women, providing they came from the “right” background or were determined enough to make their own way in the world. Although many of society's top positions were still held by men, there are numerous historical examples of women making their mark through various occupations, including Alexandra David-Néel, the French explorer who became the first Western woman to reach Lhasa in 1924 while disguised as a Tibetan *ani* (nun). Peking University also led the way in China, admitting its first female students in 1920, and many foreign women worked in Peking as Missionaries, Nurses, Secretaries, and Researchers. Thus, players should feel no compunction to create only male investigators.

embroiled in the unfolding drama. Existing characters may already possess a motivation or reason for being in the city and getting roped into the campaign's events. Whether the link is coincidental or drawn from an investigator's previous adventures and backstory, the Keeper will know best how to use these as a hook to draw the characters into the developing storyline. Elements from these backstories can also be used to help maintain an investigator's interest and focus throughout the rest of the campaign.

Also of importance is a link to Prof. Wang Enlai (**Chapter 1: The City of Decaying Splendor**, page 36) and/or Sofian Bazaz-Wain (**Appendix G**; if not using this pre-generated investigator). Prof. Wang invites the investigators to Bazaz-Wain's talk at Peking University as a means to an end: their recruitment onto the mission to rescue Langdon Warner from whatever dire situation he appears to have gotten himself into at the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas in Tun-huang. Perhaps the professor knows the investigators professionally, either from their joint attendance at academic symposia or because they've corresponded or worked together in the past. Perhaps Bazaz-Wain has run across or heard of the investigators in the course of his travels and, knowing they're in Peking, recommends them to Prof. Wang as competent individuals who could be able to help. Or, perhaps the investigators' exploits in their respective fields are sufficient to have brought them to either man's attention. Thus, the investigators don't need to have a direct personal link to Wang or Bazaz-Wain as their reputation precedes them, but if one can be engineered through an investigator's backstory, so much the better.

As mentioned in the **Introduction**, six pre-generated investigators have been provided for use with this campaign (**Appendix G**). Each of these investigators is already in Peking—either because they live there or have just recently arrived—and each has a particular reason to become involved in the plot, be that their current employment, curiosity (religious or secular), or a chip on their shoulder. Even if the players create new investigators or utilize existing ones for the campaign, the Keeper is still encouraged to read over the motivations of the pre-generated investigators for inspiration and think about how these might be adjusted to fit new or existing characters.

BY OCCUPATION

Other motivational factors may derive from an investigator's choice of occupation, which can directly place them in Peking. Each of the following suggestions is based on the occupations found in **Chapter 4** of the *Investigator Handbook*.

If a player picked the Archaeologist or Explorer template during character creation, the fame enjoyed by Western

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geologists and archaeologists—such as Sven Hedin, Sir Marc Aurel Stein, and Paul Pelliot—and the unshakeable conviction (of the time) that there were still vast, untapped caches of treasure along the Old Silk Road may provide some highly attractive (and potentially lucrative) motivations. Beating a rival to the punch is yet another motivator in the race to uncover the Silk Road's secrets, and there are certainly historical precedents for all of these suggestions.

One notable party exploring Mongolia and the Gobi region in the 1920s was the Central Asiatic Expedition (CAE). Headed by the American naturalist and explorer Roy Chapman Andrews (*Investigator Handbook*, page 198), a proponent of the Out of Asia theory of human evolution, the expedition lasted from 1922 to 1928. One of its most important discoveries came in 1923, when the world's first dinosaur nest was identified in the Gobi Desert's Flaming Cliffs. Anthropologists and Scientists (particularly those specializing in paleontology and geology) could easily be employed by the CAE, placing them in the right region to receive Langdon Warner's call for assistance (**Chapter 1**).

Chapman Andrews was also a member of the New York Explorers Club. Founded in New York City in 1904 to promote and support global exploration, the club has a history of traveling to some of the most remote spots on

Earth in the name of discovery. Those with adventuring occupations could be club members on one such expedition to Sinkiang (the region of China which holds both the Gobi and Taklamakan Deserts), and thus within striking distance of Tun-huang, which (along with Kashgar) acted as a point of departure for many of the most famous journeys across the region. Other potential expedition sponsors include the Royal Geographical Society, the Academie Française, and various national museums with an interest in Central Asia (such as the Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde—now the Ethnological Museum—in Berlin).

The China Lecture Association offered an extensive schedule of foreign speakers at Peking University, meaning that almost any investigator with a high enough professional profile could find themselves on the guest list to give a presentation. Thanks to the number of universities and foreign-managed educational institutions in the city, Anthropologists, Librarians, Laboratory Assistants, Professors, Researchers, Lawyers, and Scientists may all have been recently recruited, or be spending some time with an allied organization as guests or visiting lecturers. And, of course, every educational establishment needs Students, who may be accompanying professors and other academic staff.



Determining a path along the Silk Road

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Funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, the Peking University Medical College (PUMC, also known as the Oil Prince's Palace) was the premier healthcare trainer and provider in the whole of China at the time. Modelled after Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore and wanting for nothing in terms of staff and equipment (unlike Peking's other educational establishments), the PUMC could be home to numerous investigators, including Doctors of Medicine, Nurses, and yet more Students.

As many of these facilities were originally set up by religious orders, Missionaries and Members of the Clergy would also fit right in. The PUMC was run by Tom Cochrane, a British missionary. W. A. P. Martin, an American missionary and translator, taught international law (among other things) at Peking University, having formerly been President of the Tung-wen Kuan, the government-controlled School of Combined Learning where native students were taught a variety of foreign languages. John Leighton Stuart, the China-born son of American missionaries, headed one of Peking's other prestigious universities, Yenching. The Jesuits also had an ongoing presence in Peking, most famously represented by the exiled French priest and scientist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.

As strange as it might sound, Actors, Artists, and Authors could all have a reason to be visiting China and Peking at the start of this adventure. Although not as popular or as easily accessible as Shanghai, the Chinese Republic's capital was still quite the place to seek one's muse in the mid-1920s, with most living in and around the walled enclave that formed the Foreign Legation Quarter. The unfolding political situation of the time also made it a hot spot for Foreign Correspondents and Spies. In addition to China's own internal political struggles, the Tarim Basin was carefully observed by both the British and the Russians during the Great Game, and by the Soviets following the Russian Revolution, as it formed the meeting place of the three grand empires.

Tourism also saw a brisk trade in Peking, much to the disgust of the long-standing expatriate community, who claimed it positively ruined the city's old-world ambience. Dilettantes, Gentlemen, and Ladies of all stripes flocked there, accompanied by their Butlers, Valets, and Maids, either under their own steam or the auspices of such package providers as Thomas Cook (which had offices in two of the city's most prestigious hotels).

The Grand Hotel de Pekin and the Hotel des Wagon-Lits were renowned for the quality of their cuisine and their dances, meaning that Entertainers and Musicians could always find ready employment. The Grand Hotel (more commonly referred to as the Peking Hotel) was home to the Librarie Française, a bookshop and publisher

catering to Western visitors and residents alike, not to mention The Camel Bell, an upmarket curio and trinket shop run by American entrepreneur Helen Burton, which ensured the clientele went home with tasteful souvenirs of their visit. Although foreign trade was severely restricted in Peking, unlike in treaty ports such as Shanghai, both of these enterprises should suggest how occupations such as Antique Dealer, Book Dealer, and Shopkeeper could also be incorporated if required.

Thanks to Peking's Foreign Legation Quarter (**Chapter 1: Peking: The Northern Capital**, page 31), there are several nations with a well-established diplomatic presence that the investigators may hail from, including France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, the Soviet Union, and the United States. Japan's influence in China grew after World War I, and monks belonging to Count Kozin Otani's Pure Land Buddhist sect (whom both the British and Soviets deemed to be spies) passed through Peking on their way to explore the Taklamakan Desert. Count Otani was notorious during his occasional visits for racing his car through the city's streets, much to the terror of its abundant rickshaw drivers.

Those living in Peking's Foreign Legation Quarter largely consisted of diplomatic personnel (a variation of the Elected Official) and their families, staff, and guests, as well as each nation's Military Officers and Soldiers. After the events of the Boxer Rebellion in 1900, during which a Chinese peasant army rose up and laid siege to the quarter, Chinese military personnel were no longer permitted inside its walls, leaving each country to see to its own security. British personnel included Sikh soldiers drafted from British Indian regiments.

Refugees from the Russian Revolution flocked to Peking in the 1920s, joining a previous, and by then fully naturalized and integrated, enclave of former Albazinian prisoners captured during border disputes between China and Russia in the 17th century. This community, centered on the Russian Spiritual Mission, was looked down upon by most of the other ex-pats in the city, largely for lowering the esteem in which foreigners were held as a result of their poverty and lowly occupations (such as Laborers and Prostitutes). Exiled Russian musicians were permitted, however, to give classical concerts twice a week at the Peking Hotel.

Of course, foreigners are not the only investigators available to play. As the ancient northern capital of the Chinese Empire, Peking was home to the elite of the emperor's court. Due to the unstable political nature of the country in the mid-1920s, the capital hosted Chinese military personnel and the republic's various Elected Officials, too. Thanks to its well-respected universities and hospitals and their cutting-edge research, the city was also a magnet for homegrown—and often highly politically active—Students, Researchers, and Academics who, as the

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1920s and '30s progressed, became increasingly aggrieved by the West's wholesale plundering of their ancient antiquities. The Catholic Church's long association with Peking happily accommodates native clerics as well as foreign missionaries. Entertainers, Actors, and Musicians from the Peking Opera are also a possibility.

Then there is the Criminal fraternity. China was home to numerous secret societies, and while not all of these were criminal by any means, some did make their living on the wrong side of the law, Smuggler and Forger/Counterfeiter being two of the more accessible occupations during this period. Having said that, one of Peking's most notorious forgers was, in fact, an Englishman. Edmund Backhouse, sinologist, linguist, and (allegedly) spy, lived in the city (largely as a recluse by the 1920s) and claimed to have had affairs with everyone from Oscar Wilde to the Chinese Empress Dowager, Tzu-hsi (Cixi). The fraudulent diaries and manuscripts he produced were not revealed as fakes until long after his death in 1944, although some did suspect him of duplicity at the time.

Opportunities to incorporate other nationalities will also present themselves throughout the campaign, beyond the often-essential requirement for porters and interpreters. Suggestions for these can be found in the relevant chapters. The NPCs found in **Appendix A** (page 325) may also act as inspiration.

Summary of useful occupations for investigators:

- Archaeologist
- Author
- Dilettante
- Diplomat (Elected Official)
- Doctor of Medicine/Nurse
- Entertainer
- Explorer
- Journalist/Photojournalist/Photographer
- Member of the Clergy/Missionary
- Occultist
- Professor/Researcher/Student
- Spy

BY PERSONAL MOTIVATION

Some personal reasons for new or existing investigators to become involved with the initial expedition to Tun-huang are presented below. These could also serve as hooks for any new investigators created during the course of the campaign.

Something to Prove

You may be the youngest son, the only daughter, or the black sheep of the family, but you'll show them, one way or

ALL FUN AND GAMES

The Great Game, as it became known, was the ongoing struggle for political and economic supremacy in Central Asia. The Russians referred to it by the far more grandiose title, "The Tournament of Shadows." Waged between the British and Russian Empires, the so-called classical period of the game began in approximately 1813 and lasted until the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, which codified spheres of influence in Afghanistan, Persia, and Tibet. A lesser version of the game also occurred after the Russian Revolution in 1917.

The term was first used in a letter, dated July 1840, by Captain Arthur Connolly, a British political agent in Central Asia, although possibly not in quite the same context to which it was subsequently used. In 1842, Connolly was beheaded by the Emir of Bokhara after a mission to rescue a fellow British officer went disastrously wrong.

INVESTIGATOR WEAPONS

The political situation in China in the 1920s was highly volatile, so much so that only foolhardy visitors traveled without the means to protect themselves. Bringing firearms into the country through British treaty ports such as Shanghai was forbidden without a license, but these could be obtained for a small fee on entry. Alternatively, a generous bribe was often all that was needed for unscrupulous officials to look the other way if a hidden gun was discovered in someone's luggage. Black market guns and licenses were easy enough to get for those arriving unprepared or whose weapons had been confiscated. Of course, not everyone came into China through the treaty ports, making it far easier for them to bring in firearms undetected.

Should the investigators wish to arm themselves, either during character creation or once they've agreed to help Langdon Warner, then there should be no difficulty in them doing so. Whether they decide to go through legitimate channels or use more dubious methods will very much depend on their individual backstories.

another! They've underestimated you for the last time, and this expedition to Tun-huang is just the opportunity you need to prove that you're as capable as the next man or woman. Whether you're the first to visit this part of the world or have come in the hope of making some earth-shattering discovery, the riches of China and the Taklamakan cannot be ignored.

A Way Out

You're in a bit of a mess, and no mistake. Whether it's gambling debts, a business deal gone horribly wrong, or some terrible crime, you need to get out, and get out fast. Perhaps you've adopted a new identity to facilitate your escape, or maybe you're just hoping no one will think to look for you here at the edge of civilization.

King and Country

You have a duty to perform, whether that's to your employer, your loved ones, your religion, or your country—no questions asked. You're not necessarily interested in what you can personally get out of the deal, although a little recognition would be nice. For you, the chance to serve and to further your sponsor's aims are enough, whether that's in the field of understanding, enlightenment, or politics.

Money Talks

At the end of the day, it all comes down to cold, hard cash, and someone is paying you for your services (hopefully handsomely). You have no particular personal investment in the quest at its outset, but you do have a professional

reputation to maintain—one that you protect fiercely. After all, no one in their right mind employs a double-crossing, unreliable operative, no matter what field they work in. Unless they're really desperate, of course.

A RICH AND VARIED TAPESTRY

The world explored in *The Children of Fear* is one that may be unfamiliar to the players as well as their characters. To help everyone get a feel for the places they visit, player handouts containing brief notes on the locations in each chapter are provided in **Appendix C: What Your Investigator Knows** (page 347). While an investigator's background will have an effect on the sort of information they know about a particular country, each handout provides basic details that everyone would be aware of in that era. Successful **History** or **Know** rolls can be used to provide additional information as required, as detailed in the various background sections and boxes throughout this book.

VISIONS AND DREAMS

Throughout the campaign, the investigators are subject to premonitions of the future—or at least of a potential one. The initial vision each investigator receives is described in **Chapter 1: Visions in the Dark** (page 40), and each subsequent chapter (up to Chapter 6) makes suggestions as to how these might be affected as their journey continues.

The visions are sent by the Tokabhaya to convince the investigators that the world is indeed ending and that they are truly the “chosen ones” destined to prevent humanity's annihilation. As the campaign progresses, the dreams and portents grow in detail and complexity, from vague, shadowy omens to graphic representations of a world on fire, their own tormented deaths, and the suffering meted out to everyone and everything they've ever cared for.

This escalation takes place sooner rather than later if the investigators are initially reluctant to join Tenzin Kalsang on his quest (**Chapter 2: That's a Pass**, page 87). The same gambit can also be used by the Keeper if the investigators' enthusiasm should begin to flag at a later date in their travels, as well as to remind them of what they seek to save from the King of Fear and his minions. Such premonitions are designed to aid character motivation, and the Keeper should elaborate and build on the example visions as play progresses through the campaign.

CLASSIC VS. PULP

While *The Children of Fear* has been written as a classic *Call of Cthulhu* campaign, there's no reason why it couldn't also be run with *Pulp Cthulhu*. Several of the more important NPCs have been given Luck scores and pulp talents, and each of the pre-generated investigators also come with a pulp box for ease of conversion. For pulp campaigns, don't forget to adjust the numbers of antagonists per encounter to give the heroes more of a challenge—up to twice the recommended numbers. Any encounters with scary monsters marked as optional in the classic version, such as the scorpion demon in **Chapter 4** or the migyu in **Chapter 6**, should be brought into play to help keep the heroes out of mischief—or, rather, completely up to their elbows in it!

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

The Children of Fear takes place over large swathes of the Asian continent, and so the investigators will have considerable time on their hands to improve their skills beyond the standard investigator development phase (*Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook*, page 94).

Even if the Keeper is using red lining (**Chapter 1: Travel by Map**, page 47), there's no reason that the investigators shouldn't put their time to good use in bettering themselves. Of course, it only makes sense that the investigators could learn new skills, or improve existing ones, if there is someone with them on the journey who can teach them—even if that person happens to be a fellow investigator! The only real impediment to such learning on the road is that there cannot be a requirement for large amounts of specialist equipment or materials to carry out their training; if there is, then the learning simply cannot take place. For example, during playtesting, one Keeper encouraged her players to improve on their investigators' language capabilities as they traveled. One investigator had no **Language (Chinese)** skill and decided to rectify the issue by asking one of the other investigators and the caravan staff to teach him over the course of the month they spent traveling to Tun-huang. The Keeper awarded a fixed 10% start in the skill, and the investigator continued to learn during his travels (per the rules below), but with a skill check once per month due to the more intensive nature of his training. Another investigator wanted to improve their **Language (English)** skill of 16%, so the Keeper allowed a skill check after they reached Tun-huang to reflect the constant practice in the presence of native speakers, although no starting skill bonus was awarded, as the character was already passingly familiar with the language (i.e. the skill was already above base level).

To increase a current skill (i.e. where points have previously been invested beyond the skill's starting base value) or to learn a new skill (i.e. where no points have been invested beyond the skill's base starting value), the investigator must succeed in a **POW** roll, which represents the dedication and willpower of the character in devoting time to learning (rather than sunbathing, carousing nightlife, relaxing, and so on). Obviously, any serious distraction (at the Keeper's discretion) means the chance to improve a skill is lost.

- **Increasing a current skill:** grants +1D4 points to the skill. Two skills may be improved per journey, or a single skill improved by +2D4 points.
- **Learning a new skill:** grants 1D10+1 points to a skill chosen from the choices given below—the choice of skills may vary depending on the facilities available (Keeper's choice). One skill may be improved in this manner per journey.

Possible skills that could be learned while traveling include: Language skills, Ride (if making extensive use of horses, mules, or more exotic modes of animal-based transport), Navigate, Survival, Art/Craft, Climb, Sleight of Hand, Swim, Track, and possibly some combat or firearms skills. Brief reminders, along with some suggestions, can be found in the relevant chapters in the **Self-Improvement** boxes.

THE END OF THE ROAD

Investigator death and insanity is never very far away. At some point in the campaign, one or more investigators may succumb to either their injuries or their insanity, or may simply decide that the time has come for them to leave their companions and return to their former life.

While there are certain situations where this is more likely to happen than in others, each chapter has suggestions for finding replacement investigators within the corresponding locale.



GLOSSARY

Ani	A nun (Tibetan)	Ganachakra	(Sanskrit) (Tibetan: <i>tsok</i>). A great feast held by tantric practitioners and dakinis on the night of the 25 th lunar day
Babu	A class of Anglophile bureaucrats and professionals who work for British organizations in India including the Indian Civil Service (ICS)	Ghanta	A ritual bell (Sanskrit). See also: <i>drilbu</i>
Baeyul	A divine hidden valley whose existence is revealed to the world only at the appropriate time (usually those of great danger)	Ghat	A flight of steps leading to water; also, a place for boats to load and unload
Bodhisattva	One devoted to guiding others to enlightenment rather than to attaining it for themselves (Buddhism)	Gau	(Tibetan) A ritual amulet box (and portable shrine) worn around the neck. May contain prayers or images of the Buddha or important <i>tulkus</i>
Chang	Barley beer (Tibetan)	Gompa	Monastery (Tibetan)
Damaru	A double-headed drum held in the right hand and played by twisting the wrist, forcing two beaters attached by cords to the drum's waist to hit its skins	Guru	A teacher or master (Sanskrit). See also: <i>lama</i>
Dharma	Law or teachings (Sanskrit)(Tibetan: <i>cho</i> —reality as it actually is). To Tibetans, both Buddha's teachings and their religion as a whole; to Hindus, duty to one's family, friends, and community	Kangling	A type of horn or trumpet made from a hollowed-out human femur (thigh bone)
Dharmapala	Wrathful spirit guardians	Kapala	Begging or ritual bowl made from a human cranium
Dorje	Thunderbolt (Tibetan; <i>vajra</i> in Sanskrit); a ritual implement held in the right hand, representing the male aspect of tantric rites.	Katari	(Sanskrit) (Tibetan: <i>grigug</i>). A ritual flaying knife; the blade of the dakinis
Drilbu	A ritual bell (Tibetan); a ritual implement held in the left hand, representing the female aspect of tantric rites. See also: <i>ghanta</i>	Khatvanga	Tantric ritual staff, usually topped with a trident
Dzong	A fortress (Tibetan)	Kora	A pilgrimage route, often circular in nature. Buddhists traditionally circumambulate in a clockwise direction, while Bön practitioners journey counter-clockwise
		Kyilkhor	Tibetan word for a <i>mandala</i> (q.v.)
		Lama	A Tibetan Buddhist teacher or monk; may also be a <i>tulku</i> (a reincarnation of a previous teacher, q.v.)

GLOSSARY

Mandala A meditation “map” (more specifically, a symbolic representation of the universe) that assists the practitioner’s focus. See also: *kyilkhor*

Mantra A ritual invocation; a prayer

Melong A mirror (Tibetan)

Moffusil Up country, away from civilization (India)

Moksha Release; the Hindu equivalent of *nirvana* (q.v.)

Nirvana Release from the cycle of reincarnation known as *samsara* (q.v.). See also: *moksha*

Phurba Three-sided Tibetan ritual dagger

Puja Ritual prayer (Hindu)

Pure Land A place without obstruction where reality is exactly what it is rather than what it is imagined to be

Rilbu Sacred pill whose contents vary depending on what they are to be used for

Rten Place of power (Tibetan)

Sadhu Holy man (Hinduism). They exist outside the traditional caste system as a result of their religious calling

Sahib An Arabic loanword, used in India as a male courtesy title equivalent to “Mr.” or “sir,” depending on usage. Also used to refer non-specifically to any white European man.

Samsara The repeating cycle of birth, death, and reincarnation

Sangha An association (Sanskrit). In practice, a community of Buddhist monks and nuns (including both tantric and sutric practitioners)

Shi-sa Literally “dying ground;” a place of great power where practitioners enact a symbolic death

Stupa A commemorative monument that usually contains important religious relics (Buddhism)

Sutra A religious text usually associated with monastic Buddhism

Tantra A religious text usually associated with Vajrayana Buddhism

Terma Revealed texts and ritual items, allegedly hidden by Padmasambhava’s consort, Yeshe Tsogyal

Terton A treasure revealer; one who is destined to reveal a *terma* (q.v.)

Thangka A painted, printed, or embroidered religious or instructional image (Buddhism, Tibet)

Trapa A monk (Tibetan)

Tsampa Roasted barley flour; also used to refer to dough balls made from the flour

Tsok See *ganachakra*

Tulku The reborn emanation of a deceased *lama* (q.v.)

Vihara A monastic center (Buddhism)

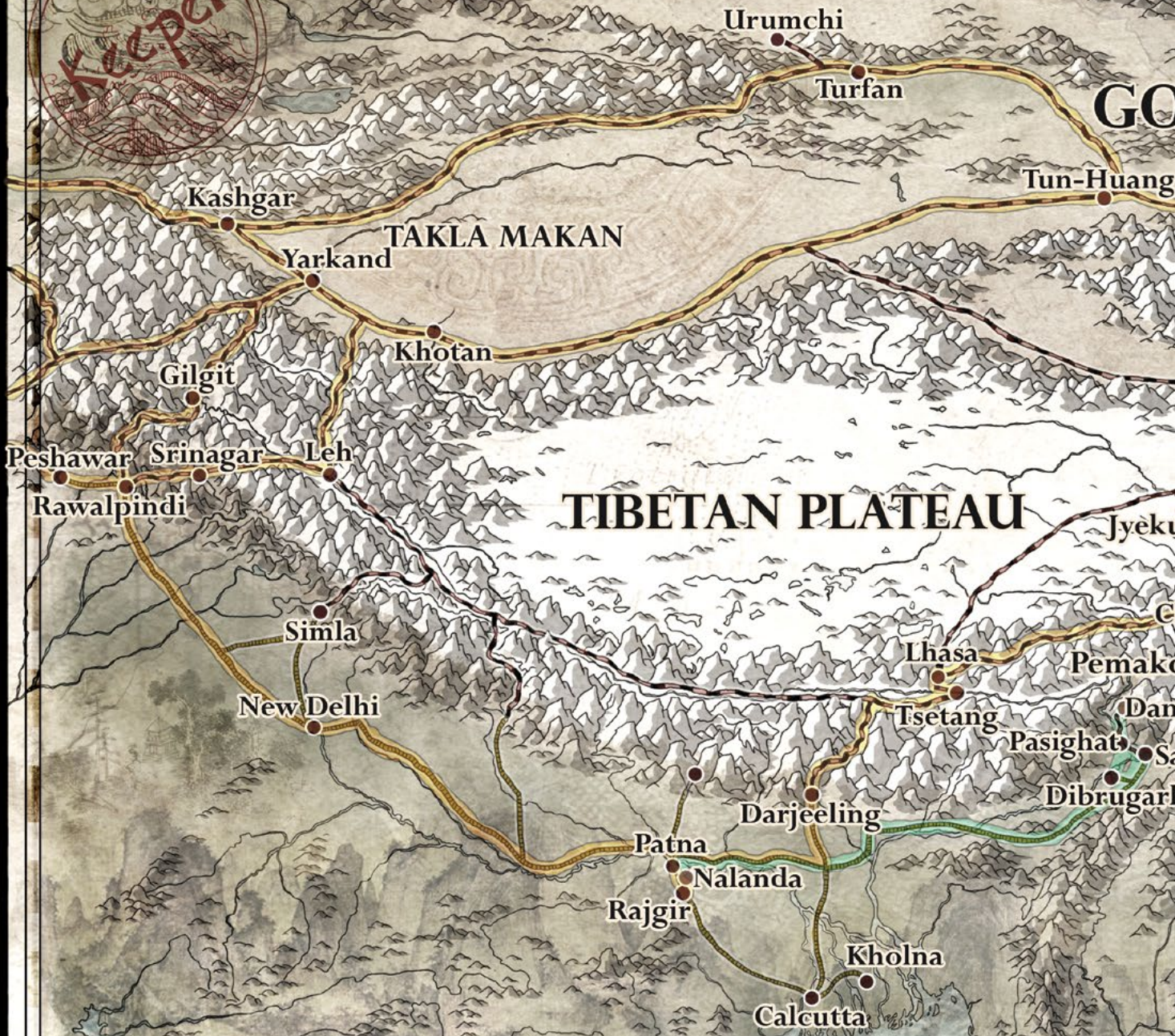
Yangsang ney The innermost (ultimately) secret level or place within a *baeyul* (q.v.)

Yidam A personal meditation deity (Buddhism)

CENTRAL ASIA

the Tibetan Plateau, and Northern India

1923



QINGHAI DESERT



Locations



Railways



Suggested path for the pre-ritual route



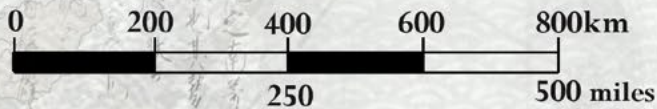
River Roads



Suggested path for the post-ritual route



Land Roads





THE CITY OF DECAYING SPLENDOR

- PEKING, CHINA -

Peking in the early 1920s is a melting pot of political machinations, racial and religious tension, and personal ambition. It has a thriving expatriate community and is the new capital of a country still revealing its secrets to the West. Many have built their reputations, not to mention their fortunes, by plundering China's historic sites in the name of preservation and research. More adventurous tourists make their way to the city to gaze in wonder at the ruins of the once mighty empire.

While visiting Peking, the investigators are recruited to help American archaeologist and explorer Langdon Warner (**Chapter 2: Dramatis Personae (Part Two)**, page 74). Warner is the latest in a long line of Western adventurers to scour the wastes of the Tarim Basin in search of the old Silk Roads and their forgotten treasures, and is currently traveling the country on a research mission for the Fogg Museum, the older of Harvard University's two art museums.

The former Director of the American School of Archaeology at Yenching University (**Taking Liberties**, nearby), Warner has traveled to China to see the wonders of the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas at Tun-huang, an old and important oasis on the Silk Road. Having reached the site in late September 1923, Warner discovers the extent of the damage done to the caves' famous murals by White Russian soldiers as they fled the ongoing Russian Civil War during the previous year. He also uncovers rumors of a secret cave, allegedly discovered by one of the soldiers and resealed for later excavation.

Warner is determined that the Americans won't miss out on another haul of historic importance, like that of the Library Cave found here in the early 1900s (**Chapter 2: The Blazing Beacon**, page 72), but is aware that he has neither the equipment nor the manpower to undertake the task of finding and emptying the secret cave. To that end, he sends an urgent and cryptic telegram to the American School of Archaeology in Peking, begging them to assemble a team and send them out to Tun-huang post-haste.

CHINA: THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

China is an ancient country with a long and complex history, ruled by an emperor from the time of myths and legends until the forced abdication of the Hsuan-tung (Xuantong) Emperor, Pu-yi, in 1912. During the 1920s, the nation finds itself under the control of a variety of warlords and political factions, each vying for absolute power at the expense of their rivals.

TAKING LIBERTIES

The Children of Fear is a work of fiction and while many of the events and locations in this campaign are real, we have allowed ourselves a certain degree of dramatic license when it comes to their timing or appearance.

Although Langdon Warner most certainly did visit Tun-huang and, controversially, remove 26 precious murals dating from the T'ang Dynasty (618–907 CE; considered by many to be China's greatest Golden Age), he didn't actually reach the caves until January 1924, after a detour to the black city of Kharakoto (the probable site of Marco Polo's legendary Euzina).

We have time-shifted Warner's visit to Tun-huang by several months in order to avoid the worst of the political upheavals that take place in China and Peking toward the end of 1924 (**China: the Middle Kingdom**), as these could seriously hamper the investigators' freedom of movement.

Opposite: Peking, the decaying city of splendor

The Ch'ing (Qing) Dynasty had been in grave trouble for around a century before General Yuan Shikai seized control and declared China to be a republic. The Ch'ing's fall brought over two millennia of imperial rule to an end. Their demise was largely a result of their inability to modernize the country or neutralize Western aggression and expansionism.

Although Western traders and clerics had been present in China since the 16th century, their access to the country and its people was strictly limited. China's first major defeat at the hands of a Western power came during the First Opium War (1839–1842), when the British forced the Ch'ing to permit the establishment of five treaty ports, including Shanghai, as well as handing over control of the safe anchorage of Hong Kong.

COIN OF THE REALM: CHINA

The accepted currency in the Republic of China during the 1920s is the silver dollar. Like its predecessor, the tael, it was based on the Silver Standard (rather than the Gold Standard used by the United States, Great Britain, and parts of Europe at the time). One Chinese silver dollar was further subdivided into 100 fen or 1,000 wen, and a variety of coins of differing values were in circulation.

Although the Chinese silver dollar's exchange rate varied widely over the course of the 1920s, for game purposes, one US dollar is worth two Chinese silver dollars (US\$1 = C\$2). For investigators converting from British pounds sterling, one British pound is worth five US dollars, so is also worth ten Chinese silver dollars (£1 = US\$5 = C\$10).

ABOUT MONEY

Call of Cthulhu is not a game about accounting. The campaign assumes the investigators have sufficient funds to cover “reasonable” travel expenses and the like, proportionate to their Credit Rating. Such things can be waived by the Keeper, as the focus should be in the mystery, investigation, and plot. Of course, that is not to say that the Keeper should completely turn a blind eye to the investigators' finances. Where the investigators' Credit Rating is low, forcing them to lean on the other player-characters for help is appropriate and further builds the overall story. How the investigators' personal funds might be affected in the early stages of the campaign is discussed in greater detail in **Chapter 2: Delicate Negotiations** (page 65).

Numerous other wars and internal rebellions followed. The Second Opium War (1856–1860) further expanded British, French, and Russian influence and trade within China, while the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895) saw the Ch'ing's power dwindle even further with each “barbarian” victory. The Boxer Rebellion of 1900—a peasant-based anti-Christian and anti-foreign uprising tacitly supported by the Empress Dowager Tzu-hsi—brought still more foreign troops into the country and weakened China once again through trade deals and diplomatic concessions.

Despite near-constant uprisings following the end of the war with Japan, the increasingly desperate imperial family held on to power through the violent suppression of its enemies. Secret societies flourished. While many provided the Ch'ing's opponents with opportunities to organize their rebellions against the state, others were purely criminal organizations built to profit from the trade in opium, gambling, and prostitution.

It wasn't until late 1911 that the various rebellions and mutinies gained enough momentum to finally overturn the old order in what became known as the Hsin-hai (Xinhai) Revolution. Headed by General Yuan Shikai in the north and Sun Yat-sen in the south, the insurgents snatched control of the country, declaring it the Republic of China in early 1912. After various political maneuvers between the two allied factions, Peking became the new republic's capital and Yuan its second provisional president (after Sun Yat-sen's brief tenure).

To underline their influence in the future direction of Chinese development, Britain, Russia, the United States, France, and Japan all took part in the negotiations to establish the new regime. However, the republic's government was not recognized internationally as the legitimate political successor to the Ch'ing Dynasty until 1928 (although the new Soviet regime, hoping to curry favor and further their own aims in Central Asia, formally acknowledged it in 1924). Built on the back of Yuan's Beiyang Army, the period between 1912 and 1928 became known as the Beiyang Period.

Yuan briefly declared himself emperor in 1915, only to abdicate the following year and die a few months later. His ascension to the imperial throne and subsequent death sparked a turbulent series of factional and civil wars that split the country in two and continued throughout the first half of the 20th century.

The years between 1915 and 1928 saw China under the control of a number of warlords who declared their independence from the republic following Yuan's demise; all brutal and self-serving men interested only in power for power's sake. Those in the North, including General Wu Pei-fu (**The Jade Marshal**, page 31), paid lip service to the official Beiyang Government while fighting amongst themselves for supremacy.

The Southern warlords officially supported the Kuomintang (KMT), a political secret society outlawed under Yuan's rule, whose military arm (the National Revolutionary Army) was headed by Chiang Kai-shek. After Sun Yat-sen's death in 1925, Chiang took control of the organization and used the Northern Expedition to bring his Peking-based rivals to heel. By late 1927, Chiang's troops had most of China under their control, and finally united it in 1928 when they overthrew the Beiyang Government.

Although the KMT was initially supported by the Communist Party of China (CPC), the two groups soon fell out, leading to the Chinese Civil War in 1927. During the following decade, Chiang Kai-shek's government tried to rebuild and modernize China while attempting to also eradicate their political rivals in the CPC. Only the events in the run up to the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937 allowed the brokerage of an uneasy truce (one that was purely fleeting in nature). The Civil War was not truly resolved until 1949, when the Communists finally seized power under Mao Tse-tung (Mao Zedong).



THE JADE MARSHAL

Born in Shantung (Shandong) Province in 1874, Wu Pei-fu became a career military man and eventually joined Yuan Shikai's Beiyang Army. After Yuan's death, Wu came to dominate Peking from 1917 until 1924, when he was driven out of the city. Two years later, in 1926, he was finally defeated by the National Revolutionary Army, whereupon he fled to Szechuan.

Although an imperious and scrupulously honest man, Wu was nevertheless capable of great brutality, as his massacre of 80 striking workers in 1923 proved. His attitude did not sit well with his subordinates either, which eventually led to his humiliating betrayal and defeat in Peking in late 1924. According to some theories, he was assassinated by the Japanese in 1939 for refusing to lead their puppet government in Manchukuo (Manchuria).

Although the investigators aren't important enough to meet the Jade Marshall in person, they will need his official permission to travel to Sian and beyond. Thankfully, Prof. Wang can secure the necessary travel permits on their behalf, meaning their journey to help Langdon Warner won't land them in hot water with the ruling warlord (**Prof. Wang's Office**, page 45).



PEKING: THE NORTHERN CAPITAL

Flanked by mountains and the Great Wall to the north, Peking rises dramatically from the bland, beige expanse of the Chihli (Zhili) Plain. Its vast, red walls are clearly visible from the train during its 80-mile (128-km) journey from the treaty port of Tientsin (Tianjin), one of the major disembarkation points for tourists and visitors to the ancient capital of the Chinese Empire.

Although there is evidence of human habitation in the region dating back as far as the 11th century BCE, for much of China's early imperial history, the city was considered to be too far north to be the main seat of government. After being razed to the ground by Genghis Khan in 1215, the city was rebuilt as Dadu, capital of the Mongol Empire and, apart from a half-century at the outset of the Ming Dynasty and a brief 21 years under the KMT, it remained the home of the imperial government from that point onward.

Renamed Beijing in 1403 under the rule of the brutal and dictatorial Yong-lo (Yongle) Emperor, it later became known in the West as Peking, allegedly as a result of the way its name was pronounced in the southern ports accessible to foreign traders. The modern layout of the city was established under the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and consists of four individual cities: the Chinese City, the Tartar City, the Imperial City, and the Forbidden City.

Established in 1861 as a result of the Convention of Peking (the peace treaty that ended the Second Opium War in 1860), the Foreign Legation Quarter was home to many of the city's expatriate residents. Lying immediately to the east of Tiananmen Square and just outside the Imperial City, the area was besieged during the Boxer Rebellion in 1900 until both



NO ENTRY

Although he abdicated in 1912, the Hsuan-tung Emperor was permitted to remain in the Forbidden City with his imperial eunuchs until 1924, when Feng Yu-hsiang, the officer who betrayed and ousted Wu Pei-fu, forced the emperor to quit his ancestral home. The complex opened as the Palace Museum in 1925, allowing the residents of Peking to finally see where their emperors had lived in carefully guarded seclusion for centuries.



AVENUES AND ALLEYWAYS

Unlike the Legation Quarter, much of Peking is built around two structures: the courtyard house, or *szubo-yuan* (*sibeyuan*), and the alleyway, or *hu-t'ung* (*hutong*). Lines of *szubo-yuan*, built side by side, create the *hu-t'ungs* between the rows of houses. The resulting alleys vary in width depending on the affluence of the neighborhood. The term "*hu-t'ung*" can also be used to describe a neighborhood formed by a group of such alleyways, such as the Pata (Bada) Hu-t'ung, Peking's red-light district.

it and the surrounding city were relieved by the armies of the Eight Nation Alliance. Once the rebellion had been put down and the political dust had settled, the foreign powers housed within the quarter expelled all Chinese residents, built a new, high wall around themselves, and obtained the right to enlist their own troops to ensure their security.

As foreign trade was restricted in Peking, most of those living in the Legation Quarter were diplomats and their associated staff, families, and guests. With one or two exceptions, the residents had little to do and were isolated from the city around them by their inability to speak Chinese (more specifically, the Mandarin dialect found in Peking), as well as their general attitude toward the city's native inhabitants.

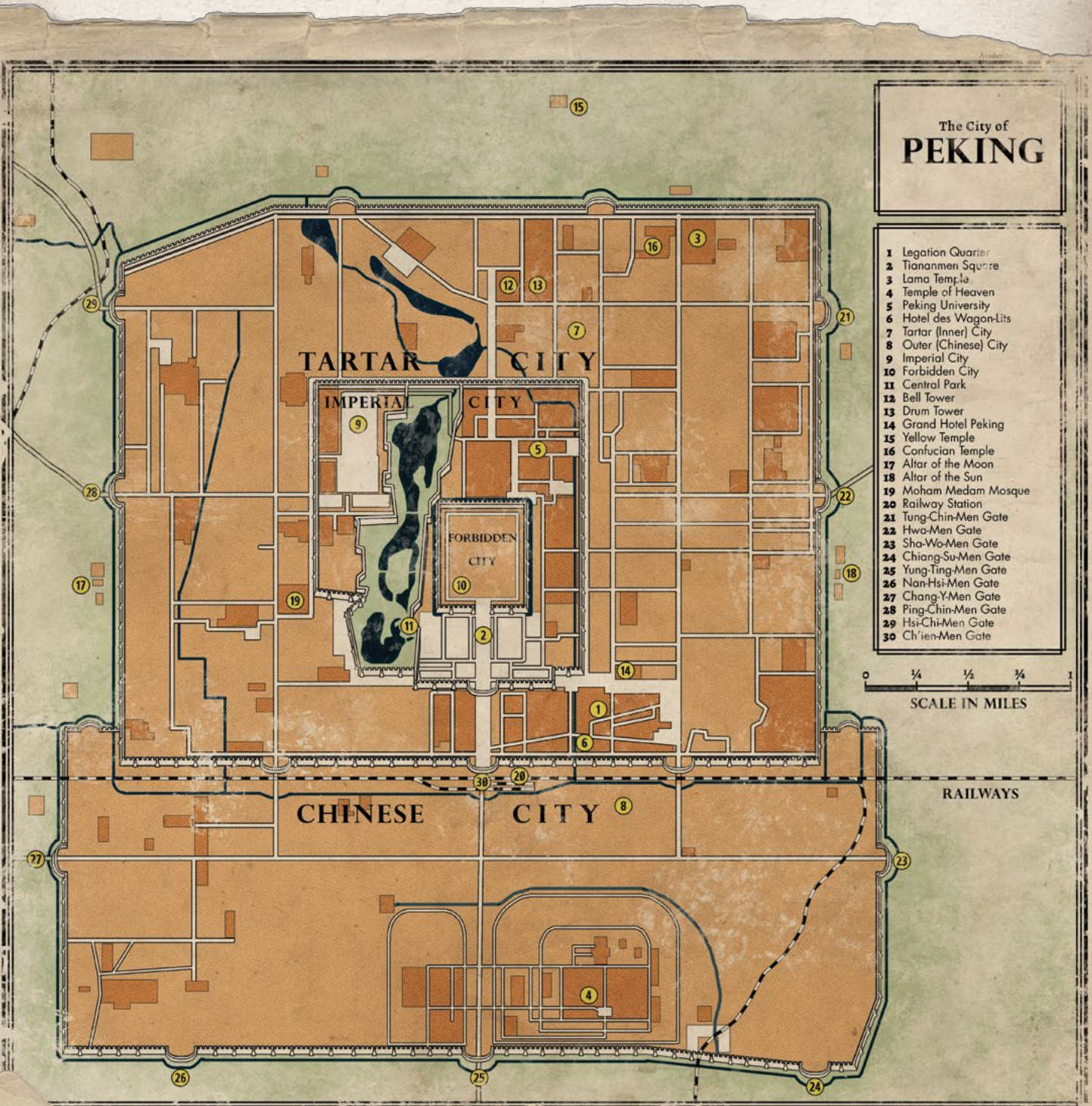
According to one commentator, the diplomats were forced to rely on an endless round of dinner parties, soirees at select hotels, and "sex and horses" for their entertainment. Given that the fierce, bad-tempered little Mongolian ponies ridden around the city's parks as part of the foreigners' daily constitutionals apparently loathed the smell of their alien riders (which only served to make them even more irritable), it's no wonder that cocktail parties and tea dances became increasingly popular during the 1920s!

The city became increasingly modern under the Beiyang regime. A Danish company installed the city's telegraph system in 1900, and electric lighting and macadamized roads were introduced outside the Legation Quarter in 1911. By the 1920s, the city boasted an electric tram system, a good water supply, telephones, and a postal system with eight deliveries a day. The previously-restricted train



The Imperial Gate of Peking
Opposite: The City of Peking map

THE CITY OF DECAYING SPLENDOR
- PEKING, CHINA -



The City of
PEKING

- 1 Legation Quarter
- 2 Tiananmen Square
- 3 Lama Temple
- 4 Temple of Heaven
- 5 Peking University
- 6 Hotel des Wagon-Lits
- 7 Tartar (Inner) City
- 8 Outer (Chinese) City
- 9 Imperial City
- 10 Forbidden City
- 11 Central Park
- 12 Bell Tower
- 13 Drum Tower
- 14 Grand Hotel Peking
- 15 Yellow Temple
- 16 Confucian Temple
- 17 Altar of the Moon
- 18 Altar of the Sun
- 19 Moham Medam Mosque
- 20 Railway Station
- 21 Tung-Chin-Men Gate
- 22 Hwa-Men Gate
- 23 Sha-Wo-Men Gate
- 24 Chiang-Su-Men Gate
- 25 Yung-Ting-Men Gate
- 26 Nan-Hsi-Men Gate
- 27 Chang-Y-Men Gate
- 28 Ping-Chin-Men Gate
- 29 Hsi-Chi-Men Gate
- 30 Ch'ien-Men Gate

0 ¼ ½ ¾ 1
SCALE IN MILES

RAILWAYS

Author: Mr. Arthur J. Vander, Cartogr. Soc.

London: Published by the Geographical Institute of the University of London, 60 D. Lane, E.C. 4, 1937.
Printed by the University of London Press, London.

New Edition, 1950.



PEKING'S WEATHER

Peking experiences extreme changes in weather during its four seasons. During the long, cold winter (November through March), the city is subject to freezing winds blowing down from the north, and in January temperatures can drop as low as -4 degrees F (-20 degrees C). Spring (April through May) is dry, but the temperatures can vary widely, and the city is subject to the occasional sandstorm blowing in from Mongolia. Summer (June to mid-September) can see temperatures exceed 104 degrees F (40 degrees C), although they usually hover around the mid-80s degrees F (30+ degrees C). Frequent short but heavy rainstorms catch both visitors and locals by surprise. The cooler and clearer fall is very brief (mid-September through October), and when it ends, temperatures plunge once again.

The investigators are in Peking during September, with the temperature ranging between 60–80 degrees F (15–26 degrees C). The summer downpours and humidity abate rapidly as the month goes on.

services were extended into the heart of the city via gaps bludgeoned through the ancient protective walls, and the former imperial gardens were transformed into a number of delightful public parks.

Despite these advances, Peking in the 1920s was, like the country as a whole, in a constant state of flux (see **Peking Timeline (Early 20th Century)**, nearby). The level of danger in the city could be judged by the flow of the city's wealthiest Chinese citizens and their most treasured possessions into the Hotel des Wagons-Lits, the only hotel in the Legation Quarter (and therefore guarded heavily by foreign troops). When the latest crisis had passed, the citizens returned to their homes elsewhere in the city—until the next threat arose.

PEKING TIMELINE (EARLY 20TH CENTURY)

- **1900:** the Boxers lay siege to the Foreign Legation Quarter.
- **1912:** the Beiyang Government, under Yuan Shikai, is established in Peking, after “rioting” in the city prevents him from leaving for the proposed new capital, Nanking (Nanjing).
- **1919:** students from across Peking march to Tiananmen Square on May 4th to protest the signing of Chinese territories over to Japan under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles.
- **1920:** Wu Pei-fu and Cao Kun seize control of the city during the Chihli-Anhwei (Anhui) War (fought between rival cliques of the Beiyang Army previously loyal to Yuan Shikai).
- **1922:** the Fengtien (Fengtian) Clique attempt to seize Peking from their former allies, the Chihli, during the First Chihli-Fengtian War. They fail.
- **1924:** in October, Wu Pei-fu is driven out of the city by the Fengtiens during the Second Chihli-Fengtian War.
- **1928:** the KMT seize control of the city, renaming it Beiping (Peiping) and painting its walls blue. The capital is moved to Nanking.

THE CITY OF DECAYING SPLENDOR
- PEKING, CHINA -

Handout: Decaying Splendor 1

SET UP: AN EDUCATIONAL INVITATION

It is September 20th, 1923, and the investigators are in Peking. Prior to the start, each investigator receives an invitation to attend a lecture being given this evening by Sofian Bazaz-Wain (**Late Arrivals**, page 39) at Peking University on behalf of the China Lecture Association. The subject of the lecture is: "A Long Road to Travel: From Srinagar to Sian in the Footsteps of My Forebears."

The invitations (**Handout: Decaying Splendor 1**) are printed on good quality card stock, with the time, date, and location of the lecture. A short note (**Handout: Decaying Splendor 2**) is also included in the envelope. Also, give the players **What Your Investigator Knows 1: China and Peking** (**Appendix C**, page 347).

THE CHINA LECTURE ASSOCIATION

Cordially invites you to~

**A Long Road to Travel:
From Srinagar to Sian in the
Footsteps of My Forebears**

A presentation by
Mr. Sofian Bazaz-Wain,
Photojournalist

Thursday, 20th September, 1923,
Examination Hall 5
7:30 p.m. for 8:00 p.m.

Formal dress is not required, although there will be a cocktail
reception in the foyer both before and after the presentation

RSVP

Handout: Decaying Splendor 2

My Dear Friend,

I would be honored if you would join me for what should prove to be
a most enlightening evening.

Yours in eternal gratitude,

Wang Enlai, Prof.

Director, American School of Archaeology,
Yenching University, Peking

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The following are the main NPCs for this short prologue. Other NPCs are detailed where they first appear in the adventure.

Wang Enlai, age 52, Professor of Archaeology and Anthropology (Yenching University)

Although he'd originally considered a career in the Imperial Civil Service, Wang's love of poetry and legend soon swayed him to devote himself to the study of his country's history instead. Trained at Peking University, Wang proved to be a competent scholar whose firm, but subtle, hand has guided many students through the rigors of their own degrees.

With limited experience in the field (both literally and figuratively), Wang was a surprise choice for the role of Director of the American School of Archaeology in 1917 after Langdon Warner stepped down from the position (although rumors abound that Warner was asked to leave by the University's Board of Directors, having been absent for the entirety of his tenure). Wang's friendship with Dr. Leighton Stuart, and the general respect in which he is held in Peking's academic circles, were certainly contributing factors to his appointment.

The professor is quietly working to establish Chinese control over the country's ancient artifacts, and he was sorely tempted to accept the position of Head of the new Chinese Cultural Research Department at his alma mater last year; however, he believes it best to foster a continuing partnership between China and America through his work until he and his fellow native academics have firmly established their credentials on the international archaeological stage.

- **Description:** Wang is still spry and trim from his long walks around the former imperial gardens that form Yenching's campus. Like his colleagues, he adheres to the school's Western dress code. His rich brown eyes miss little, and although he is soft-spoken, his voice carries great authority.
- **Traits:** lives his life according to Taoist principles, and attempts to exist in harmony with everything around him. He is universally acknowledged to be firm but fair.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** the professor has received a most perplexing telegram from his predecessor, Langdon Warner, urgently requesting assistance at the excavations at Tunhuang, and turns to the investigators for aid in resolving this matter.



Wang Enlai



Sofan Bazars-Wain

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Sofian Bazaz-Wain, *age 49, photojournalist and explorer*

An aging Indian photojournalist who has been asked by the China Lecture Association to speak about his travels along the Silk Road during the early 20th century. See his investigator sheet (page 405) for further details on his background and appearance.

- **Roleplaying hooks:** if not in play as an investigator, Bazaz-Wain can provide relevant and useful snippets of information to the investigators before they head off on their trip to Tun-huang. He can be contacted again after the lecture or before the investigators leave on their journey, if they think of any further questions they wish to ask him. Thus, use Bazaz-Wain as a means of conveying useful information.

GETTING THERE

If the investigators are not already in Peking at the start of the scenario, there are several different modes of transport that could get them there, depending on their Credit Rating or the depths of their expedition sponsor's pockets. They do not receive their invitations from Prof. Wang until after they've arrived in the city.

Although much of China is not accessible by rail until after the Communist Party takes control in 1949, some lines do run to Peking by the 1920s. The southern branch of the Chinese Eastern Railway links Peking via Tientsin and Harbin to the Trans-Siberian Railway. Running from Saint Petersburg to Moscow and on to Vladivostok, and with links to other European and Chinese rail networks, the Trans-Siberian Railway effectively reduced travel times from Europe to Peking to around two weeks, weather and war permitting. Trains run also from Shanghai to Peking via Nanking and Tientsin.

Passenger and cargo ships from all over the world regularly dock at the various treaty ports established by foreign powers in the 19th century—ports such as Shanghai and Tientsin—before taking the train inland (where available).

For those with the means, Peking's Nanyuan airport opened in the early 1900s, but the city's first commercial passenger service covering the 800-mile (1,290 km) trip up from Shanghai wasn't established until 1921. Set up by Cecil Lewis, a decorated World War I flying ace (and co-founder of the British Broadcasting Company), on behalf of Vickers Ltd, the service operated for only two years before petering out in 1923. Commercial flights from outside China were limited until the 1930s, when more external routes began to open up. Investigators with access to their own aircraft may retain flight as an unusual option.

One final, and rather extreme, possibility is to drive all the way to Peking. Although good quality roads are practically non-existent for much of the route, an automobile race was successfully held between Peking and Paris via the Gobi Desert and Siberia in 1907. (It was won by the Italian Prince Scipione Borghese, who took just 60 days to cover the distance in his Itala, arriving in Paris two weeks ahead of his three French rivals.)

Of course, at this starting point in the campaign, it may be enough to say that all the investigators are in Peking already, either as residents or guests of the city, depending on how detailed the Keeper wishes to be with the arrival and whereabouts of their players' characters.

Where to Stay

While the Hotel des Wagon-Lits may be the only hotel located within the safety of the Legation Quarter, it is not the only accommodation open to Peking visitors. If the investigators are not residents or if they do not have contacts within the Legation Quarter with whom they could stay, they could take a room at either the charming courtyard-based




THE AMERICAN SCHOOL OF ARCHAEOLOGY

As mentioned, we have taken some historical liberties in *The Children of Fear*. One is the existence of the American School of Archaeology. Originally proposed in 1913, Langdon Warner was appointed as its first director, only for the project to be scuppered by the outbreak of the Great War and the death of the school's main American sponsor.

For the purposes of this campaign, we are assuming that the school was successfully set up in 1914, after Warner's visit to Peking the year before, as a joint venture between the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C., and what would become Yenching University (as Yenching students certainly witnessed Warner's pillaging of the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas in 1924). Warner acts as an absentee director until 1917, when he hands over the reins to Prof. Wang.

Yenching University itself was formed from the amalgamation of three Christian teaching colleges in 1919 under the leadership of John Leighton Stuart. Yenching also has ties to Harvard University, home of Warner's current sponsor, the Fogg Museum.



Hotel du Nord, facing the *glacis* that surrounds the Legation Quarter, or at the nearby Grand Hotel de Peking (the Peking Hotel), famed for its French cuisine, the daily high tea in the lobby, and its spacious roof garden where dances are regularly held. Numerous smaller courtyard hotels dot the city, and many families rent out their ancestral homes to foreigners looking for a prolonged stay.

START: THE LECTURE

Peking University sits to the northeast of the Forbidden City. First established in 1898 as the Imperial University of Peking, by the 1920s it is at the leading edge of teaching and research in China. Tonight's lecture is to be held in one of the campus' many examination halls. Temporary signs and helpful students point unfamiliar visitors in the right direction.

ON THE WAY

Peking is lucky enough to have an electric tram system in place by the 1920s, enabling people to move quickly and efficiently about the city. The rickshaw is a traditional

alternative; over 50,000 rubber-tired versions ply their trade within the city, although their popularity is in decline by the mid-'20s. Cars are available in Peking, but they are not a common sight. Narrow scrapes between rickshaws and automobiles are an increasingly frequent occurrence, though, and are certain to enliven any trip.

The Keeper should ask the players how their investigators plan to get to the lecture. If their characters know each other, are they meeting up beforehand for dinner and cocktails at one of the many hotels or fashionable restaurants in Peking (such as *Quanjudé*, official home of the world-famous Peking Duck)? Or, are they making their way there individually, whether they know each other or not?

One writer described Peking in the 1920s as a city of gently decaying splendor, pungent odors, and exotic street life, whose residents ranged from the wealthy elite to the desperate poor. A trip through the streets of Old Peking, outside the regimented, genteel order of the Legation Quarter, should be full of color, noise, and chaos.

Enticing and unusual smells from food stalls mingle with the stench of manure and the bodily odors of the thousands of people who crowd the streets. Incense wafts from the numerous temples and churches, and the chanting and prayers of the priests and worshippers mingles with the



The Chinese Quarter of Peking

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clatter of the rickshaws and carts that pass by. Soldiers march about the city, and public executions are not an uncommon sight. Stunning imperial buildings, with their gilded roofs, tower over the modest *szuho-yuan*.

Travel on the evening of the lecture is eventful. If the investigators are dining out or meeting for drinks first, then there are minor but irritating delays with either the food or cocktails, such as incorrect orders or unfortunate spillages, each of which make reaching the university before 8:00 p.m. that little bit more difficult.

Travel to the lecture is also fraught with a multitude of apparently petty inconveniences, delaying the investigators even further. If taking a rickshaw, the investigators might have a near miss with an out of control horse and cart, or one of Peking's few automobiles. The driver, if questioned, explains that they momentarily lost control (either the horse shied at something unseen or the car suffered a puncture, causing it to swerve). If using their own car, the investigator might be the one almost colliding with a stranger (or even a colleague) in a rickshaw—if they succeed at a **Drive Auto** roll; a failure indicates a minor crash, with no one harmed). Any investigator traveling by tram experiences delays thanks to intermittent (and uncharacteristic) power failures.

As they attempt to reach the university, permit each investigator the chance to make a **POW** roll: success gives them the uncanny feeling that they are being watched. If the investigator's POW is over 75, they do not need to make the roll—the investigator automatically experiences the sensation. Any attempt to find their observer(s) are unsuccessful because, in truth, they are not physically there. The invisible watchers are agents of the Tokabhaya, carefully spying on their targets from a safe distance.

Keeper note: once an investigator has made a **POW** roll to notice they're being watched, they don't need to do so again (unless the Keeper wishes it); however, there is a chance that not everyone will succeed with this roll the first time, so opportunities for anyone who fails to reroll are suggested elsewhere. Alternatively, the Children of Fear's agents may occasionally decide to tail the investigators in person, requiring the investigators to make a successful **Spot Hidden** roll to notice they are being watched by a person or persons unknown. This is a favored tactic in bustling towns and cities where the observers can swiftly disappear into a crowd if detected. You never know; some characters may remain oblivious to their shadows for quite some time. Certainly, one of our playtest investigators did—not realizing someone was keeping an eye on him until he reached the Kansu Corridor (**Chapter 2: Between Sian and Tun-huang**, page 69)!

LATE ARRIVALS

Given their travel woes, by the time the investigators reach the examination hall, the pre-lecture drinks in the foyer are being cleared away by the catering staff and the talk is ready to commence—this should be a particularly nerve-wracking experience if Bazaz-Wain is one of the player characters. In spite of this, the student manning the door insists on collecting their invitations before he lets them into the building. Inside, Prof. Wang is about to begin, and the investigators are ushered into the hall, which has been repurposed for the evening as a lecture theatre.

A bulky, electric Magic Lantern has been set up to project onto a large white screen at one end of the hall. To one side of the screen stands an ornate lectern on a small dais. The rest of the hall is filled with seats, almost all of which are occupied. Thanks to Langdon Warner's well-publicized trip to Tun-huang, the popular lecture series is even more well-attended than usual.

Prof. Wang introduces the speaker, Mr. Bazaz-Wain, to the audience and the house lights dim in anticipation. The lecture, accompanied by the award-winning photojournalist's pictures, retells the story of his trek with his younger brother, Adem, from their hometown in Srinagar, British India, to Sian (Xi'an), the former capital of the Chinese Empire and the starting point of the Silk Roads of old.

Not long into the talk, the bulb in the Magic Lantern flickers and then bursts with a loud "Bang!" For the next few minutes or so, there is a scene of polite, refined chaos as the house lights fail to come back up (yet another unexpected power failure).

MANY VOICES: CHINESE DIALECTS

Although there are many—not always mutually understandable—dialects of the Chinese language, the catch-all skill Language (Chinese) has been used throughout *The Children of Fear*. The majority of people encountered in this campaign speak closely related variations of Mandarin, the largest of China's dialect families. As the basis of the language used by the Imperial Court to administer China, Mandarin dialects (particularly those from Nanking and Peking) are the most widely understood and are later used to form the basis of the standard national language adopted in the 1930s.

During the early years of the Republic of China, a move was also made from classical literary Chinese to a written form based on the vernacular instead. No in-game distinction is made between the two for the purposes of skill rolls when attempting to read documents written in Chinese.

Visions in the Dark

The lecture theater's plunge into darkness is the perfect opportunity for the Keeper to foreshadow the strangeness to come by giving each of the investigators a vision at the moment the Magic Lantern's bulb explodes. Sent by the Tokabhaya to lay the groundwork for what they will find at Tun-huang, these visions include the sights and sounds of unfamiliar (for the moment) locations or, in the case of investigators who have already visited some of the places on their upcoming route, something akin to a dislocated sense of déjà vu. They could also include the investigators interacting with some of the people they will meet along the way.

Whatever they consist of, the visions are unique to each investigator: brief flashes of insight that are over almost as soon as they begin. These form the foundation for the visions and dreams the Tokabhaya continue to send the investigators throughout their journey. Possible visions sent by the Tokabhaya during the sudden darkness of the lecture theater might include:

- Walking across the desert as hordes of rats stream over the surrounding hills toward the investigator (linking to the optional encounter **The Rat King** in **Chapter 3**, page 105).
- Standing in a museum encircled by odd-looking statues of the Buddha, which are closing in around the investigator (linking to **Chapter 3: Peshawar Museum**, page 127).
- Watching an Indian holy man, naked but for the white ash coating his skin, stacking bones to make some form of an altar (linking to **Chapter 4: The Ash-Smeared Sadhu**, page 164).
- Sitting on the ground surrounded by flickering firelight; looking down, the investigator sees their hands are covered with blood and dirt (linking to **Chapter 4: A Dark Harvest**, page 172).
- Following a strangely dressed man with long, braided hair through an orchard of fruit and nut trees toward a bright glowing light (linking to **Chapter 5: The Gathering Circle**, page 212).
- Wading through a dense, snow-covered jungle as leeches drop from the branches above and worm their way under the investigator's clothes (linking to **Chapter 6: Getting to Pemakö**, page 234).

Keeper note: the investigators' invitations to the lecture are an important component in the spell the Tokabhaya's agents cast to create these premonitions (**Appendix B: Send Vision**, page 345). If any of the investigators didn't hand



Mr. Bazaz-Wain's lecture

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over their invitation to the student at the door, they may be able to defend themselves (with a Hard **POW** roll) against the agents' attempts to affect their minds—if successful, a momentary pressure behind their eyes is felt, but nothing more; if failed, a vision is received.

As soon as the visions are over, allow the investigators a **Psychology** roll: if successful, they notice several bewildered-looking people in the audience (the other investigators who have suffered a vision). If the investigators already know each other, no roll is needed—the shock is clear for their friends to see. Everyone else in the audience either looks mildly annoyed at the delay or continues to chat unconcernedly with friends.

Investigators with some skill in either Electrical or Mechanical Repair are most welcome to offer their assistance—a fumbled roll causes irreparable damage to the projection equipment or the wiring, in which case Bazaz-Wain has to continue without his supporting images. Otherwise, if the repair is left to the university's technician, the house light's come back on, allowing the technician to replace the projector's faulty component.

With a successful **Listen** or **Language (Chinese)** roll, keen-eared investigators may hear people in the audience muttering something along the lines of, “*Well, what do you expect—this was the fourth examination hall to be built,*” or, “*I always said this was an unlucky building.*” Those familiar with Chinese superstition or who make a successful **Know** roll, recall that four is a number that has negative connotations.



KEEPER NOTE: CRIB NOTES

Only the cruelest Keeper would expect the player who has chosen Bazaz-Wain as an investigator to actually give a presentation on his travels across the Tarim Basin. On the other hand, if the player wishes to mention one or two salient facts about the history of the Silk Road, the Keeper may present them with **Handout: Decaying Splendor 3** to use as the basis of their lecture.

And, despite nearly arriving late for his own talk, Bazaz-Wain no doubt had the foresight to leave his slides with the university technician manning the Magic Lantern for him earlier in the day! Unless, of course, the player involved would appreciate the opportunity to roleplay out his flustered late arrival, slides in hand.



Keeper note: just as certain people in the West believe that certain numbers are lucky or unlucky, the Chinese hold that some numbers are more auspicious than others. Just as there is often no 13th floor in American buildings, floor four is frequently missing from Chinese structures as a result of the number's pronunciation (in pinyin, *sì*) sounding uncomfortably similar to the word for death (in pinyin, *sǐ*). As a result, the number four is deemed to be deeply inauspicious. For this reason, this examination hall is officially known as number five, not number four.

When Bazaz-Wain reaches the part of his lecture focused on the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas and their exploration by the likes of Sir Marc Aurel Stein (**The Blazing Beacon**, page 72), one section of the audience erupts in noisy jeers. A successful **Language (Chinese)** roll identifies that the students are incensed by the wholesale pillaging of the Tarim Basin's ancient sites by Westerners (“theft” is one of the nicer words used). Even with a failed roll, the underlying anger of the outburst is clear.



RISING TENSIONS

By the time of Langdon Warner's arrival in 1923, there was a growing feeling of resentment in China over the West's large-scale removal of artifacts from Silk Road sites, as well as from other ancient monuments across the country. From 1924 onward, the degree of xenophobia exhibited by academics, journalists, and locals—particularly in the towns on the eastern end of the Silk Road—grew steadily worse. Combined with the declining general political situation, this meant that no foreigner dared travel through China unarmed.

Warner's 1925 return expedition to Tun-huang never even got as far as the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas, as an angry local mob prevented him from leaving the oasis town and eventually forced him back to Peking. Sven Hedin, surveying the Tarim Basin in the winter of 1926 for Lufthansa's proposed Berlin-Dihua (Urumchi)–Peking air route, was only allowed to do so under the strict supervision of a team of Chinese academics to ensure that any archaeological finds remained in the country. Many scholars, along with the press, questioned the need for him to even be there at all. Aurel Stein's final 1930 expedition to the Taklamakan had to be abandoned in the face of stiff opposition and endless obstruction.



1.

2.

Despite its singular name, there has always been more than one Silk Road. The ancient trade networks, given their modern title in 1877 by Baron Ferdinand von Richthofen (uncle of the Great War flying ace, the Red Baron), followed several different paths and connected China with Persia, Byzantium, and Europe for over a millennium. First established by the Han Dynasty around the 2nd century BC, the Silk Road's closure in the mid-15th century AD brought about the Age of Discovery in the West, as European powers were forced to find new maritime routes to acquire the luxury items they had become so fond of.

Although much of the trade carried out along the routes was linked to silk (the production of which was, for many centuries, one of the world's greatest and most closely guarded industrial secrets), many other items were bought and sold in the desert oases that permitted the road to exist in the first place. Alongside money and goods, culture and language flowed from East to West, and vice versa.

Starting in the ancient Chinese capital of Chang'an (now Sian), the Silk Road traveled up the Kansu corridor to the oasis town of Tun-huang, where it split into three main routes. The most northerly path avoided the dread Taklamakan Desert altogether by heading north beyond the T'ien Shan Mountains. The other two, often referred to as the Northern and Southern Silk Roads, skirted the edges of the Tarim Basin and relied heavily on the oasis towns scattered along the rim.

The Northern route passed through the Jade Gate, to Turfan and beyond, before finally reaching Kashgar at the farthest end of the Taklamakan (although a shortcut across the Lop Nor Desert from Tun-huang via Lou-lan also existed). A spur up through Dihua led into Mongolia, a route many Russian refugees subsequently used to escape the Soviets after the Revolution.

The Southern route left China through the Yang-kuan, the Sun Gate, and headed along the edge of the Kun Lun Mountains, via Khotan and Yarkand, before rejoining the Northern route at Kashgar. An important trade branch split from the main road at Yarkand to head over the Karakoram Mountains into India.

West of Kashgar, the road forked once again. Its offshoots spread out towards the trading cities of Balkh, Samarkand, and Bokhara before they rejoined at Merv. After passing through Hamadan (ancient Ecbatana) and Palmyra, the road headed to Antioch and Tyre on the Mediterranean Sea, and from there to Venice and beyond...

Now, to return to Tun-huang and the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas. When Sir Marc Aurel Stein visited them in 1907, he collected an enormous cache of books and art treasures — some 40,000 manuscripts, including the Diamond Sutra, and five large cases of statues and paintings — which he paid the caves' custodian for before transporting them to the British Museum in London. Despite the size of this initial haul, there were still plenty of priceless historical artifacts left behind for other archaeologists to recover. The Frenchman Paul Pelliot and the Russian Sergei Oldenburg were among the ranks of those who continued to excavate the caves. And I believe that Prof. Warner is currently there to examine the caves' magnificent Buddhist murals...

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In the midst of this commotion, any investigators who saw Tun-huang as part of their visions in the dark realize that Bazaz-Wain's images of the caves are eerily familiar—so much so that, when they realize why, they need to make a **Sanity** roll (0/1 loss). If the projector no longer works and the images aren't on display, it's up to the Keeper whether Bazaz-Wain's description is enough to trigger the investigators' recognition.

Prof. Wang appeals to the students in Chinese to refrain from embarrassing the faculty in front of such an honored guest—a successful **Language (Chinese)** roll is needed to understand his exact words—after which the lecture continues uninterrupted. If the players do not already have a copy of **Handout: Decaying Splendor 3** (page 42), the Keeper should give it to them now.

A CONVERSATION OVER CANAPES

After the talk, the attendees are guided back into the building's foyer, where fresh drinks and canapes have been laid out by the caterers. Prof. Wang finds and gathers the investigators together, and then introduces them to each other (if they aren't already acquainted). Those who

succeeded with a **Psychology** roll (**Visions in the Dark**, page 40) realize they are gathered with the same people that they saw looking shocked after the lights came back on. This is an opportunity for the investigators to get to know each other and to chat with Wang about his invitation—although they may not wish to mention their visions just yet.


In a clear, quiet voice that somehow cuts cleanly through the background chatter, Wang explains he has received a most perplexing missive from his predecessor at the American School of Archaeology, namely, Langdon Warner (**Handout: Decaying Splendor 4**), which he now shares.


Given the apparent desperation of Warner's request for help, the professor can only assume that something terrible has happened. He apologizes for his lack of further knowledge and asks if the investigators would do him the great honor of aiding Warner at such short notice. He is aware that each of them has unique skills they can bring to bear on the task, and he would be greatly in their debt if they could assist.

Keeper note: while some may indeed have expert skills for such an occasion, others may feel less suited. If so, Prof. Wang says that, as he doesn't know all the facts concerning Warner's plea for help, he can't say for sure what experience and skills

Handout: Decaying Splendor 4

DATE RECEIVED
at Central
Telegraph Office
Wednesday
19 September
1923

POST  OFFICE
TELEGRAM

No. _____
OFFICE STAMP


Prefix. Time handed in. Office of Origin and Service Instructions. Words.
4:00 p.m. Souchow, Kansu Province

From _____
To Wang Enlai, Yenching University

Wang need urgent help ...STOP...
Send people immediately ...STOP...
Don't care who . . . STOP . . .
Just get them to Tun-huang ...STOP...
Emergency ...STOP...
Warner

No inquiry respecting this message can be attended to without the production of this paper. Repetitions of doubtful words should be obtained through the Company's offices, and not by DIRECT application to the sender.

will be required. "Perhaps just a willingness to help Warner is all that's needed," he says, encouraging all of the investigators to provide their assistance. If need be, perhaps the Tokabhaya agents listening in on this conversation hurry off to send another vision to convince the investigators to take part—one involving all of them, such as everyone staring up at their portraits painted on the wall in the secret cave at Tun-huang (**Chapter 2: Face to Face**, page 81). Although unlikely, it is possible that one or more of the investigators might decide they have no desire to head off on this potentially wild goose chase across China, particularly if they have no strong ties to Yenching University or Langdon Warner. If this is the case, the Keeper should work with the player(s) to either find a reason for them to go along—at least for the moment—based around their investigator's backstory (such as a personal goal or motivation) or to create an investigator better suited to the campaign now that they have more of an idea of what may be involved. Any new investigators created as a result can either make their way to Yenching University along with all the rest (**An Unseasonable Storm**, nearby) or be waiting at **Prof. Wang's Office** (page 45) ready to meet their new compatriots.

Assuming the investigators agree, Wang asks them to meet him in his office at Yenching University tomorrow afternoon, where they can go over the details of their imminent departure. He promises to do his utmost to make all the necessary travel arrangements to Sian on their behalf but asks that they see to their own equipment and any particular personal requirements in the meantime.

If Sofian Bazaz-Wain is not in play as a player character, permit the investigators a chance to chat with him about the route to Tun-huang, if they so wish. He can offer his knowledge (having heard some of the conversation) and fill them in about his own experiences in the area and answer any questions they might have about the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas, although he is by no means an expert when it comes to the archaeological discoveries made there. If asked why he can't travel to help Warner, Bazaz-Wain says that he has a new assignment back in India, which he cannot back out of; besides which, his eyesight is not what it was and he feels his days of wild adventure are now behind him—of course, none of this applies if Bazaz-Wain is being used as an investigator.

Despite their experiences on the way to this evening's lecture, the investigators have a peaceful trip back to their lodgings, undisturbed by unseen observers or issues with transportation.

MAKING PLANS

Next morning, the investigators have a chance to reflect on the previous evening's excitement and prepare for their trip west. If they are new to Peking, they may wish to spend their morning sightseeing while they still have the chance. Colleagues and associates can point them in the direction of the historic center of the city around the Drum and Bell Towers (in use until 1924 to inform the citizens of the closing and opening of the city's gates at dusk and dawn). Other impressive sites include the Lama Temple (see **Some Sights of Peking**, page 45), the Temple of Heaven, and the observatory built into a watchtower on the Ming city wall, complete with Jesuit-designed astronomical instruments.

Wherever the investigators go, be it sightseeing or shopping for supplies in the Tashihlan (Dashilan), an ancient commercial street just south of Tiananmen Square, they have the same uneasy sense that they are being spied on, even though no trace of a watcher can be found. If the investigator failed their previous **POW** (or **Spot Hidden**) roll to sense the feeling of being watched, permit them another one as they wander around Peking; if they fail this one as well (as discussed in **On the Way**, page 38), they remain blissfully unaware of their unseen shadow—at least for the moment.

AN UNSEASONABLE STORM

When the investigators make their way toward Yenching University, located 10 miles (16 km) to the northwest of the city center and close to the Old Imperial Summer Palace, the sky abruptly blackens. An immense clap of thunder rumbles across the heavens, and a sudden and violent hailstorm sends everyone scurrying for shelter.

Investigators riding out to the university should make a successful **Ride** roll to maintain control of their mount and steer it safely into cover and away from the ping-pong-ball-sized lumps of ice falling from the heavens; failure to do so inflicts 1D2 damage. Those taking a rickshaw ride need to find cover immediately or hope that their luck holds out; a successful **Luck** roll indicates that the rickshaw-puller managed to dodge and weave through the storm without either he or his passengers getting hit for 1D2 damage.

Those driving out to the campus must make a successful **Drive Auto** roll or end up with a cracked windscreen that makes any subsequent **Drive Auto** rolls requiring good visibility Hard until repaired. Those taking an electric tram can travel only as far as the Hsi-chih-men (Xizhimen) Gate, approximately halfway to the university; other transportation

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is required from there. In an act of perfect timing, the hailstorm waits until passengers have disembarked from the tram before delivering its icy payload. Investigators must either seek shelter or rely on their **Luck**, if they wish to avoid suffering 1D2 damage.

Those familiar with Peking's seasons know that such a storm is an unusual occurrence this late in the year. Investigators with the **Language (Chinese)** skill may also learn this information by listening to the locals complain about the damage the hail has caused (no roll required if they have the skill at 30% or more). A successful skill roll, however, identifies references to evil omens and sorcery among the citizens' disgruntled mutterings.

PROF. WANG'S OFFICE

Situated in the purpose-built American School of Archaeology, Prof. Wang's office is tastefully decorated. While full of interesting artifacts and books on a wide variety of historical subjects (in both English and Chinese), it is exceedingly neat—a reflection of the academic's calm and precise demeanor.

As soon as everyone has assembled, Wang serves tea, thanks everyone for agreeing to help out, and begins to discuss their travel arrangements. He reverently shows them a letter written in Chinese and signed by General Wu Pei-fu. A successful **Language (Chinese)** skill roll quickly identifies it as a travel permit advising any Republican soldiers they

SOME SIGHTS OF PEKING

The Lama Temple

Formerly the Yungcheng (Yongzheng) Emperor's palace before his ascension to the imperial throne, the Lama (or Yonghe) Temple was converted into a Tibetan Buddhist monastery in the mid-18th century. A place of pilgrimage and worship, the temple is filled with the sound of whirring prayer wheels and chanting monks, as well as the scent of burning juniper and butter lamps. One of the complex's five halls is home to a gigantic bronze figure of the Maitreya (or Future) Buddha, while another houses a statue of Tsongkhapa, the founder of the Gelug (Yellow Hat) school (**Chapter 5: Religion in Tibet**, page 190).

Any investigator visiting the Lama Temple can ask the monks there about the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas. The monks know that it was once a place of pilgrimage and a very holy site, home to some famous and important murals, but none of them have ever visited it.

The Temple of Heaven

Opened to the public as a park in 1918, the investigators are free to wander its grounds and explore its buildings. Originally built in the early 15th century by the Yong-lo (Yongle) Emperor, the Temple of Heaven complex stands in the south of the Chinese City. Added to and altered over the years, the temple buildings were last renovated in the 18th century by the Ch'ien-lung (Qianlong) Emperor.

The complex was traditionally visited twice a year by the emperor—also known as the Son of Heaven—so that he could carry out a variety of ceremonies to show both his respect to Heaven as the source of his divine right to rule and to pray for a good harvest for his people. The buildings' layout and construction are highly symbolic of the traditional Chinese beliefs in the structure of the universe.

The Observatory

Attached to the wall of the Tartar City, and not far from the Altar of the Sun, is an ancient observatory. Completed in the mid-15th century by a descendent of the Yong-lo Emperor, it replaced an earlier observatory built by the Mongols to help accurately track time and cast divinations. Eight bronze astronomical instruments are mounted on stone plinths along the watchtower's walls, six of them designed by a Belgian Jesuit priest who was put in control of the observatory in the mid-17th century by the K'ang-hsi (Kangxi) Emperor. By the 1920s, it was known locally as the "Central Star Observation Platform," and was turned into a museum when it was superseded in 1927 by the Purple Mountain Observatory.

Should the investigators wish to seek out an expert to determine if now is an auspicious time for them to travel, the staff at the observatory are happy to help. Of course, the Tokabhaya has agents in place to ensure that any such pronouncement is favorable.

encounter along the way to let them pass unhindered; a failed roll means they have understood the overall gist of the letter without the specifics—Wang is happy to explain the contents of the permit, if necessary.

After calling in a few favors, the professor has managed to secure sufficient vehicles to take the investigators as far as Sian. (If any of the investigators have their own cars, adjust the number Wang acquires accordingly.) Sadly, he has been unable to convince General Wu Pei-fu to waive the military escort that Warner was also obliged to travel with. Thus, ten soldiers and their two drivers (see profiles for **Chinese Soldier** and **Driver**, page 48–49) will accompany them to the ancient T'ang capital, whether they like it or not.

Once in Sian, it is up to the investigators to secure porters, pack animals, and carts to get them to Tun-huang, although Wang suggests the first person they should talk to about the necessary logistics in Sian is Mi Han (**Chapter 2: Dramatis Personae (Part One)**, page 55), a trusted and reliable individual Wang has worked with in the past. Of course, if they have their own vehicles, the investigators could attempt to take a leaf out of Roy Chapman Andrews' book (**Investigator Motivations**, page 17) and drive all the way, but they'll need to make sure they have enough fuel and supplies with them to do so.

The professor hands them a purse of silver dollars—not enough, he concedes, to pay for everything they are likely to need, but all he could scrape together at such short notice. Warner's sponsors will, he assures, reimburse them afterward for any expenses incurred while aiding the American. Where possible, the investigators should be careful to collect receipts.

The professor, in his capacity as an expert in his field, answers questions about Langdon Warner, his current expedition, and the caves at Tun-huang, although he has never been there himself or even traveled to that part of China. Key points he can pass on, if the investigators haven't already discovered them, are listed below. Additional information, if required, can be found in Langdon Warner's **Dramatis Personae (Part Two)** entry and the **Blazing Beacon** section, both in **Chapter 2** (pages 74 and 72, respectively).

- Langdon Warner is an expert in Oriental art and Buddhist history; he was also the first director of the American School of Archaeology at Yenching University.
- Warner is currently employed by the Fogg Museum, Harvard University, and is supposed to be testing some new method for preserving wall paintings out at the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas.
- The caves were once home to thousands of Buddhist monks, along with artists and scribes, although the complex is now disused and has fallen into disrepair.
- The caves are famous for their murals. While most of these depict Buddhist iconography, many also show portraits of

the wealthy merchants who passed through Tun-huang along the ancient Silk Roads.

- Warner is just the latest in a long line of mostly Western archaeologists to visit the caves in the last two decades, most of whom have sent large quantities of historical manuscripts and artworks back to their home countries or expedition patrons.

In addition, Wang warns the investigators about the dangers they may face along the road: bandits, rogue soldiers, corrupt local officials, Russian refugees, and sudden downpours. He then offers access to the university's library should they wish to carry out any further research before they leave, although he points out that General Wu has arranged for their military escort to collect them shortly after dawn the following morning.

Just before the investigators take their leave, the professor hands them a wooden chest, approximately 3 feet × 2 feet × 2 feet (91 cm × 61 cm × 61 cm). Inside are hastily assembled flags for each of the nations the investigators hail from. "*Best to display them from your baggage train once you leave Sian,*" he says. "*They may help to discourage all but the most determined miscreants. And, don't forget your letter from the General!*" With that, he bids them goodbye and good luck.

EXPEDITION LOGISTICS

Most Western travelogues of the time would have you believe that Western adventurers battled through the world's wildernesses practically single-handed, apart from their stalwart fellow explorers and maybe one or two plucky native bearers. The truth, in the vast majority of cases, was that a veritable army of local porters, translators, and beasts of burden were required to get even the smallest expedition from A to B.

The same applies to the investigators' travels across Central Asia and Northern India. To reach most of their destinations, the characters will frequently require the services of local guides or need to join other travelers for support and protection. While negotiations to hire such staff in parts of the world where they are not provided as part of the local system of taxation (such as in Tibet and the Tarim Basin) may provide an entertaining opportunity to haggle for the best deal possible, the Keeper should avoid the investigators getting bogged down in arguing over every silver dollar and ounce of supplies, and as necessary call for a successful **Charm**, **Fast Talk**, or **Persuade** roll to get the best price.

THE CITY OF DECAYING SPLENDOR - PEKING, CHINA -

ON THE ROAD

Bright and early the next morning, the investigators are collected by a driver in an enclosed coach (a variant of the Dodge Brothers Model 30 touring car). Each car can seat up to five people (including the driver) at a squeeze, although four is a more comfortable fit. So, if there are three investigators, one car is enough to carry them, plus another for their baggage. For four to six investigators, two cars and a baggage transport vehicle are available.

The military escort is waiting for them in Tiananmen Square, in an aging pair of vehicles that have definitely seen better days on the road. The soldiers, arrayed in their gray uniforms, puttees, and peaked caps, look quite pleased at the prospect of a few easy days babysitting the foreigners. They are eager to be off and lead the small convoy south through the Ch'ien-men (Qianmen) Gate out of the Tartar City, and then out through the western wall of the Chinese City via the Chang-y-men (Guang'anmen) Gate, over the Marco Polo Bridge and off to Sian.

The dirt tracks that pass for roads wind their way through rural towns and villages surrounded by farmland and grazing animals; past rivers, mountains, and historic sites; and on through the heartland of China's ancient civilization. Even with the Dodge's top speed of around 35 mph (56 kph), the condition of both the roads and the soldiers' cars means that 20 mph (32 kph) is a more reasonable pace to set, meaning it takes 2-3 days to drive the 620 or so miles (approx. 1,000 km) down to Sian or, as it was known to the T'ang Dynasty: Chang'an.

The investigators have started their journey toward the Old Silk Roads.



TRAVEL BY MAP

As the distances to be traveled in *The Children of Fear* are vast, we suggest that the Keeper make use of the *Pulp Cthulhu* trick of red lining—as used by all the best adventure films, where a scarlet line inexorably traces the characters' route across the map. Red lining allows the Keeper to maintain the scenario's pace and concentrate on the important parts of the plot, rather than getting caught up in the minutiae of every mile covered. And trust us, there are thousands of those to come!

Having said that, details are provided for encounters that may occur *en route* to the various key locations in each chapter. These are meant to support the growing sense of strangeness and outside forces interfering with the investigators' progress. They are also designed to evoke the experience of 1920s travelers in those remote and forbidding locations, although care should be taken not to overuse certain elements (like banditry), no matter how common they may have been at that time. Repeatedly having all of one's possessions stolen at gunpoint soon becomes frustrating for the players, as well as distracts them from the main storyline. Therefore, use such travel incidents to add flavor and atmosphere, rather than derail the plot.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

As previously mentioned, if no one has chosen to play Sofian Bazaz-Wain, he acts as an NPC during this prologue. His profile can be found on page 405.

Wang Enlai, age 52, professor of archaeology and anthropology

STR 55 CON 50 SIZ 55 DEX 50 INT 75
 APP 45 POW 55 EDU 85 SAN 55 HP 10
 DB: 0 Build: 0 Move: 6 MP: 11 Luck: —

Combat

Brawl 25% (12/5), damage 1D3
 Dodge 25% (12/5)

Skills

Anthropology 66%, Appraise 65%, Archaeology 66%, Art/Craft (Poetry) 55%, Credit Rating 60%, History 85%, Library Use 80%, Listen 60%, Persuade 70%, Psychology 75%, Spot Hidden 75%.

Languages: Chinese (Own) 90%, English 61%.

Chinese Soldier, ages 14–21

Nine young recruits of the Chihli Clique, who believe wholeheartedly in General Wu Pei-fu or who just needed a job to escape their family's poverty. These soldiers are far from the most elite, and their equipment is outdated by Western standards (although the General's army is better supplied than most). Many have served in the various clique wars over the last few years.

A lone sergeant, Hsu Te-Chu'an, accompanies the nine infantrymen—replace the Mauser M1888 rifle with a .45 Mauser Broomhandle M1912 pistol, damage 1D10+2.

STR 60 CON 60 SIZ 55 DEX 70 INT 55
 APP 70 POW 60 EDU 40 SAN 60 HP 11
 DB: 0 Build: 0 Move: 9 MP: 12 Luck: —

Combat

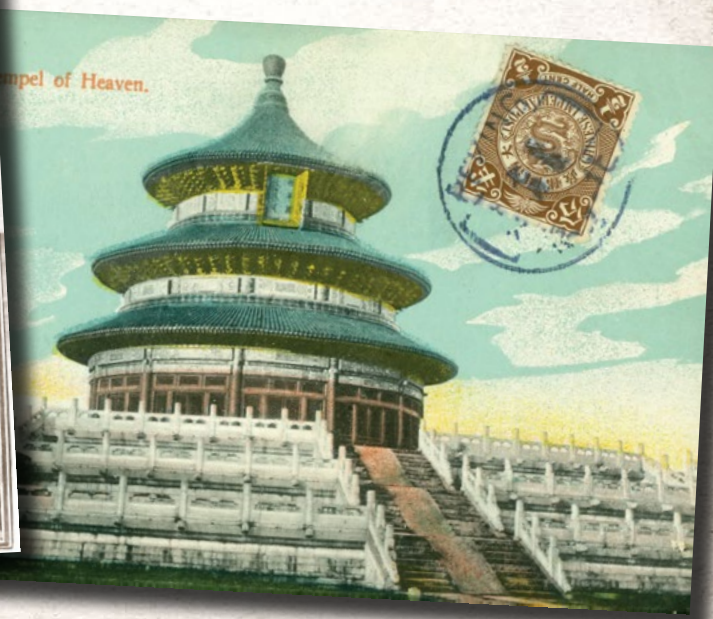
Brawl 55% (27/11), damage 1D3
 Ma-tao Saber 50% (25/10), damage 1D8+1
 M1888 bolt-action rifle 55% (27/11), damage 1D6+1
 Dodge 60% (30/12)

Skills

Climb 40%, First Aid 45%, Intimidate 55%, Listen 40%, Mechanical Repair 35%, Spot Hidden 45%, Stealth 45%, Survival (Plains) 40%.

Languages: Chinese (Own) 40%.

- **Description:** decked out in their gray cotton uniforms, the soldiers range from boys to young men. All have close-cropped black hair.
- **Traits:** full of youthful bravado.



The shrines and temples of Peking

THE CITY OF DECAYING SPLENDOR - PEKING, CHINA -

Driver, ages 20–23

It's hard to know what favors Prof. Wang called in to get these chauffeurs for the trip to Sian, but some appear to be professional drivers (and so are probably on the staff of wealthy university patrons or local businessmen), whereas others seem to be on loan from the China Geological Survey (and may have borrowed the vehicles from the CAE too).

For the two military drivers—substitute Intimidate for Fast Talk, Firearms (Handgun) for Language (English), and Dodge for Persuade.

STR 55 CON 70 SIZ 65 DEX 60 INT 70
APP 65 POW 65 EDU 60 SAN 65 HP 13
DB: 0 Build: 0 Move: 7 MP: 13 Luck: —

Combat

Brawl 25% (12/5), damage 1D3
Dodge 30% (15/6)

Skills

Drive Auto 65%, Electrical Repair 50%, Fast Talk 55%, Listen 50%, Mechanical Repair 50%, Navigate 60%, Persuade 60%, Spot Hidden 50%.

Languages: Chinese (Own) 60%, English 31%.

- **Description:** depending on their background, the drivers are either in smart livery as befits a professional chauffeur, or in smart, but well-worn, shirt and trousers (as befits a driver who usually goes on archaeological expeditions out into the desert).
- **Traits:** putting on a brave face (not exactly the sort of driving or clientele they're used to) or cheerfully enthusiastic about the trip to Sian (it's better than the Gobi, and that's no mistake!).



Soldiers of the Beiyang Army



TO THE GATES OF THE SUN

-TUN-HUANG, CHINA-

In antiquity, the Tarim Basin and its surrounds were known to the Chinese as the Western Regions, as they lay beyond the Jade Gate and the boundaries of their empire. By the 1920s, the lands of the Tarim Basin have been declared Chinese Turkistan, but are no less foreign: a wilderness of deadly deserts, strange folk tales, and the restless ghosts of history.

The investigators travel from Sian (Xi'an), the first step on the Silk Roads of old, along the Ho-hsi (Hexi) or Kansu (Gansu) Corridor to the oasis town of Tun-huang and the nearby Caves of the Thousand Buddhas, where Langdon Warner has not been idle while awaiting their arrival. Don't forget to give the players **What Your Investigator Knows 2: Sian and the Kansu Corridor** (Appendix C, page 348) and also **Handout: Gates 1**, so they have an overview of the area their investigators will be traveling through.

As this chapter focuses on the events taking place in two main locations, it is presented in two parts, each with their own Background section and accompanying scenes. Suggestions for possible encounters along the road between Sian and Tun-huang are also provided.

PART ONE: CHANG'AN

Standing in the middle of the Kuan-chung (Guanzhong) Plains on the banks of the Wei River, the city of Fenghao was founded by the Chou (Zhou) Dynasty sometime around the 11th century BCE. The Han later changed its name to Chang'an, the City of Perpetual Peace, and various dynastic capitals occupied the immediate area for the next few centuries, each with their own name. After finally being returned to its Han alias, Chang'an served as China's capital from the Ch'in Dynasty in the 3rd century BCE until the end of the T'ang Dynasty in the early years of the 10th century CE, aside from a brief period when it fell under the control

of the Tibetan Empire in 763 CE. As the official start of the Silk Road (**Handout: Decaying Splendor 3**, page 42), the city was given a new name by the Ming Dynasty in 1369 CE, the one which it still carries in the 1920s: Sian.

Surrounded by an immense defensive wall, entry to this Rome of Asia (as it was also known) was controlled by gates that closed every day at sunset when the Drum Tower finished sounding out the 600 beats of the evening curfew. They did not reopen until dawn, heralded by the hand-struck bells of Sian's great Bell Tower. Apart from the removal of the curfew, not much has changed, and visitors arriving after nightfall still find the gates barred against them. They must wait outside the city among the ancient tombs of the dead, now little more than dusty mounds beside the road, until daybreak once again permits them to enter.

During the era of the Silk Road, traders from across the world, among them Sogdians, Arabs, Indians, and the Japanese, all gathered in Chang'an, and a host of professions wandered its narrow streets and busy markets. Many of these foreigners were residents, and not transitory visitors. Curiously, there was a preponderance of entertainers with dwarfism in the city during its T'ang heyday, presumably as a result of a bizarre slave tribute paid by the city of Tao-chou in Hunan, close to Kumbum Monastery (**Chapter 5: One Hundred Thousand Images of the Buddha**, page 203).

Sian was not just a city of commerce, but also one of faith. This was where the first Christian church in China was built in 638 CE, and where the country's first mosque, the Great Mosque of Chang'an, was built in 742 CE. Sian is unusual in that—along with its mainstream mosques—it is home to a separate women's mosque, run by female *imams*. Jewish synagogues, Hindu shrines, and Zoroastrian fire temples could all, at one time or another, be found within the city's walls.


The city eventually became a great seat of Buddhist learning. The legendary traveler Hiuen-Tsiang brought back



THE MONASTERY OF FLOURISHING TEACHING

Hiuen-Tsiang's five-tiered funerary pagoda is housed within the grounds of the ancient Hsing-Chiao Temple. According to legend, the temple was built specifically in 669 CE to house the monk's ashes. Its Front Courtyard, the first of three, contains various halls—one of which showcases a statue of Sakyamuni Buddha—as well as the temple's drum and bell towers. The Eastern Courtyard houses the storerooms for many ancient Buddhist manuscripts, while the wandering monk's remains are housed in the Stupa Courtyard.

If the investigators wish to read the monk's own words about how he acquired many of the manuscripts stored here, then they should have no difficulty picking up a Chinese language copy of *Great Tang Records on the Western Regions* (mentioned in **Handout: Gates 1**) here in Sian, or in the towns along the Silk Roads once they've been recruited by Tenzin Kalsang (**An Unusual Invitation**, page 82). The investigators should also be able to acquire a Chinese or Hindustani copy in Peshawar or any other major Indian city's bazaar, should the need arise.



cartloads of *sutras* to Sian after his epic journey to India in the 7th century CE; the Big Goose Pagoda, one of Sian's most famous sites, was built specifically to house them. Hiuen-Tsiang even opened a dedicated Sanskrit college to facilitate the *sutras*' translation, rendering over 650 manuscripts into his native Chinese before his death.

SET UP: HIRING AND FIRING

In the first part of this chapter, the investigators must negotiate with Sian's merchants and porters to obtain the necessary animals, carts, supplies, and personnel they need for the trip to Tun-huang. While this is not intended to form a large part of the action, it gives the investigators a chance to exercise their bargaining skills and to enjoy the sights of one of the oldest cities in China.



If the investigators have their own cars and intend to use them for the trip along the Kansu Corridor, they still need to acquire sufficient fuel to take them the 1,000 miles (1,600 km) from Sian to Tun-huang. If the investigators decide to ignore Prof. Wang's recommendation to see **Mi Han** (page 55) about their needs, asking around in Sian should point them in the direction of reputable tradesmen who should be able to see to most of their requirements. If the investigators lack sufficient Chinese language skills, they can also hire

Handout: Gates 1

Hiuen-Tsiang, also known as Hsuan-tsang or Xuanzang, was born in Henan Province in 602 CE. Following his ordination as a Buddhist monk, he made his way to Chang'an, before sneaking out of the city in 629 CE without official permission. (Unsanctioned foreign travel was banned at that time by the T'ang Emperors.) After taking the Northern Silk Road to India, he spent the next 15 years traveling the subcontinent extensively, collecting Buddhist scriptures to improve the academic quality of the Chinese interpretation of his faith.

His journeys inspired the epic tale *Journey to the West*, first published in the 16th century CE and widely regarded as one of the four great works of classical Chinese literature. It tells the partly allegorical, partly fantastical adventure story of the Monkey King and his rebellion against heaven, after which he is recruited as one of Hiuen-Tsiang's disciples to help him retrieve sacred manuscripts from India. The actual story of Hiuen-Tsiang's trip is contained within the monk's own writings, *Great Tang Records on the Western Regions*.

Despite having long been assumed dead during his wanderings, the well-traveled holy man actually died in 664 CE. His ashes are interred in a brick pagoda in the Hsing-Chiao (Xingjiao) Temple, 12 miles (19 km) to the southeast of central Sian.

TO THE GATES OF THE SUN - TUN-HUANG, CHINA -

a translator—**Demyan Ilarivich Babanin** (page 56) is provided as a ready-made interpreter.

As the prologue scenario presented in **Chapter 1** is relatively short, the Keeper may wish to begin the Sian section of this chapter as a direct follow-up to the prologue in the same session, time permitting.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE (PART ONE)

Following are the main and optional NPCs for Part One of this chapter. NPCs for Part Two can be found in **Dramatis Personae (Part Two)** on page 74.

Prof. Thaddeus Johnson, *age 63, traveling academic*

An American academic and expert in Oriental Literature, Prof. Johnson is currently touring China while on sabbatical from Miskatonic University. Fascinated by the writings of traveling monks Hiuen-Tsiang and Fa Hsien (see **Handout: Gates 1** and **Handout: Song 5**, respectively), as well as the great works of Chinese literature, the professor is making the most of his busman's holiday by studying the texts (holy or otherwise) stored in the temples and pagodas of Sian.

- **Description:** an unassuming man with a fringe of salt-and-pepper hair around his balding pate, the professor always dresses in a collar and tie and three-piece suit. His steel gray eyes are often a little bloodshot and rheumy, which he insists is down to allergies, as are his slightly ruddy cheeks and nose. He walks with a mild limp, which he claims is due to an old sporting injury.
- **Traits:** while occasionally absent-minded about things like mealtimes, the professor's recall when discussing his field is impressive; he is also more than a little fond of a tittle—the true explanation for his rosy glow.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** although first encountered as a victim of the kueitzumen (who have appropriated his walking cane), thanks to his background, the professor can act as an expert in his field, at least about the historical aspects of the route the investigators are about to take.

Sai Na, age 46, grave robber and peddler

Sai Na's family were once wealthy and respected Hui merchants, but a series of unfortunate events and unwise investments on his father's part has caused the family to fall on hard times. All that remains of their business empire is a ramshackle courtyard house where Sai Na stores his pilgrim souvenirs (and the workshop where he forges them), and the large handcart he uses as a moveable stall.



Prof. Thaddeus Johnson



Sai Na



- **Description:** dressed in robes that have seen better days, Sai Na looks like the struggling street peddler he is. His thin black hair hangs limply beneath his skull cap, his dark eyes are dull, and he looks weary.
- **Traits:** stubborn and desperate to regain his family's lost wealth.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** thanks to the inclement weather, takings have been poor this year and, desperate to find money to pay off some of his family's debts, Na decided to break into the ancient grave mounds out to the west of the city, hoping to find the interred goods of previous, far wealthier generations. Unfortunately for him, the first mound he chose was full of *ming-ch'i*, miniature sculptures of his forebear's servants, which have somehow animated to become kueitzumen.

Kueitzumen, faithful servants of the dead

Created during their master or mistress' life to be buried with them after their death, the kueitzumen (singular: kueitzu) originally started out the same as any other form of *yung ming ch'i* (see **Spirit Articles and Grave Goods**, page 60). Approximately 23 inches (60 cm) in height, and hand-sculpted from terracotta, the anatomical detail on these miniature people is exquisite and speaks to the skill of the craftsmen who made them. Each kueitzu originally had wooden arms that could be posed in a manner appropriate to their role within the deceased's household in the afterlife. Each figure was likewise dressed in a set of robes befitting their station.

- **Description:** both arms and robes have long since rotted away, leaving behind nothing but the terracotta core and fragments of the paint used to highlight their facial features and individual hair styles. Until, that is, the kueitzumen are animated by the theft of goods from their owner's tomb. At this point, the creatures manifest in their original form, fully-clothed, in order to retrieve or replace the items needed to ensure their owner's comfortable afterlife. However, the kueitzumen are not common criminals, and they never take an item without paying for it with *ming ch'ien* (see **Spirit Articles and Grave Goods**, page 60).
- **Traits:** devoted beyond death to the one they serve.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** awoken by Sai Na's looting, a group of these animated, doll-sized terracotta servants of the dead are currently in search of replacement grave goods for their late master.

Shen Chu, exact age unknown (13–14), urchin and thief

Shen Chu has been living on the streets for several years. Her parents died when she was around nine or ten, but that all seems like someone else's life now. She can barely remember what her parents looked like, let alone what it felt like to sleep somewhere warm and dry, and regularly have good food to eat.



A kueitzu



Shen Chu

TO THE GATES OF THE SUN - TUN-HUANG, CHINA -

Sometimes Shen Chu gets lucky and finds discarded food in the gutters; at other times, she must beg for it, or even steal. When she gets truly desperate, she acts against her better judgement, as is the case when she targets the investigators (**Truth and Consequences**, page 63). She knows it is only a matter of time before she joins her parents in the grave and hopes to avoid being forced into prostitution before that day occurs.

- **Description:** Shen Chu is much smaller than she should be for her age, and so looks younger than she actually is. Her sex is also hard to judge, which is one of the few reasons she has yet to be picked up by the proprietor of a sing-song house (bordello).
- **Traits:** frightened but determined to survive.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** Shen Chu's desperate act places her in a dangerous position that could have far reaching consequences for both her and the investigators.

Mi Han, *age 47, caravan outfitter and merchant*

Mi Han's family has lived in Sian since time immemorial. Family legend has it that, back in the days of Ch'in Shih-huangdi (Qin Shi Huang Di), the First Emperor of China, a dashing Arab trader from a far distant land swept a local Chinese princess off her feet. Their union gave rise to a dynasty of merchants who plied their trade along the Silk

Road, even after the maritime routes diverted most of their business away.

Although their glory days are over, Mi Han's family is doing just fine. The ancestral courtyard house has seen better days, but at least it's still theirs. They, like China, have weathered the storms of history and have kept on going. While Mi Han used to travel the Silk Road as far as the Jade Gate (as family tradition dictates), it has been many years since he ventured that far to the northwest.

- **Description:** thanks to his wife's cooking and a certain fondness for sweet things, Mi Han is developing something of a paunch these days. A wispy black goatee, flecked with a few traces of gray, hangs from his chin, and his hair is kept short beneath his white skullcap.
- **Traits:** Mi is a proud member of Sian's Hui Muslim community and worships regularly at Sian's spectacular Great Mosque. Known for his pleasant manner, devotion to his kith and kin, and his ability to drive a hard but fair bargain, Mi is respected by his peers and the other traders in Sian's Muslim Quarter. He is keen-eyed, plain-speaking, and a skilled negotiator.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** having dealt with many previous Silk Road expeditions, Mi is an expert in his field and an invaluable source of information on who to deal with in Sian and the types of difficulties the investigators may face along their route to Tun-huang.



Mi Han

Mi Han

Mi Hu, age 22, caravan leader

A real chip off the old block, young Hu is gradually getting used to the responsibility of leading his father's caravans out along the old Silk Road and into the Tarim Basin. As the eldest son, it is his duty to carry on the family tradition; one he is honored to have been entrusted with. (It would never have suited his little brother, who looks set to follow in his mother's footsteps and become an *imam*.)

Although he has only a few long-distance trips under his belt—the furthest he has been so far is to Dihua (Urumchi)—he enjoys life on the open road, for all its hardships.

- **Description:** the spitting image of his father (Mi Han) at this age, although Hu prefers to remain clean shaven. He keeps his hair a little longer than his father does, and strands of it curl out from beneath his white skullcap. Hu has a beautiful smile and a ready sense of humor; his eyes glitter even more than his father's (if that's possible!).
- **Traits:** a follower of Islam, like his father, but not quite as devout. Mi Hu is respectful and polite but holds his own counsel and can be difficult to sway once he has made up his mind. He is bright enough to listen to advice from his elders, though. Despite his young age, he feels a fatherly responsibility toward his porters and tries to do his best for them, even in trying circumstances.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** although young and largely untested, he knows a thing or two about the road to Tun-huang and the dangers it presents, and therefore makes for a reliable and steadfast caravan leader should the investigators engage his services.



Demyan Ilarivich Babanin

Demyan Ilarivich Babanin, age 28, exiled author and translator

It has been a long year since Babanin finally escaped Siberia and fled along the Silk Road to Sian, like so many of his peers. An author arrested for his political views, Babanin was lucky to have escaped the labor camps with his life, and he had more than his share of close shaves along the way to his new home.

Thankfully, his good looks and pleasant—if somewhat old-fashioned—manners have opened doors for him that remained closed to many of his less fortunate countrymen. Babanin's gift for languages has helped him find employment, and he often acts as both a scribe and translator for those in need.

- **Description:** blond-haired and with startling blue eyes, Babanin used to turn the ladies' heads wherever he went. Unfortunately, his mangled right hand (smashed by a camp guard in punishment for his written heresies against the Soviet state) now ensures most ladies look the other way. To spite the guards, Babanin secretly taught himself to write (and shoot) with his left hand instead.
- **Traits:** resourceful, tenacious, and, usually, polite. Babanin loathes the Soviets and everything they stand for. Like most refugees, he is constantly on his guard—there is, after all, always the danger that a Soviet spy might have infiltrated the Russian community and be compiling a report of his activities for the day when the Red Army finally marches across the steppes and claims China as its own.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** besides his potential use to the investigators as a translator, Babanin has traveled parts of the Kansu Corridor several times since his arrival in Sian and can alternatively act as an expert in his field regarding travel and conditions in the region.

PILLARS OF FAITH

Islam, as practiced by China's Hui population (the descendants of those who first brought the faith along the Silk Road), the Uighurs of the Tarim Basin, and British India's Muslims, depends on five pillars or precepts: praying to Allah five times a day (*salat*), professing the faith (*shabada*), fasting during Ramadan to purify oneself (*sacum*), giving alms to the poor (*zakat*), and making the trip to the holy city of Mecca at least once in your lifetime (*hajj*).

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START: A DAMP RECEPTION

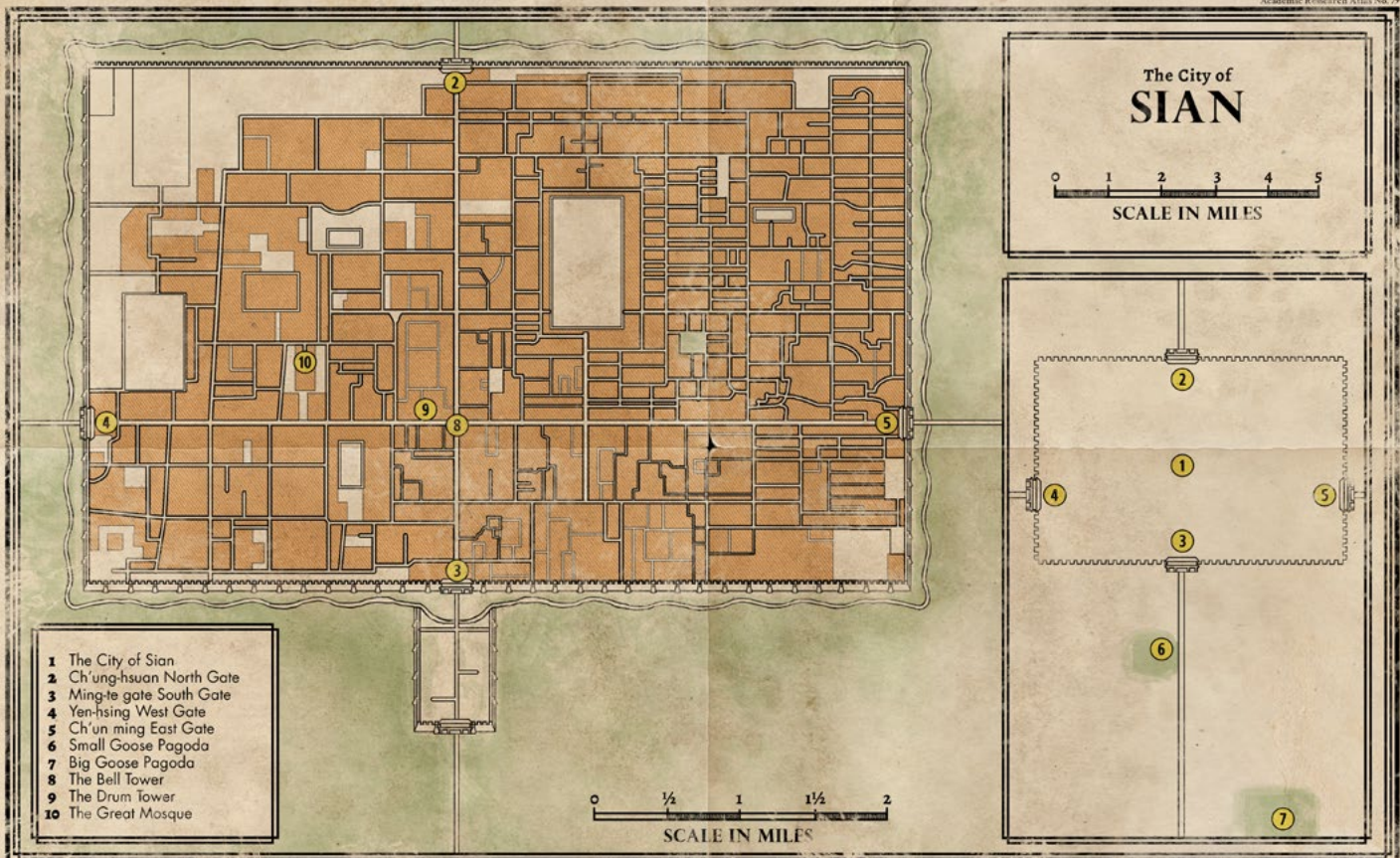
Depending on what time they arrive at Sian's walls after their drive down from Peking, the investigators may find the eastern city gates standing open, in the process of either closing (if nightfall), or opening (if around dawn). If closing, there is a mad rush of people, animals, and caravans attempting to squeeze in past the city guards before Sian's drums, thundering across the rooftops, come to a halt. If opening, there is a huge gaggle of visitors and tradesmen outside the gates, all eagerly awaiting the last of the Bell Tower's echoing chimes.

Regardless of the time of day, the weather has once again taken a turn for the worse, and a penetrating drizzle quickly leaves anyone outside damp and shivering. For the investigators, safe in their enclosed vehicles, this isn't too much of a problem, although the roads—never in the best condition—are likely to become muddy morasses if the rain keeps up for any length of time.

SIAN'S WEATHER

With the Wei River to the north and the foothills of the Ch'in (Qin) Mountains to the south, Sian suffers from hot and humid summers between May and late September, with temperatures peaking in July at around 90 degrees F (32 degrees C). Spring (March through April) and fall (late September through November) tend to be dry, though dust storms are a common occurrence in the spring. Winters are cold and dry, with temperatures frequently dipping below 32 degrees F (0 degrees C), and there is very little snowfall. Most of Sian's rain falls in sharp, heavy thunderstorms over the summer months, and September has a reputation for being horribly wet, especially in 1923.

The City of Sian map



The soldiers stationed at the gates randomly check the paperwork of those entering the city, although they take no interest in those leaving. Dressed in similar uniforms to the investigators' military escort, the guards are somewhat older and seem slightly surprised to see such a large convoy of motor vehicles—use the **Chinese Soldier** statistics provided in **Chapter 1** (page 48), although these men do not belong to the Chihli Clique, but to an allied minor faction.

Hsu Te-Ch'uan, the sergeant accompanying the investigators, swaggers forward to deal with the guards, calling to whoever is currently looking after the letter from the Jade Marshal (**Prof. Wang's Office**, page 45) to follow him. If the

investigator speaks fluent Chinese (a skill of 50% or more), they understand the conversation without needing to roll; anyone with less than 50% needs to succeed with a Regular skill roll if they want to understand the general gist of things.

To anyone observing the exchange, either from the cars or if they have accompanied the sergeant, it is clear from the expression on the guards' faces that they do not appreciate this little northern upstart bossing them around, regardless of what his precious piece of paper might say. Any investigator who speaks Chinese fluently may wish to help diffuse the situation at this point using any of their social skills (such as **Charm** or **Persuade**) as appropriate; a fumble ignites the situation into a scuffle, as does failing a pushed roll.

Provided that the incident is resolved peacefully, the guards—after a suitable show of officious behavior—wave the convoy through the gates and into Sian. If a scuffle ensued, the fracas results in the guards' commander appearing and giving all military personnel present a thorough dressing down (up to and including threatening to tell General Wu Pei-fu about their dreadful behavior). He profusely apologizes to the investigators, and hurriedly ushers them into the city.

The investigators' Peking escort leads them to Kulou House, a modest but clean courtyard hotel on the edge of the Muslim Quarter and not far from the Drum Tower, and then bids them goodbye. The soldiers return to Peking soon afterward, their duty done. After they have unloaded the investigators' luggage, the drivers hired for them by Prof. Wang also make their farewells, leaving the investigators alone in the ancient city. The erstwhile professor has booked a single night's stay at the hotel for them, although the investigators should feel free to make their own arrangements if they have contacts in Sian.

VISIONS IN THE DARK: SIAN AND THE KANSU CORRIDOR

The Tokabhaya, determined to convince the investigators of the urgency of their mission, continue to send dreams or visions during the investigators' sojourn in Sian, as well as during their journey to Tun-huang. Along with building on whatever they saw in the darkness of the lecture theatre at Peking University (**Chapter 1: Visions in the Dark**, page 40), these visions could include new information, such as details of their upcoming meetings in the former Chinese capital. They could also be based on the **Possible Encounters on the Road** section (page 71), neatly foreshadowing events before they happen and subjecting the investigators to an unnerving sense of déjà vu when the actual event—or something alarmingly like it—finally occurs (potentially triggering a **Sanity** roll for 0/1 loss). The Keeper may also weave in interesting or disturbing elements that may have arisen through play. Remember, such visions are sent by the Tokabhaya to push the investigators forward. Some new visions could focus on:

- Chasing tiny figures through Sian's streets in the dead of night (linking to **Encounters of the Ming-ch'i Kind**, page 67).
- The investigator or a Significant Person from their backstory arguing with Chinese soldiers who are harassing a disheveled and terrified-looking family of refugees (linking to **Papers, Please**, page 71).
- Seeing Russian graffiti scrawled all over the interior of a stone room; the "paint" appears to still be wet and is dripping down the walls (linking to both **The Writing on the Wall**, page 71, and **Finders Keepers**, page 77).

IN THE HEREAFTER

As the investigators enter either Kulou House or the hotel they've chosen to stay at instead, they hear an elderly American gentleman complaining to the concierge that his walking cane has disappeared from his room. Eyeing the newly-arrived investigators, the concierge takes the American to one side to discuss the matter further. A successful **Listen** roll reveals that, when he got up this morning, the old gent found his walking cane missing from its usual resting place on the back of his chair. The concierge assures the old man that he will keep an eye out for the item, which surely must have just been temporarily mislaid—after all, the hotel has excellent security, and the staff are above reproach.

If the investigators decide to chat with the old gent, he introduces himself as Thaddeus Johnson, Professor of Oriental Literature at Miskatonic University, currently

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visiting Sian in order to pay his respects to the tomb of Hiuen-Tsiang and to study some of the texts the monk brought back from India (see **Handout: Gates 1**). While he's a little annoyed at the concierge's insinuation that he's mislaid his walking stick, he has to agree that it is unlikely that any of the staff would want to steal it. Besides his cane vanishing, Johnson also insists that the items on his dressing table have been disturbed, although nothing else is missing.

A successful **Psychology** roll reveals that there is something else that Johnson isn't saying. If pressed, he is slightly embarrassed, and admits that he did get more than a little tipsy on cocktails in the hotel bar last night, although he is sure he did take his cane back to his room with him. The cocktails also fueled some bizarre dreams, in one of which he was in his room watching a group of little people juggling his toiletries and dancing around with his cane!

If asked for a description of his cane, Johnson tells the investigators that he picked it up in Boston several decades ago after he damaged his knee and it has served him faithfully ever since. The handle is a piece of greenish soapstone carved to look like an octopus, while the stock is made from hazel. Once he has finished speaking, Johnson mutters something about being too old for these modern drinks and swears next time he'll stick to whiskey, before bidding the investigators good day and heading off to the bar to double check he hasn't left his cane there.

Asking the concierge, Mr. Chien, about the incident requires a delicate touch—use the **Concierge** profile (**Appendix A**, page 329, as required). He denies that the hotel has a problem with petty pilfering, although the professor's loss is not the first he's heard of, as friends working at several other guest houses in the city have recently reported guests “losing or mislaying” items. Nothing of any great value, the concierge insists, but always of a personal or sentimental nature, like the professor's cane. If the investigators appear interested, Chien suggests they could speak to his friend Li Chun, who works as a night porter at the pilgrim hostel close to the city's western gate. The concierge doesn't know for certain, but he suspects Li may know more than he is letting on.

Keeper note: despite his conviction that he dreamed the whole encounter after a bout of alcoholic over-indulgence, there were, indeed, little people in Prof. Johnson's bedroom last night—of a sort. The creatures were actually animated statues (**Kueitzumen**, page 54), come to acquire items to replace those stolen (by Sai Na) from their late master's tomb a few nights before. Johnson's walking cane, while not exactly like the one lost from the tomb, was judged to be a suitable replacement thanks to its long service and great sentimental value.



Two terracotta servants tussle over Johnson's cane

OUT AND ABOUT

If the investigators are intrigued by what Mr. Chien told them, a trip to the pilgrim hostel by the western gate leads them to Li Chun (use the **Porter** profile in **Appendix A**, page 329, as required). Li is wary of the investigators at first, but if they mention Mr. Chien, the night porter relaxes and can be questioned about the missing objects. Otherwise, a successful social skill roll (such as **Charm** or **Persuade**) may be needed to get him talking.

Keeper note: alternatively, once the investigators have checked into their accommodation, they may instead wish to explore Sian or start organizing transport and provisions for their trip along the Silk Road to find Langdon Warner. If they do, proceed to **Truth and Consequences** (page 63). The investigators may be drawn back into the mystery of Johnson's missing cane in **Encounters of the Minch-ch'i Kind** (page 67).

Once chatting, Li asks if the investigators have seen the street children in Sian, explaining that there are many child thieves and beggars in the city. While he can't be certain it was one of them, Li did see a very small child in the alley behind the hostel on the night that an old porcelain pillow, belonging to one of the guests, vanished.

It was an odd thing for a thief to steal, Li comments, as it had little monetary value, although it was exquisitely painted, if a little cracked in places. The gentleman it was stolen from was very upset, as it had traveled with him everywhere since he was a child—he just couldn't sleep comfortably without it. The old man left the city yesterday to return home, deeply disappointed that a search had failed to turn up his pillow, although he insisted on giving his address to Li, in case it should ever reappear. He also left some money to cover the cost of returning it.

A successful **Psychology** roll identifies that Li is troubled by something, now that he is retelling the story. If pressed, he confirms that the "child" was only around 2 feet (60 cm) tall but that it didn't move like a toddler, which it must have been from its height. It was also dressed remarkably well for a street child. If attempting to come up with another theory as to what the child might be, a successful **History** roll brings to mind that there once was a community of performing little people in Sian, while a successful **Medicine** or **INT** roll suggests that, if the professor wasn't dreaming and the little people he saw were real, then the person Li saw might also be a little person, although probably still quite a young one. If asked about this, Li confirms that, while little people do still occasionally pass through Sian as part of a traveling circus, and that being a performer of some sort might explain the child's unusual clothing, there have been no traveling entertainers in the city for well over a month now.

As they are about to leave, Li remembers something else and asks them to wait for a moment. When he returns, he hands over three tiny, round terracotta coins, approximately one-third of an inch (8 mm) in diameter, with a square hole in their centers. A successful **Appraise** or **History** roll identifies them as miniature *pan liang* (*ban liang*), the half-tael coin used in China since antiquity, although these are approximately one-third of the size of most *pan liang*, which are traditionally made of bronze, not clay.

A successful **Archaeology**, **History**, or **Occult** roll identifies the coins as *ming ch'ien* (*ming qian*)—dark money—a type of spirit article (**Spirit Articles and Grave Goods**, nearby). If questioned further, Li admits he found the clay coins hidden underneath the bed roll belonging to the pilgrim whose porcelain pillow was stolen. Recognizing




SPIRIT ARTICLES AND GRAVE GOODS

The term "spirit article" is used to describe any item usually buried with the dead for use in the afterlife. This frequently included coins, left so that the deceased could purchase items that they could not easily take with them from the mortal world into the great beyond. Another name for *ming ch'ien* is *i-ch'ien* (*yi qian*)—quite literally, buried money.

Coins were not the only possessions interred. While truly ancient Chinese burials often contained the remains of servants and animals (sacrificed to keep their dead master or mistress company in the afterlife), by the time of the Han Dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE), the practice had mostly died out. Instead, the domestic staff and creatures the deceased would need to serve their needs were replaced with terracotta figures known as *yung* (*yong*)—tomb figurines. These sculptures were also accompanied by recreations of useful tools and utensils the household would need beyond death, which were known as *kuei-ch'i* (*guiqi*)—ghost vessels. Together, these two types of objects were known as *ming-ch'i* (*mingqi*): miniature reproductions of actual objects, valuable in the afterlife but useless to the living.

The dead were also interred with personal objects. These items were known as *sheng-ch'i* (*shengqi*)—vessels of everyday use. Additionally, depending on the deceased's rank, they might be buried with *chi-ch'i* (*jiqi*), sacrificial vessels previously used in communal rites. Strict rules existed for both the number and type of the various grave goods a person could be buried with, all determined by their social rank.



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what they were, he concealed them from the guest and his employers, as he did not want the hostel to get a reputation for being cursed. (The Chinese are very superstitious about owning grave goods, as anyone familiar with the country will know; no roll required.)

NEW LEADS

Later, as they return to the hotel, the investigators are greeted by Prof. Johnson. If they ask him whether or not he found anything odd after his cane went missing, he admits that, not long after they last spoke, he discovered a number of tiny clay coins in one of his jacket pockets. A close examination of the five coins reveals that they are identical to those surrendered by Li Chun. The professor is keen to hear any additional information that the investigators have uncovered, but admits that he is baffled as to who would be sending children—or little people—to steal everyday items like walking canes and pillows. He puts it down to a mischievous prank, albeit one in very poor taste.

If the investigators have links to the criminal fraternity in Sian, or have the necessary skills to make such contacts (now that they are here), the word on the street—uncovered with a successful social skill roll, such as **Charm**, **Fast Talk**, or **Persuade**—reveals that, while no one is aware of an existing gang of diminutive miscreants stealing everyday items, the thefts have become the talk of Sian's underworld. This information can also be acquired from Sian's police, should the investigators have contacts in (or some sway with) the local law enforcement.

Beside these nuisance thefts, the only other change of late is that a somewhat dubious merchant with a reputation for selling fake artifacts to pilgrims appears to have come into possession of some genuine antiques. No one knows where he got them from, but the general opinion is that it can't have been through legitimate channels. (Note that the police are unaware of this news—if they were, the merchant would have undoubtedly been hauled in for a beating by now.) The man's name is Sai Na, and he usually sets up his stall not far from the Town God Temple, on the road to the western gate.

Provided they have heard about the dubious merchant, there are now two main options open to the investigators: speak to Sai Na about his new stock, or begin organizing their trip to Tun-huang. If they choose the latter (or fail to learn of the disreputable salesman), the Keeper should skip ahead to **Truth and Consequences** (page 63). If, instead, they decide to seek out Sai Na, his stall can indeed be found on the edge of the city bazaar around the corner from the Town God Temple, and not a million miles from Mi Han's shop (**Delicate Negotiations**, page 65). If the investigators have failed to hear about Sai Na, perhaps they run across his stall

while out and about in Sian; the unusual items on sale may raise their suspicions and flag him as someone of interest.

SAI NA'S STALL

A large, red handcart, painted with golden Chinese characters, stands down from the Town God Temple, on the road to the western gate. A successful **Language (Chinese)** roll (not required by native Chinese speakers or those with 50+% skill) identifies the characters spell out Sai Na's name and the words "Purveyor of Fine Religious Tokens and Artifacts."

Sai Na is dressed in heavily worn, though clean, robes and has a hunched air of resignation about him. If he spots the investigators taking an interest in his stall, he calls out to them, promising that they won't find any finer mementos of their stay in this most marvelous of cities.

The best way to get Sai Na talking is to offer to buy something. A successful **Appraise** or **Archaeology** roll spots that, while most of the trinkets on the stall are just that, one or two pieces of statuary are genuinely old. One is of a camel, laden with panniers full of what looks like fruit. The other is a vase carved from stone that looks suspiciously like jade (but is actually agate). In addition, there is a small pile of corroded bronze coins, approximately one inch (2.5 cm) in diameter and similar in design to the ones shown to the investigators by Li Chun (the full-sized *pan liang*). While the investigators peruse the coins, Sai Na gabbles away about them being very auspicious items, lucky charms that will protect them from all manner of ills that may befall them on their journeys—purchasing a coin or two is the cheapest way to buy Sai Na's confidence. Half a dollar (50¢) should net the investigators one coin each, although generous investigators may wish to give the impoverished trader a full dollar for his trinkets.

If the investigators appear to know what they are talking about with respect to the finer objects on his stall, Sai Na asks if they are in the market for "genuine antiques" to take home with them. If they are, he offers to show them his warehouse, where he keeps the best items for his most discerning customers. Presumably the investigators agree. If so, he arranges to meet them at the warehouse that evening, giving an address on the far side of the Muslim Quarter.

If, on the other hand, the investigators ask too many pointed questions as to where he acquired his goods, Sai Na shoos them away, feigning indignation that his wares are being maligned by people obviously determined to drive a poor, honest man out of business in order to save themselves a few pennies. The only way the investigators can find Sai's warehouse now is if they attempt to follow him back there when he packs up his stall for the day—the streets are sufficiently busy at this time of day to provide sufficient cover for the investigators, as long as they aren't deliberately trying to draw attention to themselves.

Keeper note: if the investigators fail to find or be invited to Sai Na's warehouse, they can try again another day or ask around—a successful social skill roll at Hard difficulty obtains the address of the warehouse.

The Warehouse

Sai's "warehouse" is actually his family's home and, like the merchant himself, it has most definitely seen better days. If the investigators were invited, Sai is waiting to greet them by the front gate. He quickly ushers them into what appears to be a storeroom located to one side of the central courtyard.

Keeper note: if the investigators manage to track down the warehouse but don't have an invitation, it is relatively easy to break in for a look around (a successful **Locksmith** or Hard **STR** roll to open the door). Given the nature of what can be found in his workshop, Sai is unlikely to report any interlopers to Sian's police force, preferring to barricade himself and his family into the main part of the house and wait out any incursions.

The storeroom contains several tables covered with items of all shapes and sizes, almost all of which are fakes; however, as on the handcart, several pieces are genuine, including a

porcelain pillow, a carved walking stick with a handle that seems to resemble some sort of sea creature, and another pile of bronze *pan liang* coins.

Keeper note: if you've decided that the kueitzumen will liberate something of great personal value to one of the investigators as a replacement for a stolen object (**Encounters of the Ming-ch'i Kind**, page 67), you can foreshadow its theft by having a very similar—if not identical—item among the genuine objects in Sai Na's warehouse. For example, the remains of an ancient calligraphy or painting set could, later, be replaced by Chang Mei's gift from her father, or even Sofian Bazaz-Wain's camera (per the pre-generated investigator sheets in **Appendix G**). The items to be stolen don't have to be identical to the things on the table, though, just much-loved or old—or both—and with a vaguely similar function.

Pressing Sai about where he gets his "real" antiques from calls for an **Intimidate** or Hard **Psychology** roll: if successful, the scared merchant admits that, despite the fact that plundering the tombs around the city is forbidden, he had no choice but to raid his ancestors' resting place for things to sell in order to provide food for his family. He will



Anyuang gate, Sian

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show the investigators where the tomb is, as long as they agree to not report him to the authorities.

With a failure, Sai politely but firmly asks them to leave, as he has no truck with timewasters. If the investigators wish to find out what Sai is really up to, they will have to follow him when he goes out to raid the tomb again later that night (a successful group **Stealth** roll is needed to avoid notice while doing so). Like the kueitzumen (**The Hunt is On**, page 67), Sai has a hidden exit through the city walls to get around the nightly closing of the gates.

If the investigators do head straight to the tomb site with Sai, or follow him there, the Keeper should proceed to **Their Final Rest** (page 68). If the investigators instead to go back to their hotel, the events pick up at **Encounters of the Ming-ch'i Kind** (page 67).

Keeper note: if the investigators do turn Sai Na over to the police, he faces one of two punishments: two to three months in prison or, if the arresting officer or prison guard prefers, flogging with a bamboo cane (as often happened in the case of a repeat or hardened offender). Flogging was the lightest of the five traditional punishments meted out during the imperial period, and was still in use in certain parts of China during the years of the republic. The other four imperial punishments were: beating with a large stick, imprisonment, exile, and death, depending on the severity of the crime. As in Peking, public executions are commonplace in Sian in the 1920s for the most serious transgressions, usually by beheading, although more gruesome methods also exist. Because of the degree of violence potentially involved in Sai Na's punishment, the investigators' decision to hand him to the police may affect their long-term karmic balance, as explained in **Checks and Balances** (page 64).

TRUTH AND CONSEQUENCES

If the investigators decide not to follow up on Prof. Johnson's missing cane, then, once they have settled into their lodgings, the time has come for them to organize their trip along the Silk Road to find Langdon Warner. The Muslim Quarter, to the north of the Drum Tower, is by far the best place to look for outfitters and carriers. Anyone the investigators ask about the matter—be they hotel staff or people on the street—points them in that direction, and, confirming Prof. Wang's recommendation, to one man in particular: Mi Han (**Delicate Negotiations**, page 65).

Finding Mi Han's offices in the crowded warren of narrow alleyways that form Sian's Muslim Quarter is no simple task. Packed full of emporia with their goods spilling out onto roadside stands, food stalls, and barely controlled

livestock, the atmosphere is even more overwhelming than a ride through Peking's *hu-t'ungs*. The food on the groaning stalls, if possible, smells even more enticing, and the mix of ethnicities here—although not what it was in the city's heyday—is impressive. The call to prayer from the Great Mosque rings out over the general cacophony at certain times of day (before sunrise, at noon, late afternoon, just after sunset, and between sunset and midnight), and, if they close their eyes, the investigators could almost imagine themselves to be in Constantinople (Istanbul) or Baghdad.

The Cutpurse

While attempting to navigate through the maze of streets, one of the investigators becomes the target of a cutpurse: Shen Chu (**Dramatis Personae (Part One)**, page 54). The filthy, ragged beggar-child attempts to pick the pocket (or snatch the purse) of a random investigator; permit the target a Hard **Spot Hidden** roll (Shen Chu's Sleight of Hand is 50%): success indicates that they are aware of the thief's attempt; if the investigator fails, permit the other characters a **Spot Hidden** roll to see if they realize what is taking place. If no one succeeds, an eagle-eyed member of the surrounding throng alerts them to what has just happened.

Keeper note: if you wish to play on any paranoia the investigators may be developing, as they wander around Sian, ask for a **Spot Hidden** roll from each investigator prior to Shen Chu's attempted thievery. Success permits them to realize they are being shadowed and improves their chances of success in spotting Shen Chu picking their pocket by reducing the difficulty level of that Spot Hidden roll to Regular. Failure merely gives them the uncomfortable feeling of being watched again, although they cannot discern the source.

As soon as the investigators are aware of the theft, they have the option to initiate a chase (*Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook*, **Chapter 7**). The streets are crowded and present many hazards for the pursuing investigators to overcome, such as people, roadside stalls, animals, and upended baskets of produce thrown down by Shen Chu as she flees. The Keeper may wish to use the **Random Hazards** optional rules (*Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook*, page 139) to vary the difficulties the investigators face while attempting to catch the pint-sized robber.

If the investigators manage to catch up with Shen Chu and apprehend her using an appropriate fighting maneuver, they find themselves holding a terrified, sobbing child of around 10 years of age (although it's practically impossible to tell under all that grime). A successful **Language (Chinese)** roll is required to make out what she is saying through the



CHECKS AND BALANCES

The investigators' treatment of Shen Chu has repercussions when they are brought before the Lords of Shambhala in **Chapter 6**. Showing the child mercy, together with any other compassionate acts they perform along the road to the Valley of the White Ape, all work to alter the way the Lords, and Shambhala itself, manifest to the investigators, and no two characters are guaranteed to see the Lords in exactly the same way.

From now on, the Keeper should keep a secret note of how each investigator reacts to situations where there is a choice between compassionate/selfless or selfish/self-serving action. For every compassionate/selfless act, award the investigator +1; for every selfish/self-serving act, award them -1 instead. When the time comes for them to appear before the Lords of Shambhala (**Chapter 6**), tally up each investigator's final score, with each -1 cancelling out a +1. Each investigator should end up with either an overall positive, negative, or neutral (0) score. This final balance determines how the investigators perceive the mythical kingdom of Shambhala and its rulers. Further advice is given in the following chapters regarding opportunities for the investigators to affect their overall karmic balance sheet.

One other potential application of the karmic balance check sheet was devised by one of our playtesters: when an investigator died during the course of the campaign, the Keeper used their balance to determine which afterlife they would be sent to, based on the character's professed faith; however, this additional option may not be appropriate for some groups, and it is advised that the Keeper check with their players before using it.

Note: the idea of karmic balance presented here is more akin to the Hindu understanding of the term, rather than the Buddhist. In *The Children of Fear*, it serves merely as a game mechanic to determine how the investigators experience Shambhala once they finally reach it. This system is also optional, so, if the Keeper isn't sure their players would enjoy the varying views of Shambhala, they don't need to use it, and Shambhala appears in its neutral guise (**Chapter 6: In the Eye of the Beholder**, page 258) unless an investigator has done something totally heinous or remarkably heroic in the course of their adventures (at the Keeper's choice).

tears and snot. She tells them that she is so very sorry for having attempted to steal from them and begs them not to turn her over to the city's guards, who will flog her to within an inch of her life if she is caught again.

The investigators now face a decision: do they hand the girl over to the authorities, knowing what her punishment is likely to be, or do they retrieve their stolen items (if any) and send Shen Chu on her way? It is up to them to decide but, if they prevaricate for too long, a city guard is likely to wander by, attracted by the fuss and commotion (use the **Chinese Soldier** profile, page 48, if required).

Should the investigators turn Shen Chu in, the guard produces a bamboo cane and gives her 20 lashes in front of their eyes, so that they are aware that justice is taken very seriously in Sian (which may provoke a **Sanity** roll for 0/1D2 loss). They can attempt to intervene, but only outright bribery is going to prevent a thorough beating at this point (requiring a successful **Persuade** or **Charm** roll and the liberal application of cash). The child is left bleeding in the street, with a warning not to get caught again. Investigators may wish to tend to her wounds or take her somewhere to get help.

Letting Shen Chu go is the other option open to the investigators, either with a stern reprimand or a few coins with which to buy herself some food; alternatively, the investigators may wish to purchase food for her. Under these circumstances, she apologizes for her attempt to steal from them, and asks that Kwan Yin (Guanyin), goddess of good fortune and champion of the poor, look down on them and favor them with her blessing.

Shen Chu's Den

If the investigators insist on accompanying Shen Chu back to her home, she leads them to a den beneath the steps of one of Sian's many temples. There, among the street child's few possessions they find a strange, armless terracotta doll dressed in rags (approximately 23 inches/60 cm in height). One of its legs is broken and it is clearly very old.

If asked about it, the girl explains that she woke last night to find someone trying to steal a vase that used to belong to her mother, one of the few things she has left to remind her of her former life. Shen Chu struggled with the child and kicked out at it before falling over backwards as her assailant suddenly let go of the vase and vanished. The girl assumed the would-be thief decided the object wasn't worth the fight and fled after she kicked them. In the morning, when checking to make sure that nothing else had been taken, she found the broken doll and six old coins. While it may not be much of a companion, Shen Chu has decided to keep the doll and has dressed it to look like her; it was naked when she found it.

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The coins are approximately one inch (2.5 cm) in diameter and are made from bronze. They are obviously very old, judging by the corrosion on them. A successful **Appraise** or **History** roll identifies them as *pan liang*—traditional Chinese currency. If the investigators want the coins, Shen Chu is happy to exchange them for food or money. If the investigators ask to see the vase, Shen Chu shows it to them; it is carved from what appears to be green soapstone, and decorated with twisting vines. It doesn't look to be terribly old (as a successful **Appraise** roll confirms) but is a pretty object of great sentimental value to the young girl.

Keeper note: the kueitzu encountered by Shen Chu was attempting to gather a replacement for the vase currently sitting on Sai Na's handcart when it was broken and deactivated, although the investigators won't know this or realize the significance of the coins and the terracotta doll if they haven't yet spoken to Li Chun (**Out and About**, page 60) or Sai Na (**Sai Na's Stall**, page 61)—events concerning the clay figures move forward in **Encounters of the Ming-ch'i Kind** (page 67).

DELICATE NEGOTIATIONS

Having dealt with Shen Chu, the investigators are now free to carry on outfitting their expedition to Tun-huang. Mi Han's establishment is sandwiched between a bookseller and a carpet shop, and the aroma of gently steaming dumplings wafts in from the restaurant a few doors down the street.

Once they have explained why they are there, Mi Han guides the investigators to the rear of the shop, through a richly woven curtain, and into a comfortably furnished room decorated with ornate carpets and plump throw cushions. He invites the investigators to sit, and then shouts into the shop for tea. He asks them to explain what they are after and how he may be of service.

The slightly portly gentleman has a twinkle in his eye throughout any negotiations the investigators choose to carry out with him. Mi Han drives a hard bargain on porters, ponies, *mappas* (the ubiquitous two-wheeled Chinese carts, used for practically every purpose imaginable), a cook, and enough supplies to get them to the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas. He also points out that while there are many towns along the way where the investigators could restock, the deals there are unlikely to be as good. Additionally, Mi Han asks if they need a translator? If so, negotiations can be carried out for the services of **Demyan Ilarivich Babanin**, *Dramatis Personae* (Part One), page 56.

Keeper note: as mentioned in **In the Know** (page 18), Russian is an essential language skill if the investigators

are to uncover all of the clues to the secret cave's location once they reach Tun-huang. If none of the investigators have much in the way of Russian language skills, Mi Han strongly suggests the investigators hire Babanin as a local guide, in part because of his experience in traveling the route they'll be following but also because he's fluent in multiple languages and should be able to assist them in any negotiations they might need to make along the way. If the investigators decline, alternative options are provided in **Part Two**.

Bargaining with Mi Han requires a successful social skill roll, like **Charm**, **Fast Talk**, or **Persuade**. While **Intimidate** could be used, it makes a favorable outcome that much harder to achieve (adjust the results on the **Outcome of Negotiations** table accordingly). The exact amounts that change hands are not really important, just the overall impression of whether or not the investigators have made a good deal (the purse of silver dollars given to them by Prof. Wang is enough to cover the expenses).

Negotiations with any other traders (of the Keeper's design) should be handled in a similar manner, with the available outcomes adjusted depending on what the investigator's relationship is with their counterpart. If the investigator has a positive relationship with the trader, negotiations unfold exactly the same as if they were negotiating with Mi Han, whereas if they have no pre-existing relationship, the best the investigators can hope for is to come out of any such meeting with their personal funds intact (and Wang's silver dollars all gone). A negative relationship, or a fumbled or failed pushed roll, means the investigators' wallets are practically guaranteed to emerge from the bargaining session much lighter than they were when it began.

Getting a Good Deal

There are several ways the Keeper can run the negotiations, depending on how complex they wish the interactions between Mi Han and the investigators to be. In the simplest method, the level of difficulty for the negotiations is calculated as described on page 93 of the *Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook*: as Mi Han's **Charm**, **Persuade**, and **Psychology** are all above 50%, the base difficulty of any skill roll to negotiate with him is **Hard**. Have the negotiating investigator roll, using the degree of their success to determine how well the bargaining went.

Keeper note: a generous Keeper may wish to award the investigator making the roll a bonus die if they acted compassionately toward Shen Chu prior to the negotiations, or even a penalty die if they did not. After all, Kwan Yin, the goddess of good fortune and protector of the poor, may indeed be watching.



If the investigator achieves a Hard success, Mi Han relieves them of all of the silver dollars Prof. Wang gave them for expenses. If the investigator achieves an Extreme success, he leaves them with just enough silver to purchase other goods and services on the route from Sian to Tun-huang. Failure does not mean that the investigators end up without food, staff, and transport, but they will have to dig into their own pockets a little to help fund their expedition (assume approximately US \$25 to US \$50 extra is needed).

Alternatively, the negotiating investigator can make an opposed roll against Mi Han. As before, the businessman uses whichever opposing skill is most appropriate to the situation, and the result determines how well the negotiations go for both parties (see **Outcome of Negotiations**, nearby).

Sticky Fingers

Should the subject of the *ming ch'ien* or the professor's missing cane come up in conversation with Mi Han (or another supplier), the genial caravan master confirms that there have been other minor thefts throughout the Muslim Quarter over the last few days. In each, a small item—usually

of little monetary value, but of great personal importance—has been taken, and fancily-dressed children have, on every occasion, been seen in the vicinity. Why, even his own silk cap (the one gifted to him by his wife that he keeps for special occasions) was taken just a couple of nights ago, although the thief very kindly left behind some old coins in its place.

If asked to see the coins, Mi Han fetches two bronze *pan liang*, like those discovered by Shen Chu (if the investigators have seen them; **Shen Chu's Den**, page 64). If asked whether or not he is concerned by the “dark money,” the old Muslim replies that he is not; after all, if he is mindful of Allah, then Allah will protect him, as he always has.

Dangers Ahead

If asked about their proposed route, Mi Han warns the investigators that he has heard reports of soldiers extorting money from the last of the Russian refugees trickling down from Mongolia. He says that Wu Pei-fu's letter may help them get past such freebooters, as might the flags Prof. Wang gave to them (if Mi Han is aware of either of them), but they would still do well to be on their guard.

OUTCOME OF NEGOTIATIONS

Level of Success	Example	Outcome
Same	Both sides score a Regular success.	Mi Han takes all of Prof. Wang's silver to cover the investigators' costs.
One degree above required	The investigator gets a Hard success versus Mi Han's Regular success.	Mi Han takes most (75%) of Prof. Wang's silver.
Two degrees above required	The investigator gets an Extreme success compared to Mi Han's Regular success.	Mi Han takes half (50%) of Prof. Wang's silver, congratulating the investigator on a bargain well struck.
Failure	—	Mi Han takes all of Prof. Wang's silver and some of the investigators' own money (\$25); he kindly commiserates with them, pointing out that Kwan Yin was obviously not with them today.
Fumble or failed pushed roll	—	Fortune did not smile on the investigators and their pockets are considerably lighter when they leave Mi Han's premises (all of Prof. Wang's silver and \$50 of the investigators' own money); this could pose problems later, as ready currency is not easy to get hold of the further they get from civilization.

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If the investigators have no more questions, Mi Han assures them all should be ready for them to leave within the next day or so, unless the investigators express any desire to make alternate plans—the timings can be adjusted depending on how the events of **Encounters of the Minch-ch'i Kind** (following) unfold. With that, Mi Han bids the investigators good day and sends them on their way.

ENCOUNTERS OF THE MING-CH'I KIND

After a long day of wandering around Sian, the investigators are no doubt relieved to be back at their hotel and ready to bed down for a quiet night's sleep. During the night, however, one of the investigators receives a visit from the kueitzumen, come to acquire another replacement object from the unfortunate target. The Keeper should use the investigators' backstories to determine whether or not one of them has an item suitable for stealing. If they do not, but did buy a genuine artifact from Sai Na, the kueitzumen retrieve what was once rightfully their master's. Failing that, a guest in an adjacent room becomes the target of the tiny thieves.

At some point in the early hours, with a successful **Listen** or **Spot Hidden** roll, the investigator in question hears or sees something moving about in their room. If they attempt to observe the interloper without turning on the lights or raising the alarm, they see the shadowy outline of what appears to be a small child rifling through their possessions—if the item to be stolen is quite bulky, there may be more than one kueitzu present. Attempting to catch the would-be thief (or thieves) in the darkness requires a successful Hard **DEX** roll.

- **If failed:** the investigator tears a handful of fabric from the robber before it breaks free and runs away, potentially initiating a chase (see **The Hunt is On**, following). The silk fabric quickly crumbles away to nothing in the investigator's hands. A search of the room reveals that the object chosen by the kueitzumen is missing, replaced by a handful of tiny terracotta *pan liang* coins.
- **If successful:** instead of grabbing ahold of a diminutive human thief, the investigator finds they have, instead, seized a naked, armless terracotta doll. If they've seen Shen Chu's doll (**Shen Chu's Den**, page 64), they recognize it immediately (although this one doesn't have a broken leg). There is no sign of anyone else in the room, although a handful of miniature clay *pan liang* lies on the floor close to where the investigator attempted to apprehend the thief.

Should the investigator in question turn on the light before trying to catch their nighttime visitor, they hear a thudding noise. A thorough search reveals no one in the

room but the investigator and a naked, armless terracotta doll, identical to the one Shen Chu found (providing the investigator has seen it). A few clay *pan liang* lie scattered across the floor near the doll.

If the investigators are roused by yells and screams from another guest's room, they open their door in time to see at least one tiny figure, dressed in very old-fashioned robes, running down the corridor and out of the hotel. This may lead to a chase, as previously mentioned, or the discovery that a small personal item has been removed from the guest's room and a mysterious pile of tiny coins left in its place.

Keeper note: alternatively, if the investigators return late to their lodgings, they may see one (or more) of the diminutive robbers hastily exiting an alleyway behind the building, the stolen object already in their hands.

The Hunt is On

If the investigators set off after the fleeing thief, a chase could ensue, or if preferred, ask for a Hard **DEX** roll to catch up with the figure. As it is nighttime, the streets are relatively quiet with few obstacles. Even though the city is no longer under curfew during the hours of darkness, most of the locals do not venture far after nightfall. Should the investigators catch one of the kueitzumen, it turns into its armless terracotta form in front of their eyes, triggering a **Sanity** roll (0/1D6 loss).

If, on the other hand, the investigators decide to *follow* rather than *chase* the tiny miscreant, it leads them on a merry dance through the alleyways of Sian before disappearing into the bushes lining the western city wall. The Keeper may wish to call for a successful **Luck** or **Track** roll to keep tabs on the thief, at their discretion. Rummaging through the bushes reveals a small hole in the masonry where several stones have fallen away over time. By peering through the gap, an investigator can see the figure running toward the indistinct mounds out to the west, where the wealthiest of Sian's former residents molder in their tombs. An investigator capable of squeezing through the hole (SIZ 50 maximum) can continue to follow or chase the kueitzu/kueitzumen.

Keeper note: as it is not yet dawn, all of the city's gates are closed, and no amount of bribery, flattery, or intimidation can convince the soldiers to open up before the Bell Tower signals them to do so. If the investigators can't get through the hole, they'll just have to wait until daylight to follow the trail.

Should the investigators have acquired a doll instead of chasing after the thief, or if they end up with one after a successful chase, they will undoubtedly wish to figure out what it is. A successful **Archaeology**, **Art/Craft**

(**Sculpture**), **History**, or **Occult** roll identifies the doll as *ming-ch'i*, a type of statue created specifically to be buried with the dead (**Spirit Articles and Grave Goods**, page 60). If the investigators do not have the relevant skills, or fail their rolls, then Prof. Johnson or some of the city's more reputable antiquities merchants can point them in the right direction. Such objects are relatively rare in Sian, as there is a prohibition on excavating the tomb mounds that surround the city; if an expert had to guess, they'd say the doll must have come from one of the western tombs, the burial site of Sian's former elite.

THEIR FINAL REST

By now, the investigators hopefully have evidence leading them to the dusty burial grounds beyond the western city gates. Even if they lost the assailant the night before because no one could squeeze through the hole in the wall, a successful **Track** roll the next morning alerts them to the marks of tiny feet in the muddy earth, which soon lead them to the tomb mounds.

Sai Na chose wisely when it came to deciding which tomb to rob. Hidden in a shallow depression, out of sight of the main road and further screened from prying eyes by a small

stand of scrubby trees, the hole leading down into the tomb is difficult to spot in daylight (a successful **Spot Hidden** roll catches the sand-covered tarpaulin masking the entrance); however, at night, the tarpaulin is likely to be thrown back, particularly if Sai Na is down there attempting to steal more objects. Descending into the darkness is relatively easy for anyone smaller than SIZ 70, although a torch or lantern is essential to see where they are going.

Broken statues of people and animals jut out from areas where the soil has collapsed into the various burial chambers, and there are obvious signs of excavation and petty pilfering down in the tomb. What is also obvious is the small pile of newer objects, including the professor's cane, the porcelain pillow, Mi Han's silk cap, and whatever else was stolen from the investigators' hotel (if the theft was successful). Around the pile of objects, in a loose circle, stand half a dozen of the—by now—familiar naked, armless terracotta dolls.

Should the investigators attempt to retrieve any of the missing items, the dolls spring to life, triggering a **Sanity** roll (0/1D6 loss). The creatures transform, no longer naked and armless, now dressed in silken costumes that a successful **History** roll notes as being from the Han Dynasty period. The kueitzumen should not be difficult for the investigators to deal with, as damaging them in any way renders them



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lifeless forever. The only way to stop them from stealing more items from Sian is to return those Sai Na has already taken (or find suitable replacements), and convince the trader to stop removing any more—if he doesn't, new kueitzumen will keep on coming until this is so. Note that the dolls do not spring to life if the investigators simply replace the missing items before attempting to retrieve the stolen ones.

Keeper note: if the investigators are unaware of Sai Na's involvement, then they may need to put a watch on the tomb to figure out who's disturbed the kueitzumen and sparked off their highly specific crime spree.

If the investigators are struggling to reach this conclusion, permit them an **INT** roll to figure it out from what they have learned so far. Resealing the tomb without replacing or restoring the missing items only provides a temporary reprieve; eventually, once the kueitzumen manage to dig themselves out, they return to their miniature crime spree.

Keeper note: optionally, if the investigators did not accompany Sai Na to the tomb, they could find his bruised and battered corpse in one of the burial chambers. Tired of him stealing their master's possessions, the kueitzumen finally take matters into their own phantom hands. Alternatively, if the investigators *did* follow Sai Na, they could interrupt the disgruntled tomb guardians during their assault on the hapless merchant.

Hopefully, after their visit to the tomb, the investigators have solved the mystery of the missing items and potentially returned them to their grateful owners (no doubt improving their karma—see **Checks and Balances**, page 64—in the process, provided they don't attempt to claim any reward for having done so). Once they have, they are free to continue with their preparations to reach Tun-huang and Prof. Warner.

READY FOR THE OFF

Once they're ready to set off on their journey to Tun-huang and the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas, the investigators can meet up with their caravan. If the investigators organized it through Mi Han, then the expedition, led by Mi Han's son Mi Hu, awaits them at the family's compound by the city's western gate. When the investigators arrive at the Mis' marshalling area, they are greeted warmly but respectfully by Mi Junior, who introduces them to their porters, guards, and cook (**Non-Player Characters**, page 90).

The mule-drawn *mappas* are stuffed with supplies, ready for the long trip to Tun-huang. The investigators, depending on their skills, may wish to ride on horseback; if so, horses are

provided as part of the deal. Alternatively, they can ride on the carts with their drivers. The rest of the crew ride mules. If, of course, the investigators have their own transport, they can leave the city whenever they have collected their supplies.

BETWEEN SIAN AND TUN-HUANG

Having left Sian, the investigators have taken their first steps on the Silk Road. It is approximately 1,000 miles (1,600 km) from the T'ang Dynasty's ancient capital to Tun-huang along the Kansu Corridor, which officially runs from Lanchou (Lanzhou) in the southeast to the fabled Jade Gate in the northwest. There are several major towns along the way, with government resthouses, known as *kung-kuans*, spaced roughly a day's march apart (15 miles/24 km) between them.

HOME SWEET HOME?

Although they share some similarities with their Indian equivalents, the *dak* bungalows (**Chapter 5: From Rajgir**, page 198), the *kung-kuans* also have their own particular foibles. Each rest house is based on the same general floor plan: four ranges of buildings grouped around a large, open central courtyard.

Two of the ranges house the guest rooms, which each contain a stove bed (*kang*). This ingenious creation is heated from beneath by hot coals shoveled in through a hatch in the building's outer wall. Another range contains stables for horses and mules. All other livestock is corralled in the courtyard, which also serves as a parking and unloading area for carts. The final range contains the kitchens, the refectory, and the innkeeper's lodgings.

Kung-kuans are renowned for being filthy, swarming with lice and fleas left behind by previous occupants. They are also incredibly noisy; you need to be truly exhausted to enjoy a good night's sleep in a *kung-kuan*. Guests bellow their orders for food from their rooms, and when their meals are ready, the cook bellows back. Add to this the braying, lowing, and snorting of the animals, and if it weren't for the safety provided by the stout stone walls, far more travelers would probably choose to camp outside instead!

As mentioned in **Chapter 1: Travel by Map** (page 47), because of the immense distances involved, it is recommended that the investigators travel by red line. As a rough rule of thumb, though, anyone walking can reasonably expect to cover around 15 miles (24 km) a day. If riding, that increases to between 20 and 30 miles a day (32–48 km), restricted by the slowest means of transport in use.



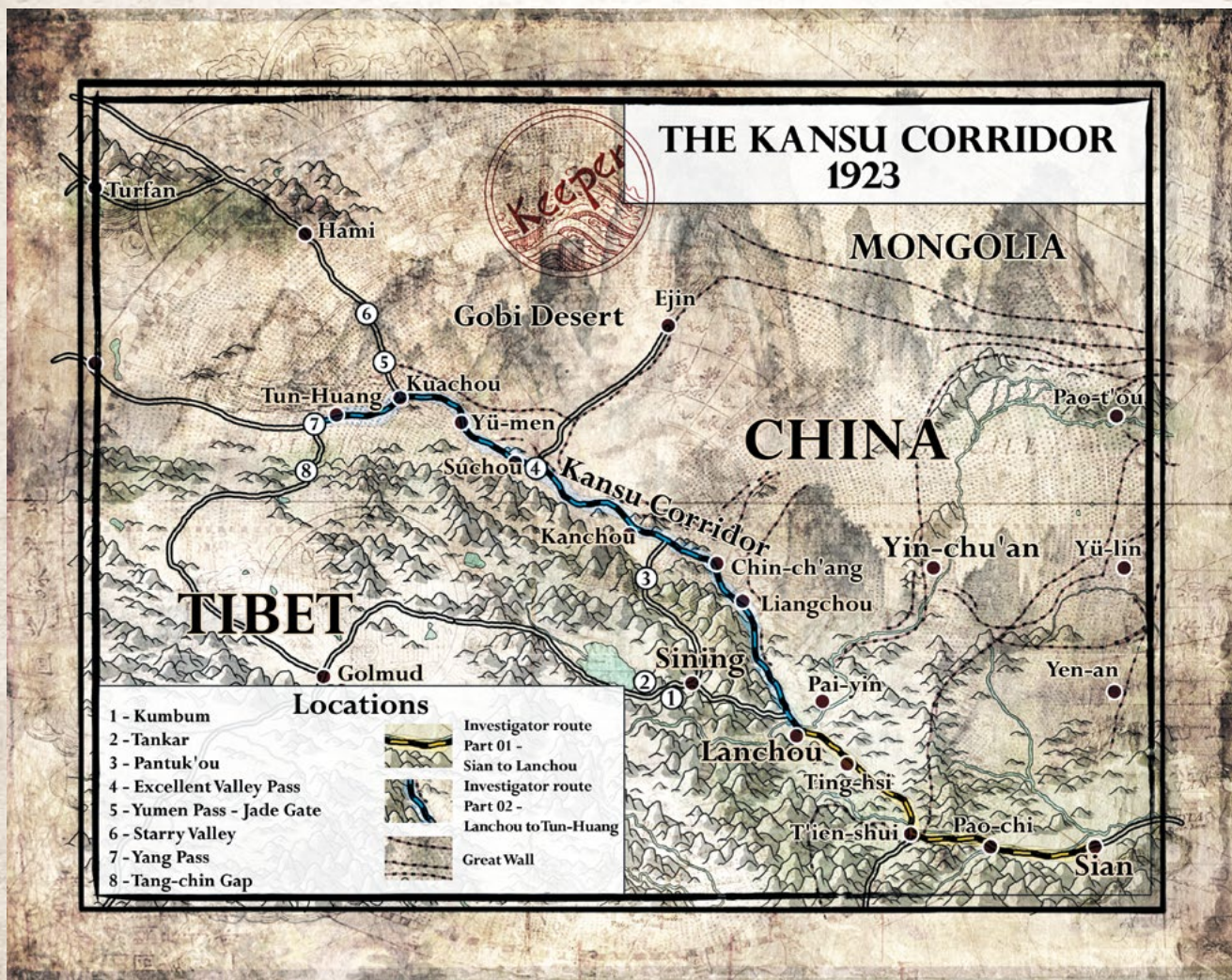
According to historical sources, the trip from Peking to Lanchou usually took 34 days for a mule-drawn *mappa* to complete; the distance from Sian to Tun-huang is virtually identical and travels over roads of equivalent quality. So, if the investigators leave Sian in late September, they will arrive at the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas in late October/early November, assuming all goes to plan.

Once beyond Lanchou, the fertile fields of Shen-hsi (Shaanxi) Province give way to the steep-sided canyons of the Kansu Corridor proper, reaching their narrowest point at the Excellent Valley Pass (Jiayuguan), the spot where the Silk Road passes through a massive double gate set into the Great Wall of China. According to **Mildred Cable** (a British missionary also traveling the Silk Road to Kanchou in late 1923; **Appendix A**, page 331), the gateway as a whole was also known as Kweimenkwan—the Gate of the Demons—and the westernmost of the two gates was referred to as the Gate of Sighs. Like Kanchou, which now sits squarely in the middle of the Kansu Corridor, this pass was once the edge of the empire,

SELF-IMPROVEMENT: THE KANSU CORRIDOR

The time taken to travel between Sian and Tun-huang can be used to further develop investigator skills, as detailed in **Experiential Learning** (page 23). Suggested skills for improvement include Ride, Navigate, and any relevant language skills the characters may be able to teach one another or glean from caravan staff.

and the gate is covered in ancient graffiti scrawled by those exiled beyond the borders of their homeland, never to return.



The Kansu Corridor map

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Possible Encounters on the Road

Here are two possible encounters the Keeper could use as the investigators travel toward the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas, even when red lining. These can serve to underline the dangers of traveling across wilderness areas during this time period or can be used to build up the investigators' unease and their sense of growing unrest in the countryside.

Keeper note: the investigators may have already experienced the sensation that they are being watched by person or persons unknown, even though, try as they might, they have been unable to identify any actual physical presence spying on them other than Shen Chu. (Unless, of course, you count Timur Repin, if he is in use as a pre-generated character). As long as the investigators have successfully made the appropriate **POW** or **Spot Hidden** roll to identify that they're being observed before they reach the Kansu Corridor, the investigators should feel as if there is an almost constant presence just over their shoulder but always out of sight as they draw closer to Tun-huang. On top of that, they also have a sense that something is about to happen, almost like a thunderstorm about to break, or that someone or *something* is on the verge of letting out a long-held breath. Of course, if they have failed their **POW** or **Spot Hidden** roll(s) so far, now would be a good time to let them try again.

Papers, Please

Mi Han may have warned the investigators about marauding Chinese troops along the Kansu Corridor during their negotiations with him. One particularly enterprising group has decided that drifting about the countryside stealing things is far too much like hard work and, instead, has set up a roadblock just west of Lanchou to extort money from lone travelers, refugees, and any other foreigners who look like they might be worthwhile marks.

The size of the investigators' caravan determines whether or not the soldiers feel brave enough to challenge them. If the investigators are traveling alone in their own vehicles with minimum staff and supplies, then the ruffians attempt to detain them by claiming the caravan doesn't have the correct papers to travel in the area. They are unimpressed by either the letter from the Jade Marshal or any flags the convoy might be flying. Use the profile for **Chinese Soldiers** (page 48 in **Chapter 1**), although they are not part of the Chihli Clique, but belong to another member of the coalition that covers this part of China.

The Keeper should encourage the investigators to be creative when it comes to dealing with the soldiers. Like all

bullies, they can be intimidated into submission. Langdon Warner, when he was stopped by a similar group on his way to Tun-huang, demanded to be taken to see the local *amban* (Chinese town governor) so that he could complain about their thievery and demand the return of his supplies. Astonishingly, the ploy worked and the somewhat shocked *amban* ordered his troops to give the American back his things and let him go on his way unmolested.

If the investigators are traveling with Mi Hu and his men, the soldiers call them to a halt, make a great show of examining the letter from Wu Pei-fu, and then wave them on their way as if doing them a great favor. Although they are greedy and ruthless, the soldiers are not foolish, and would rather run for the hills than risk a shootout with a well-armed group of adventurers and/or their porters. There are far easier pickings to be had along the road.

There is also the possibility that the investigators come across the soldiers attempting to steal what little a band of footsore and weary Russian refugees have left. This presents another karmic check point for the investigators. If they intervene and attempt to protect the refugees, the act adds positively to their karmic balance when it comes to facing the Lords of Shambhala, while leaving the refugees to their fate has a negative impact on their balance.

The Writing on the Wall

Wherever the investigators go, there is Russian graffiti scrawled on the walls (the nearest thing to redecoration many of the *kung-kuans* have seen in years) and carved into trees and rocks. While most of the phrases are perfectly mundane, though often heartbreaking (see **Lost Words**, nearby, for the types of graffiti encountered; no skill roll required for those fluent in Russian), there is one phrase in particular that keeps appearing over and over again.

Written in a dark, red-brown paint (a successful **First Aid** or **Medicine** roll identifies it as blood), the phrase requires a successful **Language (Russian)** roll to decipher as it appears to be in a particularly old, obscure dialect.

**Они прибыли. Конец наступает.
Ибо они прибыли.**

It reads: "*They are come. The end is upon us. For they are come.*" Even if the investigators fail to translate it, there is something about the foreign phrase that makes it uncomfortable and unnerving to look at.



AN UNCIVIL WAR

During 1917, two revolutions took place in Russia. The first, in February (March in the Gregorian calendar; Russia was still using the older Julian calendar at the time), saw the Tsar's family arrested and a provisional government installed to run the country. The second, in October (November in the Gregorian calendar), saw the Bolsheviks seize control under Lenin, plunging the country into a bitter civil war, which lasted from 1917 until 1922, although fighting in Central Asia dragged on into the following year. The Red Army (the military wing of the Bolsheviks) was formed in early 1918 and faced down the White Army, which was cobbled together from those who opposed Lenin's men—including rival Communist groups.


Despite containing a large number of the former Tsar's formidable armed forces, the White Army was eventually defeated and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was formed, but not before an estimated 10 million people (at least) died during the violence and starvation brought about by the conflict. Tens of thousands, if not more, attempted to flee from the brutality of both sides, with China serving as a popular destination.



LOST WORDS

The fleeing Russian refugees, many of them soldiers of the White Army or escaping political prisoners, left different types of graffiti as they made their way into China in search of a new and safer life. Often, the scrawls are simply the soldier's name, regiment, and the date they passed through the area. Others are messages to loved ones, leaving a trail of clues to follow so that they might meet again, or memorials to those who died along the way. Others are prayers, for the future and for those left behind.

If the investigators hired Demyan Babanin as their interpreter, he points out messages he left in various places along the route for a fellow escapee after they became separated on the road. Sadly, he never saw the man again and can only hope his former companion found happiness. If any of the investigators are themselves fugitives from the Soviet regime—or Soviet spies—perhaps they, too, left messages of their own.



PART TWO: THE BLAZING BEACON

One of the many oasis settlements along the old Silk Road, Tun-huang (Dunhuang)—the Blazing Beacon—is also known as the Town of Sand (Shazhou). As the empire expanded, the town, like Kanchou before it, found itself as the last Chinese outpost before the dangerous lands beyond the border.

Thanks to its strategic position as the branch point of several trading routes between China, India, and the West, the town flourished during the Silk Road's heyday, only to slip into obscurity as the centuries passed. Surrounded by massive dunes, the current town lies to the east of the old city ruins, a few miles north of the Singing Sand Mountain (a gigantic, whispering sand dune) and its crescent moon lake.

Like many places in disputed border regions, Tun-huang has a colorful history, and for almost 70 years between the 8th and 9th centuries CE, it actually belonged to the Tibetan Empire (**Chapter 5: The Land of Snows**, page 187). Although the Chinese reclaimed it, Tibet held it once again between the 16th and 18th centuries, until they were finally driven out by the Ch'ing Dynasty.

But, the most remarkable aspect of Tun-huang lies about 15 miles (24 km) southeast of the main town: Ch'ien-fotung (Qianfodong), the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas. In a little green valley, carved into the cliffs along the River Ta-Chu'an (Dachuan) and surrounded on all sides by towering sand dunes, are a staggering number of rock temples. As the name suggests, there were once reputed to be 1,000 temples in the valley, although fewer now remain. The cave walls are painted with a variety of Buddhist images, including tantric art from the area's time under Tibetan control, and numerous portraits of the caves' patrons, wealthy traders, and officials (including some from faraway Kashgar) who paid for the temples to be excavated and decorated from the middle of the 4th century CE onward.

In days long past, caravans would detour from their route along the main Silk Road to visit the temples and pray for safe passage. A map of the routes around the Taklamakan Desert can be found in **Chapter 3**, page 99. Although originally a place of retreat for Buddhist monks due to its isolation, at its height under the T'ang Dynasty there were nearly 20 monasteries and 14,000 monks at the site, as well as a host of artists, scribes, translators, and pilgrims. But, by the end of the Yuan Dynasty (c.1368 CE), the caves had fallen into disrepair and were largely forgotten by the rest of the world.

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By the turn of the 20th century, only a solitary Taoist priest lived at the caves—Wang Yuanlu, the temples' self-appointed custodian and restorer. The priest discovered one of Tun-huang's greatest secrets in 1900, during a period of renewed Western interest in Central Asia and the Silk Road in particular. Inside what became known as the Library Cave, Wang Yuanlu found huge piles of ancient manuscripts, textiles, and statuary from the site's long history. It would be another four years before he revealed this treasure trove to the world.

Over the following two decades, the Library Cave was raided by a number of Western archaeologists, including **Sir Marc Aurel Stein** (see box nearby) in 1907 and 1914 for Great Britain, Paul Pelliot in 1908 for France, Count Otani's supposed Japanese pilgrims in 1911 (**Investigator Motivations: By Occupation**, page 18), and Sergei Oldenburg for Russia, also in 1914. In 1910, the Chinese authorities finally claimed some of the cave's wonders for themselves, but, by that point, the majority of the most ancient and valuable pieces had already been spirited away to Europe, including the *Diamond Sutra*, the oldest known printed book in existence.

Langdon Warner (**Dramatis Personae (Part Two)**, page 74) arrived in Tun-huang as Chinese attitudes toward the Western exploration of the republic's ancient sites was changing. As leader of the first American expedition to Chinese Turkistan, Warner hoped to discover wonderful things of his own at the caves. He arrived armed with a newly developed chemical preservative designed to stabilize and permit the safe removal of some of the temples' magnificent wall paintings, many of which had been badly damaged by White Russian soldiers interred in the temples by the Chinese authorities for six months across 1921 and '22.

SET UP: HIDDEN TREASURES

Having arrived at the caves in September 1923, Langdon Warner wasted no time in surveying the site, largely to see what treasures could be claimed for the Fogg Museum. He was furious with the level of damage caused to the famous murals by the Russians and planned on using the destruction as an excuse to "rescue" several choice pieces for his sponsors, and to protect them from Wang Yuanlu's notoriously awful and amateurish attempts at restoration.



SIR MARC AUREL STEIN

Born in Budapest in 1862, Aurel Stein became a British citizen in 1904 after spending 20 years living and working within the British Empire. A world-renowned geographer, archaeologist, and linguist, he spent much of his professional life in India, particularly at Lahore's various higher educational institutes, and traveled extensively throughout Central Asia, inspired by his hero (and unofficial patron saint) Hiuen-Tsiang.

Allegedly an active player in the Great Game, Aurel Stein's thirst for knowledge took him all across Chinese Turkistan in search of ancient relics, ever accompanied by a succession of dogs named Dash (of which there were seven in total). His greatest and most notorious find was the gigantic haul of books and art treasures he claimed from the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas in 1907: some 40,000 manuscripts, including the *Diamond Sutra*, and five large cases of statues and paintings, for which he paid Wang Yuanlu the paltry sum of £130 (\$650). Despite the size of this initial haul, there was plenty of material left behind for other visitors to plunder.

Aurel Stein received a knighthood in 1912 for his efforts and became a Fellow of the British Academy in 1921. The final expedition he had planned into Central Asia in 1930 had to be abandoned due to safety concerns (**Chapter 1: Rising Tensions**, page 41). He died in 1943 in Kabul, Afghanistan.



As he worked, Warner became intrigued by the tales he heard from the caves' custodian and other visitors to the site about another hidden room somewhere within the complex, allegedly discovered by one of the Russian soldiers held prisoner there. According to the local gossip, some of the graffiti in the caves actually points to the secret vault's location.

Frustrated by his inability to read Russian, and with his gut telling him the stories were true, Langdon sent an urgent telegram via a trader to Prof. Wang, requesting assistance. Fearing the interference of the Chinese authorities or the attentions of a rival archaeologist, Warner's language was deliberately vague and guarded. He was determined not to be supplanted at this late stage.

Of course, the investigators are unaware of this as they arrive at Ch'ien-fotung. All they know is that Warner needs help, presumably due to some dire emergency that arose after his arrival.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE (PART TWO)

The following are the main NPCs for this section of the scenario.

Langdon Warner, age 42, adventurer and explorer

Born in August 1881 in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Langdon was only the latest in a long line of Warners—old New England stock—who could trace their time in America all the way back to the Mayflower.

Warner graduated from Harvard with a BA in 1903, after which he traveled to Russian Turkistan, becoming the first American to set foot in the Khanate of Khiva, then still an independent state. Several visits to Japan followed while seconded to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, where he became an expert in Japanese Buddhist art. In 1910, he married one of Theodore Roosevelt's cousins, Lorraine.

That same year, Warner became a lecturer in Oriental art at Harvard. He was commissioned by the Smithsonian and Charles L. Freer, a Detroit millionaire and Oriental art collector, to look into the feasibility of establishing an American School of Archaeology in Peking in 1913. After the outbreak of the Great War, he went on to help the staff at the Hermitage in Saint Petersburg safely store their prized collections.

During the latter years of the Great War, Warner acted as vice-consul on behalf of the State Department during

a confidential “diplomatic mission” to Japan and Siberia, crisscrossing between them many times during 1917–1919. By the time he reached Tun-huang, Warner was highly experienced in his field and, in his position at the Fogg Museum of Art, spent the rest of his career establishing an astounding collection of Oriental art for his employers. His book detailing his experiences in the region, *The Long Old Road in China*, was published in 1926.

- **Description:** a large man with red hair and a neatly trimmed moustache and goatee beard. His clothes are good quality but somewhat battered by the prevailing conditions.
- **Traits:** brash and dogged yet also brave and quick to act, Warner is surprisingly modest about his personal life.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** Warner can act as an expert in the field for the investigators regarding all aspects of Oriental art and Buddhist history, either independently or to confirm/update anything they learn from Tenzin Kalsang before they leave Tun-huang. His determination to go down in history as one of Central Asia's finest explorers has unforeseen consequences for the investigators.

Wang Yuanlu, age 75, temple guardian and restorer

Little is known in the West about the life of Tun-huang's self-appointed Taoist guardian. It is believed he was born around 1849 somewhere in Shan-hsi (Shanxi) Province and arrived at the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas sometime



Langdon Warner



Wang Yuanlu

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in the 1890s, having served as a soldier before turning to religion. Throughout his stay at Tun-huang, his tiny cell was located at the foot of a gigantic statue of the Buddha carved from the cliff-side.

During cleaning and repair work in 1900, Wang's workmen stumbled across the now famous Library Cave. Despite Wang's best attempts to interest various local *ambans* (Chinese town governors) in the significance of his find (with a view to gaining funds for the caves' restoration), it wasn't until 1904 that a rather woolly directive to protect the manuscripts came down from the region's provincial government. Wang installed a locked wooden door to deny access to the cave, and the manuscripts were left where they had lain for over 800 years without any further protective measures. The doorway was later bricked up to keep out pilgrims during holy festivals.

Aurel Stein's arrival in 1907 tested the protection proclamation to the limit and, by leveraging their shared profound respect for Hiuen-Tsiang, the archaeologist managed to persuade the itinerant monk that selling him a large quantity of the manuscripts and objects from the caves would comply with the regional governor's remit.

Despite the removal of many of the caves' manuscripts to Peking by the Chinese in 1910, the wily monk made sure to secrete huge numbers of scrolls and items in order to continue raising funds—a wise move, as the money the Chinese government had promised him in exchange for the hoard's relocation never appeared.

- **Description:** small and bent with age, with a bright smile and clear gaze despite his advancing years.
- **Traits:** shy and nervous but determined to restore the caves (even if he hasn't got the talent necessary for the job). A surprisingly cunning negotiator when it comes to gaining funds for his beloved project.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** Wang's need for money to restore the ancient site to its former glory conflicts with his desire to save it from the ravages of Western archaeologists.

Tenzin Kalsang, age unknown, saintly lama

Born in distant Kham at some time in the late 8th/early 9th century CE, Tenzin Kalsang was always destined for a life of religious contemplation. As a sign of respect and fealty to their king, Tenzin's family gave him to Buchu Sergyi Monastery near Nyingtri (Nyingchi)—one of twelve demoness-subduing temples built by the great King Songsten Gampo (who introduced Buddhism to Tibet). The small child trained to become a fully-ordained priest before choosing to become an ascetic hermit, giving his life over to contemplation of the tantric mysteries practiced by the Nyingma sect (**Chapter 5: Religion in Tibet**, page 190).

After receiving visions of his future while meditating in seclusion, the young man walked all the way to the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas at Tun-huang to take up an even longer internment. He has been waiting ever since for the arrival of the people (the investigators) he has seen in his dreams.

- **Description:** despite having been interred in his cave for nearly a millennium, the priest only looks to be in his mid-20s. His piercing gaze is softened by his ready smile. He wears a long white skirt, a Chinese-style, garnet-colored vest, and a long-sleeved yellow shirt. For further details, see **Face to Face** (page 81).
- **Traits:** polite, respectful, and committed to his quest. In spite of his aim to detach himself from the world and its desires, he is fascinated by the wonders he sees around him and is full of curiosity as to how they work. He is particularly intrigued, although a little horrified, by wheels (intrigued because he is unused to seeing them on vehicles (**Chapter 5: Traveling in Tibet**, page 192), but horrified because he considers it demeaning to what is a very holy symbol of his religion). His attitude toward the investigators is fatherly, even though he may physically appear to be considerably younger than those he mentors. He is not, however, patronizing.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** Tenzin Kalsang is a devout adherent of Tibetan Tantric Buddhism. Even though as an ascetic he should remove himself from the world and live in isolated contemplation, he accepts that the Lords of Shambhala have involved him in their game and that he must take on the role they have chosen for him with good grace. Little does he realize that he, and the investigators he recruits, are merely pawns of the Tokabhaya.



Tenzin Kalsang

START: A WARM WELCOME

The desert trail leads into Ch'ien-fotung's valley, where a row of trees to one side of the path partially screens the layers of caves chiseled from the soft rock over the course of centuries. Now into the fall, the air here is cooler than on the plains. The trees sway in the breeze, their bare branches whispering of the bitterly cold winter to come. Ravens and other birds watch the investigators from their perches, but other than these feathered observers, there is little sign of life.

As the investigators approach, a large, redheaded man with a neatly trimmed moustache and goatee, dressed in a heavy jacket, a battered fedora, jodhpurs, and high, laced boots, marches purposefully out of one of the upper-level caves. He hails them, demanding to know if they are Prof. Wang's helpers, then clammers down a rickety set of ladders to join them. This is Langdon Warner.

The big American is most amused by any queries into his health, or his team's, that the telegram might have caused. Still, if it got them to him as quickly as possible, then all's well that ends well as far as he's concerned. Depending on how long it has actually taken the investigators to reach the caves, and on how they introduce themselves, Warner expresses either relief to see them or annoyance that they have delayed his work for so long.

After he has had the chance to learn everyone's names and has inquired into their fields of expertise (conveying either pleasure or irritation depending on how well their skills match his requirements), the American leads the characters to one of the larger ground-level caves that he has set aside for their living quarters. He and his small team of students from Yenching University are based in the cave next door.

As with the other caves at Ch'ien-fotung, the walls are painted with Buddhist imagery—strange and unusual to those without a knowledge of the religion or art history of the region and similar rock temples. The murals are damaged, although it looks as if someone has attempted to repair them; anyone with any halfway decent artistic skills can see how poorly executed the newer patches are. Several of the human figures have ghostly white eyes which, in the grand tradition of creepy paintings everywhere, seem to follow the investigators wherever they go.

Warner gives the investigators time to settle in before inviting them to join him on a tour of the rest of the site. As they walk around and clamber among the various caves, the American points out the most interesting frescoes and their meanings and discusses the expensive pigments, brought from far and wide, to create the holy—and not so holy—images. He is happy to answer any questions the investigators

have about the caves, although it's hard to ignore the tinge of jealousy that creeps into his voice when discussing the British, French, and Russian expeditions to Tun-huang.

Keeper note: Warner is looking for people with decent (30+%) Art/Craft skills, particularly those connected to painting. The same goes for History, especially Chinese and Tibetan; Archaeology; Science (Chemistry) for handling the chemicals he has with him; and Language (Russian), in order to translate the graffiti scattered all across the site. He is also pleased to see any strong characters (STR 70+), as he is expecting the removal work to involve a lot of lifting and carrying, and anyone with good social skills (50+%) who might be able to efficiently handle any further negotiations with Wang Yuanlu.

LOST IN THE TRANSLATION

Once out of earshot of Mi Hu's men and his own students, Warner begins to explain the reason for his telegram: the unconfirmed rumors of a hidden cave, discovered by a prisoner who intended to return for the wealth it contained—riches that would set him up for life. The soldier has yet to make his reappearance, so Warner is keen to find the cache for himself; after all, if it's anything like the Library Cave, its discovery could advance Western understanding of medieval Buddhism in the region by leaps and bounds.

A successful **Psychology** roll identifies that Warner regularly checks over his shoulder while speaking to the investigators, as if looking for something. If questioned on the matter, he reveals that, ever since he left Sian, he just can't shake the feeling that someone has been watching him. He knows it's nonsense but he can't help himself. He's sure a good night's sleep would take care of the matter, but he's been having odd dreams ever since he started looking for the Russian cave, no doubt a result of the ever-present, ever-staring humans, demons, and creatures that adorn the walls here.

If asked about his dreams, Warner seems reluctant to discuss the matter, but a Hard **Persuade** or **Charm** roll convinces him to describe them. Each time, he is standing in a cave, the walls covered with indecipherable words in a thick, red paint. If he tries to touch them, the ground shakes and a large, black bird flies up into his face. It attempts to peck his eyes out before exploding into a shower of pink and white flowers. That's usually the point at which he wakes up.

The dreams aren't Warner's only problem, though; he isn't sure where the soldier's cave is actually located. He thinks he may have narrowed it down based on traces of restoration work in one of the upper-tier shrines used to incarcerate some of the officers last year, but given Wang Yuanlu's penchant for tidying things up, he can't be sure. He's pretty certain that the

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Russian graffiti also holds clues, based on what he's been told, but he can't make head nor tail of most of it.

On top of that, he's had to be particularly careful in his search, as he doesn't want to draw too much attention to his activities outside of saving the frescoes. Wang Yuanlu has grown increasingly suspicious of Warner over the last month, and the local inhabitants have been making increasingly frequent trips out to see the priest and keep an eye on matters. Warner and the investigators need to find the cave, and find it quickly, before the local *amban* puts a stop to the work, or—worse—the regional warlord's men get wind of it.

Warner suggests they spend whatever is left of the day looking over the graffiti, assuming that at least one of the investigators can read Russian. If the investigators hired **Demyan Babanin** (Dramatis Personae (Part One), page 56) as a translator then his skills can be put to use. As long as the character has 50% or more in Language (Russian), they succeed in translating the various scrawls eventually; a successful skill roll merely indicates that they have made very short work of the task, whereas a failure means several days will be required to thoroughly decipher all of them. If the investigators have less than 50% in Language (Russian), a successful skill roll is required to glean the relevant information from what's been left behind.

If no one can understand the graffiti, they nevertheless get a strange feeling every time they look at one particular phrase painted over and over again in the cave Warner has identified as the hidden treasure's possible location. It is one they have seen several times in their journey along the Kansu Corridor, which translates to: "*They are come. The end is upon us. For they are come.*" As before, it appears to be written in blood (**The Writing on the Wall**, page 71).

Keeper note: if none of the investigators speak Russian and they failed to hire Babanin back in Sian (**Delicate Negotiations**, page 65), then there are several different methods you could use to get around the problem. The first is for Babanin to turn up at the caves not long after the investigators arrive. Perhaps Mi Han sent the Russian interpreter after the investigators, or perhaps Babanin heard about the interment of White Army soldiers in the caves and has come to search for details of missing friends and family. Alternatively, a fleeing Russian refugee could arrive seeking shelter and be willing to help out in return for food and somewhere safe to stay. Secondly, if you've used the Russian graffiti vision (**Visions in the Dark: Sian and the Kansu Corridor**, page 58), the investigator could dream the necessary translation that night, the Cyrillic characters slowly morphing into more familiar ones before their slumbering eyes—after all, the Tokabhaya want the cave to be found, so happily manipulate the investigators' dreams

to ensure its discovery (**Within the Secret Cave**, page 78). Thirdly, if all else fails, a successful **Spot Hidden** roll in the graffiti cave uncovers the restoration work and notices that it isn't the same as that carried out elsewhere by Wang Yuanlu—perhaps it's worth excavating here anyway, just on the off chance?

Despite Warner's insistence, none of the graffiti appears to contain directions to the lost cave. Apart from the one eerie recurring phrase, the Russian writings consist of soldiers' names and regiments, crude jokes, and disparaging comments about people whose names mean nothing to the investigators. However, if they carefully search the room suspected to be the soldier's cave by Warner, a successful **Spot Hidden** roll identifies three separate sentences scratched into the wall beneath the bloody writing they are so well acquainted with. When put together, they form a set of directions (**Handout: Gates 2** provides the English translation).

Checking the frescoes in the graffiti cave does indeed identify a painting of a red Buddha standing on a broken human corpse, surrounded by dakinis (female tantric spirits; **Handout: Feast 3**). A few feet away, on the other side of an empty and unpainted alcove, is a mural of a caravan, led by a fat man dressed in fine silks, being accosted by fearsome bandits. At the rear of the procession is a truculent camel, its head turned toward home. Unless the investigators do so first, Warner lets out a cry of delight—the restoration work he found lies in the recess between the two paintings. He was right: the way into the cave is here.

FINDERS KEEPERS

Anxious to keep the cave's discovery secret for as long as possible, Warner asks the investigators to say nothing, and to return after nightfall with the tools they will need to break through the wall. This destruction requires a Hard **STR** roll, and only one person can attempt it at a time due to the confines of the alcove surrounding the hidden door. Success indicates that the investigator has managed to chip away the rough mud plaster on the wall to reveal a stone door that, with the careful application of brute force, slowly grinds inwards. If failed, the work is slow and arduous, taking around ten hours to make a breakthrough. If the roll is fumbled, or if pushed and failed, the work alerts the recently returned Wang Yuanlu (see **Enter Wang Yuanlu**, page 79) to the investigators' illicit activities—the temple guardian approaches and, unless headed off by one or more of the other investigators, he attempts to see what they are doing inside the cave. If the investigators are prudent and have someone keep watch, they spot him approaching, otherwise a successful Hard **Listen** roll notes his approach. If able to

Handout: Gates 2


BETWEEN THE RED GOD IN HIS DARK HEAVEN
AND THE FAT MERCHANT'S CAMEL
THE DOOR TO PARADISE

distract Wang Yuanlu (possibly with a **Charm**, **Fast Talk**, or **Persuade** roll), he is placated and shuffles off; otherwise, Warner steps in, saying that they are just examining the cave; ideally, some additional help to draw the guardian away is enough to keep him from delaying the work.

Keeper note: Wang Yuanlu causes a potential issue only if the investigators fumble or push the roll badly; however, even if he (without realizing it) does stop the work, Warner suggests they meet back in a couple of hours' time to continue, once the temple guardian has fallen asleep.

Within the Secret Cave

The air that seeps from the previously sealed room is unusually fresh. In the torchlight, the investigators can see piles of books and banners, oddly-shaped implements, and numerous statues. All cast strange, distorted shadows up the walls, which are surprisingly bare. Although they are obviously not the first people to have entered the room in recent times—several items have clearly been moved—a successful **Appraise**, **History**, or appropriate **Art/Craft** roll suggests that the manuscripts inside may well be as old or older than the ones identified by Aurel Stein, implying that the cave was originally closed up sometime before the 11th century CE (when the Library Cave is suspected to have been sealed)—Warner can relay this if there are no historical experts among the investigators.

It soon becomes obvious that carrying out a proper assessment of the cave's contents is impossible without better lighting, and Warner reluctantly yields to any suggestions to

call it quits for the night. If it has taken all night to gain entry to the secret room, Warner poo-poops any mention of resting and insists on remaining in the cave until daybreak, in hopes that visibility improves with the sunrise. It is up to the investigators if they stay with him or not.

Should they repair to their lodgings, those with the highest Cthulhu Mythos, Occult, or appropriate Lore skill suffer from yet more strange dreams while they sleep. If two or more investigators have equal ratings in any of the skills mentioned, they all individually experience the following:

The investigator is standing in the outer (graffiti) cave, but the walls are now smeared with only the blood-red warning in their own language—“*They are come. The end is upon us. For they are come*”—all of the other paintings have vanished. The letters drip and shift position if the character tries to look at them, making them feel nauseous. Suddenly, they feel the earth shake, and a huge black bird flies up into their face, striking at their eyes with its beak and claws, triggering a **Sanity** roll (0/1 loss).

Fighting the bird off (no roll required) causes it to explode, as previously described by Warner, in a deluge of pink and white petals, which a successful **Natural World** or **Science (Biology or Botany)** roll identifies as peach blossoms. The flowers then form briefly into the shape of a seated figure before dissolving into a pool of blood that seeps away through a crack in the floor. Apart from the beginning and end, the dream is exactly as the one Warner described.

Once the dream has ended, the rest of the night passes uneventfully—unless, of course, the investigator(s) involved wish to wake their companions or go and find Warner.


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EXTENDED VISION

If the Keeper used the Magic Lantern's malfunction in Chapter 1 during **Visions in the Dark** (page 40) to foreshadow some of the upcoming locations and people found in *The Children of Fear*, then another option is to begin the above dream sequence with an extended version of the vision the investigator experienced in Peking before segueing into them standing in the graffiti cave. Alternatively, some of the visions they've seen on their way to Tun-huang (**Visions in the Dark: Sian and the Kansu Corridor**, page 58) could also be repurposed as an introduction.

If none of the investigators have Cthulhu Mythos, Occult, or suitable Lore skills, or if the Keeper prefers, then everybody in the party may receive the dream, prefaced or not by their earlier visions as appropriate.



If the investigators decide to stay with Warner in the cave, forgoing sleep that night, they instead experience the vision the next time they slumber. The earth tremor (which is real and felt by everyone on site, regardless of whether or not they have the dream) and Wang Yuanlu's arrival should be postponed until at least one investigator has experienced the bizarre dream.

Enter Wang Yuanlu

As they leave their cave the next morning or when they awake (if they retired to bed), the investigators are greeted by an anxious elderly Chinese gentleman dressed in traditional, long-sleeved robes. He introduces himself as the Abbot of Ch'ien-fotung, Wang Yuanlu. He has been away visiting friends and collecting donations in the nearby oasis towns and is most concerned about the investigators' well-being, particularly as there was an earth tremor in the region last night, which sometimes causes cave-ins and rock falls. (That part of the dream, at least, appears to have been real.)

Warner, when he appears, looks to have had a bad night, too, and can barely disguise his displeasure at seeing Wang Yuanlu, who instantly starts grilling the American about the new arrivals. Those who speaks Chinese to a reasonable standard (30% or more) can join the conversation, and the investigators' diplomacy would certainly not go amiss, as it is clear that the caves' caretaker is very worried by the presence of his new guests and is demanding to know why they are here.

As long as they can mollify the tiny old man, either by convincing him that they do not intend to remove anything

from the caves without his permission or by making a generous donation to his restoration fund, he leaves them to their business. If not, he follows them about (much to Warner's annoyance), wringing his hands and muttering about how he isn't sure they should be poking around in matters that don't concern them.

If any of the investigators mention their dream to Warner, he reluctantly admits that he, too, suffered from it again last night, although he didn't see the man formed from flowers; he woke, as always, just before the petals had time to coalesce.

THE LIGHT OF DAY

Sunlight filters into the secret room from somewhere up above, as well as through the alcove back into the graffiti cave, permitting the investigators to get a clearer view of their discovery, which thankfully doesn't appear to have been adversely affected by the previous night's earth tremor. The outline of a window, crudely bricked up, can be seen in the cave's outer wall—20 minutes or so of steady work would see it cleared, flooding the room with light.

Although there are many documents and artifacts within, Warner is obviously disappointed by the room's contents. He had hoped, he explains, that it would be stacked floor to ceiling like the Library Cave, which, for all its tiny size (a mere 500 cubic feet, or 14 cubic meters), boasted a huge number of items, many of them crushed flat by the weight of objects piled on top of them. If Wang Yuanlu is with them, someone may need to distract and/or calm the old priest, who is visibly shaken both by their unsanctioned nighttime activities and by the discovery of yet another sealed room.

Searching the chamber confirms the investigators' suspicions from the night before. Someone has rifled through the piles of documents and artifacts, carefully assembling some of the most obviously valuable, unusual, and easily transportable pieces close to the hidden doorway. Two such items are:

Black Stone

A black stone, approximately six inches in diameter and a quarter of an inch thick (15 cm by 0.6 cm), framed by a filigree of gold wire from which the faded and delicate remains of a cloud-shaped pad of fabric and five rainbow-colored silk ribbons dangle. One side of the stone is highly polished, while the other is inscribed with strange and heavily worn swirling motifs. These could represent intertwined, stylized animals, or just abstract patterns—it's hard to tell. A successful **Science (Geology)** roll identifies the stone as obsidian. Those with a specialized knowledge of Chinese or Tibetan history, or Archaeology or Occult at 20% or more, can identify the object as a *melong*, or shamanic mirror.

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STAFF AND NONSENSE

Developed from one of the symbols carried by the original Kapalikas (**Variety is...**, page 15), the *khatvanga* usually consists of an eight-sided staff made from white sandalwood with various attached accoutrements. A half-*dorje* (a thunderbolt symbol, also known as a *vajra*) acts as the staff's ferrule, while the other end is topped with several auspicious objects, each with their own symbolic meanings: a crossed *dorje*, a golden vase, the carvings of a freshly severed head (painted red), a decaying head (painted green), and a skull (painted white), and, finally, a flaming trident or, occasionally, another *dorje*. A *damaru* (a ritual drum, see **Chapter 4: Coming Clean**, page 161) and a *drilbu* (a ritual bell, also known as a *ghanta*; see **Chapter 7: The Perfect Union**, page 283) hang from silk cords tied around the top of the vase alongside a long silk ribbon. Symbolically, the staff represents Mount Meru, the absolute center of all the universes, real and imagined, with the crowning items embodying the five sacred elements of earth, water, fire, air, and space, respectively (among other things).



FACE TO FACE

It requires a Hard **STR** roll—with a bonus die if several investigators work together—to move the bronze statue, followed by a Regular **STR** roll to smash through the decaying brickwork wall behind (already damaged by the previous night's earth tremor).

As they break through the wall, a flurry of wings fills the space as a large raven launches itself at one of the investigators, preferably one who had the strange dream during the night; as before, this triggers a **Sanity** roll (0/1 loss) in anyone who had the dream. The investigator has the opportunity to **Dodge** the bird but, unlike in their dream, it makes no attempt to attack them; it is only interested in escaping from the secret cave. If they don't manage to get out of the poor thing's way, they briefly receive a face full of feathers and possibly a few minor scratches, but nothing more.

As with the previous hidden room, there are no windows here, yet faint light filters into this new cave from somewhere up above and, presumably, there must be a hole large enough nearby for the raven to have entered. A small spring bubbles from the wall in the far corner. Unlike the previous chamber, this room is almost empty—what immediately catches the

investigators' gaze is an odd-looking statue of a seated man, in front of which lies a fresh peach. (Any botanists will be somewhat surprised, as it is rather late in the season for peach trees to be fruiting in the wild.)

To one side of the statue is a considerable pile of neatly stacked peach pits—several hundred, at the very least. Resting against the wall beside the door are what appear to be a mixing palette, pots of mineral ores, a grinding stone for producing raw pigments, and a variety of brushes and other pieces of artist's paraphernalia.

Cave Walls

When the investigators examine the cave's walls, ask for a **Sanity** roll (0/1 loss), for there, staring back at them, are their own portraits, painted in what any art historian (including Warner) can identify as a style dating from around the 8th or 9th century CE, right down to the period robes the figures are wearing.

The wall in which the door is set contains not only life-sized portraits of the investigators but also those of several unfamiliar faces (these additional “unfamiliar” faces are for potential replacement characters, who would be recognized further down the line, as necessary). Numerous scenes show the investigators and others engaged in a variety of different activities across the other three walls. In one they travel across a vast desert, pursued by a black whirlwind; in another, they struggle through a snowy mountain pass. One of the frescoes even seems to show the examination hall at Peking University, with an uncanny depiction of Sofian Bazaz-Wain, seen painting pictures onto a wall in front of an audience. Warner is flabbergasted and demands to know what he's looking at.

Keeper note: the walls of the secret room contain dramatic reconstructions of episodes from the investigators' upcoming (and preceding) voyage across China, Central Asia, India, and Tibet. The Keeper is encouraged to use the information from the following chapters to foreshadow the events therein if the investigators are keen to pore over every painting in detail. A few suggestions include images of them dancing and playing odd-looking musical instruments, carrying bowls brimming with blood and organs, and fighting unearthly demons that look suspiciously like yeti (**Chapter 6: The Migyu, Pemakö's True White Apes**, page 232). Alternatively, the images could be from the visions the investigators saw in Peking. For an additional twist, the investigators depicted in those situations may not be the ones who experienced them in the visions. And, if some of the events happen differently, or don't happen at all, it really isn't a problem—Mythos-induced visions of the future are hardly a reliable source of information, now, are they?

The Seated Statue

When the investigators choose to examine the statue, they find it to be incredibly lifelike, far more so than the bronze Gandharan Buddha they moved aside to gain access to this second chamber. It appears to have a firmly attached headpiece of some sort, made from long, braided ropes of black hair (probably human), coiled and carefully arranged atop its head. It is also draped with actual textiles, rather than them being part of the carving. A *mala* (rosary), made from 108 pieces of bone, hangs around the statue's neck alongside three *gau* (ritual amulet boxes containing prayers or images of the Buddha or important *tulkus*). A pair of gold rings adorn the statue's ring fingers, and its ears have been cleverly fitted with gold hoops embedded with turquoise.

Those with an understanding of Buddhism can tell that the figure is dressed in the garb of an ascetic monk; as such, it's not surprising that the statue lacks the shaven head sported by most Buddhist priests. Anthropologists, those with medical training, and anyone who has lived in Central Asia for a length of time can identify the statue's features as largely Tibetan in origin. The detail of the carving is exquisite, although the exact material it is made from is hard to determine—it might be very old wood, polished until silky smooth to the touch.

If, for whatever reason, one of the investigators suggests checking for a pulse (jokingly or otherwise), a successful **Extreme First Aid, Medicine, or Science (Biology)** roll finds one—very faint, but definitely there. If they attempt to revive the figure (smelling salts, dabbing water on its lips, and so on), the eyelids flutter open to reveal pale blue eyes; the lips part, and a pink tongue slowly emerges in the traditional Tibetan greeting. Those with a phobia involving statues or corpses need to make a **Sanity** roll (0/1 loss).

Should the characters not identify a pulse or fail to pay anything more than cursory attention to the statue, perhaps preferring to study the paintings of themselves instead, then a soft voice eventually greets them in Tibetan (“*Tashi delek!*”) before switching over to English or whatever the main language the investigators are using is.

Attempts to locate the source of the voice point to the statue and, as they watch, the figure reaches out, picks up the peach (if it's still there), and calmly eats it while smiling warmly at the people looking on. He then adds the stone to the pile by his side before slowly unfolding himself and rising to his feet.

“Welcome. My name is Tenzin Kalsang. I have been waiting for you for quite some time.” (If the peach has been eaten, or removed, he instead greets the investigators with: “Welcome. My name is Tenzin Kalsang. I don't suppose you've seen my supper anywhere, have you?”)

As previously mentioned, the investigators may need to make a **Sanity** roll (0/1 loss) at the sight of a statue apparently coming to life before their very eyes.

PERSIAN APPLES

Despite the Romans' erroneous belief that they came from Persia (hence their name for them: Persian apples), the peach is native to the Tarim Basin and was first cultivated there. Alexander the Great introduced them to Greece after he conquered the Persian Empire, although the fruits appear in Chinese writing as early as the 10th century BCE.

AN UNUSUAL INVITATION

Once the investigators have had a chance to recover from their surprise, the somewhat youthful *lama* is more than happy to answer their questions. Tenzin Kalsang explains that, when he was a very young monk, he realized it would fall to him to shepherd those who would preserve the world from chaos and destruction toward their destiny, and so he swore to become a *bodhisattva*, one devoted to guiding others to enlightenment rather than to attaining it for themselves.

According to the monk, he received visions of his future vocation while living in meditative seclusion in the caves above his former monastery at Buchu Sergyi. In response to his calling, he made the long pilgrimage to Ch'ien-foting and, after explaining his situation to the High Abbot, was walled up in the long-forgotten room with only his painting supplies. Before he began his extended contemplation of the path chosen for him, he drew images from his visions of those who would one day come and find him. He has continued to add to the scenes over the years during his brief periods of wakefulness, in order to record the truths revealed by his ongoing glimpses of what will come to pass.

He says his journey to the caves took place during Trisug Detsen's reign over the Tibetan Empire (**Chapter 5: The Land of Snows**, page 187). A successful **History** roll recalls that Detsen, more commonly referred to as Ralpachen, ruled Tibet during 815–838 CE, and was assassinated on the orders of his anti-Buddhist brother, Langdharma (no roll is required for historians specializing in Central Asian history). As fantastical as this story sounds, a successful **Psychology** roll reveals that the *lama* is telling the truth—or, at least, believes himself to be.

If questioned about how he has survived for all these years, Tenzin Kalsang points to the pile of peach pits. At regular intervals and over many lifetimes, his friend, the raven, has brought him the precious fruit to eat. Buddhist scholars and

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Handout: Gates 3

- Shambhala is a peaceful place, a Pure Land, a lost paradise hidden far from the world behind a ring of snowy mountains.
- Its Lords are ancient and wise. They oversee the golden city at the heart of the kingdom, ruling as regents until the Kulika King rises to defend the world from evil.
- The King of Fear is the ancient enemy of the Kulika King and the Lords of Shambhala. He seeks to condemn humanity to slavery and barbarity while his Agarthan armies lay waste to the world.
- The world has been destroyed and reborn before, and it will be so again; it is the natural cycle of all things until they reach true enlightenment. But if the King of Fear—the enemy of Shambhala and humanity—gains control, the new world will be one of nothing but pain and misery.
- The world's descent into violence, bloodshed, and chaos foretells the end of the Kali Yuga.
- Although the Lords of Shambhala cannot directly interfere in world affairs until the way to the Land of Living Fire is opened at the appointed time, they can communicate with their chosen advocates on Earth through dreams and visions.
- The same is true for the King of Fear, although something is amiss in this cycle; the Lords of Shambhala would never have been so bold as to set a humble lama in place to wait for the investigators if this was not the case.
- The problem is that the Gates to Agartha are opening before they should, meaning that the King of Fear will emerge into the world before the Kulika King is ready to face him, dooming mankind to a bleak Age of Catastrophe, rather than the golden Krita Yuga the Lords promise.
- While Shambhala would be able to take in some refugees from the ensuing annihilation, existing as it does both within and beyond the physical realities of the world, the majority of the human race would be eradicated.
- Those unlucky enough to survive beyond Shambhala's walls would be forced to serve the King of Fear until the next Kali Yuga gave the Kulika King a chance to reform the world in Shambhala's image.

adherents know that the peach is one of the three sacred fruits, as well as one of the six symbols of longevity. Those with a knowledge of Chinese history and legend are aware of the Monkey King's theft of the peaches of immortality from the Jade Emperor's Heavenly Garden. Although, given the pile of stones, it would appear that these peaches did not confer the alleged 3,000 years of life that the Jade Emperor's did, even if they do appear to have arrested the aging process to a very large degree.

If asked who sent the visions, or who instructs the raven to deliver the peaches, Tenzin Kalsang's demeanor changes. His smile disappears, and his face grows serious, "*There is a baeyul—a hidden land, you would say—where the great Lords of Shambhala watch for the end of the Kali Yuga, when the universe shall be born anew. It is they who send both friend raven and the visions. It is they who appointed me as guardian and guide for the path to your destiny: to ensure that the King of Fear does not leave Agartha, and that the world is not destroyed before its time.*"

Tenzin Kalsang responds patiently and politely to any other queries the investigators have, answering them as truthfully as he can in terms he thinks they will understand but without any references to the modern world; he has, after all, been locked away from civilization for over a thousand years. The *lama* can enlighten the investigators with his own version of the Buddhist history of Shambhala (**Handout: Gates 3**).

Any connections the investigators make between recent world conflicts, or the situation in China, and Tenzin Kalsang's remark about the world descending into violence and terror elicit a sad but knowing nod from the *lama*. Once he has imparted the information noted above, he looks each of the investigators squarely in the face, holding their gaze until they choose to look away. He then says, "*So, I must ask you: will you join me on my journey to the Gates of Agartha, and there, seal them until the stars are right and the cycles of time march in step once more?*"

Keeper note: as mentioned in **Opening the Way** (page 15), Tenzin Kalsang has been thoroughly duped by the Tokabhaya. It was not the Lords of Shambhala who sent the visions or the life-extending peaches, but the Triumvirate, carefully enacting their plan to cheat the ordained order of the conflict with Shambhala and seize control of Earth before their enemies can react. The *lama* has no idea that this is the case and is acting in good faith, in accordance with his belief that the Lords of Shambhala have chosen him and the investigators to ensure the end of the Kali Yuga plays out as it always has. Proceed to **Step by Step**, if the investigator agree to the *lama's* request, or to **That's a Pass**, page 87, if they refuse.

Warner and Wang Yuanlu

Langdon Warner, while an expert in Buddhist art, is mystified by Tenzin Kalsang's story, and repeatedly shakes his head while muttering things along the lines of, "*Well, I never heard the like!*" (Sentiments which may well be shared by the investigators.) He listens to the lama for a short while before wandering off to get started on rescuing the murals he's selected—he wants nothing to do with this craziness, but does not resort to shunning the investigators—he remains on friendly terms with them but makes it clear he doesn't want to talk any further about this strange man or his visions.

The investigators may wish to shield the elderly Wang Yuanlu from the entire truth if he is not present at the opening of the secret cave, preferring to describe Tenzin Kalsang simply as a pilgrim from Tibet (which is, of course, correct) without revealing his full identity. The *lama* is content to defer to the investigators' judgement in such matters. If the investigators insist on telling Wang Yuanlu who the *lama* actually is, the caves' guardian reacts with shock and surprise. He then wanders off to his cell to properly contemplate this revelation, leaving the investigators to their own devices, at least for the time being.

STEP BY STEP

If the investigators choose to take up the strange priest's challenge, Tenzin Kalsang explains what must be done next.

- They must journey to the sacred sites he has seen in his visions to acquire the necessary items to perform a ritual that will close the Gates of Agartha. Without these items, their quest is doomed to failure.
- One of the required items is a set of seven ritual bowls, left by Padmasambhava—a successful **History** roll recalls some pertinent information (**Handout: Gates 4**)—at the site of his miraculous birth: Lake Danakosha. A successful **Archaeology**, **History**, appropriate **Lore**, or **Occult** roll reveals that Danakosha is a mythical lake, alleged to have existed in the ancient kingdom of Oddiyana, and thought to be located in the North West Frontier Provinces in British India around Chakdara. If asked how they are supposed to find a non-existent lake, Tenzin Kalsang replies, "*With the melong, of course! It permits the mind to see what the eye cannot.*"

Keeper note: if the investigators fail their rolls, Tenzin Kalsang can inform the investigators of Padmasambhava (providing them with **Handout: Gates 4**) and the mythical location of the lake, while Langdon Warner can suggest that they travel to Peshawar to consult the museum staff there for advice on where Lake Danakosha might be, or even point the investigators straight to Chakdara, if the Keeper so wishes.

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Handout: Gates 4

Padmasambhava, known to the Tibetans as Guru Rinpoche (the Precious Master or Teacher), was a prominent historical figure, although little is truly known about him. It is known only that he was an Indian tantric master who helped build Tibet's first Buddhist monastery at Samye, and that he later left Tibet amid court intrigue. To fill in the gaps in this knowledge, there have arisen many legends about Padmasambhava, his powers, and his treasures.

Supposedly born as an 8-year-old child in the center of a rainbow-colored lotus floating on the waters of Lake Danakosha, the miraculous boy's special qualities were first noticed by the childless King Indrabhuti of Oddiyana, who made him his heir. After being banished from the kingdom, Padmasambhava traveled the charnel grounds of India, including Sitavana, gathering tantric knowledge and bending their resident spirits to his will.

After an incident in which the King of Rewalsar tried (and failed) to immolate him for secretly teaching tantric practices to his daughter, Mandarava, Padmasambhava flew to Tibet. There, he subdued the country's rebellious demons and gods in a battle at the sacred hill Hepo Ri, converting them to Buddhism and thereby paving the way for the Samye monastery to be built.

The Guru, by this time already over 1,000 years old, then traveled across Tibet and the Himalayas with another of his consorts, Yeshe Tsogyal, who the Tibetans view as the mother of their faith and a reincarnation of Sakyamuni Buddha's own mother. Yeshe Tsogyal hid various of Padmasambhava's teachings and precious objects (terma) around the country, ready for future treasure revealers (tertens) to uncover when they were needed. The Bardo Thodol (Tibetan Book of the Dead) is one such terma.

An emanation of Amitabha, the Buddha of Infinite Light, Guru Rinpoche is regarded by the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism, whose teachings derive from his works, as their patron deity and founder. They hold that he left Tibet not because of distrust within the Tibetan King's court as history would have us believe, but to fight a horde of cannibal demons who threatened to overrun India and Tibet. Now he dwells forever in his Pure Land, Zangdok Pelri, the Copper-colored Mountain, where he will teach the tantras to the demons he conquered until the end of the age arrives.



- Two other items—musical instruments—the investigators must craft themselves. To acquire the necessary components, they must journey to another site associated with the Great Guru: Sitavana. Again, a successful **History**, appropriate **Lore**, or **Occult** roll reveals that Sitavana was, according to Hiuen-Tsiang, one of the eight legendary charnel grounds of India, where Padmasambhava was swallowed by a dakini and thereby initiated into the secrets of the tantra after passing through her body and being born again. Although its exact location is the source of much debate, it may be in the Indian town of Rajgir in Bihar and Orissa. Again, Tenzin Kalsang or Langdon Warner can be used to set the investigators on the correct path, should they fail their rolls, or encourage them to go to a more easily identified location first.
- Once the player characters have these items in hand, they must travel back to Tenzin Kalsang's homeland, Tibet, and find the hidden Valley of the White Ape, located in the jungles of Pemakö, where the Gates of Agartha are opening. There, they must use the manuscript Tenzin Kalsang brought with him from his parent monastery to perform a liberation ritual, which will drive the evil back into Agartha and seal the gates behind it. This document is currently in the antechamber next door, along with the *melong*, his staff, his skull bowl, and his *katari*, all of which they will need to take with them.

A Change of Plan

Returning to the antechamber, Tenzin Kalsang directs the investigators to gather together the items he has already mentioned: the *melong*, his tantric staff, his skull bowl, his *katari*, and the ritual manuscript, which he describes as a scroll printed on black paper and mounted on rainbow silk (the scroll is tied with the braided hair of the venerable ascetic who trained him).

While the staff, *melong*, skull bowl, and knife are easy enough to find, no amount of searching reveals a ritual document matching the priest's description. Tenzin Kalsang also notes that several other, smaller scrolls he brought with him are missing, as are a few small pieces of statuary. It would appear that the Russian soldier who found the secret cave took some souvenirs with him before he left.

Despite the loss of such a vital artifact, the *lama* does not seem particularly distressed or annoyed. Instead, he smiles and nods. *"This explains a vision I saw shortly before I woke but could not understand: a red temple full of printing blocks—a storehouse of my faith's great knowledge. We cannot perform the rite of liberation without the scroll, so we must add another destination to those I have already mentioned. Sadly, as it was founded long after my time, I am not entirely certain where the printing house lies, but I do recognize the landscape. I think it is somewhere in the East of my country—in Kham, my old home—but where precisely, I cannot say, although I am sure that we will find it!"*

Keeper note: the Russian soldier who "discovered" the hidden cave is also not what he seems. In fact, he was a Tokabhaya agent commissioned to leak the existence of the caves at the appropriate time, leading the investigators straight to the priest. He never had any intention of returning to "collect" his treasure, having already stolen the one thing he truly wanted: the ritual manuscript Tenzin Kalsang needs to close the Gates of Agartha; however, that soldier was not responsible for the warning graffiti in the cave or along the Kansu Corridor. Those were left by another Russian internee, whose incarceration at Tun-huang shattered what remained of his sanity and triggered dark dreams of the world's destruction at the hands of the Tokabhaya.

Avoiding Redundancy

If the Keeper is concerned that the presence of Tenzin Kalsang could make the investigators feel redundant during their quest (due to his knowledge and skills), then the *lama* may head off on his own toward the printing house (Derge Parkhang; **Chapter 5: The Land of Benevolence**, page 195) to collect the ritual scroll, and arrange to meet back up with the investigators in the region of Chamdo (Qamdo), Tibet, at a pre-determined time, once they have completed their own tasks (collecting the bowls and creating the instruments). This shouldn't be the Keeper's decision alone; they should also ask their players whether or not they want the *lama* to accompany their characters. In the majority of cases, having the *lama* travel with the investigators is the best approach, as he can act to constantly remind them of their appointed task and, thus, keep them headed in the right direction.

If Tenzin Kalsang does go off to Derge alone, he first impart several gifts to the investigators before they leave Tun-huang: various notes and instructions, all written on yellow parchment, describing how to use the *melong*, how to identify the ritual bowls, and what bones are required for the instruments, as well as how to perform any necessary rituals that he will not be there to tutor them in. He also entrusts them with a satchel of pigments, the *melong*, and his *katari*, although he keeps his *khatvanga*—the investigators will need to find (or make) a ritual staff of their own.

The Keeper is at liberty to add any other small items they feel the *lama* might gift to the investigators before they part company, or to retroactively supply them with any items they feel are missing. Reminders of the steps of this quest can also be found in the relevant chapters in the various **In Absentia** boxes.

Which Way?

If they have agreed to go with Tenzin Kalsang, it is now up to the investigators to decide where they would like to travel first: Gandhara, to search for the ritual bowls (**Chapter 3**); Sitavana, to collect the elements necessary to craft the musical instruments (**Chapter 4**); or Tibet, to acquire a new

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copy of the liberation ritual (**Chapter 5**). Details for reaching each destination are covered in the relevant chapters. Consequently, these three chapters can be approached in any order, as decided by the players.

If the investigators ask the *lama* where he would suggest they go first, he offers them some advice (**Handout: Gates 5**). Unravelling his riddle (a successful **INT** roll, if required) indicates that Tenzin Kalsang believes that either Lake Danakosha—located in India and therefore part of the British Empire (whose power there is waning, as the calls for home rule or full independence gain support year after year)—or Kham, in Eastern Tibet—where he believes the storehouse of Buddhist knowledge containing new thoughts and ideas (new to the investigators, at least) to be located—would make excellent starting points for their quest.

If pressed, or if it becomes clear that the investigators cannot make up their minds, the *lama* admits a preference for the counter-clockwise route of Lake Danakosha, Sitavana, and Kham, partly because it involves less backtracking in the long run, but also because it more closely resembles a complete *kora* (pilgrim path). Anyone with a decent understanding of Buddhism (History, Lore (Buddhism), or Occult at 30% or more) recalls that Buddhists traditionally make their *koras* in a clockwise direction; following this route would take a counter-clockwise path—something the followers of the far older, more shamanic Bön tradition adhere to.

While Mi Hu's men stay at the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas until the investigators decide on a course of action, they will not travel on beyond Tun-huang. Any caravan the investigators wish to hire for their journey (that is, for any path other than the one straight back to Sian; see **That's a Pass**, following) must be negotiated at one of the oasis towns along the way.

Handout: Gates 5

West to where the sun sets on an empire — the latest of many — or east to greet the dawn of new understanding? That is the choice before you — to look back upon the old, or forward towards the new. Neither choice is more valid than the other, for we come to both eventually.

That's a Pass

If the investigators decide they don't want to travel with Tenzin Kalsang, he won't force them to do so. He quietly accepts their decision and sends them on their way back to Peking with his blessing, unless they choose to stay with Warner to assist with the removal of the paintings and artifacts they have discovered.

When they leave Tun-huang, Tenzin Kalsang gathers his things and journeys with them back along the Kansu Corridor toward Sian, intent on making his way to Kham to collect his replacement manuscript. He never mentions the quest to the investigators again, unless they do so first. Any strange encounters the Keeper did not use during the trip to Tun-huang can be used to enliven the return journey.

Mi Hu and his team accompany the investigators back to Sian as per their original agreement. If the investigators wish to rehire the caravan for a trip to Kham, for example, they will have to renegotiate the terms of the contract with Mi Han, who is more than happy to accommodate them for the right price (although coming all the way back to Sian takes the investigators a long way out of their way, regardless of where they plan to travel next).

The weather on the way back to Sian is terrible—pouring with rain, unseasonably cold, and with frequent, violent hailstorms. On top of that, the investigators are plagued by nightmares about what will happen to the world if they do not help the *lama* attempt to close the Gates of Agartha. The first investigator to suffer from the nightmares is the one with the highest POW; they begin to experience these visions from the moment they decline Tenzin Kalsang's invitation. By the time the entire party reaches Sian—if they get that far before changing their minds—the dreams haunt each and every investigator.

CHAPTER 2

The *lama* insists this is not his doing, but is the work of the Lords of Shambhala, as they attempt to show the investigators what the future holds if they do not accept their role in the coming drama. Example dreams and visions of the future follow—use these as inspiration for additional nightmares or repeat the dreams for multiple characters as needed.

- The investigator stands on a hilltop in the pouring rain. All around them, as far as the eye can see, the land is covered with floodwater. Here and there, they can pick out the tops of tall buildings or other raised areas of land in the muddy, swirling deluge. The water is full of debris which, on closer examination, turns out to be the bloated corpses of people and animals, all drowned in the flood.
- The investigator stands on a scorched plain. Deep cracks split the parched earth and an intense heat haze hangs in the air. The boiling temperatures cause every plant, animal, and person the investigator sees to spontaneously burst into flame. And then, searing-hot molten lava starts to well up through the fissures.
- The investigator stands in the middle of a collapsing city, torn apart by violent earthquakes. As the investigator stumbles through the ruins, aftershocks make the ground beneath them buck and shudder. Debris rains down from above, and the air is filled with choking dust. Broken and bloody corpses peak out from the mounds of rubble.

If the investigators really don't want to help the young priest in his mission, he parts company with them at Lanchou. They can go about their lives as they choose, but the dreams become worse and worse, preventing them from thinking straight and carrying out their daily lives. The situation in China continues to deteriorate, and by late 1924, they would be wise to leave the country for their own safety, if they haven't done so already.

Keeper note: the daily waking visions and dreaming nightmares take their toll, wearing the investigators down and forcing them to reexamine their decision to refuse to help the *lama*. Optionally, the Keeper may impose the loss of 1 point of Sanity per day due to the awful visions, and/or impose a penalty die to skills rolls due to the stress and tiredness such visions are bringing. Of course, as soon as the investigators agree to help Tenzin Kalsang, such penalties and losses end.

If visions of the world being destroyed due to their refusal to become involved is too distant a concern for any of the investigators (or their players), and if escalating to fiery visions of their own demise also proves insufficient to move them, then the Keeper should adapt the nightmares accordingly. The visions rapidly shift from the investigators' own torment to the destruction of everything they hold most dear, be that a person, place, or object. This is the perfect opportunity for the Keeper to use the investigators' backstories to provide the necessary leverage to convince them it's worth getting their hands dirty.



A ruined desert watchtower near Tun-buang

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Of course, if only one or two of the investigators ultimately decide not to join their companions and Tenzin Kalsang—possibly because they feel that their investigators don't quite match the flavor of the campaign (now that they know more about it), or because they've thought of a more relevant premise—then their players will need suitable replacement characters. These could be drawn from among the students working with Warner at the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas, or the people they meet in the oasis towns along their route (merchants, academics, spies, and so on). With a bit of customization, even Mi Hu or Demyan Babanin could be pressed into service (if they take a player's fancy).

We Say No

If it becomes clear that these particular investigators are a lost cause and no amount of visions can change their minds, the Tokabhaya select a new band of stooges to fulfil their plan. Thus, the Keeper is invited to recruit a new party of investigators (their faces now seen among those painted on the walls of the secret cave). Alternatively, the Keeper can jump forward in time, around 9–12 months, when the Gates of Agartha are opened. The Lords of Shambhala contact the investigators, wherever they are, bringing them to their kingdom to offer them a final chance to correct the situation (see **Chapter 6: Paradise Found?**, page 257, for what happens during this meeting).

REWARDS

Grant the players an investigator development phase when their time at Tun-huang is complete—either before they set off with Tenzin Kalsang to Lake Danakosha, Sitavana, or Kham, or before they return to Sian and Peking.

- For a walkthrough of the investigator development phase, see **Rewards of Experience: The Investigator Development Phase**, page 94, *Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook*.
- For healing wounds, see **Regular Damage Recovery and Major Wound Recovery**, page 121, *Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook*.
- For regaining Sanity points by spending time with a backstory element, see **Self Help**, page 167, *Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook*.

In addition, apply the following awards to each investigator:

- Returning the missing items stolen by the kueitzumen to their owners: +2 Sanity points.
- Helping Shen Chu: +2 Sanity points.
- Defeating or dealing amicably with the kueitzumen: +1D4 Sanity points.

OPTIONAL: FOOTSORE AND TRAVEL-WEARY

While the Keeper always has the option of red lining travel over large distances, there are some player groups who still might find the thought of their investigators slogging across the vast wastes of Central Asia and Tibet somewhat tedious, especially as time would appear to be of the essence when it comes to closing the Gates of Agartha.

If this is the case, we suggest that Tenzin Kalsang's *khatvanga* is more than it at first appears to be. Although he still makes the investigators compete the first leg of their journey (wherever it may be to) the old-fashioned way—by foot or whatever means of transport they have available to them, in order to test their character and suitability for the task ahead of them—for the following legs of the trip he suggests they make use of the hidden capacities of his tantric staff, which can take them to three locations before its power is spent.

Each skull on the *khatvanga* is imbued with a stored Gate spell. The Gate is activated by drawing a particular set of arcane symbols in the dirt with the staff's ferrule while visualizing or naming the place you wish to go, whereupon a portal to that location opens where the sigils were drawn. Stepping through the Gate costs 3 magic points and 1 Sanity point (meaning that the Gate's maximum range is 10,000 miles/16,000 km). The depleted skull becomes blackened and burned, starting with the top skull on the staff and working downward.

There is a way to re-enchant the staff with more Gate spells, which Tenzin Kalsang will share with the investigators should they ask: the spent skulls must be replaced with new severed heads. In accordance with the style of the *khatvanga*, one of the heads must be fresh, one must be allowed (or encouraged) to rot, and the final skull must be stripped clean of all tissue before the enchantment can be cast. See the *Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook* (pages 256–257) for details of the Gate spell. In this deeper variant, the POW necessary for each Gate spell is taken from everyone who is involved in the ritual and stored in the skull, ready to be activated when the correct symbols are drawn with the staff.

Use of the artifact greatly reduces the time taken to reach each location, and the Keeper should adjust the times and dates mentioned elsewhere in *The Children of Fear* accordingly.

CHARACTERS AND MONSTERS

For *Pulp Cthulhu*, certain NPCs have Luck values and pulp talents; these can be ignored for standard play.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Prof. Thaddeus Johnson, age 63, traveling academic

STR 70 CON 65 SIZ 60 DEX 65 INT 80
 APP 50 POW 55 EDU 90 SAN 55 HP 12
 DB: +1D4 Build: 1 Move: 6 MP: 11 Luck: —

Combat

Brawl 25% (12/5), damage 1D3+1D4
 Colt M1873 revolver 40% (20/8), damage 1D10+2
 Dodge 35% (17/7)

Skills

Appraise 65%, Art/Craft (Chinese Calligraphy) 55%, Credit Rating 45%, History (Chinese Literature) 85%, Library Use 70%, Occult 15%, Persuade 50%, Psychology 40%, Spot Hidden 65%.

Languages: Chinese 81%, English (Own) 90%, Sanskrit 81%.

Sai Na, age 46, graverobber and gewogaw peddler

STR 55 CON 45 SIZ 60 DEX 60 INT 50
 APP 45 POW 90 EDU 45 SAN 90 HP 10
 DB: 0 Build: 0 Move: 6 MP: 18 Luck: —

Combat

Brawl 25% (12/5), damage 1D3
 Dodge 45% (22/9)

Skills

Appraise 50%, Art/Craft (Forgery) 50%, Art/Craft (Sculpture) 40%, Credit Rating 10%, Fast Talk 50%, Listen 40%, Persuade 50%, Psychology 50%, Spot Hidden 50%.

Languages: Chinese (Own) 45%, English 25%.

Shen Chu, age 13–14, urchin and thief

STR 25 CON 20 SIZ 25 DEX 70 INT 75
 APP 40 POW 50 EDU 30 SAN 50 HP 4
 DB: -2 Build: -2 Move: 8 MP: 10 Luck: 25

Combat

Brawl 55% (27/11), damage 1D3–2
 Dodge 65% (32/13)

Pulp Talent:

- **Keen Vision:** gains a bonus die to Spot Hidden rolls.

Skills

Appraise 45%, Climb 40%, Fast Talk 65%, Navigate 50%, Sleight of Hand 50%, Spot Hidden 65%, Stealth 65%.

Languages: Chinese (Own) 31%, English 16%.

Mi Han, age 47, caravan outfitter and merchant

STR 65 CON 60 SIZ 65 DEX 70 INT 75
 APP 50 POW 50 EDU 66 SAN 50 HP 12
 DB: +1D4 Build: 1 Move: 7 MP: 10 Luck: —

Combat

Brawl 45% (22/9), damage 1D3+1D4
 Dodge 25% (12/5)

Skills

Accounting 55%, Animal Handling 35%, Appraise 55%, Charm 55%, Credit Rating 40%, Listen 50%, Persuade 60%, Psychology 60%, Ride 55%, Spot Hidden 65%.

Languages: Chinese (Own) 66%, English 51%.

Mi Hu, age 22, caravan leader

STR 50 CON 75 SIZ 50 DEX 50 INT 65
 APP 70 POW 50 EDU 65 SAN 50 HP 12
 DB: 0 Build: 0 Move: 8 MP: 10 Luck: —

Combat

Brawl 45% (22/9), damage 1D3
 or knife, damage 1D4+2
 Hanyang 88 bolt-action rifle 45% (22/9), damage 1D6+1
 Dodge 45% (22/9)

Skills

Animal Handling 45%, Charm 65%, Navigate 40%, Persuade 40%, Psychology 50%, Ride 45%, Spot Hidden 55%, Survival (Desert) 45%.

Languages: Chinese (Own) 65%, English 31%.

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- TUN-HUANG, CHINA -

Demyan Ilarivich Babanin,
age 28, exiled author and translator

STR 55 CON 70 SIZ 55 DEX 40 INT 85
APP 60 POW 65 EDU 75 SAN 65 HP 12
DB: 0 Build: 0 Move: 8 MP: 13 Luck: —

Combat

Brawl 50% (25/10), damage 1D3
Nagant M1895 revolver 50% (25/10), damage 1D8
Dodge 25% (12/5)

Skills

Art/Craft (Literature) 55%, Charm 65%, History 55%,
Library Use 70%, Occult 25%, Psychology 70%, Survival
(Desert) 40%.

Languages: Chinese 51%, English 46%, French 51%,
Russian (Own) 75%.

Porters, ages 18–40, experienced caravan staff

Mi Han's porters are practically part of the family—in
fact, most of their kin have worked for the Mi family for
generations. Some are Hui Muslims, some are Buddhists,
while others are Mongolian.

STR 85 CON 90 SIZ 70 DEX 50 INT 50
APP 45 POW 55 EDU 55 SAN 55 HP 16
DB: +1D4 Build: 1 Move: 8 MP: 11 Luck: —

Combat

Brawl 55% (27/11), damage 1D3+1D4
or knife, damage 1D4+2+1D4
Hanyang 88 bolt-action rifle 50% (25/10), damage 1D6+1
Dodge 25% (12/5)

Skills

Animal Handling 65%, First Aid 50%, Natural World 30%,
Navigate 65%, Ride 50%, Survival (Desert) 55%, Throw
50%, Track* 60%.

Languages: Own (varies; Chinese, Mongolian, Turki) 55%.

**For the caravan's cook, Yeh Hong, replace Track with Art/Craft
(Cooking).*

- **Description:** burly Chinese and Mongolian porters, hired
by Mi Han for their trustworthiness and their families'
long-standing associations. While usually dressed in simple
Chinese-style clothing and warm hats, they also carry furs
for when the weather gets colder.
- **Traits:** deferential, tough, and not to be messed with.

Langdon Warner,
age 42, adventurer and explorer

STR 70 CON 65 SIZ 70 DEX 70 INT 85
APP 65 POW 70 EDU 85 SAN 70 HP 13
DB: +1D4 Build: 1 Move: 8 MP: 14 Luck: —

Combat

Brawl 50% (25/10), damage 1D3+1D4
.45 automatic pistol 55% (27/11), damage 1D10+2
Dodge 50% (25/10)

Skills

Appraise 60%, Archaeology 65%, Bow 60%, History (Art)
75%, Intimidate 65%, Library Use 60%, Navigate 50%,
Persuade 60%, Science (Chemistry) 20%, Spot Hidden 65%,
Survival (Desert) 40%.

Languages: Chinese 51%, English (Own) 85%, Japanese 51%.

Wang Yuanlu,
age 75, temple guardian and restorer

STR 30 CON 55 SIZ 40 DEX 40 INT 80
APP 45 POW 65 EDU 30 SAN 65 HP 9
DB: -1 Build: -1 Move: 4 MP: 13 Luck: —

Combat

Brawl 25% (12/5), damage 1D3-1
Dodge 20% (10/4)

Skills

Art/Craft (Painting) 11%, Art/Craft (Sculpture) 11%,
History 55%, Listen 50%, Lore (Taoism) 51%, Navigate
40%, Persuade 70%, Psychology 40%, Rifle 25%, Survival
(Desert) 40%.

Languages: Chinese (Own) 51%.

Tenzin Kalsang, true age unknown, saintly lama

STR 65 CON 60 SIZ 50 DEX 60 INT 85
 APP 70 POW 100 EDU 70 SAN 80 HP 11
 DB: 0 Build: 0 Move: 9 MP: 20 Luck: 55

Combat

Fighting: although he carries both a *khatvanga* and a *katari*, Tenzin Kalsang does not engage in acts of violence unless they are part of a ritual—where such activity is purely symbolic and not intended to cause actual harm—or if he considers them to be compassionate in nature (see **Compassionate Violence** box, nearby).

Brawl	25% (12/5), damage 1D3 or <i>katari</i> , damage 1D4+2
Khatvanga	25% (12/5), damage 1D8+1
Dodge	30% (15/6)

Pulp Talents

- **Endurance:** gain a bonus die when making CON rolls (including to determine MOV rate for chases).
- **Resilient:** may spend Luck points to shrug-off Sanity loss, on a one-for-one basis.

Skills

Art/Craft (Instruments) 65%, Art/Craft (Painting) 65%, Charm 65%, First Aid 60%, History 60%, Listen 65%, Lore (Buddhism) 60%, Natural World 45%, Navigate 70%, Occult 60%, Persuade 70%, Psychology 60%, Ride 70%.

Languages: Other (any) 51%, Tibetan (Own) 70%.

Spells

Any non-Mythos spells the Keeper deems appropriate, such as Cloud Memory, *Empty Mind*, Fleetness of Foot*, Flesh Ward, Healing*, *Journey to the Other Side*, *Levitate*, *Restorative Meditation*, Sword Siddhi*, Telepathy*, *Wandering Soul*, Warmth of Mind*, or Words of Power.

*See **Appendix B**.



COMPASSIONATE VIOLENCE

When most people think of the Buddhist faith, violence is not something that immediately springs to mind. But, in certain tantric forms, the concept of compassionate violence is widely accepted. According to this concept, if such an act would prevent someone from committing a terrible crime or sin that would curse them to multiple terrible reincarnations, or if it would reduce the suffering in the world, then a practitioner could murder that person with potentially very little damage to their own karmic wellbeing.

In some cases, the killer would take on the negative karma of the act and then spend the rest of their lives working to pay off the karmic debt they have accrued while protecting others; however, if the act is committed with altruistic motives in mind—i.e. not only to prevent the crime but to save the victim's soul from being condemned to one of the many Buddhist Narakas (hells) as a result—the negative karma can be avoided altogether. In short, the killer's pure and altruistic motives for performing the act outweigh any other ethical considerations. In fact, in some cases, *not* killing someone would be considered a far greater crime!

One story which illustrates this point is that of Mahakaruna, a ship's captain and devout Buddhist. During one voyage, he discovered a thief on board who planned to murder the ship's other passengers and steal their possessions—a total of 500 people! This posed something of a dilemma for the captain: if he told the passengers, they would undoubtedly kill the thief, bringing negative karma on themselves for the act. But, if he did nothing, all of his passengers would die, burdening the thief with a truly horrendous karmic debt. His solution: to nobly take the debt onto himself by killing the thief, thus preserving not only the thief's soul but also saving the lives (and souls) of the other passengers as well. Because of the altruism and compassion of his act, Mahakaruna avoided the karmic retribution such an act of murder would normally incur, and the thief's untarnished soul went on to a good reincarnation.



WITH GREAT POWER

To quote Alexandra David-Néel in her book *Magic and Mystery in Tibet*, based on her travels there in the 1920s, “*The fact is that Orientals, excepting vulgar charlatans, do not make a show of their mystic philosophies or psychic knowledge.*”

This is a key point to bear in mind with regards to Tenzin Kalsang; tantric adepts do not openly use their powers, no matter how great, or attempt to explain them to observers or convince them that what they can do is real, considering both exercises somewhat tacky and unworthy, as well as ultimately futile. Besides, one of the main landmarks in achieving such great power is the realization that it is ultimately powerless in the grand scheme of things.



CREATURES AND MONSTERS

Kueitzumen, faithful servants of the dead

	average	rolls
STR	17	(1D6)×5
CON	25	(1D3+3)×5
SIZ	15	15
DEX	50	(3D6)×5
INT	25	(1D3+3)×5
POW	17	(1D6)×5

Average Hit Points: 3–5**Average Damage Bonus:** –2**Average Build:** –2**Move:** 9**Combat****Attacks per round:** 1 (knife and other weapons)

Small and fragile, the kueitzumen are easily damaged, meaning that they prefer to run rather than fight; however, in their spectral form, complete with arms, they can wield small weapons, such as knives.

Fighting	25% (12/5), damage 1D3–2 (min 1) or small knife, damage 1D4–2
Dodge	55% (27/11)

Armor: none; any damage incurred by a kueitzu returns it immediately to its terracotta form, broken in the location it received the hit that sent it to its final rest. Once broken, a kueitzu cannot animate, even if repaired.

Sanity Loss: 0/1D6 Sanity points to encounter a kueitzu.**Mule**

Use the horse statistics found in the *Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook*, page 338.

Camel

There are two types of camel: the dromedary (one-humped), which is native to Arabia, and the Bactrian (two-humped), which is native to Central Asia. Superbly adapted for the harsh environments in which it lives, the camel is an extremely valuable means of transportation, both for riding and for carrying goods and equipment. Infamous for being stubborn and bad-tempered, these long-lived ships of the desert also provide their owners with wool (used for textiles), milk, and (in more desperate circumstances) meat.

A healthy adult camel can travel between 25–35 miles (40–55 km) a day over a prolonged period of several weeks, and as many as 50 miles (80 km) a day in short bursts. The maximum load a dromedary can comfortably carry is 400 lbs (180 kg), while a Bactrian camel can handle up to 500 lbs (225 kg). Although they can survive without water for a few days, the longer they go without proper care and rest, the slower they become and the less they can carry. Their temper will steadily worsen as well. If prevented from drinking water for more than six days, the camel dies.

Riding a camel at speed requires a specialization of the Ride skill, although anyone with an above base skill for horse riding should be able to control and steer a camel under normal circumstances.

STR 160	CON 65	SIZ 185	DEX 50	INT —
APP —	POW 50	EDU —	SAN —	HP 25
DB: +3D6	Build: 4	Move: 11	MP: —	Luck: —

Combat**Attacks per round:** 1 (kick, bite)

Slightly larger than a horse, the camel is known for its propensity to kick and bite, as well as its alarming habit of spitting at anyone it takes a dislike to.

Fighting	30% (15/6), damage 1D8 + DB
Spit	40% (20/8), penalty to social skill rolls until spit is wiped off
Dodge	25% (12/5)

Armor: 1-point tough hide.

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SAMPLE KUEITZUMEN

Human figurines were not the only types of *yung* found in Han tombs. Miniature dogs, sheep, pigs, camels, horses, cows, and even chickens were all included, meaning that, if the Keeper desires, the investigators may face a range of shrunken tomb guardians, not just the kueitzumen. Simply adjust the relevant statistics for each creature to one-third of the average value stated in their description, although their DEX should remain as is.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
STR	20	5	30	10	15	20
CON	30	30	30	20	25	25
SIZ	15	15	15	15	15	15
DEX	60	50	35	50	45	55
INT	30	20	30	25	20	20
POW	30	15	15	10	30	25
HP	4	4	4	3	4	4
DB	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2
Build	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2
Move	9	9	9	9	9	9
MP	6	3	3	2	6	5





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- TAKLAMAKAN, CHINA & GANDHARA, INDIA -

Having been recruited to a strange quest by an apparently immortal priest, the investigators' eyes turn westward, across the Tarim Basin and the fringes of the vast Taklamakan Desert to the mountain valleys of India and the ancient lost kingdom of Gandhara.

In this chapter the investigators attempt to retrieve the seven ritual bowls they need for the liberation rite to close the Gates of Agartha. According to Tenzin Kalsang, the bowls are buried at a site sacred to the Great Guru Rinpoche (better known as Padmasambhava): Lake Danakosha. Unfortunately for the investigators, things are not as straightforward as they seem, and someone has already beaten them to the punch, leading to a rather more complicated retrieval exercise than they may have hoped for.

TACKLING THE UNKNOWN

As with the other chapters in this central section of the campaign, **Chapter 3** covers several different regions before the investigators reach the main area of interest. Depending on how they decide to take on the journey, there are multiple ways for the investigators to reach some of these locations. Although travelers of the time frequently had an abundance of routes to choose from, in order to make things simpler for the Keeper, only the most obvious or direct paths are described, along with rough travel times based on the modes of transport at the investigators' disposal. Places of interest linked to some optional scenarios are also noted, in case the Keeper decides not to opt for red lining across the vast distances involved—see **Towing the (Red) Line**, following.

This chapter is written on the assumption that this is the investigators' first foray into the unknown alongside Tenzin Kalsang. While the set of ritual bowls may be the first object the investigators aim to gather, it could also be the last. Depending on their choices, some of the locations in this chapter may not be visited by the investigators at all, although the suggested encounters can easily be moved to other regions if required.

Guidance is provided for the methods and routes the investigators may use to reach Lake Danakosha and, subsequently, Peshawar, from the locations visited in **Chapters 4** and **5**.

TOWING THE (RED) LINE

It is important that the players don't feel as if their investigators are simply passive observers in this epic journey across Central Asia. In order to avoid this happening, the Keeper may wish to fade to black as the group leaves the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas with their strange new companion, only fading back in again as they stand beneath the fort on Damkot Hill (**Reflections**, page 124), merely mentioning the slightly bizarre weather and odd dreams they experience along the way (**Signs and Portents**, page 100).

Alternatively, the Keeper may wish to include one of the five optional encounters along the route between Tun-huang and Chakdara: **The Black Storm** (page 101), **The Painted Ruins** (Northern Silk Road; page 102), **The Rat King** (Southern Silk Road; page 105), **The Giantess Reborn** (page 111), or **The Runner** (page 117). While these optional encounters are designed to help the Keeper build the growing sense of menace as the investigators travel toward their goals under the watchful eyes of both Tenzin Kalsang and the Tokabhaya, none are essential to the overall plot—although they may have lasting repercussions, depending on the investigators' actions during these encounters.

Another option at the Keeper's disposal is to include as many of the supplementary encounters described in **Parts One** and **Two** of this chapter as they desire, to ensure that the players aren't just sitting idly by as the action takes place around them. Of course, if Chakdara is not the first location the investigators choose to visit and they are making use of Tenzin Kalsang's Gate-containing *khatvanga* (**Footsore and Travel Wary**, page 89), then the Keeper may choose to use as few, or as many, of the optional encounters as they see fit, depending on where the Gate deposits the *lama* and his companions.




THE TAKLAMAKAN'S WEATHER

Effectively sandwiched between the Himalayas and Siberia, the Taklamakan Desert gets cold enough in winter for snow to fall and for the unwary to find themselves at the mercy of frostbite, with temperatures often dropping below -4 degrees F (-20 degrees C). Despite the dangers, explorers and archaeologists routinely dig the desert over the winter months in search of lost civilizations. Their choice of timing at least spares them the brutal heat of the summer months.

Even once the temperatures start to improve in February, the area is constantly blasted by ferocious winds that can suddenly turn into blinding, pummeling sandstorms. Particularly feared are the *kara-buran*, or black hurricanes (**The Black Storm**, page 101, and **Handout: Song 1**).



Summer begins to arrive in April and lasts for about six months. As the season progresses, temperatures soar, and have been known to far exceed 104 degrees F (40 degrees C) in the heart of the desert. Those Europeans foolhardy or unfortunate enough to find themselves traveling through the desert at this time tend to suffer from prickly heat, and often prefer to travel at night to avoid the worst of the fiery weather.



Handout: Song 1

The most feared sandstorms in the Taklamakan Desert are the "kara-buran"—the "black hurricanes"—where the sky turns black as midnight and the desert's sand and stones are lifted into the air, spun up to dangerous speeds, then hurled back down again to the detriment of any who happen to be in their way. According to Albert von Le Coq, in 1905, one kara-buran overturned an entire caravan of carts carrying heavy silver ingots.

The strange clashing and wailing noises that accompany such storms are alleged to drive people mad. Some believe the sounds are the ghostly cries of those who lost their lives to the tempests in ages past. Others claim they are the cries of flesh-eating monsters—pisachas—who roam the storms looking for fresh meat; these creatures may even be the source of Marco Polo's reference to the region as "ghoul-infested."

PART ONE: THE LAND OF DEATH

The Tarim Basin, home to the vast Taklamakan Desert, was brought into China in 1884 as part of the province of Sinkiang (Xinjiang) along with the ancient lands of Dzungaria. The Dzungar people, ancient Tibetan nomads, were all but wiped out by the Ch'ing, and the Tarim Basin instead became the home of the Uighurs—Turkic Muslims forced out of their own homelands in Mongolia. In the 1920s, those in the West tended to call the Tarim's inhabitants "Turki" after the language they spoke and, hence, the region became known as Chinese Turkistan.

The most feared geographical feature of the Basin is the Taklamakan Desert—referred to by the Swedish explorer Sven Hedin as, "the worst and most dangerous desert in the world." The desert is bordered to the north by the T'ien Shan Mountains; to the south by the Karakorum and Kun Lun Mountains; and to the west by the Pamir Mountains. Only its eastern edges are not hemmed in by mighty peaks; instead, the trackless wastes of the Gobi and Lop Deserts act as an ever-shifting barrier. Passes to Tibet, the North West Frontier Provinces, Afghanistan, and the Soviet Union cross the mountains around the desert, although some are only passable at certain times of the year, when the snows have cleared.

Known by the Chinese some two thousand years ago as Liu Sha (Moving Sands), the Taklamakan Desert's

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massive dunes can reach up to 200 feet (60 m) in height and were described by one traveler as petrified waves. The desert's current name is allegedly taken from a Turkic phrase meaning, "Go in there and you won't come back out!" Whether this is true or not, countless merchants, bandits, pilgrims, refugees, and spies have died in the millennia since the Silk Road first crossed what Marco Polo called the region's "ghoul-infested deserts."

Give the players **What Your Investigator Knows 3: The Tarim Basin** (Appendix C, page 349) and **Handout: Song 1** so their investigators have an idea of what they'll be facing.

NORTH OR SOUTH?

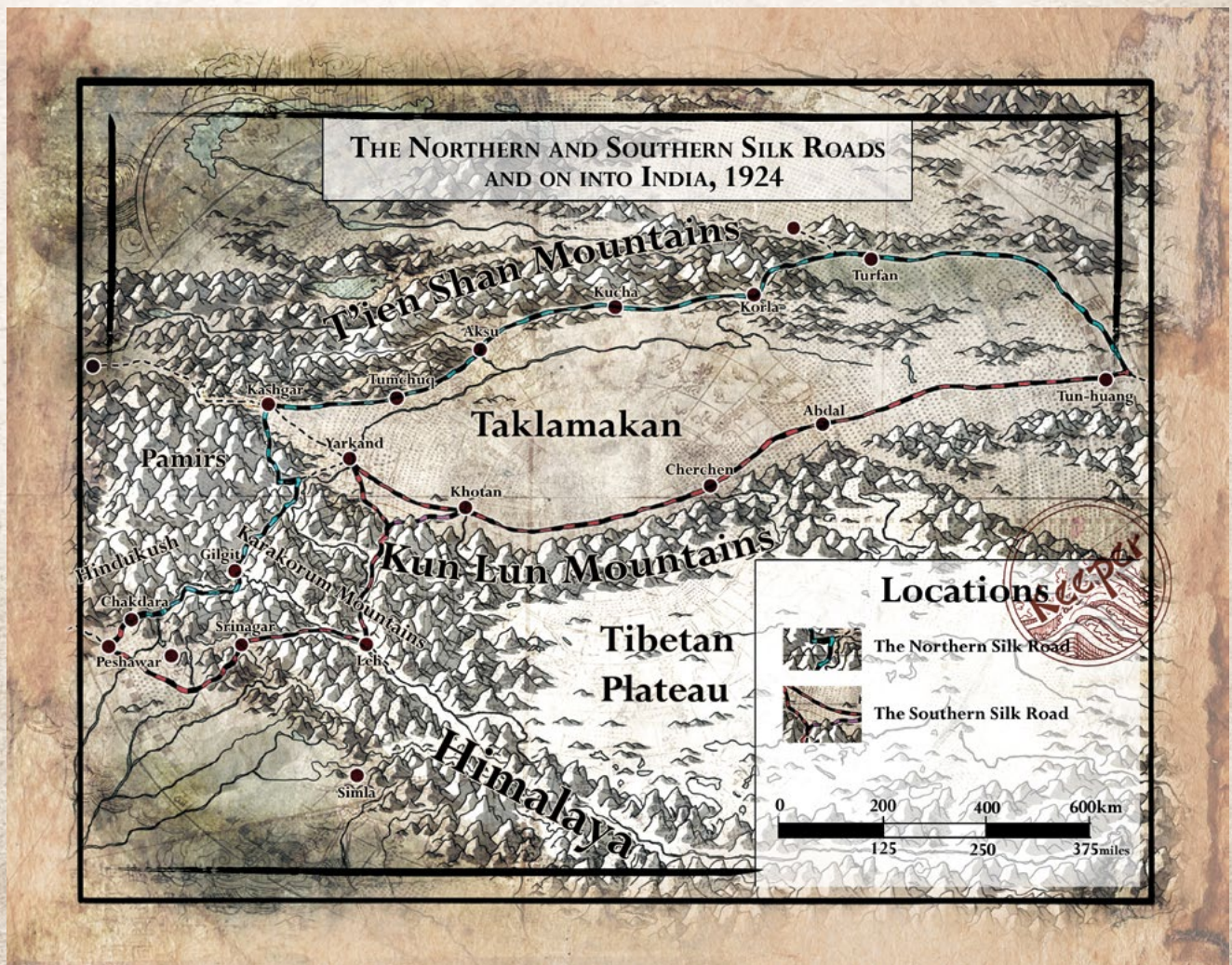
If the investigators travel directly from Tun-huang toward Lake Danakosha, they have two choices: follow the Northern Silk Road via Turfan (Turpan) to Kashgar, before crossing the mountains to Gilgit via the Kilik Pass, and then on down to Chakdara (close to where Lake Danakosha once

lay), or take the Southern Silk Road to Khotan and, possibly, Yarkand (depending on the time of year), before heading over the Karakorum Pass to Leh and Peshawar beyond.

The northern route stretches nearly 1,400 miles (2,250 km) between Tun-huang and Kashgar, with the southern route slightly shorter at around 1,100 miles (1,770 km, Tun-huang to Khotan; 1,300 miles/2,100 km if traveling on to Yarkand). Apart from the variation in distance, there is very little marked difference between the two routes; in one playtest, the investigators picked by flipping a coin!

If you are not red lining the entire journey and want to incorporate **The Rat King** (page 105) and/or **The Runner** (page 117) optional encounters, we suggest following the Southern Silk Road. If, on the other hand, you would like to make use of the **Painted Ruins** (page 102) and/or **The Giantess Reborn** (page 111) optional encounters, we suggest following the Northern Silk Road.

Both routes follow a path marked by wooden posts to prevent travelers from becoming lost at night or during



The Northern and Southern Silk Roads map

storms. Other, more gruesome, trail markers are the bleached bones of previous visitors to the region; similar skeletal guides can be found along the various mountain passes leading out of the Basin. The paths around the edges of the desert link together a series of glacier-fed oases, large and small, and never more than a few days' march apart. Even with the way-markers, it is all too easy to lose one's way and wander off into the heart of the Taklamakan, never to be seen or heard from again.

If the investigators have their own vehicles, they should be able to acquire sufficient fuel to get them between the minor oases, refueling at the major towns along the way. If they do not have their own vehicles, as mentioned in **Chapter 2: Which Way?** (page 86), the investigators will need to negotiate a new caravan escort or acquire *mappas* and/or animals of their

own from Tun-huang or one of the other nearby oasis towns (**Appendix D: Hiring a Caravan**, page 355).

While Mi Hu's men won't travel beyond Tun-huang without Mi Han's express consent—something that is difficult (but not impossible) to gain at this distance—they *will* assist the investigators with organizing a suitable replacement. Tired animals can be exchanged for fresh ones at regular staging posts along the way; it is extremely rare, even though the Silk Road's heyday is long past, for one set of animals to make the entire journey across the desert from start to finish.

Due to the prevailing conditions and constantly shifting sands, the largest caravans have, historically, often only managed to travel around 10 miles (16 km) in a day; however, for the sake of expediency, following the northern route to Kashgar should take the investigators approximately three months if walking, and a little under two months if riding (horse, camel, or cart). The southern route to Khotan takes about two and a half months if walking or one and a half months if riding.

MISSING THE PLOT

If the investigators don't go immediately to Lake Danakosha, but instead decide to travel to Kham and the Derge Parkhang first (**Chapter 5**), they may well end up avoiding the ravages of the Taklamakan altogether. From Derge, there are several ways to reach the mythical lake. The most straightforward of these—at least, geographically speaking—winds across Tibet, picking up the Tea Horse Road at Chamdo (Qamdo) before transferring onto the Tasam Highway on its way to Leh, then continuing on to Chakdara as described in **Part Two** of this chapter. Alternatively, they could follow the Tea Horse Road all the way to India before making their way to Peshawar and beyond. See **Chapter 5** for more details on both routes and the potential difficulties the investigators may face during their travels through Tibet.

If the investigators decided to travel to Rajgir and Sitavana first, they may also miss most of the Taklamakan's delights, depending on the route they take to get there. From Rajgir, they can hop on the train to Peshawar before heading up to Chakdara. Thanks to the marvelous interconnectivity of the Indian railway system (**Chapter 4: Glorious Steam**, page 158), the bulk of the trip won't take long, although the railways sadly don't go all the way to their initial destination. For further details, see **Chapter 4: Getting to Sitavana** (page 158). See the same section for other—far slower—travel alternatives. Heading to Peshawar first may have other ramifications on whether or not they reach Chakdara—see **From Khotan/Yarkand** (page 116) for further details.

Signs and Portents

Even if the investigators have chosen to travel with the Tibetan *lama*, they are still subject to dreams and visions of a most disturbing nature. As mentioned in **Visions in the Dark: Sian and the Kansu Corridor** (page 58), these dreams may contain increasingly rich details of previous visions, or presage encounters along the way to Lake Danakosha and Peshawar, particularly if the Keeper chooses to use any of the optional encounters described in the following sections.

The weather is also more than a little odd as the investigators travel around the desert's fringes. If it is winter (highly likely if they have headed west straight from the events at the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas in Ch'ien-fotung), then the sandstorms start much earlier than February, and there are strange, airless days when the temperature rises well above the seasonal norm. If it is summer, there are frequent hailstorms and snow flurries. These weather disturbances are immediately apparent to anyone familiar with the region; if no such person exists within the party, a successful **Science (Meteorology)** roll identifies the unseasonable weather. Alternatively, the grumbings of the caravan members can make the investigators aware that the weather is acting oddly. This strange weather is, once again, just part of the Tokabhaya's set dressing to convince the investigators that all is not well in the world and drive them to complete the *lama's* mission.

If asked about either the dreams or the strange weather, Tenzin Kalsang replies that they are merely a taste of what is to come if the Gates of Agartha are allowed to fully open, and that such phenomena will only worsen with time.


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WITH CURIOUS EYES I: THE SILK ROAD

The route Tenzin Kalsang took from his monastery to Tunhuang only joined the Silk Road as it reached the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas so, although he knows of the past reputations of the various locales along the way, he has never actually visited them. He is curious to see them now (although many of them have disappeared below the desert sands), and intrigued by how much, and how little, has actually changed since his own time.



THE BLACK STORM (OPTIONAL)

Regardless of the route the investigators choose to take, they are in constant danger from that most feared of the Taklamakan's storms: the *kara-buran* (**Handout: Song 1**). Unless they are red lining the entire journey, the investigators should be unfortunate enough to get caught in at least one while traveling across the Tarim Basin, leading the party into a desperate fight for survival.

A successful **Spot Hidden** or **Listen** roll identifies the telltale signs that a sandstorm is brewing (rapidly strengthening winds, dust clouds on the horizon, and so on). If the investigators are traveling with a caravan, they are advised by the caravan master to hunker down and weather out the storm, taking shelter wherever they can find it among the dunes without straying too far from the path. It takes a successful **POW** roll to resist the urge to flee in panic once the storm hits, or a successful **Ride** roll to control one's mount if caught out unawares while riding.

Taking flight into the desert as a result of a failed **POW** or **Ride** roll causes the victim to become hopelessly lost unless they succeed with a **Navigate** roll. Even then, there are other dangers out in the swirling sand, including the mummified revenants (*Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook*, page 333) of previous *kara-buran* victims as well as those of the former inhabitants of the region, known collectively as the Tarim mummies (see **High and Dry** box, page 102). Those lost to the storms alternatively howl and wail as ghosts (*Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook*, page 333), attempting to lure victims even further from the safety of the path and their companions to where the animated remains of the dead (see **Chapter 4: Skeletons**, page 185) wait to add new bones to the pile.

In certain parts of the Tarim Basin, particularly close to the Lop Nor Desert and its fringes and around Khotan, lost travelers are at risk from the local variety of ghoul, known as a pisacha. Less canine in appearance than their Western cousins and with glowing red eyes, the pisachas still share their brethren's taste for flesh and roam the deserts in search of easy prey, although pickings are far slimmer now than they were at the height of the Silk Road's popularity. Use the profile for pisachas given in the **Creatures and Monsters** section at the end of this chapter as needed.

If the investigators are traveling alone and have no local knowledge to call on, or any relevant experience with such matters, they may wish to try and outrun the storm, instigating a chase. In this case, the *kara-buran* has MOV 12 (representing an average wind speed of 40 mph, although gusts can reach up to 85–100 mph). Failure to outrun the storm calls for a **Navigate** roll to avoid becoming lost, and anyone without shelter suffers 1 point of damage per round until they can find cover, or until the storm blows itself out (1D10 rounds).

Failure to find their way back to the correct path leaves the investigators in a tenuous position, for they will die quickly without a ready supply of water, even in the cooler winter months. Luckily, help of a supernatural kind is at hand.

If the investigators become lost as a result of a *kara-buran*, a successful **Spot Hidden** or **Listen** roll identifies what looks (or sounds) like a caravan somewhere nearby. Although they repeatedly catch fleeting glimpses of it, the investigators cannot catch up with it no matter how fast they travel. The ghostly caravan disappears once the group is safely back on the correct path.

Keeper note: the ghostly caravan is a supernatural echo, replaying the journey of the monk Hiuen-Tsiang, who traveled through China on the Northern Silk Road and returned many years later by the southern route, accompanied by cartloads of religious manuscripts. The apparition is another of the Tokabhaya's devices to keep the investigators on their path.

If the investigators become lost and do not follow the ghostly caravan back to safety, Tenzin Kalsang eventually comes to their aid using his own impressive navigational abilities—but only as a last resort. He is there to serve as a passive observer, not a leader, and prefers that the investigators get themselves out of any messes they find themselves in. The *lama* sees each challenge the investigators face not only as a learning opportunity for them, but also as a test of their worthiness to accompany him to the Valley of the White Ape. In the early days of their association, he steps in if he believes his charges are out of their depth, but only after they have exhausted all opportunities to prove (and *improve*) themselves.

THE NORTHERN ROUTE

The Jade Gate, named for the precious stones brought to China from Khotan, stands approximately 50 miles (80 km) north of Tun-huang; 150 miles (240 km) beyond that is the town of Hami, the first of the large oasis towns on the Northern Silk Road, famed for its succulent melons. The other major oases along the northern route include Turfan (Turfan), Dihua (Urumchi; although it requires a detour to reach), and Kashgar.

One potential diversion the investigators may stumble across in their travels along the Northern Silk Road is the **Painted Ruins** (following). The diversion's location can be changed if the Keeper wishes; it is merely mentioned here due to the historical records linking it to Turfan.

THE PAINTED RUINS (OPTIONAL)

Karakhoja, an ancient walled mud-brick city situated around 18 miles (29 km) to the southeast of Turfan, was once home to a flourishing religious center populated by Manichaeans, Nestorian Christians, and Buddhists. Its ruins have more recently attracted locals scavenging for building materials, fuel, and soil to enrich their fields, and archaeologists seeking the lost libraries and works of art of the once mighty outpost.

An unusual feature of the artwork (left undisturbed by Western treasure hunters in the early 20th century) is that every painting of man or beast has had their eyes and mouths meticulously picked out. The local Turki believe that if this act is not performed, the paintings will animate after sunset, climb down from the walls, and cause mischief to those they encounter before returning to their allotted places at sunrise.

HIGH AND DRY

Thanks to the extreme dryness of the Tarim Basin's deserts, and the presence of preserving salts in its soils, corpses buried here are naturally mummified. Some of the oldest and most interesting of the region's mummies date from as far back as the 2nd millennium BCE. With Indo-European physical features, rather than Asiatic, they may be descended from waves of migrants from India, Siberia, and beyond. Some scholars even posit that one or two may have originated from Bronze Age Scotland!

An ambitious—though rather late to the scene—foreign archaeologist seeking fortune and glory has unearthed a new building among the ruins whose paintings are intact, although the archaeologist is trying to hide this fact from the locals, so as to avoid any interference in recovering the artifacts they've found. The exact gender and nationality of the archaeologist are left for the Keeper to determine as best fits their own campaign, although several suggestions and historical examples are contained in the generic **Archaeologist** profile (**Appendix A**, page 325).

Shortly after the rooms are discovered, and immediately before the investigators arrive, several goats belonging to nearby townfolk are killed under unusual circumstances—the investigators stumble across the corpse of one as they make their way toward Karakhoja, their attention attracted by the circling carrion birds above it. Although there are wolves in the area that might occasionally prey upon goats, a successful **Science (Biology)** or **Natural World** roll identifies that the goat's injuries do not match those a wolf would inflict. For starters, the animal's neck appears to have been broken. On top of that, only the creature's eyes and lips are missing, not the intestines and haunches a hungry wolf

SELF-IMPROVEMENT: THE TARIM BASIN

Once again, with vast distances for the investigators to travel, their time crossing the Taklamakan can be used to improve their skills (unless, of course, they are making use of Tenzin Kalsang's magical *khatvanga*; **Footsore and Travel Wary**, page 89).

Suggested skills that could be improved during this leg of the journey include: any relevant Language (including Tibetan, if they are traveling with Tenzin Kalsang); Lore (Buddhism), if the *lama* is with them; Ride, depending on their means of transport; Navigate; Survival (Desert, Mountain), and Firearms.

At the Keeper's discretion, there may also be an opportunity for the investigators to begin learning a spell or two from Tenzin Kalsang, if they can persuade him of their worthiness and dedication (a successful **Hard** social skill roll, excluding **Intimidate**). See the suggested spells known to the *lama* in his profile for further details (**Chapter 2: Tenzin Kalsang**, page 75).

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would usually consume first. It's possible that carrion birds have pecked out the eyes, depending on how long the corpse has been left out in the open, but the removal of the lips is harder to explain. Even a successful **Occult** roll reveals little; after all, most animal sacrifices involve slitting the throat as a blood offering or spilling the intestines to use in augury.

Upon reaching the town and assuming they alert the locals to what they've found, the investigators hear of other animal deaths and mutilations in the area. Although some of the dead goats had been ravaged by opportunistic scavengers by the time they were found (including wolves, in some cases), the only two consistent injuries are the missing eyes and lips.

It soon becomes clear that the locals suspect the newly-arrived archaeologist of disturbing something ancient in the ruins, which is now killing their animals. The archaeologist, on the other hand, is convinced that the local *imam* is trying to discredit their work in order to drive them away. Both sides mention the legends of the **Walking Portraits** (page 149), although the archaeologist is dismissive of such superstition, incensed that the stories are being used as an excuse to deface valuable works of art. There are several possible explanations for what is happening around Karakhoja. Two main ones are described below. The Keeper should scale the horror and menace provided by the walking portraits to best suit their campaign.

- Local treasure hunters, or the *imam* (determined to protect his flock from the wickedness of the idols and scrolls the archaeologist has uncovered), are playing on the local people's fears to drive the archaeologist and their team away. Profiles for **Treasure Hunters** can be found in **Appendix A** (page 338); use the **Novice Monk** profile (page 332) for the *imam*, if required. The culprits have been killing the goats and mutilating them, and then disposing of the missing organs. If they are not caught, soon either a goatherd or one of the archaeologist's laborers is killed when he stumbles across the perpetrators carrying out their next animal mutilation; his death escalates matters further. If the murderer(s) are unmasked, the killings stop, although the longer the investigation takes, the more danger the archaeologist and investigators are in from the increasingly frightened locals. The death of a human may even trigger a walking portrait to rise. Its actions may be confined to mischief-making around the dig site (moving or taking small items, upending objects in and around nearby farmhouses, and so on), or they may be more malevolent in nature, as described below, meaning that there are now not one, but two sets of killers on the loose!



Surveying the Taklamakan Desert



- The archaeologist has indeed awoken something deep in the ruins. Several of the images in the newly revealed rooms have become restless and incarnated as walking portraits. Unfortunately, the images' acts of mischief are far from the benign deeds attributed to them in the tamer folk stories, and are instead of a much more macabre nature. The animated paintings are targeting living creatures similar to their inanimate brethren, removing the relevant organs from their victims and forcing them into the holes left where the paintings' eyes and mouths have been gouged out. They hope their actions will restore and activate their disfigured kin (animal and human alike), swelling their numbers so that they can punish the locals for the injuries done to them over the centuries. It is up to the Keeper to decide whether or not the walking portraits' efforts are in vain, or whether the half-buried streets of Karakhoja increasingly echo with the sound of shuffling footsteps on moonless nights.

Depending on their actions when dealing with the townsfolk and the walking portraits, the investigators' individual karmic balances may well shift (**Checks and Balances**, page 64). The Keeper should make a note of any relevant changes in preparation for the characters' meeting with the Lords of Shambhala (**Chapter 6**).

As previously mentioned, wolves are an issue in the deserts around Karakhoja; their eerie nocturnal howls are often reported by visitors to the region. Packs do occasionally snatch children or weakened individuals from villages, farms, and caravans during particularly hard winters. Statistics for wolves can be found on page 340 of the *Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook* if required.



TURFAN

Sitting in a huge natural depression some 500 feet (150 m) below sea level and surrounded by the ruins of the distant past, Turfan lies roughly 100 miles (160 km) away from the provincial capital of Dihua, and is famed for its grapes, which are alleged to produce some of the finest raisins in the world once dried. Nearby, close to the beautiful Flaming Mountains—a natural wonder created by the Monkey King, according to *Journey to the West* (**Handout: Gates 1**)—lie the Bezeklik Caves, whose grottoes were plundered for their impressive murals by German archaeologist Albert von Le Coq in 1905.



THE SOUTHERN ROUTE

About 40 miles (65 km) southwest of Tun-huang, the Gate of the Sun marks the route toward the numerous oasis towns of the Southern Silk Road, the most important of which are Khotan (Hotan) and Yarkand.

As with the Northern Silk Road, there are several possible encounters the investigators may have while traveling along the southern route. One option is facing down a *kara-buran* (**The Black Storm**, page 101), which, in the area around Khotan, is more likely to contain Tarim mummies and pisachas than the ghosts of lost travelers. Another is an encounter with an unusual colony of desert-dwelling rodents (**The Rat King**, page 105).



A THORN IN THEIR SIDE

If the Keeper wishes to provide the investigators with a more mundane adversary to keep them on their toes during the early stages of the campaign, or to act as a red herring in terms of who is following them about, then perhaps the archaeologist from **The Painted Ruins** can be of further use.

If, during the course of their interactions with the archaeologist, the investigators let slip about what they're up to, the archaeologist could decide that they want a piece of the action for themselves—after all, the pieces the investigators are after in Gandhara could be worth a fortune to the right collector.

Whether keen to get one over on their new rivals, eager to make a killing in the antiquities market, or simply desiring vengeance (if they blame the investigators for any of their team's deaths), the archaeologist dogs the investigators' steps from here to Peshawar (at the very least), potentially causing all sorts of additional headaches for our protagonists. They may interfere with any plans the investigators have to retrieve the ritual bowls, or even alert the authorities in an attempt to hinder the investigators and further their own agenda. Thus, the archaeologist can be used to present a mundane threat to the investigators.

Of course, if the archaeologist comes to represent too much of a danger to the investigators, there's every chance the Tokabhaya will step in to deal with them—and a sudden absence of trouble could be just as noticeable as the trouble itself. Alternatively, the archaeologist could perhaps fall into the role of a replacement investigator, should they realize the true nature of what the party is up against and the dire threat to the world.



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THE PEOPLE YOU MEET

If the Keeper doesn't like the idea of using the archaeologist from Karakhoja as an ongoing antagonist (**A Thorn in Their Side**, page 104), then it is worth bearing in mind that it isn't just the Tokabhaya who have eyes and ears everywhere—the British are just as bad (well, almost). Any Muslim traders or pilgrims the investigators meet along their way through the Tarim Basin may well be British **Spies** (**Appendix A**, page 336), who can either hinder or help the party as required. They will also, of course, send reports back to their British paymasters in Simla about any interesting strangers they encounter.

On top of this, the British maintain a string of operatives, known as *aksakals* (white-beards), in every main trading oasis along the Silk Roads—usually the senior Indian trader in each location. While their official remit is to look after the interests of the expatriate community in their town and help travelers in need, their true occupation is to secretly provide a network of spies and informants, all feeding information back to British India.

Depending on what the investigators get up to as they travel across the Taklamakan, they may well draw the notice of such spies, meaning that their arrival in India is expected, and that they will be closely watched for the duration of their

visit. Attracting too much attention (perhaps by becoming embroiled in events at Khotan or Karakhoja) may even result in the investigators being hauled in for questioning by an officious British **Government Bureaucrat** (**Appendix A**, page 327) at the first major town they come to across the Indian border.

All of this unwanted attention may later have serious repercussions when it comes to retrieving the ritual bowls from the **Peshawar Museum** (page 127), as well as making acquiring the necessary materials for the musical instruments in Sitavana very tricky indeed. It may also affect their ability to legally enter Tibet (**Chapter 5: Permission to Enter**, page 193).

THE RAT KING (OPTIONAL)

Some 30 miles (48 km) to the west of Khotan, hidden among a series of small hills, lies a strange animal enclave: a sacred colony of rats venerated by the inhabitants of Khotan. According to local beliefs, the rats, led by an individual known as the Rat King, protected the town's inhabitants from the Huns by eating through the marauding armies' leather armor and harnesses, leaving them vulnerable and unmounted. As a result, the invaders were driven off and



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the town saved—such stories were first recorded by Hiuen-Tsiang, and then again, much later, by Aurel Stein.

During his excavations in 1900–1901 at Dandan-uilik (another abandoned ancient oasis town far out in the desert to the northeast of Khotan), Aurel Stein uncovered paintings of the Rat King—a strange, hybrid creature with the body of a man and the head of a rat, crowned with a jeweled headband. Despite a later search for the rats themselves, Stein reported no trace of them.

The investigators arrive in Khotan just in time for the annual festival celebrating the town's protection from the Huns. Although the vast majority of the town's inhabitants are Muslim Turki, everyone present contributes in their own way to decorating the town for the upcoming festivities and, if anything, the oasis is even more bustling and frenetic than usual. A successful **History** or **Archaeology** roll identifies the nature of the festival; otherwise, the locals are more than happy to chat about the reason for their celebration, along with any of Khotan's other notable legends (see **Khotan** box, nearby).

While checking into a guest house, the investigators bump into an aging white woman with graying hair and a pinched expression. A successful **Psychology** roll spots that she is distracted and upset. The woman seizes the opportunity to initiate a conversation with the investigators, introducing herself as Miss Celia Roberts in a noticeably Scottish accent. Provided that there is at least one white investigator in the group (or, alternatively, one who is obviously Christian), Roberts begs them for their help in locating her traveling companion, Miss Moira Abernathy, who set off into the desert five days ago and hasn't been seen since.

If the investigators question her further about the disappearance, Roberts reveals that both she and her friend Miss Abernathy are Methodist missionaries traveling from China to Afghanistan in order to proselytize the locals (use the **Missionary** profile as needed, **Appendix A**, page 331). Shortly after they arrived in Khotan, Miss Abernathy got into an argument with a pilgrim, who had come for the festivities, over Khotan's famous rats. Disgusted by what she referred to as “superstitious clap-trap,” Miss Abernathy lost her temper and swore to prove that the rats were perfectly normal creatures with no supernatural powers whatsoever, and that there was most certainly no Rat King hiding out in the desert sands. Despite Roberts' attempts to calm her down, Abernathy would not listen to reason and rode off into the desert, determined to show “these Godless heathens” the error of their ways.

To begin with, Roberts wasn't too concerned; after all, Abernathy has spent much of her life journeying through some of the most dangerous parts of the world spreading the word of God and is, therefore, an experienced traveler. But, Abernathy should have been back by now from what ought

to have been, at most, a three-day trip on horseback. The locals have refused to help look for her missing friend, as they fear that the Rat King has been offended by her unwelcome intrusion into his domain. Roberts has no one else to turn to. “*Your popping up here is the answer to my prayers,*” she gushes. “*Will you help me?*”

If asked why she didn't accompany her friend on her mission, Roberts blushes. “*I have something of a dislike of rodents,*” she whispers. “*If it had been anything but rats, of course I would have gone with Moira—Miss Abernathy. As it was...*”

If the investigators accept Roberts' plea for help, she informs them of the alleged location of the rat colony, some 30 miles (48 km) or so to the west of the town, hidden away from the road among a sea of dunes and long-abandoned ruins. If they are sensible and set out first thing in the morning, with fresh supplies for the journey and a cart (*mappa* or bullock), the investigators will come to the spot Roberts spoke of by nightfall. If, instead, they are walking, it should take them two days to reach the alleged home of the Rat King and his subjects. The Keeper may wish to call for a **Navigate** roll from the investigators to ensure they don't get lost along the way; a failure means they get lost but eventually find the spot some hours (or potentially days) later.

If the investigators arrive in daylight and immediately begin searching the dunes and ruins, permit a **Spot Hidden** roll: if successful, they discover a broken and bloodied



KHOTAN

Situated on the junction of the Silk Road with an equally ancient trade route to India and Tibet, Khotan is famed for both its jade and its carpets. The town, at the time positioned outside the empire, is also, according to legend, the place where an ancient Chinese princess smuggled silk cocoons out of her motherland in her elaborate hairstyle when she was married off to the local king, thus breaking the long-held imperial monopoly on silk production. The town is home to what the locals jokingly call their bird monastery (there are flocks upon flocks of pigeons in this town—far more than one would expect—which are kept well-fed by pious pilgrims; the Keeper may make of that what they will). The oasis is also where several Tarim mummies were unearthed, although such discoveries are more common at the eastern end of the Taklamakan, especially around Hami and Turfan.



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umbrella half-buried under the shifting sands. A closer examination of the umbrella identifies animal fur stuck to the blood. Digging around nearby reveals sand stained with yet more blood; however, there is no sign of Miss Abernathy.

Searching the ruins eventually leads the investigators to a subterranean room full of rats (**Rat Pack**, page 147). Provided the investigators tried to keep quiet during their search (a successful **Stealth** roll), the rats are sound asleep when they are discovered; if not, they are watching warily from the shadows, having been awakened by the investigators banging about on the surface. Among the rats are a number of larger creatures: the Rat King's lieutenants (**Rat-Things**, page 147), although their exact nature may go unnoticed for the time being, depending on whether or not the creatures have been roused from their slumbers. Of the Rat King, however, there is no sign.

If, on the other hand, the investigators arrive too late to search the ruins before darkness, a successful **Listen** roll during the night detects the sound of singing voices carried on the desert wind. Alternatively, a successful **Spot Hidden** roll notices the soft glow of a torchlit procession moving through the dunes toward the colony.

Sneaking up to the site for a closer look requires a successful **Stealth** roll: those failing immediately draw the

attention of either the singers, the rats, or both, depending on the circumstances. As long as the investigators make no move to attack after being discovered, the human singers, dressed in robes and carrying baskets of fruit, meat, and what look like amphorae of wine, politely ask the investigators to leave the area as they are interrupting a private ceremony.

If the investigators ask what the ceremony is for, the singers' leader explains that it is time to pay tribute to the Rat King and renew the town's pact with him for its continued protection. Polite requests to watch the ceremony, if backed up with a successful **Charm** or **Persuade** roll, earn the investigators an invitation to watch—and a warning not to interfere with the proceedings; the townsfolk cannot be held responsible for their safety if they do. If asked about Miss Abernathy, the singers claim to know nothing of her whereabouts, although they are aware of her disappearance.

If the investigators manage to sneak up on the colony and the singers without being spotted, they bear witness to a most extraordinary sight. The torchlit procession is met in front of one of the colony's hillocks by a sea of rats, which emerges from a doorway in the side of the mound. Once the rats have all left their dormitory, a number of larger creatures—giants of the rat world, by the looks of things—follow, forming a protective semicircle in front of a shadowy, man-sized figure



The nighttime procession



that remains largely concealed in the darkness of the archway.

Provided they are not interrupted, the singers lay down their baskets of food and make a show of offering it to the rats, which all turn to look at the figure in the doorway. The figure nods its head, and the rats and their larger brethren descend upon the food. Once it is all gone, the creatures disappear back into the hillside while the singers collect their baskets and take their leave.

Keeper note: the Rat King's domain is one of the places of power where Tenzin Kalsang's *melong* works—a fact that the *lama* could make clear when they arrive (see **Line of Sight**, page 126). Suitable visions revealed here by the stone mirror include the creation of the rat-things and the **Rat King** himself (page 146), as well as a stately procession of humans offering up food to the creatures, across which the participants' clothing gradually changes in style to show the passage of time. This should hint to the investigators that locals visit the colony regularly to provide food for the rats. Perhaps another visit is due soon?

The Fate of Miss Abernathy

Should the investigators provoke or attack either the rats (day or night) or the townsfolk (night), or attempt to disrupt the ceremony in any way, a high-pitched, strident female voice with a refined Scottish accent loudly interjects, “*Well, that's no' very polite, now is it?*” It may take the investigators a moment (or a successful **Spot Hidden** or **Listen** roll) to realize that the voice came from one of the larger rats, triggering a **Sanity** roll (1/1D6 loss) when they realize exactly what has become of Miss Abernathy.

As long as the investigators stay their hands after the interjection and refrain from doing anything stupid (such as might happen during an ensuing bout of madness caused by discovering Abernathy's new form), the rat-thing that was once Moira Abernathy is quite happy to answer their questions as to how she came by her current predicament.

She recounts how, while hunting through the ruins for the Rat King, she was surprised by one of the rat-things and, in her panic, beat it to death with her umbrella. The Rat King then appeared and offered her an ultimatum: become his servant in the dead thing's place, or doom Khotan to destruction. As a good Christian woman, she couldn't sentence all of those poor women and

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children to the fires of Hell unshriven, and so accepted the Rat King's offer in the hope that someone else would point the townsfolk toward the Light after she was gone. Besides, the Rat King's proposition was a perfectly biblical solution to the problem—an eye for an eye, and all that.

If someone asks what they should tell poor Miss Roberts back in Khotan, Abernathy the rat-thing thinks for a moment, and says, *"How about: as I was making my way back to town, a runner delivered a message to me saying that there had been a family emergency, and I had to travel to Srinagar immediately to join my cousin, James Strudwick, so that it could all be sorted out. Tell her to carry on without me, as I don't know when, or if, I shall be able to join her again. And, should you ever need help, wee Jamie is a member of His Majesty's Indian Civil Service—just tell him his big cousin Moira vouches for you and he'll know what to do."*

Keeper note: Abernathy's suggestion is another way to introduce the investigators to James Strudwick in his capacity as a British Government official (instead of using **The Runner** optional encounter on page 117).

However, should the investigators insist on fisticuffs, the townsfolk immediately leap to the rat-things' defense, as do the colony's more mundane rats. The number of rats, townsfolk, and rat-things should be determined by the Keeper based on the number of investigators and their martial capabilities. For scholarly groups with little fighting capability, there should be between 1–2 of each antagonist—townsfolk, rat packs, and rat-things—in whichever combination works best for those investigators. For more action-oriented (or pulp) groups, there should be approximately one of each per character. Sample statistics for all three groups can be found in the **Creatures and Monsters** section at the end of this chapter. The Rat King attempts to stay out of the fight, although he may cast Evil Eye (or any other non-lethal spells of the Keeper's choosing) if it looks as if the townsfolk and his rats are struggling to drive the investigators off.

Should one of the investigators accidentally (or deliberately) kill a rat-thing, the Rat King steps forward, his appearance triggering a **Sanity** roll (1/1D6 loss). He announces that, unless the killer provides a replacement for his slain lieutenant, the protection afforded Khotan will be withdrawn and the town afflicted by a plague of rats sent to destroy everything in their path—a fitting punishment for oath-breakers.

There are several options now open to the culpable investigator under these circumstances: sacrifice themselves and be turned into a rat-thing during a Sanity-shattering ritual before their corpse has grown fully cold, convince one

of the townsfolk in attendance to take their place (perhaps arguing that it is a great honor for an acolyte of the Rat King to give their life in such a way), or promise to find another victim and return with the live sacrifice before 24 hours have passed.

While the first option is just, it would remove the investigator in question from the campaign. The other options permit the culprit to continue their journey in Tenzin Kalsang's retinue. And, just because the investigator promises to return with a freshly dead body, it doesn't necessarily mean that they have to—although failure to keep their word results in the investigator being plagued by rats at the most inopportune times until they make good on their promise.

Alternatively, the investigators could fight on until the Rat King and his followers are destroyed—no mean feat, but not impossible. If the investigators do commit a massacre in the desert, it is up to the Keeper whether or not this has ramifications for Khotan and the town's continuing good fortune. Perhaps, several months from now, the investigators read or hear of some terrible tragedy involving the town, such as a natural disaster, a terrible famine, or a deadly epidemic—the news of which provokes a **Sanity** roll (1D3/1D6 loss) for the investigator in question.

One way or another, the investigators should, by now, have solved the mystery of what happened to Miss Roberts' friend. As with the troubles at Karakhoja, the investigators' behavior here influences their overall karmic balance, and the Keeper should make a careful note of any positive or negative shifts.

Keeper note: if the Keeper wishes to hint at the existence of the Rat King rather than serve him up to the investigators, then instead of stumbling across the rat-things or the late-night procession of Khotan's Rat King devotees, they find an injured and delirious Miss Abernathy among the ruins. This is, perhaps, an option best suited to a more academic group of characters who would struggle with the potentially violent confrontation described in the text. A successful **First Aid** or **Medicine** roll identifies that Abernathy is suffering from heat stroke and dehydration, as well as numerous small bite marks. Barely conscious, she raves about a rat-headed man and his shining crown, as well as his monstrous and deformed henchmen—gigantic rats with the faces of men, who tittered and giggled and teased while they nibbled on her flesh! Of course, her insane pronouncements are just a byproduct of her medical condition. Or are they? A successful **Hard Spot Hidden** roll suggests that Abernathy is right about at least one thing: something odd was in the desert with her, for there are traces of what look suspiciously like tiny handprints in the damp sand around the babbling missionary.

PEAKS AND TROUGHS

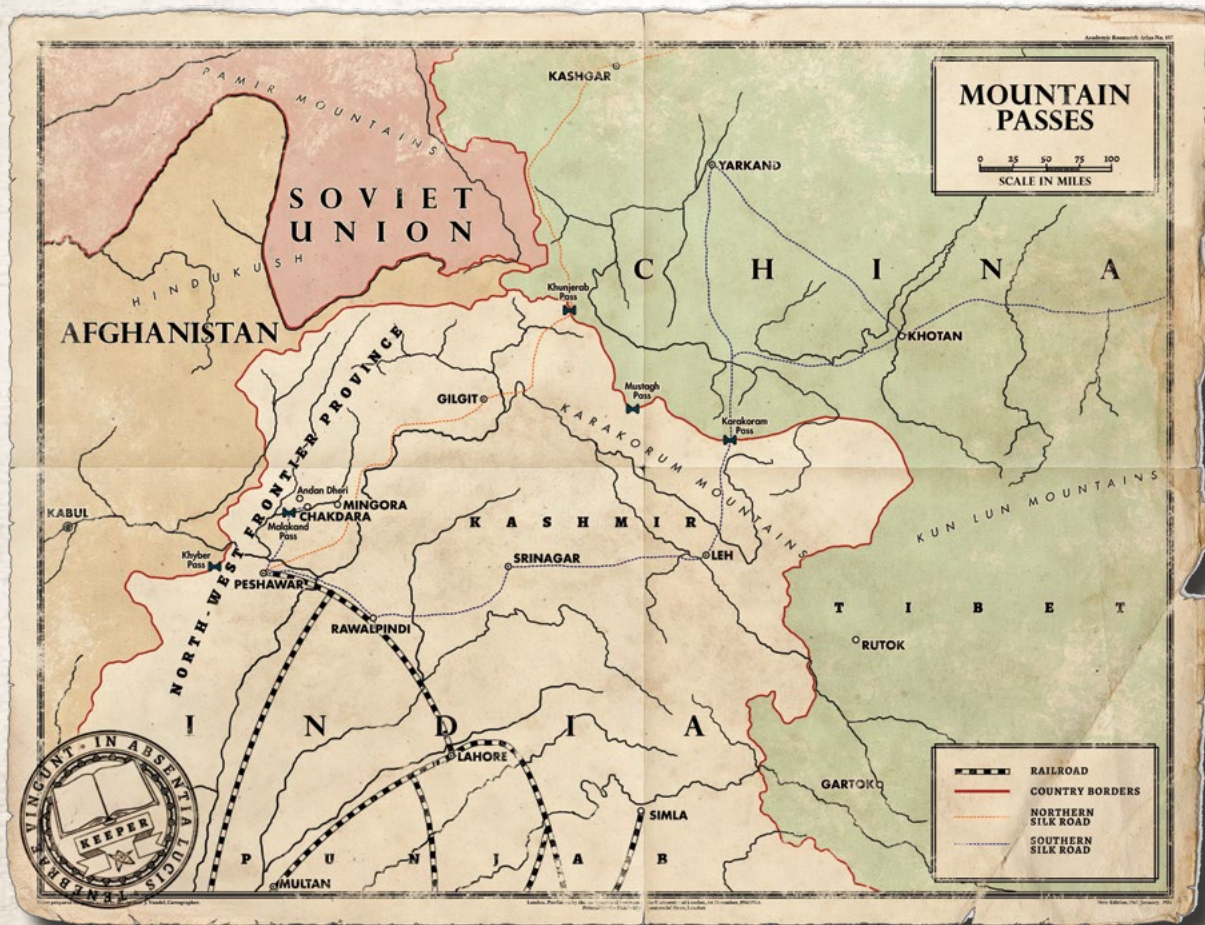
The question of where one mountain range ends and another begins is a tricky one—one which vexed 18th and 19th century Western geographers for many years. The Pamirs, a range of low, rounded mountains and broad grassy valleys could just as easily be described as a high plateau. Where they meet the Karakorums, which officially form the border between Sinkiang and the then-princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, the terrain shifts into steep peaks, plunging gorges, and terrifying drops.

The Karakorums run parallel to the western end of the Himalayas, separated from them by the valley of the Upper Indus River. Similarly, the Hindukush—which form part of the border between Afghanistan and the North West Frontier Provinces (modern Pakistan)—are also kept apart from the Himalayas by the mighty Indus, the ancient gateway to India herself.

PART TWO: THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS

The routes down through the great mountain ranges between the Soviet Union, Afghanistan, northwestern British India, and Chinese Turkistan are no less varied or dangerous than those across the Tarim Basin. Consisting of the T'ien Shan Mountains, the Pamir Knot, the Hindukush, the Karakorums, the Himalayas, and the Kun Lun Mountains, the border region can be traversed via numerous high altitude passes, but the paths are often blocked by snow until late in the year.

The investigators' exact route to Chakdara and the site of the mythical lost Lake of Danakosha is one fraught with danger at every turn—from avalanches, freezing winds, rock falls, and crumbling footpaths along the edges of precipices, to fearless mountain bandits (good for optional encounters with investigators who like a spot of rough and tumble) and suspicious villagers and officials. Shooting stars and odd lights in the sky (unidentified flying objects akin to those seen in 1927 by Nicholas Roerich) can also



Mountain Passes map

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be included. And, as ever, the investigators should have the uncomfortable feeling that they are being watched at every turn (**On the Way**, page 38).

The two major routes linking up with those detailed in **Part One** are described below, along with their specific hazards but, as with all long-distance travel, red lining should be the order of the day except for specific encounters. Regardless of the approach the investigators choose, the scenery is spectacular and, thanks to the high altitude, quite literally breath-taking. As their investigators are now moving into a new region, give the players **What Your Investigator Knows 4: The Northwest Frontier** (**Appendix C**, page 350).

Although the investigators may have traveled by automobile to Kashgar or Khotan/Yarkand, there is no way to drive over the mountains into India during the 1920s. Any vehicles the investigators still possess at this point need to be sold, abandoned, or placed in storage, and a more traditional form of caravan—including horses, mules, camels, and yaks should be employed if they hope to make the trip south.

FROM KASHGAR (NORTHERN ROUTE)

If the investigators took the Northern Silk Road and are heading down from Kashgar to Gilgit (once home to the terrifying monarch Shri Badat; **Handout: Song 2**), their best option is to travel through the Kilik Pass, an ancient route

from Sinkiang into India. The pass leads into the Upper Hunza Valley (a region notorious for bandits until the rogues were brought under control by British annexation at the end of the 19th century), and from there down to Gilgit and the Gandharan Plains beyond.

The Kilik Pass, standing at an elevation of almost 16,000 feet (4,880 m), was the fastest way to get from the Tarim Basin to India as it had the advantage of remaining open all year round. The major downsides of this path include its high level of danger and the fact that it can only be traversed on foot—all pack animals must be unloaded on one side of the pass and the gear and goods carried through by porters, before being reloaded onto fresh animals on the far side.

Even though their daily progress may slip to as little as 5 miles (8 km) a day as they pick their way over treacherously narrow tracks even a yak would struggle with, it should take the investigators around a month to reach Gilgit from Kashgar, and the same again to reach the Swat Valley and Chakdara down the Indus Valley.


A less hazardous alternative route takes travelers across the Khunjerab Pass, which lies between the Pamirs and the Karakorums on the northern border between the Gilgit Agency and Sinkiang. A broad, fertile valley, with an elevation of nearly 15,500 feet (4,725 m), the Khunjerab (whose name supposedly means “Valley of Blood”) is often closed from November to late April due to snow fall.



WITH CURIOUS EYES 2: THE MOUNTAIN PASSES

No stranger to the cold or harsh winds, Tenzin Kalsang is apparently unaffected by the weather conditions. He does not don additional layers of clothing no matter how low the temperature drops, preferring instead to meditate peacefully for a few minutes each morning to generate what he calls *thumo*, an internal fire that keeps him perfectly cozy no matter the temperature.

As they pass through the mountains, the *lama* shouts the traditional Tibetan greeting to the gods at the summit of every pass: “Lha gyalo! De tamche pham!” A phrase translating roughly to, “*The gods win! The demons are defeated!*” No matter the difficulty of the terrain, he obviously enjoys the exertion of the trip and comments that the stark beauty of the surrounding terrain reminds him of home.



THE GIANTESS REBORN (OPTIONAL)

This optional encounter can be used on either of the northern routes down from Kashgar (northern purely because the trail links to the Northern Silk Road, while the southern routes described in **From Khotan/Yarkand** (page 116) connect India to Chinese Turkistan along the Southern Silk Road.

As the investigators make their way through the mountain valleys on their way to Gilgit, they come across an **Asiatic Black Bear** (page 150) feeding on what looks like an animal carcass. The bear either turns tail and runs from a large group or makes a mock charge to drive away a smaller group. Should any of the investigators declare their intention to run away or play dead, the bear immediately attacks them. Alternatively, the Keeper could call for a **Natural World, POW, Science (Biology or Zoology)**, or appropriate **Survival** roll: if failed, they flee with the bear in hot pursuit. If they succeed, they know that running is the worst thing they could do; attacking—or facing down the bear—is most definitely the best form of defense on this occasion. If choosing to face down the bear, ask for a combined **STR** and **POW** roll, which if successful, causes the bear to retreat and leave everyone alone.

Once the bear is dealt with, a successful **First Aid**, **Medicine**, or **Science (Biology or Zoology)** roll leads the investigators to realize that the bear's meal was not an animal carcass, but the corpse of an old man, which may provoke a **Sanity** roll (1/1D2 loss) at the Keeper's discretion. The body is not long dead (a few days, at the most), and appears to be wearing little more than a white sheet of fabric—all that remains of a burial shroud. If a Hard success was achieved on any of the rolls, it reveals that alongside the bear's claw marks, there are two different sets of teeth marks on the body: one set definitely belongs to the bear, while the other appears to belong to a much smaller animal, although the exact species is impossible to determine. If an Extreme success was gained, it suggests the second set of bite marks may be canine in origin, but that there's something a little odd about them.

A careful examination of the corpse reveals that the major soft internal organs are missing (intestines, liver, kidneys, lungs, and heart) and the fleshiest parts of the thighs have also been ravaged (mostly by the bear). The ground around the corpse is too hard and rocky to preserve any footprints, although a successful **Spot Hidden** or **Track** roll indicates that the corpse rolled (or was dragged) down the slope above the path before coming to its current resting place.

It is possible to scramble up the slope with a successful **Climb** roll; a fumble or pushed failure results in a fall and 1D6 points of damage as the investigator tumbles back down

the way they came. Further up the slope, hidden from the road below, is a small cave. The smell wafting from inside is enough to trigger a **CON** roll for all those attempting to enter; those failing retch at the stench of rotting meat and grave mold. Inside the cave are the dismembered remains of at least two other bodies and their winding sheets. Oddly, there is no sign of animal scat in the cave, suggesting to anyone with above base skill in **Natural World**, a relevant **Survival** skill, or **Track** that this is not an animal's lair—at least, not a permanent one.

Any porters the investigators are traveling with know that there is a small village a little farther down the path. If nothing else, the porters insist that the villagers should be notified so that the human remains can be properly re-interred. They've never heard of a bear digging up corpses before, but they do know that they can turn into man-eaters if old or injured. A successful **Natural World** or **Science (Biology or Zoology)** roll indicates that the bear they encountered appeared to be neither.

The Village

Arriving in the small settlement, the investigators stumble into what, at first, appears to be some sort of celebration. A successful **Listen** roll on their way to the village gives them advanced warning of what sounds like a party in full swing up ahead. A large fire burns in the center of the village, surrounded by singing and music played on horns and drums. A successful **Spot Hidden** roll reveals that, despite the crowd, only one man is dancing, and all eyes are focused on him. If the investigators are traveling with porters, the men indicate that they should keep back and not interfere—a powerful magician, a *Danyal*, is performing a ritual, and it could be dangerous to interrupt him. In the absence of any porters, a successful **Occult** roll or a comment from Tenzin Kalsang can provide the same information.

Provided they watch quietly and make no move to disrupt the ceremony, the investigators see a solidly-built older man drag a goat into the circle. First, he milks it, decanting the milk into what looks like a drinking horn of some sort (a successful **Natural World** or **Science (Biology or Zoology)** roll identifies it as an ibex horn); then, in one deft move, he slits the creature's throat, collecting the gushing blood in a bowl before cutting off the goat's head, a scene that may call for a **Sanity** roll (0/1 loss) if any of the investigators are faint of heart. The man decants the blood into a second drinking horn, before taking the still-dripping head to the dancing man (the *Danyal*).

The *Danyal* takes the goat's head and holds its severed neck to his lips, noisily sucking out what remains of its blood. He then casts the head into the flames and takes the two drinking horns. Continuing to dance and chant, the *Danyal* takes alternating sips from each one. Suddenly,



Asiatic Black Bear

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he throws the horns to the floor, spilling their remaining contents, and drops prone, his ear pressed tight to the ground. The music stops, and everyone waits with bated breath. After what feels like an eternity (but is only really a minute or so), the man rises and proclaims something in an unfamiliar tongue (Shina—the local language in this area), which seems to cause great upset among the crowd. He collapses as soon as he's finished speaking and is carried away by a group of young men.

It is at this point that the assembled villagers probably take notice of the investigators (unless they have made their presence known before now or are successfully hiding while watching). The traveling party is eyed with an air of deep suspicion—very different from the hospitality they have experienced so far on their journey. The man who slaughtered the goat quickly approaches them and introduces himself as Atif Baig, the village's headman—first in Shina, and then in English or Hindustani (if at first he only receives puzzled looks).

A successful **Psychology** roll deduces that Baig is a troubled man, although he's doing his best to hide it. If the investigators ask him about what they've just witnessed, Baig confirms that the village's *Danyal* has performed a ritual to identify the nature of the curse that has fallen on the village in the last couple of weeks. Someone, or something, has been desecrating the village's burial ground, and a number of corpses have disappeared. On top of that, one of the village's young women never returned from a trip to her family in a neighboring village a week ago; despite a search, no trace of her has been found.

If the investigators confide in Baig about what they discovered in the cave, he thanks them, and promises to send some of his men to recover the corpses for proper reburial. If they mention the two sets of teeth marks on the first body they discovered, his expression grows grim. The *Danyal* has just declared that the spirits informed him that Yathini, the cannibal giantess of legend, has been reborn and is sating her perverse desire for human flesh. Unless the villagers find and destroy Yathini, the village is doomed.

If the investigators ask Baig about Yathini, he recounts both her legend and that of her brother, Shri Badat (**Handout: Song 2**). If pressed, he admits that he is concerned about the *Danyal*'s pronouncement, aware that some within the village may use it to further old grudges when the real cause might be little more than predation by wild animals. After all, it has been a hard winter (and a difficult spring, depending on when the investigators arrive in the village), and man and animal alike have felt the sharp pangs of deep hunger.

Provided the investigators have behaved respectfully so far, Baig asks if they will help him discover the truth about what is going on in the village. Although their outsider

status comes with a certain degree of suspicion, they are also untainted by the family feuds within the village and, as a result, are possibly the only ones who can view the situation with a dispassionate eye. Baig is afraid of a literal witch hunt and wants to make sure that only the guilty are punished for what has happened. A successful **Psychology** roll reveals that there is more to Baig's request; if pressed, he admits that, if everything goes wrong, he could unite the village by blaming the investigators for any unsatisfactory outcome—after they've had a chance to make their getaway, of course.

The Graveyard

Provided they agree to help, and night has yet to fall, Baig takes the investigators up to the village's burial ground. It lies around half a mile (800 m) above the village in a small, secluded valley. The graves are marked by mounds of rocks and simple headstones, and it is clear that one has been very recently disturbed. A careful search or a successful **Spot Hidden** roll notices that several other graves have also been freshly repaired.

Questioning Baig reveals that the desecration was only discovered a few days ago when they came to bury an old shepherd (from the description, the corpse the bear was eating). Three graves had been plundered: first that of an old woman who'd died a couple of weeks ago, another of a young man who had been killed in a fall the month before, and finally, that of a young woman who had died in childbirth the same month. The old shepherd's grave was found plundered the day after his burial. There have been no disturbances since.

If asked why he hasn't established a watch on the graveyard, Baig replies that the people of the village are all too busy working during the day to spare anyone, and that at night, bears, wolves, and leopards prowl the mountains. Before the *Danyal*'s pronouncement, everyone hoped the culprits were just wild animals and that the incidents would stop of their own accord. Any animal hungry enough to dig up the dead would make for a dangerous opponent in the dark, and Baig was loath to risk the lives of his villagers without good cause.

If the investigators think to ask about the young woman who vanished during her trip to a neighboring village, Baig sighs and shakes his head. **Hasina Moiz** (page 144) was a popular young woman, engaged to one of the young men in the next village over. Despite having her fair share of admirers in her own village, in the end her parents decided to marry her off to one of her mother's people to further strengthen the bonds between the two settlements. Due to her family's high status, negotiations over who would win her hand had been strenuous in both villages, and her main suitor in this village, a middle-aged farmer called Ziab Ali, was deeply disappointed by the final decision.

CHAPTER 3

Handout: Song 2

Shri Badat was allegedly the last Buddhist king of Gilgit in the 8th century. He was said to be a powerful magician (who may or may not have also been part demon) who developed a taste for human flesh after eating a lamb fed on human milk—one which made him practically immortal. He demanded that each household in his kingdom take it in turn to give him human meat to sate his perverse appetites. Angered by his demands and his increasing barbarity, his people turned to his daughter, Miyokhay, for help. Miyokhay and the king's wazir convinced Shri Badat to tell them what his weakness was: he could only be killed by fire, which would melt his heart, as it was made of butter rather than flesh. Miyokhay and her lover, a half-faery Persian prince named Azu Jamsher, built a trap for Shri Badat and burned him alive—although some versions of the story include Shri Badat escaping to hide under a nearby glacier until the time is right for him to regain his kingdom. Miyokhay went on to marry her prince, accept Islam, and change her name to Nur Bakht. Together with her prince, she founded a royal dynasty that, according to the locals, still exists in the valleys around Gilgit to this day.

However, Shri Badat may not have been the only cannibal in his family. According to one story, his sister Yathini was also addicted to human flesh. She was trapped and neutralized by the machinations of a local Danyal called Soglio, who entranced Yathini with song before pinning her to a cliff face with iron nails and turning her to stone. Yathini had the last laugh, though, as the Danyal then insisted that, after his death, he must be buried nearby to prevent her from ever breaking free. Afraid that their savior might die far away and so leave them prey to the cannibal princess' hunger once again, the villagers murdered Soglio and interred him next to his victim to ensure their safety for all eternity.



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Searching the graveyard turns up no obvious animal tracks—of course, the abundance of human activity in the graveyard might have erased them. The investigators' best bet is to set up a night watch of their own to see if they can catch the culprit red-handed. Alternatively, they could question the villagers about Hasina's disappearance, which is the only other oddity in the village's recent history, or they could mount a watch on the cave where they found the corpses to see if the culprit returns to their lair.

For Atif Baig and Ziab Ali, use **Villager #1** and **Villager #2**, respectively, from the **Generic Villagers/Townfolk** profile (page 145). For the *Danyal*, use the **Holy Person/Mystic** profile found in **Appendix A** (page 328), with the following adjustments: Lore (Danyalism) 60%, English 31%, Hindustani 45%, and Shina (Own) 60%.

The Missing Girl

The atmosphere in the village is tense. Questions about Hasina Moiz are received with both sadness and a little hostility, particularly from Ziab Ali and his family. Most people originally thought she'd been killed and eaten by a wild animal. If the investigators' discovery of the bear feasting on the old shepherd's corpse has become widely known, the villagers admit that, had this information arrived yesterday, they would have said that the creature was undoubtedly the culprit, having obviously turned man-eater. But now that the *Danyal* has spoken, they are afraid that Hasina was taken by Yathini and that there will be more deaths to follow unless something is done to put the cannibal queen to rest once again.

A successful **Psychology** roll when talking to Ziab Ali reveals that he knows more about the situation than he admits. If pressed, he confides that he believes Hasina may have committed suicide to get out of her arranged marriage, but that he cannot bring himself to say as much to her parents or the rest of the village because of the shame it would bring them. Another successful **Psychology** roll (or a Hard or Extreme success on the previous one) suggests that Ali is lying—he knows exactly what happened to Hasina and is deeply afraid of something.

The only way the investigators can get Ali to admit the truth—that he met with Hasina on her way back from her trip, they argued about her impending marriage, and he struck her in anger, knocking her to the ground with a fatal blow before burying her body in the old woman's grave—is with a successful Hard social skill roll (such as **Intimidate**). If they can convince him to reveal his crime, he admits something else: he is afraid that Hasina has been resurrected as Yathini to punish him, and the rest of the village, for his actions.

If the investigators fail to uncover Ali's duplicity, he raises a mob to search the hills for "Yathini" in the hope of discovering and destroying her before his own crimes come to light.

Keeper note: Ziab Ali didn't actually kill Hasina when he struck her, although he genuinely believes he did. Merely knocked unconscious by the blow, the poor young woman later woke to find herself face to face with the corpse of the old woman she'd been buried alive with. Driven mad with fear and desperation as she dug her way out of the grave, Hasina became convinced that she had become a pisacha, due to dying and being interred without the proper funeral rites. Hungry and afraid, and unable to return to her family because of what she believed she had become, she did what she knew pisachas must do to survive, and began feasting on the old woman's remains after dragging them to a nearby cave for safety. She has retrieved several other bodies since then only to be driven away from her latest acquisition by the hungry bear. Provided the investigators didn't meet a pisacha while caught in a *kara-buran* (**The Black Storm**, page 101), this encounter may lead to a degree of confusion for the investigators when they finally meet a real flesh-eater face to face (**Unwanted Attention**, page 136)!

The Night Watch

Deprived of her latest meal by the bear, Hasina has little choice but to raid the burial grounds for another corpse, although she has already taken the three freshest. Investigators mounting a watch on the graveyard during the day see nothing—Hasina is far too ashamed of what she thinks she has become to risk being seen in daylight.

Once darkness falls it is a different matter altogether. Still, Hasina only approaches a grave and begins to remove its stones if she is unaware of the investigators' presence. If they've lit a fire or are making a lot of noise, she flees the area, but not before giving the investigators an opportunity to notice her presence with a successful **Spot Hidden** or **Listen** roll, which identifies that something is out there in the darkness.

If the investigators spot the shadowy, humanoid figure lurking around the graveyard, it may lead to a chase, with the darkness and roughness of the terrain providing sufficient hazards for those involved. Even without pursuit, the investigators have their first clue: whatever is stalking the burial ground isn't a wild animal.

Should the investigators give chase, Hasina leads the investigators back toward the cave hidden above the road. Even if they lose her in the dark, a successful **Navigate**, **Track**, or Hard **INT** roll suggests the general direction of her flight. If the investigators continue on their way to the cave without informing the villagers, and as long as it is still nighttime, they find Hasina there alone. Alternatively, if they put off heading for the cave until the next day, they find themselves accompanying the *Danyal* and a team of men from the village, sent by Baig to retrieve the corpses. It doesn't require a **Spot Hidden** roll to notice the heavy satchel the *Danyal* carries—one that clinks ominously every time he moves...

The Cave

Providing they approach the cave at night and without any villagers, the investigators find a filthy, terrified young woman huddled inside, gnawing distractedly on whatever is left of her previous meals. The sight of the woman chowing down on dead human flesh is enough to provoke a **Sanity** roll (1/1D4+1 loss). The Keeper may wish to ask for a **Stealth** roll when approaching the cave, with failure alerting Hasina to the investigators' approach, causing her to attempt to hide (as though a corpse).

When cornered in the cave with no way out, the young woman screams at the investigators to leave her alone but does not attack unless forced to defend herself. Anyone who attempts to talk to Hasina must succeed at a **Psychoanalysis** or Hard social skill roll (such as **Charm** or **Persuade**) to convince her that they are no threat and that they only want to help. The use of Intimidate under these circumstances only worsens her hysteria. Note that if using English, the roll suffers a penalty die, as while Hasina understands some English, she is not fluent, preferring to speak in Shina or Hindustani.

Provided they win Hasina's trust, the investigators can coax the story of what happened out of her. It is now up to them to either hand her over to the villagers and expose Ali for his attempted murder and cover-up of the crime or try to get Hasina treatment somewhere for her insanity (perhaps secretly taking her with them until they can find somewhere better for her), knowing that the villagers believe her to be a reincarnation of the cannibal queen. Without Hasina's trust, they will need to subdue her to get her out of the cave; the young woman, panicked by the fate that awaits her at the hands of her people, kicks and screams and attempts to run away.

If the investigators have any doubts about what the villagers will do to her, this is the perfect opportunity for Hasina to fill them in. If she knows about the *Danyal's* pronouncement, she screams that she does not want to die nailed to a cliff. If not, she weeps as she tells them she will most likely be burned to death as a pisacha—a flesh-eater whose soul can only be cleansed by the purifying flames.

Should the investigators arrive at the cave with the villagers and the *Danyal* in tow, either at night or during the day, the scene is far more chaotic and distressing—particularly if Ziab Ali is also present. Determined not to have his part in the affair exposed (provided he hasn't already told the investigators what he did), Ali whips the crowd into a frenzy, aided and abetted by the *Danyal*. Unless the investigators act quickly and decisively to save Hasina, specifically without killing anyone (if they do, they'll face the full fury of the assembled mob), then the terrified young woman is dragged howling from the cave and pressed up against the cliff wall.

The *Danyal*, unless stopped, instructs his helpers to position Hasina's left hand over her left thigh, and then hammers a large iron spike through both, pinning her to the rockface. As her screams of agony ring out across the valley, the *Danyal* orders a villager to place the young woman's right hand over her heart, before driving home a second iron spike, killing her. He then begins to sing and dance, commanding her (in Shina) to turn to stone and never bother the villagers again. Once satisfied that his work is done, he leads the villagers away, leaving Hasina's corpse dangling as a reminder of their narrow escape from the return of Shri Badat's terrible sister. Those witnessing Hasina's violent death must make a **Sanity** roll (1/1D6 loss) and have their karmic balance adjusted depending on whether or not they attempted to intervene.

Of course, if Ziab Ali's role in Hasina's downfall is revealed before her death, then he, too, will be punished according to the laws of the village, but not until the investigators have left the area.

By now, the mystery of Yathini's "return" should have been solved. Either the investigators manage to uncover the truth and save Hasina, or the young woman is subject to a brutal punishment for her descent into madness as a result of Ziab Ali's jealousy and covetousness. Regardless, the travelers may now carry on toward their destination.

FROM KHOTAN/YARKAND (SOUTHERN ROUTE)

If the investigators follow the Southern Silk Road away from Khotan, their best route is to cross the Karakorum Pass into India. At an altitude of over 18,000 feet (5,490 m), the Black Gravel way over the mountains has a bad reputation for banditry and is littered with the bones of people and animals; their bodies left to decay as a result of exposure and starvation or from wounds suffered at the hands of brigands.

The Karakorum Pass sits at the highest point on the main caravan route between India and China and is free of snow and ice year-round, thanks to the high winds that constantly scour it. The open passage and the gentle ascents on both sides are the only positives to using this route—it is so barren that all food and water needed for the journey must be gathered beforehand and carried through the pass.

At the top of the pass stands a monument to the murdered British trader and explorer Andrew Dalglish. It was Subaltern Hamilton Bower's search for Dalglish's murderer in 1889 that sparked the race to explore the Silk Road, thanks to his acquisition of a birch bark manuscript—now known as the Bower Manuscript—which described the lost Buddhist civilizations of the Tarim Basin, as well as various magical incantations.

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It takes around a month to travel from Khotan to Leh. From Leh, the investigators must follow the ancient trade routes down to Srinagar (the former home of the pre-generated investigator **Sofian Bazaz-Wain**, page 405), which takes a further three weeks.

Alternatively, if the investigators trek to Yarkand before heading down into India, they could follow in Sir Francis Younghusband's footsteps and travel over the Mustagh Pass, the shortest route from Yarkand to Srinagar. This route takes roughly the same amount of time to traverse as the path from Khotan, give or take a week or two.

As there are no rail links to Srinagar in the 1920s, the investigators have no option but to walk or ride for another one to two weeks (depending on their mode of transport) to join the famous (and fast) Indian railway system at Rawalpindi. From Rawalpindi, the fastest route to Chakdara is by train to Peshawar, and then a trek up through the Malakand Pass to Chakdara which, all told, takes around another week.

If the investigators do choose to pass through Peshawar on their way to Chakdara, we recommend that the Keeper puts off describing the delights of the city until the investigators return to track down the whereabouts of the missing ritual bowls (**Houses of Wonder**, page 126). Unless, of course, they decide to visit the museum for advice on where Lake Danakosha might be, only to accidentally discover that the items they seek have already been found—if so, skip straight to **Peshawar Museum**, page 127, adjusting the relevant events accordingly.

SELF-IMPROVEMENT: THE HIGH PASSES

Travel to India from Tun-huang is the perfect opportunity for the investigators to improve their skills; twice, in fact, due to the distances and time potentially involved. Suggested skill improvements on this leg of the journey are identical to those listed in **Self-Improvement: The Tarim Basin** (page 102), with the addition of Climb and Survival (Mountain). Again, there is the opportunity to learn some magic from Tenzin Kalsang, if the investigators can convince him of the merit of their studies.

THE RUNNER (OPTIONAL)

The following optional encounter can be used to enliven the investigators' trip as they head down across the border and through the mountains via the southern route from Khotan or Yarkand. Alternatively, this encounter may be used instead of **The Giantess Reborn** (page 111) optional encounter on the northern route, or whenever the investigators cross the Himalayas between India and Tibet (or vice versa). If the investigators don't have official permission to be in the country, then deploying it on their way to (or from) Tibet has important ramifications—ones that may color the investigators' decision to become involved. For more on this, see **Chapter 5: Entering Tibet** (page 192). Generic profiles for the **Government Runner**, Harit Peshin, and his British paymaster, James Strudwick (**Government Bureaucrat**), can be found in **Appendix A** (page 327).

As the investigators make their way through a freezing mountain pass (even in summer, the temperatures at these altitudes rarely climb very high, especially with the strong, near-constant winds), they spot an area where the path has crumbled away ahead of them. Looking down from the point of collapse reveals a bundle of bloodstained clothing tens of feet below the trail. Those studying the rags (a successful

MANY VOICES: HINDUSTANI

Like China, India is host to many different dialects and languages. Unlike China, India has no catch-all tongue. The closest approximations are the mutually comprehensible languages Urdu and Hindi, but these are not spoken everywhere. For game purposes, Language (Hindustani) is used to cover both Urdu and Hindi; the three terms were often used interchangeably during the period. Someone fluent in Language (Hindustani) can understand and communicate in both Hindi and Urdu.

While English is the official language of administration and education in British India, the further you go from the heartlands of the Empire, the less chance there is of someone speaking it. In the places covered in this chapter, there are many regional tongues. In the northern areas around Gilgit, you are likely to hear everything from Turki (Uighur) and Shina in the hills and valleys to Persian, Pashto (the Pathans' language), Urdu, and English in the main trading towns. Urdu, English, and Pashto are the main languages found in the North West Frontier Provinces.

Spot Hidden roll; no roll if using binoculars) realizes that they contain a person who, as far as they can tell, appears to still be alive.

Cautious investigators may wish to do nothing—after all, the mountains are filled with bandits and this could be a trap designed to embroil them in an ambush. If they decide to carry on without investigating further, their karmic balance receives a negative check (**Checks and Balances**, page 64). This isn't an ambush, and the poor man below is definitely in need of their assistance.

It requires some rope and a successful **Climb** roll to scramble or rope down to where the body lies hard up against a large boulder (the only thing that stopped the victim from careening down into the gorge below). If the roll is failed, the investigator slips but can try a pushed **Climb** roll to avoid a fall; if the push is failed, the fall delivers 1D6 damage (a kind Keeper may allow a successful **Jump** roll to halve the damage).

The person below is a barely-conscious young Indian man in desperate need of medical attention. Despite his injuries, he clutches a battered leather folschap wallet to his chest and becomes deeply disturbed if anyone tries to take it from him. He can be hauled back up to the path by rope with a successful **Hard STR** roll—with a bonus die if several investigators work together (reward ingenuity where possible).

It is obvious to those with above base skill in **Medicine** or **First Aid** that the young man is severely injured. A successful **First Aid** roll (before or after he is brought up to the path) stabilizes his condition; however, he needs to be taken to the nearest large settlement for proper medical attention if he is to survive. Even then it may be too late—who knows exactly how long he's lain undiscovered on the mountainside? A successful **Medicine** roll indicates that it's been more than 24 hours, at the very least.

Assuming the investigators treat him kindly and attempt to help him, the young man briefly regains consciousness, saying in English that his name is Harit Peshin, and begs them to take the wallet he is carrying to his employer, Mr. Strudwick of the Indian Civil Service, in Srinagar.

Keeper note: if this encounter happens instead on the northern route from Kashgar, then Gilgit is a suitable alternative location for Mr. Strudwick's offices. If, on the other hand, the encounter takes place when entering or leaving Tibet, and depending on the point at which the investigators cross the border, Darjeeling, Simla (Shimla), or Gangtok are all potential places that Mr. Strudwick could call home (see **Chapter 5: Seats of Government and Sikkim**, pages 194 and 199 respectively).

If the investigators wish to take the wallet from the youth without his permission, he's not exactly in a state

to prevent them from doing so. The wallet holds sheets of paper filled with flowing copperplate handwriting, but their contents appear to be pure gibberish. Those with **Science (Cryptography or Mathematics)** immediately recognize the script as a code, but cracking it up here in the mountains is a near-impossible task, especially without knowing the corresponding cipher. A successful **Know** roll identifies the injured man as a runner, a hardy individual used by the British to literally run secret messages between countries.

The investigators are now faced with a choice: take Peshin and his wallet to the settlement he mentioned or take the wallet and leave him where he is. As harsh as the latter option sounds, if the investigators are having a difficult trip and are struggling for supplies or have fallen victim to severe bad weather, then bringing the young man along with them could jeopardize their entire journey as it will slow them down considerably and use up vital resources they may not be able to spare. On the other hand, leaving Peshin here alone to die from either his injuries or exposure may be a step too far for some.

The decision obviously has consequences for the investigators' karmic balance, and the Keeper should keep a careful note of who argues for what—group consensus is one thing, but if a particular investigator desires a different outcome, for better or worse, they should be rated accordingly. If they seek Tenzin Kalsang's advice, he asks them to consider whether or not the young man has yet to fulfill his true potential, and ultimately accepts their judgment without comment.

If they decide to deliver Peshin, the wallet, and its contents to Strudwick, then they are greeted warmly. Strudwick thanks them for their services to the Crown and advises that if they ever need his help in the future, they should get in touch immediately. He even gives them his card.

If the investigators only brought the wallet, they need to convince Strudwick that there really wasn't anything they could do to help Peshin when they found him, or that he was already dead when they stumbled across him (a **Hard Persuade** roll). Strudwick thanks them but, depending on whether or not he believes their story, they may now find themselves subject to greater scrutiny from the authorities during their travels.

Of course, the investigators are under no obligation to deliver the wallet if they leave the young man behind—anyone finding his corpse assumes he was murdered by bandits who robbed him of everything he carried. If they keep the coded sheets, an **Extreme Science (Cryptography)** roll cracks the cipher after several weeks' study. The papers contain intelligence gathered by the British in the Tarim Basin (or Tibet, depending on where they encounter Peshin), including details of a strange party of pilgrims making their way toward India!

PART THREE: STILL WATERS

Having braved the trials and tribulations of both the Tarim Basin and India's mountain passes (depending on how they got here), the investigators must now begin their search for the ritual bowls. But, these things are never quite as straightforward as one would hope, and recovering the items takes the investigators to a very different location from the one they were expecting.

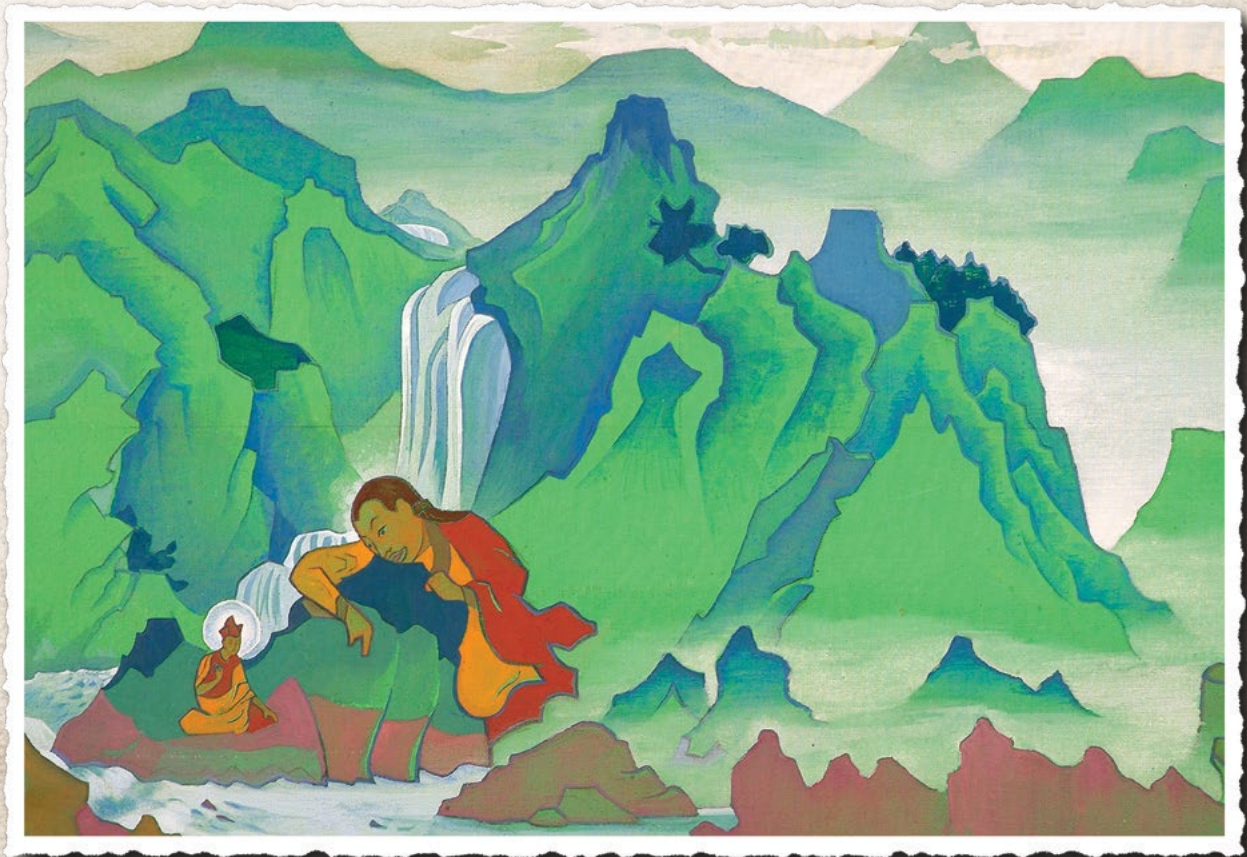
CHAKDARA

Built on the banks of the River Swat, Chakdara lies around 80 miles (130 km) from Peshawar. It was here that Alexander the Great forded the river on his journey to the Indus, and the town stands, like so many others in the region, at the junction of several important ancient trade routes.

The Swat Valley, located in its own minor princely state (just beyond the North West Frontier Provinces), once formed the northern tip of the Kingdom of Gandhara. Miangul Gulshazada ruled the valley after his election in

1918, and the British formally recognized him as the Wali of Swat in 1926. Historically home to the fierce and warlike Pathans (Pashtuns), the area was ruled by a succession of powerful empires and was widely traveled by Hiuen-Tsiang in his search for Buddhist scriptures and relics. Many scholars believe it to be the home of Vajrayana (Tantric) Buddhism, which was introduced to Tibet by Padmasambhava in the 8th century (per the information in **Handout: Gates 4**).

The fabled medieval Indian kingdom of Oddiyana, birthplace of Padmasambhava, is thought to be located in the Swat Valley, a fact the investigators are hopefully aware of thanks to the skill rolls described in **Chapter 2 (Step by Step, page 84)**. Also known as the Paradise of the Dakinis, Oddiyana was a fertile valley where wisdom and knowledge were held in high esteem. The exact location of Lake Danakosha is unknown, but the Kagyupa (**Chapter 5: Religion in Tibet, page 190**) identify the remains of a *stupa* at Andan Dheri, a few miles north of Chakdara, as the source of the spring which provided water for the lake.



Padmasambhava by Nicholas Roerich

SET UP: SMOKE AND MIRRORS

In the first part of this section, the investigators search an ancient holy site for the seven ritual offering bowls, only to find they are missing. Then, they travel on to Peshawar, former capital city of Gandhara, in order to track down an amateur archaeologist and retrieve the bowls by fair means or foul. But, are the investigators the only ones looking for the bowls? And, after a strange encounter with pisachas, is everything as it first appears?

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The following are the main NPCs for this section, whose profiles are located at the end of this chapter. Tenzin Kalsang has already been described in **Chapter 2** (page 75), and any generic characters can be found in **Appendix A**.

Robert Frederick Moorcroft, *age 51, British civil servant*

Unlike many of the other men he works with in the courts at Peshawar, Moorcroft does not herald from a long line of “Company Men” (a term sometimes used to refer to those whose families have a history of service in the subcontinent, as their ancestors were employed by the notorious British East India Company, which was in charge of British India before its fall from grace after the Indian Mutiny in 1857, when the Crown took over and formed the Raj).

The first of his family to join the Indian Civil Service (**Chain of Command**, page 121) and travel abroad, Moorcroft was inspired by his namesake, William Moorcroft (the famed British explorer and horse veterinarian, and the first Englishman to reach Leh). Moorcroft has worked in India for 30 years—not always in the North West Frontier Provinces, but consistently in the northwest of His Majesty’s Indian domains. He knows that some of his associates view his position as a punishment posting in an uncivilized backwater, but Moorcroft loves the sense of romance, danger, and history that still pervade the area, even though the upheavals and discoveries of the 19th century seem long past. Somehow, he never quite got around to finding someone to share his life with, and all his family in England are now dead. But, he’s far too busy to be lonely.

A keen amateur scholar, specializing in Gandharan history and artifacts, Moorcroft uses what little time he has away from work to indulge his passion for unearthing antiquities. He has quite the private collection and is a generous benefactor of both the Peshawar and Lahore

Museums, donating numerous objects for display. He is often consulted on matters of authenticity and identity by Suraj Dhar (following) and is always on the lookout for new and interesting artifacts, especially if they come from his beloved Gandhara (although anything from India’s early history would tempt him).

- **Description:** a tall, wiry man with thinning hair, Moorcroft has intelligent eyes and a habit of mopping his forehead and neck with a handkerchief when he overheats. This being India, that happens quite a lot.
- **Traits:** intelligent, curious, and very good at what he does. Although Moorcroft’s studies have found much to attract him to the Buddhist faith, he realizes that a middle-aged Englishman adopting it as his religion would be looked upon as somewhat ridiculous by his peers.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** Moorcroft stumbled across something far more valuable than he realized while out digging around Chakdara a few months ago—something the investigators need if they are to complete their mission. The amateur archaeologist can act as an expert in his field to answer questions the investigators may have regarding the ritual bowls or Gandharan art and history in general. Moorcroft can also help direct the investigators in their next move in their quest (see **Moving On**, page 140).



Robert Frederick Moorcroft

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Suraj Dhar, age 46, museum curator

A high-caste Brahmin and member of the so-called Babu class (Anglophile professionals and bureaucrats who work for the ICS and other British organizations), Suraj Dhar has ambitions: one day it will be his name etched into the plaque on the “big desk” belonging to the ASI’s Superintendent. It doesn’t need to be the Frontier Circle (any superintendent post will do), and it would be nice to get away from the North West Frontier Provinces, even if it would mean leaving his extended family behind.

As the second of three sons, Dhar is dutiful toward his family but appreciates the freedom being the middle child affords him. His own children are now all grown, and he has another grandchild due any minute. Although he loves his family dearly, sometimes the museum is the only place he can get any peace and quiet.

Professionally polite and accommodating, Dhar knows his stuff, although he is not a specialist in any particular era of Indian history, as he must maintain a broad view to manage the museum’s collections on a day-to-day basis. He is proud of his museum, but is aware that it is overshadowed by Lahore’s so-called *Ajaib-Gher* (Wonder House).

- **Description:** broad-shouldered and comfortably rotund, Dhar is no longer the polo-playing youth he once was. Thankfully, there is no gray in his immaculately trimmed moustache, although a few stray wisps are creeping into his hair, much to his dismay. Always smartly dressed in collar and tie, Dhar’s only concession to his age is his pair of wire-rimmed spectacles.
- **Traits:** neat, polite, and knowledgeable, with a ready sense of humor. He has a slight tendency toward condescension when dealing with people he thinks don’t know what they’re talking about, but he’s very good at hiding it when it matters. As a Hindu, Dhar believes in the universal power, Brahman, and the Trimurti (Brahma, Shiva, and Vishnu). He has a small shrine in his office to Saraswati, Brahma’s consort and the goddess of knowledge and wisdom, which he often prays to when seeking guidance.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** as the caretaker-cum-curator in residence at the Peshawar Museum, Dhar can point the investigators in the right direction when it comes to identifying the ritual bowls they seek, as well as assist in figuring out their direction of travel in their quest (see **Moving On**, page 140).

CHAIN OF COMMAND

There are three powerful entities running the Raj in British India: the military, namely the Indian Army and visiting British Army regiments; the Indian Political Service (IPS), which provides the Residents (chiefs of staff) who oversee the Agencies and princely states; and the Indian Civil Service (ICS), which supplies the administrative staff that keep the country running like clockwork.

Other notable organizations include the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), built on the foundations laid by the Asiatic Society and responsible for research into India’s rich history, and the Survey of India, responsible for surveying and mapping the Indian subcontinent and often used in the past as a front for clandestine activities in countries over the Indian border (**Chapter 5: Pundits**, page 189). Interestingly, the ASI’s first task was to survey the route Hiuen-Tsiang took in his epic journey across India, parts of which the investigators are now following.



Suraj Dhar

Isminder Veer Singh, age 24, policeman

Sergeant Singh likes people, hence his chosen profession. Most of the men in his family served in the military at some point—for maharajas, princes, or the British, depending on the era. But Singh never really liked the idea of killing strangers who were probably a great deal like him, or the thought of sacrificing himself for a King and Country on the other side of the world. He preferred to serve his local community and, as a compromise and to appease his family, he plumped for the police force instead.

Although he's done his share of traffic duty in both the cantonment and the old city, Singh now has his own beat around the Peshawar Museum and along the railway line. He's very fond of the museum and is intrigued by the relics on display. He knows that, if he keeps his nose clean and works hard, he could go far—well, as far as any Sikh in the Raj can.

Singh comes from a large, close-knit family and has spent most of his life surrounded by children: his siblings, his nieces and nephews, and now his own daughters. He loves youngsters in general, which is one of the reasons he hasn't taken measures to have the street children around the museum moved on. He is well aware of how fortunate he is and does what he can to help others whenever and wherever he can, not just because it is part of his duties as a Khalsa (a Pure One) but because it's in his nature—see **Guru Singh's Warriors**, page 123.

- **Description:** tall and muscled, Singh is an imposing figure in his smart police uniform. As a Khalsa, Singh wears a turban and does not cut his luxurious beard or his hair. Those looking closely can also spot his *kara* (steel bangle) and *kirpan* (dagger).
- **Traits:** friendly, quiet, and watchful. Baptized as a Khalsa, Singh takes his sacred duty to protect the weak and defend his faith seriously. He is determined to be a good husband and father, and a good role model for his little princesses-to-be.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** Singh makes a superb friend and a terrible enemy. He prefers to use persuasion rather than his physical bulk when dealing with suspects, but when needs must, he's quite prepared to resort to intimidation.

Pisachas, ghoul subspecies

Depending on which mythology you subscribe to, pisachas may be: members of the various tribes of Central Asia, the Himalayas, and northwest India (including Gilgit) vilified as eaters of raw flesh and accused of human sacrifice by the Aryans as they migrated into India; the dead who did not receive the proper funerary rites and so could not pass on to their next incarnation, instead clinging on to existence as the undead while feasting on human corpses; or cannibal demons, as indicated by their Sanskrit name.

THE CASTE SYSTEM

At the beginning of the 20th century, native Indian society was strictly governed by the caste system. Although there are many castes by the time the British arrive in India, originally there were only four occupational, non-hereditary castes that applied first to the Vedics and then to the Hindus who followed them.

At the top of the heap were the Brahmins, the priestly caste; then came the Kshatriyas, the warrior and noble caste; then the Vaishyas, the merchant caste; and finally, the Shudras, the caste of servants and artisans. At the bottom of the social hierarchy were the Dalits, the Untouchables—casteless members of society who performed the jobs no one else would sully themselves with, such as dealing with the dead.

A person's caste determined the structure of their whole life, from what they wore to what jobs they could perform, and who they could associate with. Stepping outside of one's caste was strictly taboo, with potentially devastating consequences for the perpetrator and their entire family.



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GURU SINGH'S WARRIORS

India's male Sikhs are instantly recognizable thanks to their turbans (*dastar*) and well-groomed beards, which may become quite substantial with age. Their beards are part of the five Ks (in this case, *kes*: uncut hair, representing spirituality) of their faith, symbols that all Khalsa (those initiated fully into the Sikh religion) must carry. The other four Ks are: *kangha*, the comb used to maintain the hair and beard, symbolizing discipline and hygiene; *kaccha*, cotton undergarments representing chastity and self-control; *kirpan*, a dagger representing courage, power, and dignity; and *kara*, a steel bangle representing restraint and determination.

Most often, though, pisachas are thought of as disease-bearing ghouls who live in graveyards and charnel grounds across Central Asia and Northern India, eating cadavers and performing a grim service of sorts in countries where dead bodies rapidly fester in the hot and humid conditions, or where there is insufficient fuel to burn the corpses. Unlike the Aghoris (see **Chapter 4**) with whom they often share such places, the pisachas do not consume the dead in a search for enlightenment, but merely for sustenance. Due to their association with death, pisachas occasionally worship Sisirama (another name for Mordiggian, the Charnel God—see **Chapter 7: Sibling Squabbles**, page 286).

- **Description:** pisachas have much in common with ghouls, although they are less canine in appearance and have bright red eyes, which glow eerily in the dark. Other than that, they are just as loathsome. Pisachas worshipping Sisirama all bear some token of the Charnel God: usually a twisted wire pendant in the shape of a crude whirlwind or, in more extreme cases, a brand of the same design.
- **Traits:** in addition to the traits and skills possessed by their ghoul cousins, pisachas retain rudimentary human language skills—enough to get their point across with spoken word when required.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** the Tokabhaya managed to convince the pisachas they recruited in Peshawar and Patna that their dark deity is another face (an avatar) of the King of Fear, and that they share a common purpose. The Children of Fear consider the pisachas as useful—and expendable—foot soldiers in their plan to open the Gates of Agartha.

RACISM IN COLONIAL INDIA

Alongside the inequities of the **Caste System** (page 122), institutionalized racism ran rampant during the colonial administration in India. If playing a “historically accurate” game, this may lead to problems if none of the investigators are white or able to pass as such. If the Keeper doesn't want to soften or ignore the stance of white British officials and organizations, then the investigators will need to seek out sympathetic souls who have a more enlightened view of the world. Many of the generic NPCs detailed in **Appendix A** can be adapted for such purposes, particularly those who, despite their Indian heritage, have risen to positions of influence against the odds, and may act on the investigators' behalf (or become player-characters). Alternatively, the Keeper may dispense with such historical depictions in games for the comfort of the players. Either way, it is recommended that groups discuss and reach a consensus on the role historical racism takes in their games: cutting it out entirely, presenting it in limited form, or exploring the matter to a fuller degree.



Pisacha

START: REFLECTIONS

Regardless of how they reach Chakdara, the investigators find themselves in a small village, overlooked by a British fort and the fortified picket atop Damkot Hill. The most distant British garrison in Swat, Chakdara is surrounded by evidence of the past and, as such, is a frequent haunt of archaeologists, surveyors, and religious pilgrims. Unless the investigators have done something to damage their reputation with the British government, they are unlikely to be challenged by any officials in the area, although their actions may be watched.

Those with an above-base skill knowledge of **History**, **Lore (Buddhism)**, or **Occult** recall that Hiuen-Tsiang wrote about Lake Danakosha, when he visited in the 7th century CE. If, on their way through the bazaars of Sinkiang or India, they acquired a copy of the wandering monk's writings: *Great Tang Records on the Western Regions* (as noted in **Chapter 2: The Monastery of Flourishing Teaching**, page 52), then the investigators can use these to help locate the various ancient sites belonging to the kingdom of Gandhara—in this case, specifically the Andan Dheri *stupa*.

Alternatively, if they have not researched Hiuen-Tsiang's writings, the investigators may talk to any of the pilgrims traveling in the area, who can provide information about the number of holy sites within the Swat Valley, as well as give directions to the path that takes the faithful pilgrims the 5 miles (8 km) up to the remnants of the largely buried stone monument at Andan Dheri. In addition, if the investigators are not traveling with Tenzin Kalsang, the pilgrims may act as experts in their field regarding not only the location of the Andan Dheri *stupa*, but also the myths surrounding what is supposed to be buried there (**Chapter 2: Step by Step**, page 84; use the **Pilgrim** profile in **Appendix A** as required).

THE STUPA

A tree-covered mound marking the site of the Andan Dheri *stupa* rises from the surrounding cultivated land—the *stupa* is all but hidden from view beneath the shrubs and grasses. The broad base of the valley slopes gently toward the mound, indicating that the fields may have once been the site of a lake, although there is absolutely no sign of it now.

Tenzin Kalsang approaches the base of the mound with great reverence, and begins to walk around it counterclockwise, chanting a prayer and counting off his *mala* beads as he goes. After three complete circuits of the *stupa*, he clambers onto the mound to investigate it further. Questioning him about his actions while he circles the mound elicits no answers but, as soon as he is finished, he explains that he is showing respect to the birthplace of the Precious Teacher, Padmasambhava, who was born here.

If Tenzin Kalsang is carrying the *melong*, he gives it to the investigator with the highest POW and instructs them to stand on the mound with their back to the valley. He then asks that they hold the stone mirror at face height, but slightly to one side, so that when they look into it, they can see over their left shoulder. Finally, he says to close their eyes, take a deep breath, and think of the sound of gently lapping water. Once that is fixed in their mind, they can open their eyes again.

With a successful **POW** roll, when the investigator opens their eyes, they see a broad, glittering lake reflected in the mirror. If they turn to look directly at the water, all they see are fields, and looking back into the mirror shows the investigator nothing but dim reflections of the trees and bushes on the mound; the strange experience calls for a **Sanity** roll (0/1 loss), which is repeated each time the *melong* is used. Further concentration and another successful **POW** roll are required to see the lake again; a fumble or a failed pushed roll (after a short period of further instruction from Tenzin Kalsang) results in the investigator suffering from bleed-through (see **Line of Sight** and **Side Effects**, page 126).

If someone else is already carrying the *melong*, the *lama* instructs them on what to do instead. Each investigator is encouraged to try using the mirror, so that they can confirm for themselves that this is indeed the site of the mystical lake. Even if no one manages to get the *melong* to work this time, Tenzin Kalsang is convinced they are in the right location, and encourages them to proceed with their search for the ritual bowls' resting place.

Hunting around the mound eventually reveals the base of the *stupa* among the bushes and weeds. There are obvious signs that someone has been here before them, although judging by the state of growth on the trees and shrubs, the visit must have been at least a couple of months ago. The monk encourages the investigators to use the *melong* to locate the source of the spring which fed the lake, as that is where the bowls are said to be buried. This location also happens to coincide with the area that has been most disturbed. Alternatively, if no one succeeds with the *melong*, a successful **Science (Geology)**, **Natural World**, or **Survival** roll identifies the most likely location of the former spring.

Clearing the area of greenery takes a little while. Digging through the rubble and soil confirms that someone else has already been here, particularly when a dirt-stained handkerchief bearing the hand-stitched monogram "RFM" is unearthed. Further digging reveals a square-cut recess in the base of the *stupa* where something was obviously secreted; there are traces of staining in the mud bricks from what were probably the metal bands wrapped around a box of some sort.

Enterprising investigators who wish to use the *melong* to see what happened here are quite welcome to try. As before,

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they must stand with their back to the sight they wish to observe, close their eyes and concentrate on something they believe links their thoughts to the time of interest. As long as they suggest something appropriate, a successful **POW** roll reveals a thin, sweating man repeatedly dabbing his forehead with a handkerchief while scraping soil out of a hole in the *stupa's* mound. The image is shadowy, slightly out of focus, and completely silent, but the observer should be able to identify the man if they ever saw him again. If the investigator achieves a Hard success, they also see the man withdraw an intricately carved wooden box from the hole; an Extreme success shows him removing the ritual bowls they seek from the box and admiring them. The image then fades, leaving the investigator feeling slightly dizzy.

Chatting to the local farmers and villagers confirms that an English *sahib* was digging on the mound around three or four months ago. He was just one more in a long line of people hunting for ancient statues and buildings, feverishly digging them up, and carting them back to Peshawar for their museum. No one can remember his name, but they do recognize the given description (if the investigators have one from using the *melong*) and seem to think that he was an amateur historian who worked for the Indian Civil Service. They've seen him in the area several times, but he tends to

keep to himself and always brings his own bearers with him from Peshawar.

A professional archaeologist investigator may attempt an **Archaeology** roll to see if any names spring to mind from the initials on the handkerchief. If successful, they recall an amateur archaeologist in Peshawar by the name of Robert Moorcroft. If the roll is failed, asking around (or for those with some archaeological training or familiarity with the region) points to the museum in Peshawar as the main destination for all artifacts found in the area. Even if the objects they seek aren't there, the museum's staff may well know the gentleman that found them, and should be able to point them in his direction.

Should the investigators decide to inquire at the fort at Damkot Hill to see if they know who the gentleman in question is, a successful **Charm, Persuade, or Credit Rating** roll gets the investigators past the sentries on duty to speak to a young subaltern; any member of the armed forces—present or retired—who can demonstrate their credentials is automatically allowed entry, no questions asked.

The subaltern, although he hasn't met the man personally, believes his name was "Moor-something," and that he was undoubtedly an "office-*wallah*" up from the city. While not desperately helpful, the name fragment at least corresponds to the initials on the handkerchief the investigators found at the *stupa*.



The ancient *stupa*

LINE OF SIGHT

While the *melong* is a powerful artifact, it is not all-powerful; the investigators can't just whip it out and start looking over their shoulders wherever, and whenever, they feel like it. It only has the power to reveal the hidden and forgotten in what Tenzin Kalsang refers to as "places of power" (*rten*)—locations that are revered, holy, or where some momentous event once took place.

Notes on where the *melong* can be used, and what the investigators are likely to see if they use it, can be found throughout the following chapters. There are consequences for using the *melong*. On top of the dangers of Sanity loss for using the artifact (0/1 loss per use), as well as the consequences for fumbling or failing a pushed POW roll to activate it, prolonged or excessive use also leads to bleed-through (see following).

SIDE EFFECTS

Prolonged and repeated use of the *melong*, particularly if looking far back into history at sites of great power, begins to have lasting effects on the person using it. They start to experience bleed-through—snatches of visions at places of power without even having to use the mirror. Each time this happens, the investigator should make a **Sanity** roll (0/1 loss), which if failed also induces 1D3 rounds of paranoia (treat this as a limited bout of madness) as they witness what no one else can see. Precisely when an investigator begins to suffer from bleed-through is at the Keeper's discretion, although it should be sooner rather than later if the investigators insist on using the *melong* to solve every puzzle they are presented with.

Once an investigator has lost 5 Sanity points from using the *melong*, have them make a **History** roll: if failed, they gain 1D10 skill points in the History skill (as per an investigator development phase skill check). In addition, they gain an applicable phobia or, perhaps more appropriately, a mania.

For example: a fear of missing out on something important or entertaining (FOMO), ecdemomania (a compulsion to wander, perhaps to find suitable places to use the *melong*), epistomomania (an obsession with acquiring knowledge), or monomania (an obsession with a single idea or thought, such as using the *melong*).

From this point onwards, every time the investigator visits a vaguely historical site, they must make a **POW** roll to resist using the *melong* and snooping on its previous inhabitants. Failure indicates that they give into their impulse and risk losing further Sanity points. All subsequent POW rolls to resist using the *melong* then become Hard; a further failure makes all subsequent POW rolls Extreme. For every further 5 points of Sanity lost, the investigator makes another **History** skill development roll and gains +1D10 skill points and a new phobia or mania.

IN ABSENTIA I

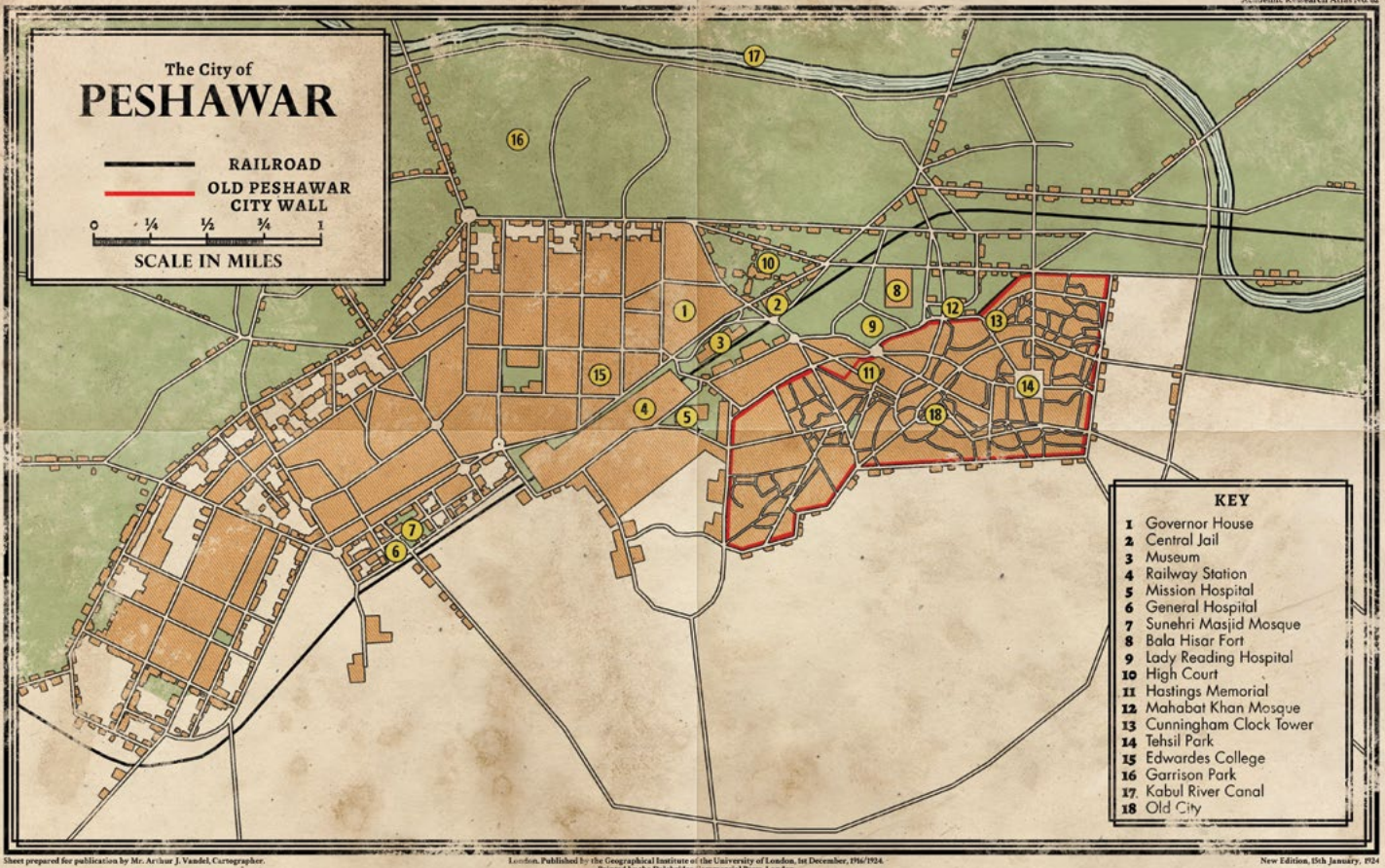
If the investigators are traveling without Tenzin Kalsang, he provided them with the *melong*, along with instructions on how to use the stone mirror, before they left Tun-huang.

HOUSES OF WONDER (PESHAWAR)

Nestled in a valley at the eastern end of the Khyber Pass, Peshawar is one of the most ancient cities in the region, and certainly the oldest still in operation. Many empires have made their headquarters here, the Kingdom of Gandhara included. Indeed, so closely is the kingdom associated with the immediate area that Gandhara is often used as an alternate name for the Peshawar Valley.

While known as Po-Lu-Shah to the Chinese, the city has had many names. As the City of Flowers (Pushapur), it was the winter capital of the mighty Kushan Empire, but it was

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also known as Purusapara, the City of Men. A major center of art, learning, and trade, the city flourished, eventually becoming British frontier headquarters thanks to its position on the Grand Trunk Road (**The River of Life**, page 140) and its proximity to the infamous Khyber Pass and the “lawless” tribes of Afghanistan.

The British took up residence in their cantonment, located over the railway lines to the west of the old walled city and under the watchful gaze of the Balar Hisar fort. Originally built by Babur, the first of the Mughal Emperors, the fort was later rebuilt by the Sikhs after they sacked it during their assault on the city.

As a result of the myriad cultural influences that have contributed to its history, Peshawar is full of traditional Indian buildings (including *havelis*, classical Indian townhouses), European churches, bustling bazaars, and ancient monuments. Along the Grand Trunk Road and in the city’s dusty streets and alleyways, camels, horses, and elephants rub shoulders with *tongas* (two-wheeled horse-drawn carriages), bullock carts, and the few motor vehicles.

Turbaned Pathans suck on *naswar*, a snuff made of tobacco, lime, and spices kept stuffed into their cheeks; they frequently discharge a vile greenish spit that seems to get everywhere. Give the players **Handout: Song 3** when the investigators arrive in Peshawar.

Peshawar Museum

Originally built in 1905 as the Victoria Memorial Hall, the red- and yellow-brick premises formally became the home of the Peshawar Museum in 1906. Famed for its Gandharan art collection, donated by a succession of largely British archaeologists and the staff of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), the museum falls under the honorary curatorship of the Superintendent of the ASI for the Frontier Circle to which the North West Frontier Provinces belong. The day-to-day running of the museum, however, falls to the superintendent’s Hindu deputy, Suraj Dhar (**Dramatis Personae**, page 121); the current superintendent, Harold Hargreaves, is usually away supervising digs across the region.


The city of Peshawar map



PESHAWAR'S WEATHER

Despite most people's conception of India as being a country ravaged by the heavy downpours of the monsoon season, Peshawar is not a monsoon region. It does see rain, however, usually in the winter and especially between February and April, but summer showers are also a feature of the local weather.

Winters, which nominally run from November to late March, can be cold, dipping down to around 39 degrees F (4 degrees C) on average, although the temperature does drop below that on occasion. Summer occupies the weeks from mid-May to mid-September, wherein temperatures climb to over 104 degrees F (40 degrees C). The city becomes particularly sticky, humid, and unpleasant in August.



A large Sikh policeman, Isminder Veer Singh (**Dramatis Personae**, page 122), hovers beside the front door. If asked, he explains that he is taking a break from his patrol of the area to make sure that Peshawar's street children don't pester the museum's visitors. Those scanning the area can see a small gaggle of urchins peeking around the corner of the building, obviously waiting for the policeman to take his leave.

Handout: Song 3

The Kingdom of Gandhara is believed to have lasted for over 2,000 years. Originally an independent state, it was then ruled by the Persian Empire and the Greeks before being traded to Chandragupta, leader of the Mauryan Empire, for 500 elephants. The last great Mauryan to rule Gandhara was Chandragupta's grandson, Ashoka, who introduced Buddhism to the area. After Ashoka's death, the Mauryan Empire crumbled, but Gandhara continued. Its unusual art style—a fusion of those of its many conquerors, including the Bactrian Greeks, Scythians, Persians, and Kushans—attracted attention from across the known world. Trade also flourished, and the Kushan Empire went on to extend the Silk Road through the Indus Valley to the Indian Ocean and the Roman Empire beyond.

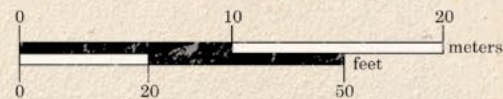
The kingdom fragmented after the arrival of the White Huns in the 5th century; from the 11th century onwards, it witnessed the arrival of Islam, the Mughals, the Afghans, the Sikhs, and finally, in the mid-19th century, the British. Gandhara, or what remained of it, became part of the North West Frontier Provinces in 1901 when they were separated from the Punjab.

Inside, the museum is a haven of peace and tranquility, beautifully cool in summer without turning chilly in winter. From the lofty main hall (18), painted a gleaming white, visitors can see up to the second-floor galleries (17) as well as catch glimpses of the side galleries (4) on the first floor. Several Westerners and a few pilgrims meander through the exhibits. One young woman has brought a folding stool with her and sits on it while sketching one of the larger statues.

On Display

If the investigators decide to wander around the museum before asking about the mysterious “RFM” initials found on the handkerchief at the Andan Dheri *stupa*, they find an impressive selection of ancient artworks tastefully displayed in glass cases and on plinths and pedestals in the cool hallways and main room. Tenzin Kalsang is almost speechless with wonder at the sights on offer, but with encouragement, he talks of how familiar the objects are to him from his former life.

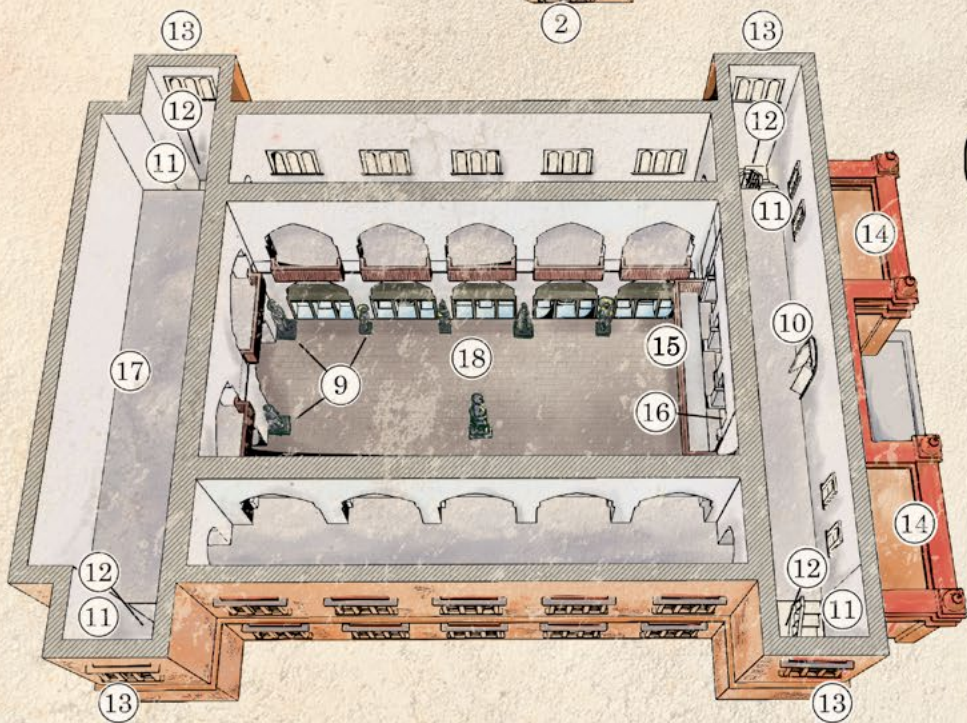
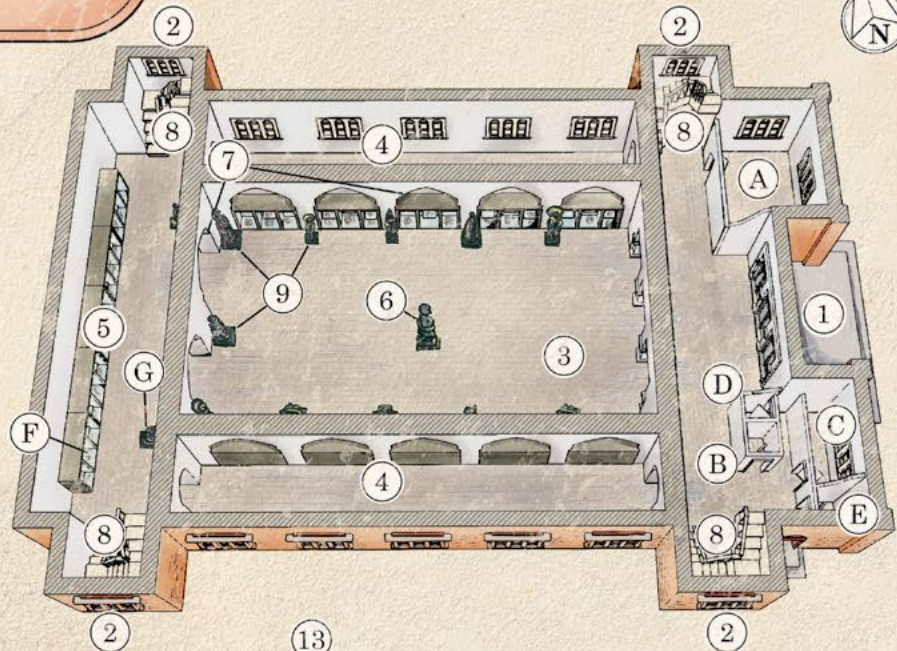
With a successful **Spot Hidden** roll, the investigators notice a display cabinet in a corner of the rear gallery (F), tucked away in the shadow of a large Buddha (G). Inside, resting on a row of seven stepped plinths, are a set of alms bowls (at least, that's what they've been labelled as), all in a remarkable state of preservation. When Tenzin Kalsang sees the bowls, he exclaims, “*There they are! But oh dear, oh dear—this is all wrong, all wrong.*” He seems genuinely disturbed by the display, insisting that the bowls should have been placed the other way up, given that they are empty.



PESHAWAR MUSEUM

c. 1924

- First Floor**
1. Entrance
 2. Towers
 3. Main Hall
 4. Side Galleries
 5. Rear Gallery
 6. Central Statue
 7. Arches
 8. Stairs
 9. Statues



- Second Floor**
10. Exterior Balcony Door
 11. Stairs
 12. Light Well
 13. Towers
 14. Exterior Balcony
 15. Interior Balcony
 16. Steps
 17. Upstairs Gallery
 18. Main Hall

- Important Locations**
- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| A. Mr. Hargreave & Mr. Dhar's Office | E. Stairs to Basement Storage Area |
| B. Chai Wallah's Kitchen | F. Cabinet Containing Ritual Bowls |
| C. Secretaries' Office | G. Statue |
| D. Cleaner's Store Cupboard | |



Handout: Song 4

ALMS BOWLS

COPPER/TIN ALLOY WITH METEORIC IRON.
GANDHARAN ERA CIRCA 3RD CENTURY BC

ANDAN DHERI, CHAKDARA

ON LOAN FROM MR. ROBERT F. MOORCROFT, ICS

The display's handwritten label (**Handout: Song 4**) claims that the bowls were unearthed by a Mr. Robert F. Moorcroft in the Andan Dheri region and are currently on loan to the museum.


Examining the bowls through the glass case shows that the museum has marked each one with tiny reference numbers in white paint. The bowls are remarkably plain, apart from a dimpled finish where they have been beaten into shape with a hammer; the label notes they are made from a copper-tin alloy with meteoric iron. One bowl is larger than the rest, approximately 12 inches (30 cm) across, while the others decrease in diameter one inch at a time down to the smallest, at 6 inches (15 cm) across. Their heights decrease proportionally from 6 inches (15 cm) down to 3 inches (7.5 cm).



COIN OF THE REALM: INDIA

Unlike in most of its colonial territories, the British Empire allowed India to maintain its own currency after conquest: the rupee. While the coin itself is standard, there are many different versions; besides the Raj's regal issues, the rulers of the princely states often minted their own coins, as did India's French enclaves. All are legal tender.

In terms of conversion, 15 rupees is equivalent to £1 sterling, or \$5 dollars US. One of the most frequently encountered lesser coins is the anna; there being 16 annas to one rupee, and beggars often request a "spare anna or two" from passersby.



Those with a relevant **Art/Craft** skill or some skill in **Archaeology** or **History**, agree that, yes, they do look as if they contain iron, at least judging by the color, and that such artifacts are, anecdotally at least, usually made from meteoric metals when hailing from countries without easy access to iron ore, such as Tibet.

The *lama* is most insistent that the label is wrong on two counts. For a start, they are not alms bowls, but are intended for ritual offerings of water or other sacred fluids or objects. Second, they are made from a magical alloy of seven metals, many of which were gathered from the sites of lightning strikes and

thereby blessed by the gods. Tenzin Kalsang refers

to the iron content of the bowls as "blazing sky iron." This set of bowls is even more hallowed, he says, as they were the Great Guru's, brought back from Tibet to his birthplace by Yeshe Tsogyal and buried as *terma*. The *lama* is a surprised that someone else found them, but shrugs amiably, adding that everyone has a part to play in the grand scheme of things.

If Tenzin Kalsang is not with the investigators, a successful **Archaeology** or **Lore (Buddhism)** roll reveals the bowls' true nature; otherwise, these finer points of artifact classification are lost to the investigators. Besides which, in the long run, the information is unimportant—what matters is that the ritual bowls have been found.

Keeper note: due to their ancient and venerable history, there is more to the bowls than at first meets the eye. Mechanically-speaking, if they are used in a ritual, they reduce the difficulty level of any attempts to cast the spell they are being used with—for example, from Hard to Regular. The reduction in difficulty applies as long as all seven bowls are present, even if they are not all actively used in the ceremony.

The Curator's Office

If the investigators attempt to find information on "RFM" as soon as they enter the museum, asking the young clerk seated in the entryway (1) about the initials quickly directs them to the office of the on-site curator (A), Mr. Suraj Dhar. A large man no longer in his prime, Dhar welcomes the investigators into his inner sanctum and asks how he can be of assistance. He is obviously curious about the investigators and their traveling companion, the *lama*, but is also far too polite to make a direct inquiry.

There are two desks in the office, one belonging to Dhar, and the other to a Mr. H. Hargreaves (according

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to the name plaques, at least). Dhar's desk is very neat and organized, whereas Hargreaves' desk has virtually disappeared under mounds of paperwork. Dhar shakes hands with each of the visitors in turn before sitting down behind his desk and waiting for someone to begin. A large ceiling fan whirs lazily overhead, and there are insufficient chairs for everyone to take a seat.

If asked about British archaeologists digging in the Andan Dheri region, Dhar turns in his chair and pulls a ledger from the shelves behind him. He lays it open on his desk, takes his wire-rimmed reading glasses from his jacket pocket, places them firmly on his nose, and looks expectantly at the investigators, awaiting further details. Any additional information they give him, such as a description, what was found, and so on, helps him narrow down the potential identity of person they seek. Showing Dhar the handkerchief helps immensely, as does the young subaltern's pronouncement that the man's name began with "Moor-".

Provided they give him enough details, Dhar replies, "*Ah, yes—Mr. Moorcroft. One of our gifted amateurs. He certainly has an uncanny knack for finding interesting and unusual objects, and the Andan Dheri alms bowls were some of his best. Have you seen them?*"

If they have not yet seen the bowls, Dhar takes them straight to the display cabinet. He appears most intrigued to hear Tenzin Kalsang's thoughts on the bowls, although a successful **Psychology** roll identifies a certain degree of polite condescension and amusement on his part when dealing with the apparently young monk.

If they have already seen the bowls, Tenzin Kalsang respectfully points out the inaccuracies in their label and method of display to the quietly nodding curator. A successful **Psychology** roll identifies the amusement in Dhar's attitude during the *lama's* corrections, despite his apparent professional demeanor.

Dhar provides the investigators with a description of Moorcroft (if they don't already have one) but is reticent to hand over details of where he lives or works unless the investigators can convince him otherwise. A successful **Charm**, **Psychology**, or **Hard Persuade** roll sways him, although **Intimidate** or **Fast Talk** may also work, depending on the circumstances—a lifetime of dealing with British bureaucracy has left Dhar largely immune to bullyboy tactics and flim-flam, so treat any Intimidate and Fast Talk rolls as **Hard**. Provided the investigators manage to convince him that they are trustworthy, the curator gives them Moorcroft's address in the British cantonment.



THE MAN FROM THE MINISTRY

Robert Moorcroft's house is located on a leafy street just off Khyber Road, not far from Governor House and the courts where he works. A modest building, its small garden is well-tended and shady. Ringing the doorbell attracts the attention of a smartly liveried servant, who politely requests the investigators' names and the purpose of their visit.

At Work

Depending on what time of day the investigators choose to call, Moorcroft is either at work (daytime), in his study (early and very late evening), or at the Royal Ancillary Club (after dinner). If he is at work, the servant requests that they leave their calling cards and try again this evening before dinner. Trying to see Moorcroft at his place of work is impossible—the courts are always busy and, even if they seek him out, he asks them to meet him at either his home or at his club, depending on how they approach him. The club is his preferred option if the investigators insist on talking to him despite his obvious lack of time.

At the Royal Ancillary Club

If Moorcroft is already at his club when the investigators call, the servant gives them directions, pointing out that, unless they are members, they won't be able to get beyond the front desk without an invitation. Any conversation had with Moorcroft

at his club takes place in the lounge, a spacious room full of deep leather chairs, hunting trophies, and a huge portrait of George V, the King Emperor of India. The air is thick with the smell of pipe tobacco and whisky. Apart from a few quiet conversations, the only sound is that of rustling newspapers.

The interview follows along the lines described below, but without the opportunity to look over Moorcroft's private collection of artifacts. If the investigators impress him sufficiently with their tale and/or their knowledge of Gandhara (a successful **Charm** or **History** roll), then they may be invited back to Moorcroft's home to view the items in question.

At Home

If Moorcroft is in, and it is a reasonable time of day, the servant still requests cards (a hastily scribbled note will do, unless the investigators had the foresight to ask Dhar for a letter of introduction), which he takes through to Moorcroft while the investigators wait for an answer on the step. Luckily, Moorcroft's reply is not long in coming, and the servant shows them into a lavishly decorated study that stands in complete contrast to the house's modest exterior.

Bookshelves line the walls, and side tables groan under the weight of monographs and *objets d'art*. Where there aren't shelves, paintings and bizarre masks adorn the walls. An over-stuffed and somewhat worn sofa sits beneath the window at one end of the room, opposite a large mahogany desk. Despite the quantity of material present, the room is very neat.

Robert Moorcroft, when he appears, is impeccably turned out, dressed as he is for dinner. Even in the 1920s, British residents still donned black tie for evening meals and visits to

MEMBERS ONLY

Expatriate clubs across the British Empire were bastions of privilege and snobbery. The military and civil services had their own meeting places, and learned societies had (almost) equal footing when it came to being recognized as suitable venues to spend one's time socializing.

Women, "foreigners" (i.e., anyone not British), and non-whites were often either utterly unwelcome within the club's hallowed halls or were only accepted into certain rooms within the club house (and under the strict supervision of a member or on certain special occasions). If you wish to ignore the strictures of the day when visiting Moorcroft's club, please feel free to do so; otherwise, only male investigators are permitted to speak to Moorcroft within the building; Tenzin Kalsang and any women will be asked to wait in the club's gardens (although they can get refreshments while they wait).

SOMETHING FOR THE LADIES

If the gentlemen decide to visit a club that does not permit women and/or non-whites, it is suggested that the Keeper has something else on hand to keep those so excluded occupied: perhaps a run in with shadowy assailants (pisachas keeping an eye on them, or the archaeologist from **The Painted Ruins**, page 102, for example), or a trip to the bazaars of Peshawar, where they may hear something to their advantage in the Street of Storytellers (any relevant historical handouts from this and other chapters as the Keeper desires), or encounter and possibly befriend a useful NPC (from **Appendix A**).

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the club—partly for appearance's sake, but also to maintain the strict routine viewed as essential in combatting the ever-present threat of tropical malaise. His perfectly pressed suit and white bow tie are in sharp contrast to the perspiring gentleman with rolled-up sleeves the investigators may have witnessed at the Andan Dheri *stupa* via the *melong*.

Moorcroft's handshake is firm and confident, and his eyes sparkle with curiosity, particularly when the investigators present him with his missing handkerchief (if they do). He listens attentively to the investigators and answers their questions with all candor where he can. It is clear from his collection and knowledge that he has a keen interest in the history of Gandhara and its Buddhist monuments. He is particularly fascinated by Tenzin Kalsang (assuming the *lama* is in attendance).

If asked why he was digging at Andan Dheri, Moorcroft replies that he has been systematically investigating the area for several years now. It was his study of the works of Fa Hsien and Hiuen-Tsiang, along with what he refers to as his "sixth sense when it comes to these sorts of things," that led him to the *stupa* and the bowls. This admission certainly aligns with Suraj Dhar's description of Moorcroft's "uncanny knack," although the Englishman has no actual supernatural or magical powers—he really is just very good at what he does—although letting the investigators think that there's more to him than meets the eye is no bad thing!

Keeper note: refer to **Handout: Song 5** for what Moorcroft says regarding Fa Hsien, and then provide the handout to the players. What he knows concerning Hiuen-Tsiang is covered by **Handout: Gates 1**, which the players most likely already possess and know.

If given the opportunity, Moorcroft explains that he loaned the bowls to the museum because they were such an unusual and rare find; beautiful objects of that nature should be available for all to enjoy, as far as he is concerned. He is very proud of the work he has done recovering such items, several of which he still has in his possession, although most of his collection is either in the Peshawar Museum or the one in Lahore.

RECOVERY

Now that the investigators have located the ritual bowls, they should decide how they are going to obtain them. There are several options available, not all of them legal. The main options, with some variations, are described below; however, the Keeper should encourage the investigators to be creative about their recovery efforts.

Tenzin Kalsang supports the investigators in whatever scheme they choose, although he won't directly involve himself in the execution of any plan they come up with. Even theft does not shock him or earn his approbation—

Handout: Song 5

Apart from what he wrote of himself in his travelogues, little is known about the Chinese Buddhist monk Fa Hsien (Faxian). He and four of his colleagues left Shan-hsi (Shanxi) Province, China, in 399 CE on pilgrimage, taking the Southern Silk Road down into Gandhara, where they arrived three years later. After they'd visited what he described as a "Buddhist Paradise," Fa Hsien's colleagues returned home, leaving him to carry on alone. He wandered across northern India, touring the four holiest sites in Buddhism (Lumbini, Bodh Gaya, Sarnath, and Kusinagara), collecting Buddhist scriptures as he went. In 407, he finally began his homeward journey, spending two years in the kingdom of Singhala (Sri Lanka). Despite several shipwrecks along the way, he finally reached China almost 15 years after first leaving home.

Although not the first Chinese pilgrim to seek Buddhist wisdom in the land of its birth, Fa Hsien was the first whose travelogue was widely read, and its contents were highly influential on those who came after him, such as Hiuen-Tsiang. His book, *A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms*, was translated into English in 1869.



after all, the bowls were left for them to use for a specific undertaking—they can be returned as soon as their task is complete. He agrees with Moorcroft that, once they have served their purpose, they should be enjoyed by everyone.

Sale or Return?

The investigators may wish to purchase the bowls from Moorcroft, depending on how affluent they are. While it's not impossible for them to do so, Moorcroft is incredibly resistant to the idea if he is offered cash—less so if an exchange is suggested. If either the *melong* or Tenzin Kalsang's *khatvanga* are offered instead of money, any relevant skill checks to convince Moorcroft to let them have the bowls are Regular difficulty (as opposed to Extreme, in the case of cash). Loss of the *khatvanga* at this stage may prevent the investigators from using its hidden powers, if the Keeper is using that option (see **Footsore and Travel Weary**, page 89), and the *lama* insists on finding a suitable replacement before they leave Peshawar—perhaps leading to a side adventure of the Keeper's own design.

If something else is offered, the Keeper should use their discretion regarding the difficulty level of any associated roll to convince Moorcroft to make a deal; the more mundane or common the offering, the harder the skill check. Depending on the extent of their travels prior to reaching Peshawar, the investigators may have acquired some interesting artifacts of their own—ones that a scholar like Moorcroft would be keen to study.

If a sale or exchange is agreed upon, Moorcroft accompanies the investigators to the museum to retrieve the bowls as described in **On Loan** (following) and subject to the same conditions if Intimidate is used to secure the sale.

On Loan

The investigators may convince Moorcroft to let them simply borrow the bowls, with a view to returning them later, but their reasons have to be good; a successful **Charm, Fast Talk**, or Hard **Persuade** roll is required. A successful **Psychology** roll suggests arguments that might appeal to Moorcroft, such as wishing to study the bowls to authenticate the materials they are made from or to date them more accurately.

Of course, the investigators could just tell Moorcroft the truth. He seems oddly unsurprised by the revelation if they do so, particularly if the *lama* confirms the story, and says that he always knew there was something deeply special about the bowls. He is well aware of the legends of Padmasambhava's *terma* and is thrilled that the investigators think the bowls are one of the Guru's hidden treasures.

If the investigators are successful in convincing Moorcroft to let them borrow the bowls, he accompanies them to Peshawar Museum to speak with Dhar about their removal. Dhar is not happy, but the bowls are only on loan, so

despite a half-hearted attempt to convince Moorcroft of the foolishness of taking them from the museum, the burly curator carefully removes the items from their display case and sees to their packing (a plain wooden crate a little larger than the largest bowl, lined with straw). He sadly writes out an additional card for the display case: "Temporarily Removed From Display For Cleaning."

Note that attempts to **Intimidate** Moorcroft into relinquishing the bowls require not only a successful roll, but also a **Charm, Fast Talk, Persuade**, or **Intimidate** roll with Dhar once at the museum (at Regular or Hard difficulty, depending on context). The investigators could, as an alternative, pressure Moorcroft into writing a release note to Dhar, but the note's use still requires a successful social skill roll to assuage the curator's suspicions. Use of Intimidate not only affects the investigators' karmic balance (**Checks and Balances**, page 64), but leaves room for Moorcroft to reconsider and inform the authorities, in which case the rest of their trip through India will be dogged by British law enforcement unless they can give them the slip.

Breaking and Entering

Of course, there is always the option of stealing the bowls from the museum. It's a risky undertaking but, depending on the investigators' skills and their interactions with Moorcroft and Dhar, it may be the best (or only) option. It is an opportunity for action, although the potential fallout from a failed attempt should not be underestimated.

Staking out the museum identifies a clear pattern. Dhar and his staff (a cleaner, a *chai* (tea) *wallah*, two secretaries, a porter-cum-handyman, and a young clerk who runs the front entrance) each have their own routine. In the morning, the cleaner arrives two hours before the rest of the staff; the *chai wallah*, one hour before, along with the porter. The secretaries and clerk arrive shortly before Dhar.

In the evening, the *chai wallah* leaves first, followed by the porter. The secretaries and the clerk leave not long after, followed by Dhar, although Dhar occasionally works late if new items have been received, or if Hargreaves has sent for records or objects concerning any of the area's current digs. Finally, the cleaner leaves two hours after the museum closes. No fixed times are given, so that the Keeper can manipulate them to best suit their game.

On top of the museum staff's routine, there is Sergeant Singh to take into account. He regularly patrols past the building, particularly around opening and closing time. He usually has his lunch in the gardens at the front of the museum, where he can shoo away the street children during the museum's busiest time. His shift ends sometime mid-evening, and there is no sign that his replacement is anywhere near as protective of the museum as the good sergeant.

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Much of this information can be acquired from the gang of street children who live near the museum (see **Appendix A** for **Street Child** profile, page 337). They are quite happy to divulge any and all of the above information for the right price (food, coins, clothing, and so on) or a successful social skill roll. They appear to be quite fond of Sergeant Singh who, if the investigators watch carefully, is just as likely to share his lunch with the children as he is to chase them away, as long as they aren't bothering the visitors. Alternatively, the investigators can learn the various NPCs' routines by surveilling the museum for a few days.

Casing the museum reveals that there are two official entrances: the front doors and a service entrance to the side. The first floor windows could be jimmed open, and there are certainly sufficient handholds to be able to access the balcony (14) (and, therefore, the door (10) or windows) above the main entrance, as well as the roof where another service door leads down into the building. A successful **Spot Hidden** or **Electrical/Mechanical Repair** roll identifies that the building has no apparent alarm system.

In order to successfully retrieve the bowls, the investigators must break into the museum after hours—either by judicious use of the **Locksmith** skill, force (Hard **STR** roll), or by leaving a window open somewhere they can slip through later. Once inside, they can remove the bowls from the display cabinet without attracting attention, and then make good their escape. Alternatively, they could attempt to find a hiding spot inside the museum and wait until all the staff have gone home for the evening (requiring a successful **Stealth** roll from all concerned).

The street children are ever-present and make excellent witnesses—or accomplices—to any shenanigans (they can easily be bought off). As an added complication, Sergeant Singh can, if desired, switch shifts with his colleague for an evening, meaning that the investigators won't just have the eagle-eyed urchins to worry about.

Unless they take precautions, their theft is discovered the next morning by the cleaner, who raises the alarm as soon as Dhar arrives. If the investigators have expressed an interest in the bowls before now, they are the first on Sergeant Singh's list of suspects, provided they haven't already skipped town (a clear sign of guilt, unless they faked their departure the day before to cover their tracks). If questioned by the sergeant, it requires a Hard social skill roll to convince him that they are not involved, although he will refrain from searching their rooms or luggage unless they give him obvious cause (such as a fumble or a failed pushed roll).

In terms of precautions, the simplest by far is to place a card in the display case similar to that written out by Dhar in **On Loan** (page 134); there are several examples in other cases the investigators can spot during either their daylight or evening visits, and cards and ink are available from the

secretaries' office (C) if the investigators do not have their own with them (a successful **Locksmith** or **STR** roll to open an office door, if the Keeper desires). If they use this ruse, the cleaner notices the empty case but thinks nothing of it; after all, it's not his job to spruce up the artifacts and they are occasionally removed for just such a reason.

An even more devious precaution is to have copies of the bowls made in the Ander Shahar, the Jeweler's Bazaar, located next to the Mahabat Khan Mosque and the Hastings Memorial (Chowk Yadgar) in the heart of the old city. All that the craftsmen need, besides payment, are detailed sketches (perhaps a successful relevant **Art/Craft** skill roll or a photograph (**Photography** roll) to work from, plus the relevant dimensions (or near enough). This doesn't negate the need to get into the museum and swap the forgeries out for the real thing, but it does mean that the theft is likely to go unnoticed for longer—provided, of course, that the investigators remember to paint on the little white reference numbers.




DOING TIME

There is a real danger in attempting to steal the ritual bowls that the investigators may land themselves in hot water. The Tokabhaya do not want to see this as an outcome and so do their utmost to aid and/or exonerate the investigators if they get caught (and if they cannot talk their own way out of the situation). Of course, the one thing the Tokabhaya absolutely won't do is reveal their true identity—if push comes to shove, they are prepared to abandon the investigators to protect their anonymity and, thereafter, select a new group of stooges instead, leaving the investigators to their fate.

The Tokabhaya can do anything: from deploying their pisacha allies to act as a diversion during the theft, delivering patsies to the police, maneuvering a good barrister in the investigators' direction to argue their case in court, and so on. If all else fails, the pisachas could spring the investigators out of jail, although they would now be fugitives from the law and should adjust their travel plans accordingly.

Hopefully, the investigators do not need such (unseen) assistance. Depending on their own contacts and skills, they may be able to hush the whole matter up and avoid a diplomatic incident (for example, if Charles Lockhart is in play), or manipulate their way out through cunning and good social skills. But, if they can't, the Tokabhaya have their backs—for the most part.



Not the Real Deal

Another way for the investigators to get hold of the ritual bowls from the museum without resorting to theft or involving Moorcroft's cooperation is by convincing Dhar that the bowls in question are fakes. In its own way, such a ruse is as tricky and delicate a plan as actually breaking into the museum and stealing the bowls. It relies on at least one of the investigators having a sufficiently high reputation in the field of archaeology, history, or Buddhism to give their arguments the necessary credence; thus, if one or more of the investigators is considered a leading authority in such matters, a straightforward **Persuade** roll (perhaps with a bonus die, if a credible argument is put forth) convinces Dhar the bowls are fake. Otherwise, any attempt to fool Dhar requires an Extreme **Persuade**, **Fast Talk**, or **Charm** roll. Tactics that sweeten the pill (and either reduce the difficulty of the roll or grant a bonus die, at the Keeper's discretion) include wanting to save Dhar, Moorcroft, and the museum's reputations (even that of the ASI, if the investigators are really laying it on thick), offers to track down the

Handout: Song 6

Dear Colleagues,

I must warn you that you may be in danger. Robbers ransacked my home last night searching for the items you were also seeking. If you have them, exercise great caution.

Yours,

Robert Moorcroft

perpetrators of such an amazing forgery, and learning about the techniques used in their construction to make sure that such a mistake doesn't happen again.

UNWANTED ATTENTION

Providing the investigators manage to avoid being arrested while acquiring the bowls, they may believe that they are home and dry, at least for this leg of their mission. But, the Tokabhaya have a trick up their sleeve to further convince the investigators that the threat of Agartha is real and ongoing, and that they need to maintain their focus to see the mission through to the end.

Regardless of where the investigators find themselves (as long as it isn't the police cells in the British cantonment), a day or so after they acquire the bowls, word reaches them that Moorcroft has been attacked and both his home and the museum have been broken into and ransacked. If the investigators already broke into the museum, this news may play nicely as an alibi for them, as the police assume that the thieves must have been disturbed the first time and didn't get everything they came for, and so tried again. If they are traveling by train toward Sitavana or Kham by this point, the news could arrive in the form of a newspaper headline, while if they are still in Peshawar, it could be gossip overheard in a tea shop in the Street of Storytellers, or a note from Moorcroft (**Handout: Song 6**) warning them of the danger, if he knows they have the bowls.

If the investigators wish to visit Moorcroft again in light of the attack and break ins—the note's deliverer, the police, and/or Dhar can confirm that the injured civil servant is currently being cared for in the Lady Reading Hospital (**Bedside Manner** following). Or, if they want to return to the museum to see what took place there, go to **Museum Mayhem** (page 137).

Bedside Manner

Going to see Moorcroft in the newly opened Lady Reading Hospital finds the civil servant battered, bruised, and rather shaken. The doctor is not entirely happy with Moorcroft receiving visitors but, as long as they promise not to overtax him, the investigators can stay.

If questioned about the incident, Moorcroft recounts that he surprised two intruders when he returned home early from the club the night before. The perpetrators broke in through the back door, scared off the servants, and were in the process of turning over his study when Moorcroft arrived.

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Keeper note: if the investigators traded an artifact of their own for the ritual bowls, Moorcroft says that he had wished to come home early in order to study whatever it was they gave him.

The amateur archaeologist didn't get a good look at the burglars, but there was something very strange about them. They were heavily wrapped in ragged clothing and moved about in an odd way, almost as if they had leprosy or some sort of joint deformity. What's more, the smell that accompanied them was nauseating—like rotting meat and moldering soil. He visibly blanches as he recalls it.

In a shaking voice, he reveals that one of the attackers demanded to know where the ritual bowls were. From their strange accent and the manner in which the man growled the question in very broken English, Moorcroft assumes that at least one of the perpetrators was a foreigner of some sort, though what such a person could want with the bowls is beyond him.

A successful **Psychology** roll notes there is something else Moorcroft isn't telling them. A successful **Charm** or **Persuade** roll convinces him to admit that his attackers appeared to have bright red eyes and, most oddly, sharp, jagged teeth, although it was very dark, and he *must* be misremembering the exact details due to the bump on the head he received during their altercation.

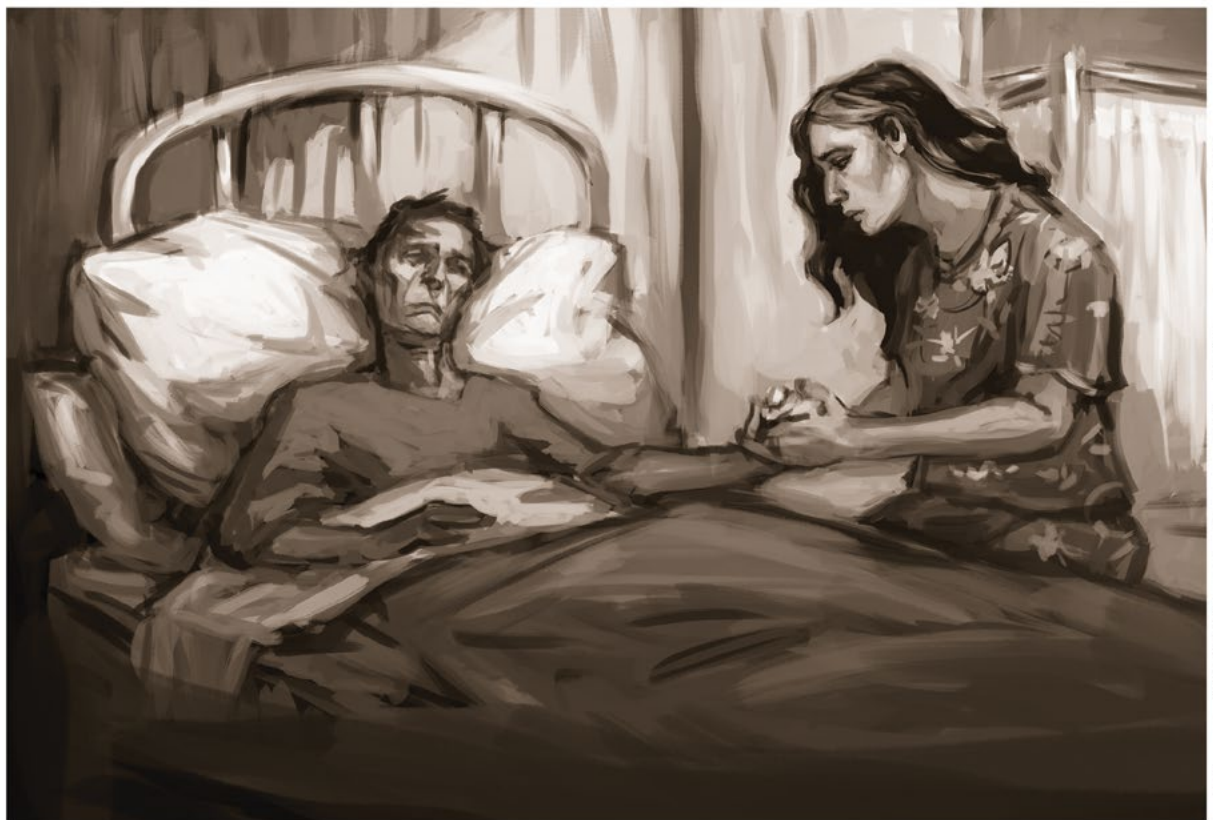
Shortly after he imparts this information, or if he becomes visibly distressed at any point, a prim and starched nurse shoos the investigators away, insisting that Mr. Moorcroft needs his rest. If they acquired the bowls from him in some way—buying or trading them, or by convincing him to let them borrow the items—he warns the investigators to be careful; he can't remember for certain, but he fears he may have pointed the robbers in their direction.

Museum Mayhem

Suraj Dhar is sitting forlornly on the steps of his museum, the large, comforting bulk of Sergeant Singh standing protectively over him. His demeanor is very different to what the investigators have seen from him previously; his cheer and energy are gone, and he reminds them of a deflated balloon. Even the street children are keeping a respectful distance.

Depending on how the investigators got hold of the bowls, inquiring after the events of the night before reveals different answers.

- **If they received the bowls from Moorcroft:** Sergeant Singh informs them that, as far as the police can tell, the thieves broke into the museum, found the bowls gone and went



Visiting Moorcroft in the hospital

straight to Moorcroft's home after searching for his address in Dhar's ledgers.

- **If the investigators stole the bowls and the theft has not been discovered:** the Sergeant reveals that Moorcroft was attacked first, before the miscreants continued to the museum, where they smashed the display cabinet and removed the bowls. If the investigators left a "Removed for Cleaning" card, careful questioning of Singh (or an equally careful search of the area) reveals that the card is nowhere to be found.
- **If the investigators' theft had already been discovered:** (whether the investigators are suspects or not) both Singh and Dhar are at an absolute loss as to why the perpetrators broke in again or attacked Moorcroft. It makes absolutely no sense to them, unless the thieves didn't get everything they wanted the first time. Several other items are missing, including a variety of ritual daggers, and the large statue by the bowls' display case was deliberately toppled and smashed.

Neither Dhar nor Singh have any objections to the investigators looking around the museum, as long as they are careful not to touch anything. As soon as they enter, a pungent odor hits them—one that is only partially masked by the smell of fresh bleach. If they have already spoken to Moorcroft (**Bedside Manner**), they can confirm that his description was an accurate one—it does indeed stink of rotting flesh and damp, moldy earth.

Those who understands Hindustani (30+%) clearly hear the cleaner bemoaning the mess the intruders left behind; the complaints are coming from the direction of the gallery where the bowls were on display. On entering the alcove, the bleach fumes are enough to make the investigators' eyes water, but the stench of decay is even stronger here—a successful **CON** roll is required to avoid gagging. The disgruntled domestic mentions in conversation that not only did the thieves track in all this stinking muck, they also brought their dog with them—or their goat, but that makes even less sense.

A successful **Spot Hidden** or **Track** roll identifies the presence of strange paw or hoof-like animal prints in an uncleaned area (the cleaner could point these out, if engaged in conversation). Unless they have encountered ghouls before, the investigators are unlikely to recognize the prints for what they are, but those with 30+% in either Natural World or Science (Biology or Zoology) realize that they don't match any dog (or goat) that they're familiar with. Should anyone possess skill in **Cthulhu Mythos**, a successful roll could suggest the involvement of "non-human creatures, said to live among the dead."

A conversation with the street children outside finds them much changed from any previous encounters. They are visibly uneasy and reluctant to talk, and attempts to bribe or

coerce them are much more difficult (and expensive) than before. If convinced to talk, the children say they saw the burglars breaking in, but there was no dog—or goat—just two men. The children can confirm Moorcroft's story, stating the men shambled about and moved strangely.

One small child, Neha, has an additional piece of information, although it takes a good bribe or a successful **Persuade** roll to wheedle it out of him. Under the watchful gaze of his compatriots, he whispers one word: "*Flesh-eaters.*" The rest of the gang mocks him, but it is obvious that they are not entirely confident in their dismissal of their friend's identification of the robbers. The children say no more and quickly scatter to the four winds.

Asking Dhar, Singh, or Moorcroft about the child's pronouncement returns only bemusement. While there are many stories associated with Gilgit and the surrounding kingdoms concerning cannibalism (**Handout: Song 2**), there are none linked to Peshawar, and it's not as if there are any Aghori (see **Chapter 4—Handout: Bones 4**) living in Peshawar's charnel grounds at the present time. The thieves obviously scared the children, and the little one has merely cast them in the role of boogymen as a result of his fright.

Keeper note: both Moorcroft and Dhar can help the investigators in determining where they should travel to next on their quest to acquire the items needed to perform the ritual—see **Moving On**, page 140, for how they can help. Alternatively, the investigators could turn to Dr. Paira Mall (**Wellcome's Man in India**, page 142).

UNWELCOME GUESTS

Depending on where the investigators have hidden or stored the bowls since they acquired them, the next encounter could take place anywhere and should be adjusted accordingly. Suggestions are given for three potential options: **At a Hidden Location, Up Close and Personal**, and **Brief Encounters** (all following). In addition, the time of day when this encounter plays out is important.

- If it is daylight when the investigators encounter the thieves, then any close interaction quickly makes it clear that these are not bedraggled men, but something much worse—**Pisachas** (page 148)—and triggers a **Sanity** roll (0/1D6 loss). Moorcroft was certainly correct about their teeth and eyes but, thanks to the darkness in his home at the time, he missed a great deal more.
- If the pisachas are encountered at night or in darkness, the Sanity loss decreases to 0/1D3 points, as their hideous features are obscured and more or less hidden.

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MARK OF A GOD

The pisachas worshipping Sisirama all carry a mark or token that looks like a crude whirlwind. During any encounter with pisachas in Peshawar, permit the investigators a **Spot Hidden** roll to notice flesh marks or the wire pendants their assailants wear (either on leather thongs around their necks or on beaded strings wrapped around their wrists, like a warped rosary). A successful **Cthulhu Mythos** roll identifies these as a symbol of the Charnel God, sometimes known as Sisirama or Mordiggian. While it may have little significance to the investigators now, such knowledge will become important later (**Chapter 7: Sibling Squabbles**, page 286).



At a Hidden Location

If the investigators left the bowls in their hotel room or another secure location in Peshawar, then the next time they go to check on them or retrieve them, they are instantly aware of an unpleasant smell. Two (or more) stinking and filthy beggars—or, at least, what appear to be beggars—are ransacking the bowls' hiding place. The number of pisachas is determined by the number of investigators present: one pisacha for every two investigators, rounding up, with a minimum of two. As before, encountering the pisachas' colorful aroma requires a successful **CON** roll to avoid gagging at the stench; failure means that the investigator vomits and subsequently acts last in the ensuing round (after that, initiative order is resolved as usual).

If the investigators present a united front, the pisachas flee, throwing any object that comes to hand as they attempt to make their escape, including the bowls. They are not here to seriously harm or kill the investigators—their instructions from the Tokabhaya are very clear in that respect—just to scare and convince them that the evil they face is real and not of human origin.

If attacked by the investigators, the pisachas defend themselves for one round and then try to escape. Should the investigators give chase, throw in as many obstacles as necessary to aid the pisachas' flight. Their destination is either the British cemetery in the cantonment, or the cemeteries, charnel grounds, and ancient mausoleums out beyond Peshawar's southern walls. If the investigators catch up, combat may continue but the creatures are under orders not to kill, so do their best to flee again, this time into the ground to avoid the wrath of the Tokabhaya.

If confronted by a single unlucky investigator, the pisachas rush them, attempting to knock them down (1D3 damage from the fall, if the pisachas are successful). In the resulting chaos of their escape, they “accidentally” drop the bowls.

Up Close and Personal

If the investigators have the bowls with them, the pisachas ambush them at the first opportunity, such as when they are making their way down a narrow alley or wandering through a deserted area after dark.

The investigators should be given the chance to identify that they are being followed—a successful **Spot Hidden** roll could draw their attention to flashes of movement out of the corner of their eyes or an odd, cloaked figure keeping pace with them, while a successful **Listen** roll picks up on the pisachas' strange, guttural method of communication. And, don't forget there's that all-pervasive odor.

The pisachas' aim is to frighten the investigators and to drive home the existence of an external threat to their quest, not to kill or maim. They attack, make a half-hearted attempt to snatch the bowls from the person carrying them, and then flee empty-handed at the first sign of resistance.

If the investigators decide to run, the creatures give chase for a little way before abandoning their pursuit as soon as it becomes expedient to do so; say, if the investigators head into a busy area or somewhere brightly lit. There is no need to use the chase rules for this, as the pisachas have no intention of actually catching up with the investigators whatsoever—the pursuit is merely for show, although the Keeper may wish to run the pursuit to maintain the illusion for their players.

Brief Encounters

If the investigators have already left Peshawar and are on the way to their next destination, the pisachas seize the first chance that presents itself to stage their fake robbery attempt. If the investigators have hired motor cars or horses—or even the ubiquitous bullock cart or *tonga*—to convey them onward, the pisachas target them at their first stop along the road. As before, the investigators have the opportunity to notice a strange presence in their lodgings and wake up, raise the alarm, or deal with matters in their own way.

If, on the other hand, the investigators are taking full advantage of the wonder that is the Indian railway system, the attack comes during the night, as close to a center of habitation as possible. Having jumped onto the train in the darkness, perhaps as it slows to pass through a station, the pisachas creep through the carriages in search of the investigators and the bowls.

In both cases, even if the investigators remain oblivious to the pisachas' actions, there are others around who do notice the creatures. The terrified screams and shouts of fellow

travelers alert the investigators to the things' presence, and they can either catch the pisachas in the act of attempting to steal the bowls, or as they try to make their getaway.

The pisachas are more than willing to throw themselves from a moving train to evade their pursuers, making sure that they leave the bowls behind if they managed to snatch them. The investigators should be careful not to accidentally fall from the moving train while chasing the creatures—a fumbled or failed pushed **DEX** roll could result in 1D6 to 1D10 damage, depending on the speed of the train.

A Quiet Word

In any of the possible confrontations, there is always the chance that the investigators may capture one or more of their assailants. If so, the prisoner meeps, gibbers, and snarls at them. It can answer questions in broken English, Hindustani, or Pashto, and sticks to the story that its masters want the bowls for themselves and sent it and its companions to collect them. It has no idea what its "masters" want the bowls for, only that they do. If the investigators stole the bowls, and especially if they left fakes behind, the pisacha acknowledges this fact, finding it very funny that they are upset it has tried to steal something they had already taken without permission.

As the interrogation draws to a close, the pisacha lets slip one final piece of information. The creature growls, "*The Gate must open. The Children of Fear command it!*" No matter what they do to it now, it says nothing more—largely because, shortly afterwards, it shudders, then begins to choke and spit up water. The pisacha screams and gurgles, alternately raking at its throat with its claws, tearing away bloody strips of tissue as it does so, and flailing wildly as it tries to grab one

of the investigators for support. In between the drowning noises, it appears to be begging for help.

Unless the investigators know a spell to countermand *Breath of the Deep* (*Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook*, page 247), the pisacha is done for, and finally expires three rounds later. A nearby Tokabhaya agent, seeing that the pisacha has served its purpose, dispatches it without a second thought. Depending on where this all happens, the investigators may wish to beat a hasty retreat if they want to avoid being caught with the thing's corpse; its death throes are bound to attract attention. At least now the investigators have a name for those that have silently dogged their steps since Peking: the Children of Fear.

MOVING ON

Once the investigators have secured the bowls, they are free to continue to their next destination. If they have not yet visited Sitavana or Derge, then these are their choices: either travel to Derge in Tibet and the famed Buddhist printing house (**Chapter 5**), or to Rajgir in the Indian state of Bihar and Orissa, where the Sitavana charnel ground resides (**Chapter 4**).

Asking Tenzin Kalsang for his thoughts on where to go next elicits the advice, "*It is better to move forward than backward.*" The investigators can interpret this how they will, but the most obvious meaning is that, since they are already in India, they might as well continue on to Rajgir to the charnel grounds, rather than go past it to Kham and then double back again.

Of course, if the investigators have already been to Tibet and Sitavana before arriving in Peshawar, they now (should) have all the pieces they need to head for the Valley of the White Ape to perform the "liberation" ritual (**Chapter 6**).

To the Cool Grove (Sitavana)

If they have already been to Derge in Tibet (to acquire a new copy of the liberation ritual; **Chapter 5**), then, there really isn't much of a choice to be made: Sitavana it is. Based on his readings of both Hiuen-Tsiang and Fa Hsien's travel writings, and on the knowledge passed down to him by his gurus, Tenzin Kalsang suspects that Sitavana (where they can collect the elements necessary to craft the musical instruments required for the ritual) is located at Rajgir (**Chapter 4**). If the investigators are still in Peshawar, this can be confirmed at Peshawar Museum, where a search turns up birch bark fragments of a Sanskrit manuscript detailing the legend of the building of Sitavana (**Handout: Bones 1**). Those with a Language (Sanskrit) skill of at least 20% can pick out the names of various locations—Sitavana, Cool Grove, and Rajgriha (another ancient charnel ground at Rajgir)—without having to make a roll, but if they



THE RIVER OF LIFE

Running over 1,900 miles (3,060 km) from Chittagong in the east to Kabul in the west, the Grand Trunk Road is, in places, a very ancient thoroughfare. As Uttarapatha, the Northern Road, it once connected Gandhara to the Kingdom of Magadha in the east. In the 20th century, it passes through Calcutta (Kolkata), Benares (Varanasi), Delhi, Lahore, and Peshawar on its way to the Khyber Pass and Afghanistan. Built and rebuilt time and again down the ages, it is one of the major transport routes across northern India, and numerous caravanserai crop up along its length to cater to the flood of people who travel the road on a daily basis.



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want any more details, then a successful skill check is required. If no one has the relevant skill, either Robert Moorcroft or Suraj Dhar can assist them as experts in their field.

To the Parkhang (Derge)

The *lama* has dreamed of the Parkhang (printing house) but does not know exactly where it is, although he does recognize the landscape as being somewhere in Kham. Once a stopping-off point on the trade routes to China, Tenzin Kalsang actually passed through the town of Derge on his way to Tun-huang, centuries before the king who ordered the printing house's construction was even born—although the *lama* doesn't realize this yet.

Chatting to Robert Moorcroft or Suraj Dhar confirms that there are three famous scripture printing houses in Tibet. One is at Narthang Monastery, near Shigatse, and another is at the Potala Palace in Lhasa—both in Central Tibet. The third printing house lies in Derge in Eastern Tibet (where Kham is located). Although it isn't either man's area of expertise, Moorcroft and Dhar both know of collectors who rave about the quality of the work produced by Derge's craftsmen, and that historic scrolls and manuscripts from that printing house are highly sought after on the antiques market.

Once Tenzin Kalsang learns of the Parkhang's location, he bursts out laughing and then gently berates himself for not realizing why the surrounding hills and mountains looked so familiar. "Well, it has been a thousand years, I suppose!"

MISSING PIECES?

There is a chance that the investigators failed to retrieve the ritual bowls. Maybe they couldn't convince Moorcroft to part with them, their attempts at theft were unsuccessful, or the pisachas kept the lovely, shiny things for themselves (either because they unintentionally frightened all of the investigators away as a result of failed Sanity rolls or the encounter just went wrong).

Tenzin Kalsang is not perturbed by this turn of events, no matter how crestfallen the investigators might be. He calmly points out that they can create their own substitute bowls; although they may be inferior to the real thing, *kapala* (skull bowls) made from the most auspicious corpses should be sufficient to complete the gate-closing ritual.

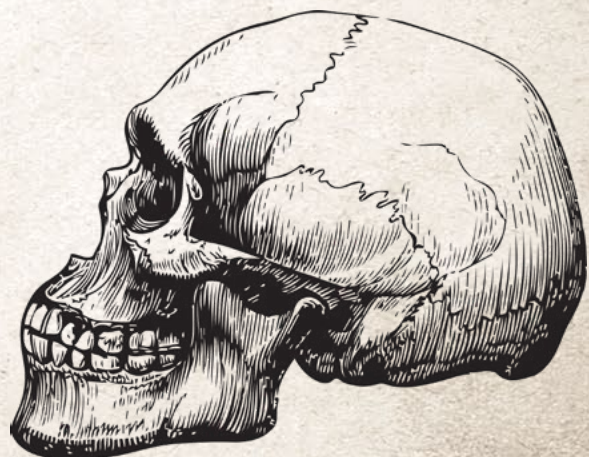
If they haven't already been to Sitavana (Chapter 5), the investigators now have an additional task to complete—they must also find seven suitable skulls and craft them into offering bowls under the *lama's* guidance (Chapter 4: **Kapalas**, page 181). If they have been to Sitavana, then it's time to find another auspicious charnel ground, most likely at one of India's holy sites, such as Benares (Varanasi).

THE END OF THE ROAD: GANDHARA

If any of the investigators have been incarcerated as a result of their actions (**Doing Time**, page 135), or have died during any stage of the journey to Peshawar, then there are multiple options for replacement characters: merchants, spies, foreign adventurers, and religious pilgrims, to name but a few. It is possible that Robert Moorcroft could be prevailed upon to apply for extended leave in order to become a replacement investigator. Even Hasina Moiz, if she survived her ordeal and received suitable treatment, could make an unusual addition to the investigators' entourage.

Another alternative is to introduce the investigators to Dr. Paira Mall (**Wellcome's Man in India**, page 142) as soon as they enter India—perhaps in the town they visit while delivering the injured runner's message to his superiors (**The Runner**, page 117). While Dr. Mall is unlikely to join the investigators' party, his wide and varied pool of contacts can be used as a source of new investigators, should the worst happen.

Keeper note: obviously, the Tokabhaya do not want the investigators to fail in retrieving the ritual bowls. But, if everything really does go wrong, the Tokabhaya will intervene and acquire the artifacts at a later date, transporting them to the Valley of the White Ape—where they will lie in plain sight, ready for the investigators to find them upon their arrival (**Chapter 6: Deus Ex**, page 243). Naturally, the Tokabhaya would prefer the investigators do the work themselves, particularly as there's a chance they will sully themselves spiritually in the process. The Children of Fear are unwilling to stand by and watch their plan crumble completely due to the vagaries of fate.



WELLCOME'S MAN IN INDIA

Described as being “of Hindu descent but raised by an English lady,” Dr. Paira Mall was originally sent by his adoptive mother to London for missionary training, but instead ended up acquiring a medical doctorate while living in Munich. Something of a polyglot (he was reputed to speak and read at least ten languages, most of them proficiently), Mall’s early career saw him working as chief medical adviser to the Maharaja of Karpurthala in the Punjab, although he also reportedly spent time as an army surgeon during the Russo-Japanese War.

By 1911, Mall was recruited to act as a collector for the wealthy pharmaceutical entrepreneur Henry Wellcome, who was busily amassing an eclectic assortment of medical—and other—ephemera and documentation from across the globe with a view to creating a “Museum of Man.” For the next ten years, Mall traveled widely across India from his base in Amritsar, purchasing suitable bits and bobs and commissioning copies of rare manuscripts for Wellcome’s collection. His relationship with Wellcome came to an end in 1926 over a contractual dispute. Little is known of him after this time.

Aside from his work for Wellcome, in 1910, Mall was involved in the development of the India Society, an organization dedicated to showcasing Indian art and culture in Britain and the wider world. He also became a member of the Theosophical Society in 1912.

Dr. Paira Mall, age 50, medical collector

STR 60	CON 65	SIZ 55	DEX 55	INT 85
APP 55	POW 80	EDU 80	SAN 65	HP 12
DB: 0	Build: 0	Move: 6	MP: 16	

Combat

Brawl	25% (12/5), damage 1D3
Dodge	30% (15/6)

Skills

Appraise 55%, Art/Craft (Photography) 45%, Credit Rating 40%, First Aid 60%, Lore (Buddhism) 45%, Lore (Christianity) 40%, Lore (Hinduism) 45%, Lore (Folk Medicine) 60%, Medicine 70%, Navigate 55%, Occult 45%, Persuade 60%, Psychology 50%, Science (Biology) 50%, Science (Pharmacy) 65%.

Languages: Arabic 40%, English (Own) 80%, French 50%, German 60%, Hindustani 70%, Japanese 25%, Latin 50%, Persian 40%, Punjabi 60%, Sanskrit 60%.

- **Description:** his thick head of wavy black hair and neatly-trimmed mustache show no signs of gray, despite his advancing years and the rigors of his nomadic lifestyle. Mall always wears a collar (preferably wing-tipped) and tie, coupled with a tweed suit, as befits a man raised by an English lady.
- **Traits:** stubborn, watches every penny, and is nobody’s fool. He is deeply aware that there is much forgotten wisdom that could still be of great use to mankind, and not just in the field of medicine.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** besides being an interesting model on which to base an investigator, Mall is a very valuable NPC in his capacity as an expert in several useful fields, with his wide-ranging understanding of local and ancient medical and religious traditions, extensive contacts and geographical knowledge from over a decade of wandering in regions the investigators are likely to visit, and his ability to appear wherever and whenever the Keeper needs him. This is especially the case if the investigators are not traveling with Tenzin Kalsang (**A Change of Plan**, page 86). In these circumstances, Mall can be used to provide additional information and to point struggling investigators in the right direction.



Dr. Paira Mall

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REWARDS

Permit the players an investigator development phase when they leave Peshawar; this is in addition to any other skills they may have learned or developed during their travels. Likewise, apply the following rewards as appropriate.

- Surviving the Taklamakan Desert: +1 Sanity point.
- Surviving the mountain crossing: +1 Sanity point.
- Discovering Miss Abernathy's fate (optional encounter): +1 Sanity point.
- Revealing who is behind the goat mutilations in Karakhoja (optional encounter): +1 Sanity point.
- Saving Hasina Moiz from the wrath of her village (optional encounter): +1D4 Sanity points.
- Leaving Hasina Moiz to her fate, despite knowing what will become of her (optional encounter): -1D6 Sanity points.
- Saving the life of the runner (optional encounter): +1D4 Sanity points.
- Leaving the runner to die (optional encounter): -1D4+1 Sanity points.
- Recovering the ritual bowls: +1 Sanity point.
- Failing to recover the ritual bowls or losing them to the pisachas: -1D2 Sanity points.
- Defeating a Mythos monster: ghost (optional) +1D6 Sanity points; mummy (optional) +1D8 Sanity points; pisacha +1D6 Sanity points; the Rat King (optional) +1D6 Sanity points; rat-thing (optional) +1D6 Sanity points; skeleton (optional) +1D6 Sanity points; walking portraits (optional) +1D4 Sanity points.



CHARACTERS AND MONSTERS

The NPCs and creatures found throughout this chapter are described below. For generic NPCs, such as missionaries, bandits, street children, and foreign archaeologists, see **Appendix A**.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Hasina Moiz, age 18, terrified cannibal

STR 50 CON 85 SIZ 45 DEX 80 INT 75
APP 75 POW 55 EDU 30 SAN 45 HP 13
DB: 0 Build: 0 Move: 9 MP: 11 Luck: —

Combat

Brawl 25% (12/5), damage 1D3
Dodge 40% (20/8)

Skills

Art/Craft (Dance) 40%, Art/Craft (Sing) 30%, Climb 30%, History 45%, Jump 40%, Natural World 40%, Spot Hidden 45%, Stealth 40%, Survival (Mountain) 40%.

Languages: English 20%, Hindustani 50%, Shina (Own) 60%.

- **Description:** while previously an attractive young woman, Hasina has been warped by her ordeal. Her steel-gray eyes are now wide with fear, and her face distorted with self-loathing and madness. Her clothing is torn and filthy, and she has a nasty-looking gash on one temple.
- **Traits:** Hasina used to be a happy, intelligent young woman, but is now convinced she died as a result of Ziab Ali's attack and believes she has returned as a pisacha, cursed to feast on the dead for eternity thanks to her improper burial. In game terms, she is currently suffering from an indefinite insanity which, given time, could probably be cured.

Robert Frederick Moorcroft, age 51, British civil servant

STR 70 CON 70 SIZ 70 DEX 85 INT 90
APP 55 POW 65 EDU 70 SAN 65 HP 14
DB: +1D4 Build: 1 Move: 6 MP: 13 Luck: —

Combat

Brawl 25% (12/5), damage 1D3+1D4
Dodge 42% (21/8)

Skills

Appraise 65%, Archaeology 61%, History (Gandhara) 65%, Library Use 75%, Lore (Buddhism) 45%, Occult 30%, Persuade 60%, Spot Hidden 65%.

Languages: English (Own) 70%, Hindustani 41%, Kharoshthi 31%, Sanskrit 36%.

Suraj Dhar, age 46, museum curator

STR 50 CON 50 SIZ 75 DEX 50 INT 70
APP 65 POW 60 EDU 80 SAN 60 HP 13
DB: +1D4 Build: 1 Move: 6 MP: 12 Luck: —

Combat

Brawl 25% (12/5), damage 1D3+D4
Dodge 25% (12/5)

Skills

Accounting 55%, Appraise 65%, Archaeology 65%, History 55%, Library Use 65%, Occult 40%, Persuade 50%, Ride 55%, Spot Hidden 65%.

Languages: English (Own) 80%, Hindustani (Own) 80%, Sanskrit 41%.

Isminder Veer Singh, age 24, policeman

STR 75 CON 65 SIZ 75 DEX 50 INT 90
APP 60 POW 65 EDU 60 SAN 65 HP 14
DB: +1D4 Build: 1 Move: 8 MP: 13 Luck: —

Combat

Brawl 65% (32/13), damage 1D3+1D4
or kirpan (knife), damage
1D4+2+1D4
Webley service revolver 60% (30/12), damage 1D10
Dodge 45% (22/9)

Skills

First Aid 50%, Intimidate 60%, Law 40%, Persuade 65%, Psychology 65%, Ride 45%, Spot Hidden 65%, Throw 40%.

Languages: English (Own) 60%, Hindustani (Own) 60%, Pashto 51%.

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GENERIC VILLAGERS/TOWNSFOLK

Sample profiles are provided here for six villagers/townsfolk. If they are used in **The Rat King** optional encounter, these human devotees are descended from the murine monarch (**Rat King**, page 146). The men keep their monthly offerings to the Rat King a secret from the rest of Khotan, as they know their *imam* is unlikely to approve.

If used instead for **The Giantess Reborn** optional encounter (page 111), Villager #1 represents the headman, Atif Baig, while Villager #2 represents Ziab Ali. All of the village men in this encounter wear a cream-colored *khoi*, the traditional wool hat of the Gilgit region.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
STR	60	50	55	55	65	55
CON	60	55	45	50	55	50
SIZ	65	60	50	45	65	60
DEX	60	65	50	65	55	60
INT	65	60	55	55	60	65
APP	50	60	45	55	40	55
POW	60	50	35	45	55	65
EDU	55	40	60	40	45	50
SAN	60	50	35	45	55	65
HP	12	11	9	9	12	11
DB	+1D4	0	0	0	+1D4	0
Build	1	0	0	0	1	0
Move	7	8	8	9	8	8
MP	12	10	7	9	11	13

Combat

Attacks per round: 1

Brawl 35% (17/7), damage 1D3 + DB

Dodge 35% (17/7)

Skills

Climb 35%, Jump 30%, History 65%, Listen 45%, Navigate 55%, Persuade 45%, Psychology 45%, Spot Hidden 45%, Stealth 45%, Survival (Desert/Mountain; as appropriate) 50%.

Languages:

- Villagers in the Tarim Basin: Chinese 60%, English 30%, Turki (Own) 60%
- Villagers in the mountains: English 30%, Hindustani 60%, Shina (Own) 60%.

CREATURES AND MONSTERS

Rat King, *sorcerous guardian of Khotan*

The Rat King is a bizarre hybrid creature, with the body of a man and the head of a giant rat. Upon its head rests a golden headband studded with glistening jewels (**Diadem of the Rat King**, below). He was once a great and noble sorcerer revered as a god in ages past by rats and humans alike, but his power has diminished somewhat over the ages since he first made his dark pact with the desert's rats in return for their help.

As with all legends, there is a grain of truth in the story of the rats' defense of Khotan from the invading Huns, but it came at a cost to the locals. A village wise man, a kindly soul desperate to prevent the massacre and enslavement of his people, approached the rats and asked for their aid. The rats agreed to protect Khotan, but at a price. First, the wise man had to agree to the creation of a number of lieutenants to lead the rats, with a number of the villagers becoming possessed by the spirits of the dead, transforming them into rat-things. Secondly, when the fighting was over and the people of Khotan were saved, the wise man must agree to becoming the rats' ruler for all eternity. Left with little choice, his mind already tainted with blasphemous magics, the wise man agreed and so was later transformed into the rat-headed ruler, in part by the power of the jeweled headband he wears (an ancient artifact unearthed by the rats).

Another part of the deal, still observed by the wise man's descendants, is the ritual feeding of the rats and the creation of new lieutenants when old ones die. As long as the Rat King exists, the rats of Khotan protect the oasis town, but should the Rat King die, all bets are off and Khotan's protection ceases to exist.

Diadem of the Rat King

A golden band encrusted with emeralds, sapphires, and diamonds, the diadem grants immortality to its wearer (as long as it is worn). Should the diadem be removed, the effect lapses and the wearer is no longer immortal; aging resumes as normal from the point at which the diadem was taken off.

Rat King

STR 70 CON 95 SIZ 70 DEX 85 INT —
APP — POW 120 EDU — SAN — HP 18
DB: +1D4 Build: 1 Move: 8 MP: 24 Luck: —

Combat

Attacks per round: 1 (claw, bite)

Uses claws and bite, but prefers to leave combat to its rat packs and rat-things.

Fighting 45% (22/9), damage 1D3+1D4
Dodge 45% (22/9)

Skills

Dodge 50%, Jump 70%, Listen 50%, Psychology 60%, Stealth 70%.

Languages: Chinese 45%, Gandhari 60%, Khotanese (Own) 60%.

Armor: none.

Spells: Bind Rat*, *Charm Rat*, *Command Rat*, Contact Rat-thing, *Curse of the Rat Thing*, Evil Eye, *Lame/Heal Animal*, Warding the Eye*.

Sanity Loss: 1/1D6 Sanity points to encounter the Rat King.

*See *Appendix B*.



The Rat King

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Rat-Things, lieutenants of the Rat King

The Keeper should adjust the number of rat-things encountered based on the number of investigators and their fighting capabilities.

**Rat-thing 5 is the transformed Miss Abernathy; realizing who she is incurs a higher Sanity point loss (1/1D6+2), even though it is unlikely that the investigators know her personally.*

	1	2	3	4	5*	6
STR	15	10	5	15	10	5
CON	10	20	45	35	40	20
SIZ	5	5	5	5	5	5
DEX	95	85	85	115	70	115
INT	55	55	80	45	65	75
POW	45	35	15	25	30	20
HP	4	4	5	4	4	4
DB	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2
Build	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2	-2
Move	9	9	8	9	9	8
MP	9	7	3	5	6	4

Combat

Attacks per round: 1 (bite, tear)

Rat-things attack by climbing the legs or clothes of human opponents or by dropping down from ceilings. Once an attack succeeds, the rat-thing clings to its target and keeps on biting. Tearing away a rat-thing requires a successful STR or Fighting (Brawl) roll, and costs the unfortunate victim an additional 1D3 hit points.

Fighting 35% (17/7), damage 1D4-2
Dodge 45% (22/9)

Skills

Dodge 45%, Listen 50%, Stealth 75%.

Languages: Chinese 30%, Gandhari 30%, Khotanese (Own) 40%.

Armor: none, but attacks to hit a running rat-thing are made with one penalty die.

Sanity Loss: 0/1D6 Sanity points to encounter a rat-thing; however, if the rat-thing was known to the observer in life, the sight of their former friend or colleague costs them 1/1D6+2 Sanity points.

Rat Pack

Assume that there are 10 rats per pack. Unlike a normal rat pack, as long as there is at least one rat-thing alive, the pack keeps on fighting to defend the Rat King until they are totally destroyed.

	1	2	3	4	5*	6
STR	50	45	30	40	50	40
CON	70	40	35	60	60	50
SIZ	25	50	35	30	30	50
DEX	70	75	75	90	75	95
POW	50	50	45	35	85	90
HP	9	9	9	9	9	10
DB	-1	0	-1	-1	-1	0
Build	-1	0	-1	-1	-1	0
Move	9	8	8	9	9	8

Combat

Attacks per round: 1 (bite, claw, or overwhelm)

Overwhelm (mnvr): as a pack they may assault and overwhelm an individual using the maneuver rules. Because of their numbers they gain one bonus die on the attack. Such an attack would involve swarming over the target, biting and scratching as they do so.

Fighting 40% (20/8), damage 1D3
Overwhelm (mnvr) 40% (20/8), damage 2D6
Dodge 42% (21/8)

Armor: none.

CHAPTER 3

Pisachas, *ghoul subspecies*

	Average	Roll
STR	80	(3D6+6)×5
CON	65	(2D6+6)×5
SIZ	65	(2D6+6)×5
DEX	65	(2D6+6)×5
INT	65	(2D6+6)×5
POW	65	(2D6+6)×5

Average Hit Points: 13

Average Damage Bonus: +1D4

Average Build: 1

Average Magic Points: 13

Move: 9

Stench: a pisacha's revolting odor automatically triggers a CON roll whenever it is encountered: failure indicates the victim has succumbed to a bout of vomiting, causing them to act last in the current round. If there is no pisacha present and only the odor remains, failure triggers a gag reflex.

Combat

Attacks per round: 3 (claws, bite)

Pisachas, like their ghoul cousins, have the usual range of unarmed attacks open to humanoids. They possess filthy, razor-sharp claws that can slice through human flesh.

Wounds caused by a pisacha's claws may become diseased if not treated (a failed CON roll).

Bite and hold (mnvr): if the pisacha's bite strikes home, it hangs on (instead of using its claw attacks) and worries the victim with its fangs, continuing to deal 1D4 damage automatically per round. A successful opposed STR roll dislodges the pisacha, breaking its hold and ending the ongoing bite damage.

Fighting	40% (20/8), damage 1D6 + DB
Bite and hold (mnvr)	40% (20/8), damage 1D4 per round
Dodge	40% (20/8)

Skills

Climb 85%, Jump 75%, Listen 70%, Spot Hidden 50%, Stealth 70%.

Languages: Other (as appropriate) 16%, Own (as appropriate) 30%, Pisacha 50%.

Armor: firearms and projectiles deal half rolled damage (round down).

Spells: 15% chance that a pisacha knows 1D4 spells of the Keeper's choosing.

Sanity Loss: 0/1D6 Sanity points to encounter a pisacha.

SIX SAMPLE PISACHAS

	1	2	3	4	5	6
STR	80	90	65	80	95	80
CON	85	85	60	70	90	70
SIZ	50	70	65	75	60	70
DEX	65	80	65	80	45	65
INT	70	45	65	65	75	55
POW	80	55	75	85	70	75
HP	13	15	12	14	15	14
DB	+1D4	+1D4	+1D4	+1D4	+1D4	+1D4
Build	1	1	1	1	1	1
Move	9	9	8	9	8	8
MP	16	11	15	17	14	15

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WALKING PORTRAITS, ANIMATED ART

Why these paintings of animals and men step down from their walls is anyone's guess. Perhaps, the power of superstitious belief has, over the centuries, leeches into the very stones on which the portraits are painted, imbuing them with a strange form of half-life, or they were somehow cursed by a powerful sorcerer in ages past for a long-forgotten slight. If there was once a spell that created them, it is long lost; however, spontaneous use of the Cthulhu Mythos skill may be sufficient to wake them from their slumbers, albeit temporarily, if attempted during daylight hours.

Regardless, on moonless nights they wake, peeling themselves from their surrounding frescoes with a sound not unlike tearing cloth, to walk the ruins of their forgotten civilizations until the light of day once again drives them back to their slumbers.

The walking portraits look exactly like what they are: the likenesses of animals and people, as though ripped from a painting. They are oddly three-dimensional, while somehow retaining a distinct flatness to their features and appearance. The backs of their bodies (i.e. the side which has not been painted) are completely plain and match the surface on which they were drawn, making them hard to spot if they are turned away from their observer.

One simple way to neutralize a walking portrait is to hunt it down during daylight hours and remove its painted eyes and mouth; this being a far less risky strategy than facing one down in person. Of course, one must identify which of the paintings are walking portraits, so perhaps local superstition has it right when it comes to the practice of defacing every painting you come across; after all, it's probably better to be safe than sorry!

	<i>Human</i>	<i>Horse</i>	<i>Goat</i>	<i>Dog</i>	<i>Camel</i>
STR	50	105	30	10	110
CON	55	40	15	15	40
SIZ	65	90	25	10	110
DEX	55	15	45	20	15
POW	50	15	10	10	15
HP	12	13	4	3	15
DB	0	+1D6	-2	-2	+2D6
Build	0	2	-2	-2	3
Move	7	12	11	12	11
Attack	Fists or weapon	Kick or bite	Butt or kick	Bite	Kick or bite
Damage	1D3 or as per weapon wielded	1D8+1D6	1D6-2	1D6	1D8+2D6

Combat

Attacks per round: 1 (varies)

Human portraits fight with whatever weapon they were painted with, such as a sword or bow; if they have no weapon, then they use their bare hands. Animal portraits attack with their "natural" weapons.

Fighting	30% (15/6), damage as per table (above)
Dodge	30% (15/6)

Sanity Loss: 0/1D4 Sanity points to encounter a walking portrait.



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Asiatic Black Bear, opportunistic scavenger

STR 90 CON 60 SIZ 100 DEX 60 INT —
 APP — POW 60 EDU — SAN — HP 16
 DB: +1D6 Build: 2 Move: 12 MP: — Luck: —

Combat

Attacks per round: 2 (claws and bite)

Brawl 40% (20/8), damage 1D3+1D6
 Dodge 25% (12/5)

Skills:

Climb 60%, Listen 75%, Scent Prey 70%.

Armor: 3-point fur and gristle.

Asiatic Black Bear



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Yak, beast of burden

Yaks are the archetypal beasts of burden in Tibet and in the southern mountains on the outskirts of the Taklamakan Desert. Relied-upon by the nomads and indigenous peoples, the animals provide everything from food (milk, cheese, and meat) to clothing, housing, and even fuel (dried yak dung used when building fires in areas where there are no trees).

Most of the yaks used to plough the land and to carry cargo are a cross between wild yaks (*drong*) and domesticated cattle, known as *dzo* (if male) and *dzomo* (if female). These are smaller than their wild cousins and less volatile, although even these creatures can be as stubborn as camels and are quite happy to roll over and destroy their loads when the mood strikes them.

Female yaks are always smaller than their male counterparts. An adult male yak can carry up to 300 lbs (136 kg) of cargo. The distance a yak can cover in a day is determined by the terrain: in steep, rocky regions, it may be able to only cover as few as 5 miles (8 km) a day, whereas it can easily manage 20 miles (32 km) on even ground.

If riding a yak, use the Ride skill; while not a horse, the yak's gait is sufficiently close enough that a specialization is not required.

STR 170 **CON** 100 **SIZ** 185 **DEX** 35 **INT** —
APP — **POW** 35 **EDU** — **SAN** — **HP** 28
DB: +3D6 **Build:** 4 **Move:** 7 **MP:** — **Luck:** —

Combat

Attacks per round: 1

Broad, stocky, and powerful, wild yaks tend to charge their foes with the intention of either goring them or trampling them.

Fighting 40% (20/8), damage 2D6 + DB
Dodge 25% (12/5)

Armor: 4-point tough hide and solid muscle.



Yak



OLD BONES

- SITAVANA, INDIA -

The investigators' journey leads them toward northeastern India and the homelands of one of the world's oldest religions, where Sakyamuni Buddha attained enlightenment beneath a Bodhi tree.

The investigators travel to the town of Rajgir in search of its sacred ancient charnel grounds. In particular, one of the eight great historical charnel grounds of Indian legend—Sitavana, the Cool Grove, where they must gather the necessary components to create the two musical instruments needed to complete the liberation rite to prevent the King of Fear from escaping Agartha. But, will the investigators' moral scruples prove to be insurmountable obstacles to their quest or can they overcome their squeamishness for what their *lama* insists is the greater good?

The events in **Chapter 4**, like those in the other chapters in this central section, can be reached from either of the other two main locations (Gandhara in **Chapter 3** and Tibet in **Chapter 5**). Depending on the order in which the players have chosen to approach their adventures, Rajgir may be the first opportunity they have to retrieve components for Tenzin Kalsang's proposed ritual, or it may be their final stop before attempting to close the Gates of Agartha (**Chapter 6**).

This chapter is written under the assumption that the investigators have already been to Peshawar and claimed the ritual bowls (**Chapter 3**); however, advice is given throughout if this is not the case. Guidance is also given on how to reach Rajgir if the investigators have chosen not to follow the potential route suggested by Tenzin Kalsang in **Chapter 2: Which Way?** (page 86).

THE JEWEL IN MANY CROWNS

Known to the Chinese in antiquity as Dahila and mythologized as the “Western Paradise” through the writings of the wandering monks Fa Hsien and Hiuen-Tsiang, India has been home to many great civilizations. As it is possibly one of the oldest continually inhabited countries on the planet, its complete history is too tangled and complex for a full description here, so only a brief overview of those northern kingdoms and empires most relevant to *The Children of Fear* campaign is provided here.

The oldest known Indian civilization was discovered (though not correctly identified as such) in 1826 at Harappa in the Punjab, although little in the way of large-scale excavation was carried out until around 1922, when the site was finally studied and classified as part of the Indus Valley Civilization. Another of the civilization's great cities, Mohenjodaro, was excavated during the 1920s by Rakhal Das Bannerjee and Harold Hargreaves of the ASI. Both cities are believed to date from approximately the middle of the 3rd millennium BCE.

After the Aryans arrived from Central Asia in around 1500 BCE, several other great empires rose to the fore in both the north and south of the country. The Mauryan Empire, established by Chandragupta in 322 BCE when he defeated the King of Magadha with 9,000 drunken war elephants, lasted for a little over 130 years and covered Afghanistan as well as the vast majority of the Indian subcontinent, barring only the southern tip. After the Mauryans came the Kushans

Opposite: Creating the kangling and damaru

(**Handout: Song 3**). Although their empire was smaller, it was just as influential in terms of trade and artistic advances.

The Gupta Empire began in the north in the 4th century CE and oversaw the development of Hindu culture and religion from the area's earlier Aryan Vedic roots. India also witnessed another of its many golden ages of art and culture under the Guptas before their empire finally crumbled after two centuries of rule. A host of minor kingdoms then rose and fell, before the Islamic conquests of the 10th and 11th centuries eventually led to the establishment of the Mughal Empire in the 16th century. A further Golden Age followed, but the empire began to disintegrate from the moment foreign interests (with a view to plundering its vast wealth and resources) set their sights on India.

The worst of these offenders was the British East India Company (BEIC), which first arrived in the country in the early 17th century. The Company spent the next 250 years seizing control of India, both directly and through treaty arrangements with petty local rulers, riding roughshod over all who stood in its way until, finally, its own arrogance brought about its downfall via the Indian Mutiny of 1857. India then passed to the British Crown, which continued to rule through a patchwork of client states and those under direct governorship (the "British Raj") until the country finally achieved independence in 1947.

A LAND OF KINGS

Formerly part of the Bengal Presidency under the British East India Company, Bihar and Orissa (present day Bihar) split from Bengal into its own state in 1912. Dotted with thousands of ruins, the region was home to several prominent dynasties and empires from India's past, at least three of which were centered on Magadha, one of the Great Countries (*Mahajanapadas*) of ancient India—these were: the Haryanka Dynasty, which founded Rajagriha (Rajgir, **The Royal Mountain**, page 154) and Pataliputra (Patna; **Chapter 7: Heaven and Hell**, page 284); the Mauryan Empire, whose most famous king, Ashoka (**Chapter 7: The Heart of an Empire**, page 269), promoted Buddhism as the state religion; and the Gupta Empire, visited by Fa Hsien in the 5th century (**Handout: Song 5**).

Bihar formed the core of Magadha. Its name is believed to derive from the Sanskrit *vihara*, the word used for the numerous religious centers that sprang up in the region as a result of it being the birthplace of Mahavira, the last of the Jain's Tirthankaras (Ford-makers, roughly equivalent to a Christian saint), and the country where Sakyamuni Buddha spent most of his life. A brief overview of the area is provided for the players in **What Your Investigator Knows 5: India, Bihar and Orissa** (**Appendix C**, page 351).

HOLY GROUND

Although born in Lumbini in the Kingdom of Nepal as Prince Siddhartha Gautama, Sakyamuni Buddha's religious development largely took place in Magadha. Bodh Gaya, the place of his enlightenment, Sarnath, where he delivered his first sermon after enlightenment (now in Uttar Pradesh; the United Provinces in the 1920s), and Rajgir, where he spent many years teaching and meditating, were all part of the ancient kingdom. Thus, Bihar is strewn with the remains of Buddhist *stupas*, monasteries, and other sites sacred to the Buddhist faith.

THE ROYAL MOUNTAIN

To the south of Rajgir lie seven peaks, split across two parallel ridges. Once, between these hills, beside one of the ancient mineral trade routes that crossed the area, lay the former capital of the Haryanka Dynasty before it moved approximately 60 miles (97 km) northwest to where Patna stands today (**Chapter 7: Heaven and Hell**, page 284). Now, all that is left of the city of Rajagriha (whose name can be translated as the Royal Mountain) are a few ruins and the remains of its cyclopean stone walls, which can still be seen marching across the hillsides.

The whole area is littered with sites important to multiple faiths. Saptaparni Cave on Vhaibava Hill played host to the First Buddhist Council sometime in the 5th century BCE, shortly after Sakyamuni Buddha's death. Hot springs, sacred to Hindus, emanate from the cave, and the path up to them is edged with Jain shrines. Sakyamuni Buddha regularly meditated on Gridhakuta Hill (Vulture's Peak; now known as Chhathagiri) where he delivered both the *Prajnaparamita* and *Lotus Sutras* (**Shambhala**, page 12), and King Bimbisara gave his pleasure garden at Veluvana, the Bamboo Grove, to Sakyamuni Buddha as a place for him to live during his time in Rajgir.

SET UP: HOT AND COLD

The charnel grounds of India are a strange place to go looking for materials with which to fashion musical instruments, but this is what the investigators must do if they are to help Tenzin Kalsang craft the equipment needed to perform the




BIHAR AND ORISSA'S WEATHER

There are wide variations in the weather in this state, largely due to its size and the fact that Orissa has a large stretch of coastline on the Bay of Bengal. Both Bihar and Orissa have hot, humid summers (from late March to early June), which end with the onset of the monsoon season (June through September).


Bihar is classed as a humid subtropical region and, depending on the area, temperatures during the summer can reach 107 degrees F (42 degrees C) or more. Winter arrives in late October and runs through to late February, with the coldest months being December and January, when the temperatures can dip to around 43 degrees F (6 degrees C).

Orissa, on the other hand, is a tropical region with a long dry season and a very short winter, centered on December and January. The temperatures here rarely drop below around 61 degrees F (16 degrees C) even in the depths of the cold season, and regularly rise to the mid-90s Fahrenheit (mid-30s Celsius) or above at the height of summer.



RESPECT FOR THE DEAD

All of the practices mentioned in this chapter are based on actual beliefs and rites carried out by the various faiths involved. Death, and dealing with the bodies of the deceased, is a sensitive matter in Western culture in a way that it is not in India, although certain strictures and taboos do apply. As Keeper, it is up to you to handle the events of this chapter with respect for your players' feelings and beliefs, and to acknowledge and accept that some players may feel uncomfortable with certain aspects of this particular scenario, which should be adjusted accordingly (see **Coming Clean**, page 161).



proposed gate-closing ritual. But, will their arrival upset the charnel ground's resident *sadhu* (holy man)? And, would it be better to risk muscling in on his seat of power or leave to find another source for their components?

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Here are brief descriptions of the main NPCs for this scenario; their profiles can be found at the end of this chapter.

Aghor Kalidasji, age 99, Aghori ascetic

Born into a wealthy Bihari Brahmin family, the man who became Aghor Kalidasji was expected to follow the family tradition and become either a priest or an academic; after all, his parents had a reputation and a position in society to maintain. But, even as a child, the boy knew he was not destined for such a traditional way of life and, as he grew older, he rebelled against the strictures placed upon him, often violently. His drinking and debauchery broke his mother's heart (and took a great deal of money and influence to hush up the worst of his misdemeanors). The family were at their wits' end and had no option but to send the young man away to relatives in Benares, hoping that a change of scenery and a visit to the holy City of Light would bring about a miraculous change in the youth's attitude. It did, but not in the way they had expected.

While visiting the cremation *ghats* on the banks of the River Ganges for a family funeral, the young man came across an ash-covered *sadhu* smoking *ganja* (cannabis) and drinking cheap alcohol from a human skull. Fascinated by seeing such an obviously holy man engaged in distinctly unpriestly behavior, the young man sat down in front of the *sadhu* and began to question him. The filthy, stinking ascetic nodded at him as if greeting an old friend and proceeded to open the young man's eyes to the truth of reality. Knowing he had found his true calling at last, the youth begged the *sadhu* to take him on as an apprentice. Assuming the name Aghor Kalidasji (to honor the goddess of the burning grounds), the young man renounced his former life and strove to find *moksha* (the Hindu equivalent of *nirvana*—release from the cycle of death and rebirth), first in Benares, and then when his guru had taught him all he could, in the charnel grounds of his home province. His family were not sorry to see him go, having regained at least a modicum of honor through their son's becoming a holy man, even one belonging to such an extreme sect.

After years of wandering, Aghor Kalidasji came to the Cool Grove (Sitavana) or, at least, what remained of it. And, here he intends to stay until he is granted his long-awaited *moksha*.

- **Description:** tall, emaciated, and covered in ash, with long, matted hair and an equally matted, straggly beard, the *sadhu* reeks of sweat and excrement, and his breath is foul. Around his neck hang several rosaries carved from human bones. He is surprisingly spry for his age, which he credits to his ritual cannibalism and meditation.



- **Traits:** watchful and strong-willed. Despite what everyone else might think, Kalidasji knows there are no such things as opposites—good and evil, black and white. All life is the same, an illusion, and only by attaining *moksha* can one break free of the fetters that bind the soul to the endless cycle of rebirth.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** as an expert in his field, the Aghori ascetic can provide the investigators with a great deal of background knowledge on a variety of tantric topics, particularly if they are traveling without Tenzin Kalsang. He may also act as an advisor regarding the crafting of the instruments required for the gate-closing ritual, although he will not leave his charnel ground or take an active part in the instruments' creation.

Sanjit Chopra, age 32, hospital cleaner

As a member of the Dom caste, whose traditional roles included menial labor as well as handling the dead and seeing to their funerary rites, Sanjit Chopra is a Dalit (an Untouchable). As such, his start in life could not have been more different from that of the holy man he reveres. Still, his upbringing gave him a sense of pride in who he was and the task his family had carried out since time immemorial. Although cleaning is beneath the upper castes because it might bring them into contact with unclean substances, like blood and spit, Chopra knows that without him, and others like him, the world would be unfit to live in.

Chopra was already working in the hospital when his son became sick. Although his family scraped together enough money to pay for a consultation, the doctors were unable to cure the child. Desperate, the Chopras turned to the terrifying Aghori of the charnel ground, whose services came highly recommended from those who couldn't afford hospital treatment.

Chopra had little faith in folk superstitions, but his love for his son forced his hand. The strange old man chanted over the boy from dawn until dusk, supposedly taking the sickness into himself, or so he claimed. With his task accomplished, the Aghori sent them home. Miraculously, the child recovered and, from that day, Chopra has made sure that the *sadhu* has plenty to eat and drink and is regularly informed of any corpses he may find useful.

- **Description:** on the short side but powerfully built, Chopra is meticulously groomed and always smart, despite his modest dress and income.
- **Traits:** quiet, loyal, methodical, precise. He never adhered to the superstitious side of the Hindu faith before but, having witnessed the Aghori's abilities, Chopra is now a firm believer in the power of the gods.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** if approached correctly, Chopra can act as a valuable source of information regarding identifying corpses suitable for the investigators' needs.



Aghor Kalidasji



Sanjit Chopra

OLD BONES - SITAVANA, INDIA -

Shri Chitipati, the Glorious Lord and Lady of the Charnel Grounds

According to legend, Shri Chitipati, the Glorious Lord and Lady of the Charnel Grounds, were originally both monks who were so deep in meditation they didn't realize that a passing thief had cut off both their heads. The pious pair were then reincarnated as *dharmapala*, wrathful spirit guardians of the charnel grounds and protectors of Chakrasamvara and Vajrayogini, both important *yidams* (personal meditational deities) in Vajrayana (Tantric) Buddhism.

In other versions of the tale, the pair are called the Smashana Adipathi—literally the Lords of the Charnel Grounds. They are considered to be emanations of Mahakala, the Great Destroyer of creation and bringer of death (Hindus believe Mahakala is Lord Shiva in his most destructive form, while Vajrayana Buddhists class him as *dharmapala*). The Smashana Adipathi are invoked as protection against thieves and, bizarrely, are also named in ceremonies to promote the acquisition of wealth.

- **Description:** the Lord and Lady appear as dancing skeletons, each wearing a crown of five small skulls. The Lord wears a tiger-skin loincloth and carries a corpse club in his right hand and a *kapala* (skull cup) full of boiling blood and brains in his left; a flayed human skin is draped around his shoulders like a flowing scarf. The Lady wears a

red silk loincloth and carries a protective head of grain in her left hand and a small wealth vase in her right; she, too, is wreathed in a flayed human skin.

- **Traits:** wrathful and inquisitive protectors of Buddhist funerary sites.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** the skeletal pair are drawn to Rajgir by the investigators' activities.

Scorpion Demon, oversized arachnid terror

Scorpions have many roles in both Indian and Tibetan mythology. Although they often represent negative influences and aspects, such as disease, defilement, and destruction, they can also be brought to bear as talismans when subduing dangerous spirits.

- **Description:** gigantic in size and clothed in the jet-black scorpion-hide armor, it has 9 heads and 27 eyes. It possesses 18 pincers and a large, blood red stinger whose power is symbolically represented by the blood (or poison) on the tip of the *phurba* (three-sided dagger) in sacred images.
- **Traits:** wrathful and protective.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** the scorpion demon acts as a *dharmapala* (wrathful protector deity or spirit) or a discoverer of tantric wisdom, although it usually takes on the former role if summoned. It may be called by Aghor Kalidasji to defend his territory from thieving interlopers.



Shri Chitipati



Scorpion Demon

GETTING TO SITAVANA

If the investigators wish to travel toward Rajgir from Peshawar, the simplest option is to take the train. A frequent service runs from Peshawar through New Delhi to Patna and on to the little station of Bakhtiyarpur on the main Delhi-Howrah (Calcutta) line. From there, a connection on the Bakhtiyarpur Bihar Light Railway can take them straight to Rajgir. Another potential train route follows the Grand Chord line (a shorter, faster spur of the Delhi-Howrah line) to Gaya Junction. From there, they could either hire transport to get them to Rajgir or catch a train up to Patna and on to Bakhtiyarpur and beyond.

Depending on the trains the investigators catch, it takes at least two days to cover the distance between Peshawar and Patna, including one night-train. The journey from Patna via Bakhtiyarpur then takes another 2–3 hours.

Alternatively, the investigators could travel the approximately 1,400-mile (2,250 km) trip from Peshawar to Rajgir along the Grand Trunk Road, passing through

historic cities such as Lahore, Delhi, and Benares (Varanasi, the holy city of Shiva), before taking the turn for Gaya and Rajgir. This route goes past Bodh Gaya, one of the four holiest sites in Buddhism, which would certainly make an interesting diversion for Tenzin Kalsang and any other Buddhists in the group.

If they have sufficient cash on hand, the investigators may be able to hire or buy a car and drive themselves, without having to rely on anyone else. The result is a hair-raising journey that sees them weaving along a pot-holed, glorified dirt track between streams of people, camels, horses, bullock carts, and the occasional elephant, as well as herds of sheep, goats, and cattle. Without a car, they will need to borrow or acquire horses or a bullock cart to transport them or attempt to negotiate their way into a trade caravan that's going their way. By car, the journey is likely to take around a month; riding, or by cart, almost two.

If the investigators are heading to Rajgir from Derge, the easiest way is to travel to Chamdo (Qamdo) to join a spur of the Tea Horse Road before heading down to British India via the Chumbi Valley and Sikkim, before finally catching a train to their destination (see **Chapter 5: Getting to Derge**, page 198, for more information on this route and the difficulties the investigators are likely to face). The trip should take them around two to three months, depending on their method of travel.

GLORIOUS STEAM

India is rightly famous for its railway network, which permits travel across vast areas of a subcontinent lacking in proper roads outside the main population centers. After the first line connected Bombay to Tannah (Thrane) in 1853, the system expanded at a prodigious rate. By 1929, India was host to over 40,000 miles (64,400 km) of track, both standard and narrow gauge, running across deserts, plains, and mountains—an epic feat of engineering carrying almost one-hundred-million tons of goods and more than six-hundred-million passengers per year.

Although it started out as a conglomeration of many private companies, the vast majority of the system was nationalized by the 1920s. The railway tracks didn't reach *everywhere*, though; certain remote parts of the northeast remained without a train service until long after Indian independence. Overcrowded, unbearably hot in summer and freezing cold in winter, subject to severe delays due to extreme weather conditions and unpredictable wildlife, and with only basic facilities, the system was far from perfect but, if you had limited time and money, it was still by far the easiest—and fastest—way to get around.

WITH CURIOUS EYES 3: TRAINS

While somewhat taken aback by the noise and heat generated by steam engines when he first encounters them, Tenzin Kalsang quickly becomes fascinated by these great machines—as soon as he is convinced they aren't dangerous. If any of the investigators have above base skill in Science (Engineering), or even Mechanical Repair, and the *lama* is aware of this, he bombards the “expert” investigator(s) with questions about the trains' inner workings. He is impressed with whatever they tell him, unless they try to use the words “magic” and/or “demons” at any point in their explanation—he's an intelligent man and knows exactly what both of those are, and these engines are most definitely unrelated. If anyone does attempt this approach, his disappointment in them is palpable, although he doesn't outwardly chastise them for their blunder.

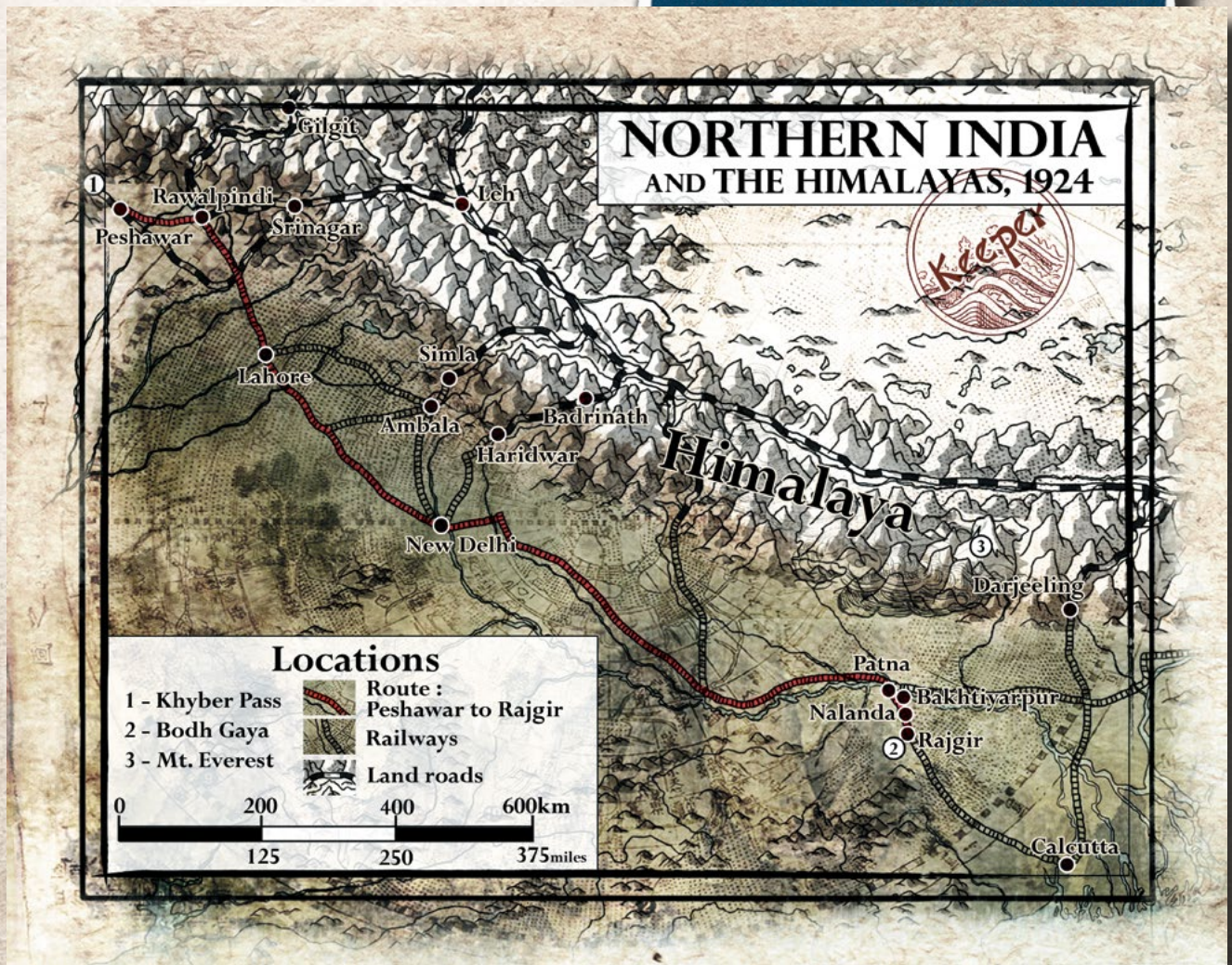
OLD BONES
- SITAVANA, INDIA -

It is also possible for the investigators to head straight for Rajgir from Tun-huang. If they decide to go this way, they will have to travel down through Tibet. One option takes them along the Mongolian trade route through the Kansu corridor and Sining (Xining), past Koko Nor (the Blue Lake), and over the Tang La to Amdo and Nagchu (Nagqu) before picking up the Tea Horse Road to India beyond Lhasa. Alternatively, they could follow the southern Silk Road to Cherchen, and then cross the mountains into the fearsome Chang Tang before heading to Lhasa and the Tea Horse Road.

As with the route from Derge, there are many obstacles along each of these paths (**Chapter 5: Getting to Derge**, page 198). A journey from Tun-huang, by either route, takes at least four months to complete if riding, and up to eight if walking all the way. It may prove to easier, in the long run, to follow the Silk Roads down into India via the Karakoram passes as if they were heading for Chakdara, particularly as the plains of Tibet are notorious for their fearsome outlaws.



Himalayas by Nicholas Roerich



Northern India and the Himalayas map

START: BENEATH THE TREES (RAJGIR)

The modern town of Rajgir lies only 20 miles (32 km) from Bodh Gaya, in a valley a short distance from the steep hills of the old city that flank it to the south; its red buildings peek out from beneath verdant trees. Now a bustling market town, Rajgir's streets are lined with hostels and boarding houses, any one of which would make an ideal base for the investigators if they have no local contacts. The hostels, along with numerous eateries, cater to the pilgrims making their way to the various holy sites scattered across the hillsides, or to the *kunds* (water tanks) fed by the medicinal hot springs the region is famous for. In the heart of the town, there is little evidence that this region was once the nerve center of a great empire.

By now, the investigators should be curious about why they are going to a charnel ground in search of musical instruments. For once, Tenzin Kalsang is reticent when it comes to dealing with their questions. It is a delicate matter, he explains, which must be handled sensitively, and this is neither the time nor the place to do so. Saying that once they have reached Sitavana, all will become clear and they will have all the answers they need.

SELF-IMPROVEMENT: NORTHERN INDIA

If the investigators travel by train from Peshawar to Sitavana, there is little opportunity to better themselves during their journey; only a trip along the Grand Trunk Road between the two locations gives sufficient time to hone their skills. As on previous long hauls, the most obvious areas for improvement or acquisition are Ride (depending on their means of transport) and Navigate, and, if traveling with Tenzin Kalsang, any relevant languages along with Lore (Buddhism).

If, on the other hand, they are traveling to Sitavana from Derge or Tun-huang, then the investigators have plenty of opportunity to engage with their studies. Survival (Desert, Mountain), Natural World, Disguise—even Fighting (Brawl), if traveling with a band of Mongolian traders, who love nothing more than to practice their wrestling.

Asking around for Sitavana draws strange looks from the locals, who insist that the charnel ground has long since disappeared beneath what they call the “old and new royal cities,” whose ruins are located in the valley beyond the town—although they can tell the investigators that there are two other ancient charnel grounds close to Veluvana, which lies at the foot of the northernmost ridge.

VISIONS IN THE DARK: SITAVANA

It is important to remember that the investigators' strange dreams and visions since setting off on their quest are still occurring. In fact, they're becoming more frequent the further the investigators proceed toward their ultimate destination. While the visions contain premonitions of events in their immediate future, such as dancing skeletons, hideous scorpion monsters, and images of dismembered corpses, they should now begin to take a more apocalyptic turn.

Although things are most likely going well for the investigators in terms of acquiring everything they need to complete Tenzin Kalsang's ritual, the Tokabhaya have a timetable to adhere to and use the dreams and visions to reinforce the feeling that time is of the essence and, indeed, is beginning to run out. As mentioned in **That's a Pass** (page 87), if saving the world from annihilation seems too distant and remote a reason to continue on their journey, the Keeper should adjust the investigators' nightmares to something more personal: the torment and destruction of the people or things they care most about. The Tokabhaya are determined to keep the investigators on the hook for as long as possible and are quite happy to alter their strategy slightly to do so.

The Keeper may wish to use the apocalyptic visions described in **That's a Pass** (page 87) if they haven't already done so. Instead of a nameless city, though, it's the investigator's hometown that is destroyed by the earthquake, or their backstory's Meaningful Location. Or, perhaps it's the bodies of their Significant People that are swept past them in the surging floodwaters. Then again, if the investigator is a great collector—of books or other flammable ephemera, for example—it isn't a blasted wasteland they see burning, but their own precious belongings going up in smoke; this could also apply to any investigator's Treasured Possessions, if appropriate. Visions of the investigator's nearest and dearest being put to the sword or enslaved by the King of Fear's legions are also suitably ominous alternatives.

OLD BONES - SITAVANA, INDIA -

Keeper note: the first charnel ground is detailed in **Coming Clean** (following) and then **The Ash-Smeared Sadhu** (page 164), while the second one the investigators may potentially visit is described in **The Bamboo Grove** (page 169).

Although he seems a little saddened by Sitavana's disappearance, Tenzin Kalsang is not surprised; after all, the stories of Rajagriha were old even in his day. "Still," he says, "it would have been interesting to see where Guru Rinpoche was initiated by the *dakini*." And, while the charnel ground might not still be there, the location can still be visited, making for a pleasant day trip out beyond the bamboo groves of Veluvana.

If any of the investigators have a knowledge of Tibetan Buddhism, a successful skill roll (such as **History**, **Lore (Buddhism)**, **Occult**, or a **Hard Know**) calls to mind stories of another famous charnel ground at Rajagriha—one where Padmasambhava (**Handout: Gates 4**) received knowledge of the *phurba*, a three-sided Tibetan ritual dagger, from a terrifying scorpion creature. Asking the *lama* about such stories cheers him, although he says that any charnel ground is suitable for their purposes, but the more ancient and well-used, the better.

If the investigators don't have a relevant skill or fail the roll, then as they make their way toward Veluvana, Tenzin Kalsang stops and berates himself for his stupidity, revealing the above information about Padmasambhava, and wondering if either of the two sites mentioned by the locals

could be the location of this miracle (and therefore a suitable alternative to Sitavana). Regardless there's really only one way to find out: to go to Veluvana and look for themselves.

COMING CLEAN

The first of the charnel grounds the investigators were told about in Rajgir lies to the northeast of the sanctuary of Veluvana, set back from the road leading from the modern town through the hills to the farmland beyond. The area is lightly covered with trees, and the aromas of burning wood, incense, and charred meat hang heavy in the air. On arrival, Tenzin Kalsang takes the investigators to one side. Seating himself beneath a solitary tree, he asks that they join him. It is now time to discuss why they are here and exactly what they need to do. He acknowledges that it may be difficult for some of them, but assures them that he would not ask them to do anything that wasn't essential to their success.

He begins by explaining the significance of the charnel grounds they are visiting (**Handout: Bones 1**), before moving on to what they must do here (**Handout: Bones 2** explains India's funerary practices). As he has said before, the investigators require certain musical instruments to perform the liberation ritual to thwart the King of Fear. Music and dance are an important part of such rites and, because of their intended use, no ordinary instruments are sufficient for the task. Therefore, they must gather the materials they need to make new, special instruments—ones with the necessary power to support them in their battle against Agarth's evil.


The lama explains that in tantric practices, be they Hindu or Buddhist, bones contain power, particularly if they come from the right person. That is why the investigators have come here to Sitavana (or at least to the remaining charnel grounds next to that most ancient and powerful of places): to find the bones and skin needed to make both a *damaru* and a *kangling*. Tenzin Kalsang hopes that the investigators can assist him in gathering the necessary components and, with his guidance, join them together in a ritual that will increase and focus the bones' latent potency and ready them for use against the inhabitants of Agarth.

A successful **History**, **Occult**, **Art/Craft (Instrument)**, or **Lore (Hindu or Buddhism)** roll identifies a *damaru* as a double-headed drum, held in the right hand and played by twisting the wrist, forcing two beaters attached with cords to the drum's waist to swing back and forth and hit the drum's skins. Although usually constructed from wood, goat or snake skin, wax, and silks, tantric versions are made from the joined calvariums (domes) of two human skulls, their beaters from other carved pieces of human bone, the skins and leather adornments from human flesh, and their tassels from silk and braids of human hair.



MIRROR, MIRROR

Use of the *lama's melong* in the valley where the old city used to be reveals shimmering, shifting images of beautiful palaces and richly-dressed citizens going about their daily business. The visions are fleeting and confusing, with different historical periods and their corresponding royal residences overlaid one on top of the other. A film of smoke drifts across the visions, curling through and around the people and buildings. A successful **Spot Hidden** roll highlights a faint, underlying grove of trees surrounding a lake. Throughout the grove are cremation fires and scattered piles of bones, along with vultures tearing apart fresh corpses. Those seeing this scene should make a **Sanity** roll (0/1D3 loss) unless they are used to such funerary practices (for example, if they are Hindus, Buddhists, or those from cultures who revere vultures as sacred birds that perform an essential religious service).



CHAPTER 4

The same roll also identifies a *kangling* as a type of horn or trumpet, made from a hollowed-out human femur (thigh bone) and adorned with copper wire and leather (not necessarily human in origin). One head of the femur is removed completely, and part of the other head is sawed off to create either a single or double horn, depending on where the bone is cut.

If none of the investigators have the necessary skills, or fail their rolls to understand what these instruments are, Tenzin Kalsang is happy to answer any questions they have about the instruments and what they're made from. Alternatively, the investigators could visit Rajgir's small public library, which does have a limited selection of books on comparative religion and music (the Keeper may wish to call for a **Library Use** roll to determine how long it takes them to find the relevant information, or whether or not they need to call on the librarian for assistance).

The holy man continues to explain that they are not just after any old bones. To ensure the greatest potency, the bones must be taken from specific corpses. For the *damaru*, one must be male (ideally, a 15- or 16-year-old Brahmin boy), and the other female (ideally, a 15- or 16-year-old Brahmin girl); failing that, a 16-year-old boy and a 12-year-old girl are the ideal donors.

The *kangling's* requirements are equally specific: the left femur of a 16-year-old Brahmin girl would be most effective, but failing that, the right femur of a Brahmin boy

of the same age is almost as good. After that, the femur of a murder victim is better than that of a victim of accidental (or weapon-related) death, followed by the bone of someone who died from a contagious disease.

For both instruments, the bones from those who died of old age are almost useless, as are those from people who died of natural causes after puberty. Interestingly, bones taken from a *lama* or *ani's* (nun's) corpse are powerful, but not ideal; despite their holiness, their donor most likely died of old age, which keeps them from being the best possible bones to use in a ritual of this sort. This information is presented in **Handout: Bones 3** for the players' reference. For what the bone quality means in game terms, see **All in the Bones**, page 168.

As well as the bones, they need human skin for both the drumheads and the adornments; sinews will also be useful in the *damaru's* construction. While the bones might be tricky to acquire, the skin will be even more so, as it must come from either a fresh corpse or the remains of a mummified holy man, boiled in a vat of butter after death, as is the preferred technique for Buddhist *lamas*. Unlike a *lama's* bones, such a skin would be ideal, partly because it has already been preserved. A fresh skin would need to be tanned by being buried with copper salts and a special concoction of herbs and other sacred ingredients for up to a month—time the investigators do not have. If all else fails, the *lama* tells them, a fresh skin could be suitably preserved within a couple of days.

Handout: Bones 1

Legends tell of the fierce and dangerous demon Rudra, the reincarnation of a Buddhist practitioner who perverted the teachings of the tantra to his own ends. Eventually, after many terrible battles, the demon was slain and his body cut up into eight pieces, which were carefully placed across India. His head, heart, navel, and genitals were positioned at the cardinal points, while his limbs were laid at the primary intercardinal sites. From each part of his corpse sprang a great tree of a different species, and around these trees grew the eight great charnel grounds of ancient India, the Astamahasmashana. Although the locations of most of the fabled eight great charnel grounds have been lost to time, Hiuen-Tsiang claims that Rajgriha was home to one of them: Sitavana.

The wandering Chinese monk relates a strange tale of how the inhabitants of a nearby city were plagued by "non-human" creatures who kept burning down their houses. The king insisted that, if anyone lost their home in this way, they should build it again but on the site of the Cool Grove, Sitavana. When the royal residence, too, was burned to the ground, the king built the first of many new palaces on Sitavana's sacred ground, hence the town's original name: Rajagriha, the House of the King. Over time, Rajagriha was abbreviated first to Rajgriha, and then to simply Rajgir.



OLD BONES - SITAVANA, INDIA -

As repulsed as the investigators might be by this somewhat gruesome request, hopefully they agree to assist Tenzin Kalsang. He will not force anyone to take part if they don't want to, but underlines that without these instruments, their chances of succeeding in their quest are slim. Note that such a task must be undertaken carefully so as not to upset the sensibilities of Rajgir's current inhabitants; although there is a tradition of such practices across India and Tibet, they are still viewed as strange and terrifying by the majority of society, particularly by those of European descent, who first thought that the bones the holy men used in their rituals were acquired through cannibalism.

Tenzin Kalsang is hoping that the Dalits who tend the charnel grounds can help them. If they are really lucky, there may even be a resident Kapalika (see **Variety Is...**, page 15) who can point the group in the right direction. Either way, they must search the burning (charnel) grounds to see what they can find.

Keeper note: there may well be some players who are reluctant for their investigators to take part in recovering the corpses, or investigators who have good reasons for not wishing to become involved in what is a truly grisly process. Tenzin Kalsang is, as ever, highly understanding of their qualms and accepts their decision immediately. If none of the investigators wish to gather the components, the *lama* does so himself, asking only that one or two of them

Handout: Bones 2

Charnel grounds, often located next to rivers, are where Buddhist, Hindu, Jain, and Sikh bodies are cremated, if appropriate. According to religious lore, certain corpses cannot be cremated, such as those belonging to holy men and children under the age of puberty, while others, such as those of the poor and unclaimed, simply cannot afford the wood for a funeral pyre. In areas lacking sufficient wood for cremation, bodies are either buried or left out for wild animals to pick clean; "sky burials" such as this are also part of the Tibetan Buddhist and Parsi traditions, for both practical and spiritual reasons. If the charnel ground is next to a river, not only are the ashes of the dead disposed of in the water, but so are some of the corpses not fit for burning (usually those of the poor and unwanted).

Apart from using them for their essential function, people generally avoid visiting charnel grounds as they are reputed to be the home of fierce gods, ghosts, and evil spirits. Shiva, in his guise as the Lord of Ghosts, Bhutesvara, frequents charnel grounds with his consort, Kali. Tantric adepts of both the Buddhist and Hindu faiths also seek out charnel grounds, in order to gain occult power and knowledge.

WHICH IS WHICH?

It is perfectly reasonable for the investigators to ask exactly how they're supposed to identify whether a corpse is suitable or not. While those with a skill of 20% or more in either Medicine or Science (Biology) can identify the sex of a complete skeleton based on the shape of the skull and pelvis, as well as the rough age at the time of death, the cause of death may be harder to confirm. If there's nothing on the body to denote a violent death, they could always use the *melong* to view the history of a particular skeleton, at the risk of developing bleed-through (**Side Effects**, page 126).


accompany him to keep watch and deal with any scavengers he might encounter (see **Difficult Reflections**, page 182). This may also be an appropriate time for the *lama* to remind the investigators of the importance of what they are doing and why they are doing it, to reinforce the need to stop the Gates of Agartha opening (see **Handout: Gates 3**).



IN ABSENTIA 2

It is possible that, as discussed in **A Change of Plan**, page 86, Tenzin Kalsang did not travel with the investigators to Sitavana. If this is the case, then one of his gifts to them in Tun-huang was a ritual scroll detailing exactly what has to be done and where, including details of the types of bones required and how to prepare the skins.

As per the usual rules for learning an enchantment (*Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook*, page 176), an investigator can attempt to learn the spell from the scroll as they travel; needing a Hard INT roll to memorize it fully and, if successful, they learn the spell Enchant Sacred Instruments (**Appendix B**, page 343). Remember, the first time they attempt to cast the spell (undoubtedly during the ritual itself), they must succeed with a Hard POW roll to properly cast the enchantment.



THE ASH-SMEARED SADHU

While wandering through the trees in the first charnel ground, northeast of Veluvana, the investigators come across three funeral pyres in various stages of completion. The first has family members still gathered around it while Brahmin priests conduct the final rituals to send the departed on their way to the next life. At the second, Dalit (Untouchable) workers carefully turn the body with long poles to ensure that it is properly cremated. While at the third pyre, more Dalits sift through the ashes, recovering bone fragments for ritual disposal.

In one part of the charnel ground, next to the burial site reserved for those who cannot be cremated, is a graveyard for Indian Christians, complete with tombstones. In another section, separated from the main cremation area by a small lake, is a clearing littered with bones. A young Dalit workman shatters the larger bones with a mallet, while a naked *sadhu* with long, matted hair, smeared from head to foot in cremation ash, picks up the remaining bones and inspects them carefully, separating out some (including a human skull) while throwing others back where he found them.

Handout: Bones 3

Quality	Damaru	Kangling
Superb (best possible)	15-16-year-old Brahmin girl and boy	Left femur of a 16-year-old Brahmin girl
Good (almost perfect)	16-year-old boy and 12-year-old girl, any caste or creed; the skull from a lama and/or ani (or other holy persons of the required sex)	Right femur of a 16-year-old Brahmin boy; bone from a lama, or other holy person
Reasonable (just about suitable)		Femur from a murder victim, an accidental/weapon-related death, or from someone who died of a contagious disease
Poor (totally unsuitable)	Those people who died of old age or of natural causes after puberty	

OLD BONES - SITAVANA, INDIA -

Keeper note: those unused to dealing with the dead or the practice of sky burials should make a **Sanity** roll (0/1 loss) triggered by the bizarre and unsettling sight; some investigators may be immune to such losses, for example, if they took one of the experience packages described on page 61 of the *Investigator Handbook*, and so do not need to roll Sanity under these conditions.

The young Dalit pointedly ignores the investigators, even though it is obvious he is watching them carefully. As an Untouchable, he won't approach to ask what they are doing in the cemetery, as that could get him into all sorts of trouble he would rather avoid. But, if the investigators go to him, he politely answers any questions they have. His reactions depend completely on what the investigators ask of him.

- If they inquire about fresh corpses, the boy does his best to hide his shock, although he is not entirely surprised, given the presence of Tenzin Kalsang and his skull *khatvanga* (providing he didn't trade it with Robert Moorcroft before acquiring a potentially much less fearsome replacement—**Sale or Return?**, page 134). The boy informs them that while they do receive bodies for sky burial here, they really need to talk to the *sadhu* about such things, as this is "his place."

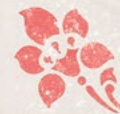
- If they ask about the naked *sadhu*, the Dalit identifies the man as Aghor Kalidasji, who, the young man explains, is a *sadhu* who knows all about corpses, although he's not a Kapalika but rather an Aghori, who lives and worships in the charnel ground. Aghor Kalidasji has made his home here for longer than anyone cares to remember and regularly performs his rituals at his seat of power beneath the branches of the charnel ground's centuries-old snake-hair tree. It doesn't require a Psychology roll to detect the distinct note of fear in the Dalit's voice when speaking about the *sadhu*.

A successful **History, Occult, Anthropology, or Lore (Hindu or Buddhism)** roll reveals the information in **Handout: Bones 4**. Although their exact origins are hard to identify, the Aghori are thought to have split off from the Kapalika (**Variety is...**, page 15) sometime in the 14th century CE. Modern Aghori can trace their lineage back to the 17th/18th century guru Kina Ram, the son of a poor Kshatriya family from Ramgarh accepted as an incarnation of Shiva by his devotees. Kina Ram is buried in Benares (Varanasi), and the city is considered to be the Aghoris' spiritual home.

Handout: Bones 4

Aghori (those who follow the path of Aghora) are ascetic holy men who revere Shiva in his incarnation of Bhairava, the demon slayer. Aghori live and meditate in charnel grounds. They do not cut their hair or beards and wear nothing but cremation ash, which they believe protects them from disease. If they do wear clothes, it is only ever a shroud taken from a corpse. Respected yet feared by the public, their name, which can be translated as "the absence of fear," comes from their refusal to accept that there is a difference between the pure and impure, or between what is acceptable and what is taboo.

To an Aghori, existence is non-dualistic—there are no such things as true opposites, and actively embracing taboo practices speeds up their attainment of moksha, the Hindu equivalent of the Buddhist nirvana. They are widely believed to be powerful magicians and healers, and they use corpses as both altars and components in their most powerful rituals. They also engage in acts of cannibalism and coprophagy (eating excrement).



INTERVIEW WITH A HOLY MAN

Approaching Aghor Kalidasji as he sifts through the picked-clean bones prompts a grunt of acknowledgement, but little more. Only when he has completed his survey of the sky burial site does he give his full attention to the investigators, his dark eyes glittering when he sees the *lama's khatvanga* (or whatever replacement he may have been forced to find). While Kalidasji talks to the investigators, he walks to his campground in a small nearby clearing. It is up to them to follow him, as he does not invite them to do so (but neither does he object if they decide to tag along).

At the center of the *sadhu's* camp is a nagkesar tree, the so-called “snake-hair” or “Medusa tree,” revered in Buddhist mythology as one of the trees found in the eight great charnel grounds (a successful **Occult**, **History**, **Anthropology**, or appropriate **Lore** roll); its wood is also quite handy for fashioning railway sleepers, thanks to its remarkable hardness (a successful **Science (Botany or Engineering)** roll). In front of the tree are the remains of a small fire and the Aghori's few possessions: a cremation shroud, a *kapala* (skull bowl), and a curved knife with a carved bone handle.

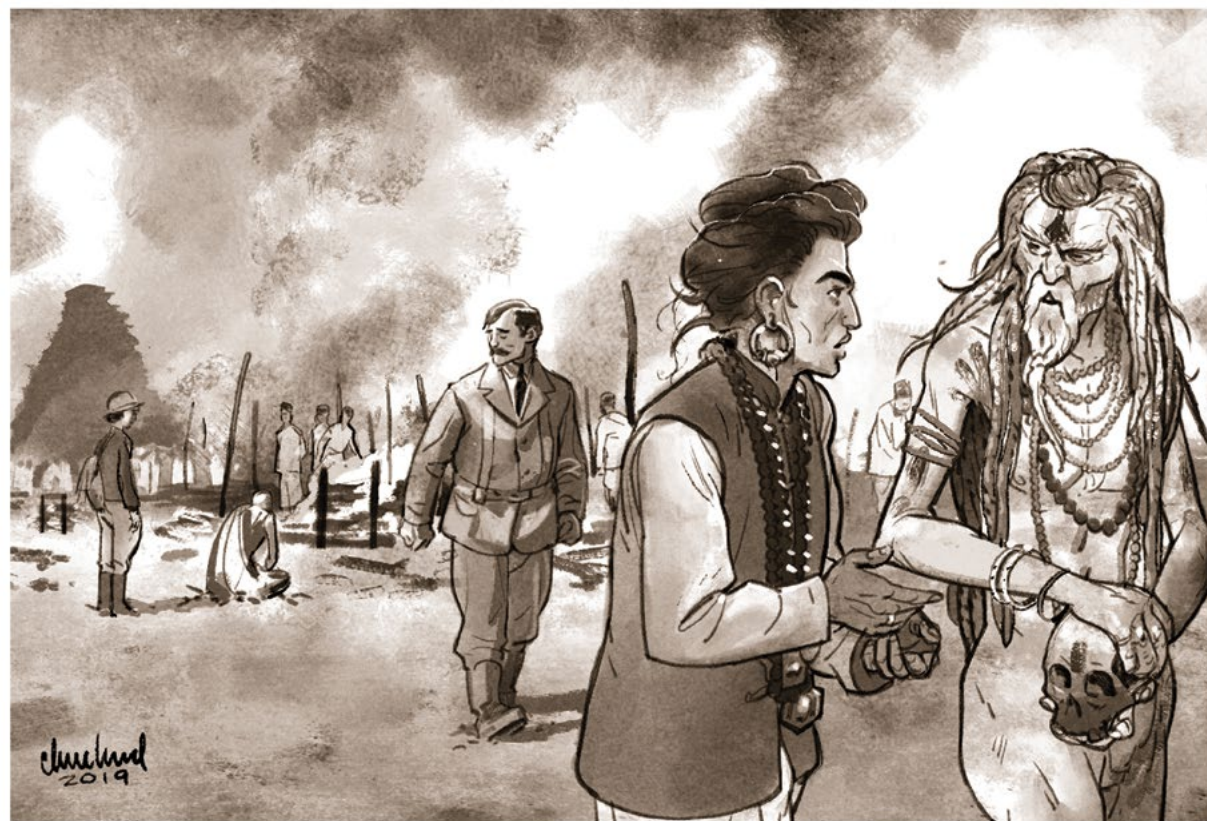
To one side of the clearing is a stone shrine, obviously of a great age. On it, a circle of red-painted human skulls surround

a carved stone statue of Dattatreya (a joint emanation of the Trimurti of Shiva, Vishnu, and Brahma), said to be the Aghoris' spiritual founder. A neat pile of yet more skulls, not all human in origin, is stacked in a space beneath the shrine. Those with at least 10% in Science (Biology or Zoology) or, in a pinch, a successful **Natural World** or **Medicine** roll, can tentatively identify these as belonging to a broad spectrum of creatures, ranging from a snake to a large carnivore, probably of the cat family. A firm identification of the largest skull as that of a tiger requires closer inspection which, without Aghor Kalidasji's express permission, is not well received.

The *sadhu* places the skull he took from the sky burial site on the ground in front of the shrine, and then turns to address Tenzin Kalsang, watching him closely for a reaction. “Died by the sting of a scorpion demon,” he says.

“Then his bones will make a powerful weapon against your enemies,” replies the *lama*, “if that is what you wish.”

Apparently satisfied with the answer, the *sadhu* waves toward the fire, indicating that the investigators should join him. He settles himself on the cremation shroud and lays a few small branches on the smoldering ashes of his fire. He looks directly at each investigator in turn, his eyes obviously searching their faces for something. Ignoring the *lama*, whose worth he has already judged, Kalidasji speaks: “Usually no one



The charnel ground

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talks to me unless it's healing they're after—they're all far too afraid of what I am for that. So, what do you want? What is so important to you that you risk seeking counsel from an Aghori?"

Seeking Advice

It is up to the investigators to explain why they are here; Tenzin Kalsang sits quietly by, only stepping in to correct any finer details they get wrong. The investigators must decide just how much information they share with the strange *sadhu*, who absent-mindedly plays with the carved skulls of his bone necklaces while they talk.

If the investigators ask about his beliefs and rituals, Aghor Kalidasji explains how powerful the dead are—both their bones and the spirits still attached to them—which act as his guides and protectors if propitiated correctly. If questioned about eating human flesh, he claims that it keeps him from aging. He then asks the investigators to guess his age, which is hard to do considering his emaciated form and unkempt appearance. He chuckles at their answers unless someone guesses correctly the first time (see his details in the **Dramatis Personae** section, page 155, for further details); if they get it right (age 99), or are only a year or less off, he compliments them on the keenness of their eyes.

If they ask Kalidasji where he gets his bones from, he answers truthfully: from the graves of those not fit or appropriate to be burned, and from the poor left in the sky burial site. He also relies on tip-offs from a Dalit whose son he cured of a serious illness; the man works as a cleaner in the mortuary at the hospital in Rajgir and lets him know when suitable corpses, such as those of accident victims, become available. Usually, he takes the bodies before they rot or are devoured by the jackals, pi-dogs, and vultures so that he can use them for his rituals, but, depending on what he plans to use the remains for, he may wait for nature to take its course.

As strange and unsettling as the *sadhu's* words may be, a successful **Psychology** roll reveals that he genuinely believes everything he tells the investigators. The same roll reveals that he is proud of his traditions and fiercely protective of them.


All goes well unless (or until) the investigators ask if they can take the bones they need to create the ritual instruments from *this* charnel ground. If they do, the Aghori becomes angry and uncooperative. He defecates into his hand and throws the excrement at the nearest investigator, who needs to successfully **Dodge** to avoid a noisome direct hit. He remonstrates loudly with Tenzin Kalsang, shouting that he should know better than to try and steal a "*tantrika's* power." Screaming obscenities and foul invocations, the Aghori chases the investigators from his campground, and potentially from the charnel ground as a whole, if they have upset him badly enough.

If, on the other hand, the investigators ask *where* they can get the necessary bones, Kalidasji tells them that the other



OPTIONAL ENCOUNTER: THE SCORPION DEMON

If the investigators are predominantly combat-oriented (or pulp) in nature, and their players would enjoy a supernatural punch-up, then one option is for Aghor Kalidasji to summon a scorpion demon to deal with these potential thieves, should they attempt to take bones from his charnel ground or if they otherwise upset him; see **Scorpion Demon** (page 184) for the demon's profile.



charnel ground, south and west of this one (see **The Bamboo Grove**, page 169), would make a good hunting ground for them. It has no resident Aghori and tends to be favored by the area's Buddhists due to its placement on the far edge of the ancient *vihara* (monastery) at Veluvana. There are also numerous ruined *stupas* (relic mounds) in among the charnel ground's bamboo groves. On top of that, the local authorities tend to use it for the disposal of the corpses of disease and murder victims, as well as any bodies that remain unclaimed.

A successful **Psychology** roll identifies that the *sadhu* is hiding something. If pressed, he admits that, while it is obviously a place of great power, he has his reasons for not gathering bones and bodies from there. Partly, it is due to tradition—the Aghori of Rajgir have always favored the northern of the two ancient burning grounds—but more than that, there is just something about the place that makes him feel uncomfortable, and so he avoids it.

THE BONE COLLECTORS

As with the ritual bowls in **Chapter 3**, there are numerous ways for the investigators to acquire the bones they need. The following sections detail several possible methods available to them.

THE DEVIL YOU KNOW

- *The charnel ground northeast of Veluvana* -

Aghor Kalidasji's charnel ground is certainly a place of power, and there are undoubtedly suitable bones there for the taking. Depending on their interactions with him, the *sadhu* probably makes it quite clear to the investigators that he doesn't want them scavenging in his domain.

NEW BOWLS, PLEASE

If the investigators did not manage to retrieve the ritual bowls while in Peshawar, or the pisachas or some other miscreant stole them, then Rajgir's charnel grounds are an ideal place to create their own from any additional skulls they find. Those of murder victims are ideal for their purposes, but finding seven of those could be tricky. If they are traveling with Tenzin Kalsang, his skull bowl (**A Change of Plan**, page 86) could be repurposed to replace a missing bowl. It counts as a material of "superb quality" for the enchantment.

If they are still intent on helping themselves to components from this location, their only option is to sneak back in at night without arousing the Aghori's suspicions, requiring a successful group **Stealth** roll for those involved in the nighttime raid. Failure on anyone's part rouses the *sadhu* from his meditation and, as guardian of the charnel ground, he summons a **Scorpion Demon** (page 184) to deal with the interlopers once he's sure of their identities. For a less supernatural threat, the Keeper may instead have an encounter with a tiger (*Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook*, page 338), as these large predators are often attracted to such places by the easy meals on offer.

If they are successful in creeping around the charnel ground, the investigators can search for suitable graves and sky burial corpses. They need to find at least two bodies for the *damaru*: one male, one female (any other required bones can come from either cadaver). Those involved in recovering corpses, either by grave robbing or by taking them from the

ALL IN THE BONES

Luck Roll	Result
Fumble	The investigators disturb a pisacha (Chapter 3: Creatures and Monsters , page 148) feasting on the remains of the corpse. Not only must they deal with the creature, but the bones it gnawed on are too damaged to use.
Failure	Poor quality. The bones are from a cadaver that died of natural causes after puberty, or of old age. Although they can be used to create the instruments, they have no intrinsic power of their own and cannot be imbued with any additional POW.
Regular Success	Reasonable quality. The bones come from a corpse that died of disease, a violent death, or even murder. If found in Aghor Kalidasji's charnel ground, the murder went undetected at the time of death. Any bones from such a corpse have 1 POW and can be imbued with additional POW through enchantment.
Hard Success	Good quality. The bones are almost ideal in terms of their tantric power. While not quite at the highest level attainable, any instruments created from these bones significantly aid any ritual they are used in. The bones from this type of corpse contain 2 POW and can be imbued with additional POW through the correct ritual incantations.
Extreme or Critical Success	Superb quality. The bones from this body are absolutely perfect for use in the crafting ritual and will imbue the item created with enormous tantric power. These bones contain 4 POW and can be imbued with additional POW through the correct ritual incantations.

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sky burial site, should make a **Sanity** roll (1/1D4+1 loss) unless they are immune to such losses.

To determine the quality of the corpses found, have the participating investigator with the lowest Luck make a **Luck** roll on the **All in the Bones** table (nearby) for each body the group recovers; the roll indicates whether or not the specimen is suitably powerful, although they should also ask Tenzin Kalsang for his definitive pronouncement on the matter. If the *lama* isn't present, they'll just have to trust in their own judgement.

If the investigators deliberately look for graves belonging to the most powerful corpses, as described to them by Tenzin Kalsang, the Keeper should feel free to adjust the weighting of the **Luck** roll so that every result, bar a fumble, is shifted up by one level (meaning a failure counts as a Regular success on the table, and so on, with Hard, Extreme, and Critical successes garnering the best possible bones for the job). Once again, the *melong* could be brought in to help with identifying suitable graves.

It is up to the investigators whether or not they continue to search all night for the best possible components or content themselves with what they get first time. If they are digging up graves, as opposed to sifting through the ashes of funeral pyres or combing the sky burial ground, realistically they have only enough time to uncover half a dozen or so bodies at most before sunrise. It would be in their best interests to not still be carrying out their excavations when daylight comes (when the Aghori wakes), especially as they need to transport their gruesome trophies to a safe location to prepare the instruments. The methods the investigators use to retrieve only the parts they need from whole corpses is dealt with in **A Dark Harvest** (page 172).

THE BAMBOO GROVE

- The charnel ground at Veluvana -

The other charnel ground mentioned by Aghor Kalidasji lies hard up against the ancient hills in the far fringes of the bamboo groves of Veluvana, in what were once King Bimbisara's pleasure gardens and Sakyamuni Buddha's meditational retreat. Odd bits of ancient brickwork peek up from beneath the soil, and bamboo shoots form leafy crowns on strange undulations that could be natural but could equally be manmade. The wind whispers through the bamboo, its susurrations like the chattering of distant voices.

This site is much quieter than the more northeasterly burning grounds of Aghor Kalidasji. There are few Dalit workers, even fewer mourners, and, as Kalidasji told them, no Aghori ascetics. Even though the investigators have a distinct feeling that they are being watched by someone—or something—besides the charnel ground's patrons, it feels

somehow different to what they've experienced elsewhere on their journey. The *sadhu* was right—there is “something” about this place that is unnerving.

There is no Christian cemetery here, although a small section does cater to the burial traditions of other faiths. The sky burial area here sees far more use than the one at its sister site, judging by the signs left by its carnivorous visitors. A successful **Track**, **Natural World**, or **Science (Biology or Zoology)** roll identifies the fresh spoor and footprints of jackals and vultures, as well as rats. If necessary, use the average dog stats for jackals, and the average stats of the condor for vultures (*Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook*, pages 337 and 336 respectively). These may become relevant if the investigators end up fighting the scavengers for control of a cadaver (**A Dark Harvest**, page 172).

Besides any bones they might find here, Tenzin Kalsang is convinced that there may be something of great use hidden beneath the charnel ground's earth mounds: a suitable skin for the *damaru*. As a predominantly Buddhist site, any *stupas* should contain either the relics of *lamas* (such as their cremation ashes) or their mummified corpses. While there are undoubtedly better bones out there, in terms of the leather required for the drumheads and cords, a holy man would be hard to beat.

One way to discover any *stupas* buried over the centuries is to dig for them—the fastest way to identify one is to use the *melong*. Doing so shows whether a mound is natural or contains a *stupa*, visible as it was when it was first built. Staying focused on the vision permits the investigators to see what is inside, as they witness part of the interment ceremony. Unfortunately, as mentioned in **Side Effects (Chapter 3, page 126)**, such prolonged use is likely to trigger bleed-through, especially if the *melong* is only handled by one investigator.

As at Aghor Kalidasji's charnel ground, any recovery efforts are best carried out at night. While this site isn't frequented quite as often by Rajgir's citizens, it is not disused by any means and, although the local authorities turn a blind eye to the Aghori messing about with corpses, they are likely to take a dimmer view of outsiders, particularly Westerners, doing the same in broad daylight. As in Peshawar, should the investigators get themselves arrested, the Tokabhaya will intervene if they don't have the powerful friends (or the wit) to get themselves out of trouble (**Doing Time**, page 135).

And, as before, the investigator with the lowest Luck should roll on the **All in the Bones** table (page 168) to determine the quality of the bones found here (due to the nature of those who are disposed of here, deliberately searching for the best bodies does not adjust the weighting of the **Luck** roll).

INSIDE KNOWLEDGE

- The hospital at Rajgir -

If the investigators have spoken to Aghor Kalidasji about where he gets his bones, they probably know about his contact at the local hospital. A visit to the mortuary there soon uncovers a member of the Untouchables caste called Sanjit Chopra (see details in **Dramatis Personae**, page 156), whose son the Aghori saved. Chopra is reluctant to talk to the investigators at the hospital, as it could cost him his job, but agrees to meet with them after work in a park close to Rajgir's main *kund*.

True to his word, Chopra arrives promptly at the prearranged time, even if his description of the park is a little off—it is barely more than a patch of trees and shrubs beside a wall surrounding Rajgir's communal water tank. Chopra's gratitude to Kalidasji is obvious; he explains that had the Aghori not taken his son's illness into himself, the child would undoubtedly have died. Out of loyalty to the holy man, Chopra is uncomfortable discussing his arrangement with Kalidasji, and a successful social skill roll (such as **Charm** or **Persuade**) is needed to loosen his tongue on the subject. With that, Chopra confirms what the Aghori has already told them: that he visits the *sadhu*, or sends his son with a message, if a corpse arrives that would be suitable for the

sadhu's rituals. He lets the holy man know when the corpse is to be released and taken to the charnel grounds, and whether or not it is slated for cremation, burial, or to be left for the animals to pick clean. He doesn't bother to inform Kalidasji about any bodies going to the southwestern charnel ground, as he knows the *sadhu* has no interest in them.

One option is to enter into an arrangement with Sanjit Chopra. With a successful **Charm** or **Persuade** roll and 3 to 6 rupees (US\$1–2), he agrees to let the investigators know when a corpse is assigned to the Veluvana charnel ground. Nothing can convince him to tell them about those headed to the Aghori's charnel ground—as the *sadhu* saved his son's life, he could just as easily take it away again with his powerful magics if Chopra ever wronged him.

If the investigators reach an agreement with Chopra, it doesn't take long for him to get back in touch. A day or so after their meeting, he sends the investigators a message that a number of unwanted bodies (1D3) in the mortuary are to be transported to the sky burial site at Veluvana later that day. They are all in a sorry state, having been at the morgue for several days while waiting for someone to claim them, but, perhaps they'll prove suitable. The investigators need to arrive at the site quick sharp after the corpses are delivered, if they don't want the charnel ground's scavengers running off



Rajgir's main kund

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with any of the bones. Alternatively, the investigators could keep watch on Chopra to see if he sends any messages to Aghor Kalidasji. If they do, then as above, a corpse becomes available quite rapidly. After that, the investigators must proceed with caution if they don't want to raise the *sadhu's* ire. In either case, the quality of the cadavers should be determined by having the investigator with the lowest Luck roll on the **All in the Bones** table (page 168).

Body for Sale

If they investigators can't convince Chopra to notify them about the bodies the hospital disposes of, he does have an alternative suggestion: visit the town's slums and offer money to the families of the deceased to take their relatives' corpses off their hands. Most families in the slums are sufficiently poor that their dead would most likely be left out for sky burial, and some rupees could mean the difference between starvation and survival for those left behind.

Although there are poor Brahmins living in Rajgir, most of those in the slums are Dalits, meaning that an Extreme success on the **All in the Bones** table (page 168) counts as a Hard success in terms of bone quality. Only a Critical success (01) garners the best possible corpse under these circumstances.

Any such approaches need to be handled with extreme care if the investigators hope to avoid attracting the attention of the authorities. *Sahibs* (white Europeans) making the advances are less likely to cause an uproar, as the town's poor are well aware that their word counts for little against that of a Westerner. Any negotiations for bodies should be conducted with a suitable skill roll, although only a fumble or a failed pushed roll results in consequences such as the local police becoming involved in the matter; a straightforward failure simply means the investigators must look elsewhere for a corpse. Arrests resulting from a botched transaction should be dealt with as per the **Doing Time** box (Chapter 3, page 135).

DRASTIC ACTION

If all else fails, and the investigators are desperate to acquire sufficiently powerful skin and bones, there is one rather drastic solution to the problem: murder someone themselves. It should be obvious that such an action will most likely tip the investigators' karmic balance into the red, unless the circumstances mean that the death results from the investigator defending themselves against an unprovoked attack. And, the chances of such a "lucky" incident occurring twice in a short space of time are very slim indeed; remember, the investigators need a minimum of two bodies, one male and one female, in order to create the *damaru*.

Certainly, the *lama* disapproves of gathering the bones by such aggressive and violent means, concerned that the actions

taken to acquire the bodies could undermine the legitimacy of the ritual. Indeed, he may refuse to accept any bones obtained with evil intent. One potential way to avoid accruing negative karma, and the *lama's* censure, for such an act is if the victim is a murderer or other violent criminal themselves, or is about to become one. Technically, at least in Tenzin Kalsang's eyes, such a killing would count as **Compassionate Violence** (page 92). Just how the act sits with the investigators is up to their players and the Keeper. Of course, if an investigator is a criminal or a soldier, they may have very different views on killing to anyone else in the group; otherwise, a regular investigator may need to fail a **Sanity** roll in order to perform an act of murder, with an associated Sanity loss of 1D6+2 points.

Keeper note: a deliberate act of murder incurs a -1 check against an investigator's karmic balance. Killing someone as an act of genuine self-defense (i.e. having not provoked the attack in the first place) has no effect, while a death in keeping with the tenets of compassionate violence gives the investigator +1. The Keeper's decision on what constitutes compassionate violence and what doesn't is final.

If the investigators decide to pursue this course of action, one possibility is to have them cross swords with a local criminal gang involved in extorting protection money from the slum's population and making bloody examples of any who refuse to pay up. Perhaps the investigators interrupt a savage beating while searching for corpses to buy, alerting them to the existence of worthy targets. Statistics for such **Ruffians** can be found in **Appendix A** (page 335).

Alternatively, a vicious thief may be praying on wealthy pilgrims visiting the area. As they make their way between the charnel grounds, the investigators stumble across a dying victim who fought back against the thief. Dumped in a ditch by the roadside and badly charred from the fire the inept robber set to dispose of the body, they survive just long enough to inform the investigators of what happened—potentially providing their own corpse for harvesting in the process. Statistics for a thief or bandit can also be found in **Appendix A** (pages 337 and 326, respectively).

Keeper note: as mentioned, callous or murderous actions by the investigators may carry a **Sanity** roll and loss and, should those participating in such acts later fall insane, the Keeper is advised to corrupt aspects of their backstories, as well as consider attaching phobias, such as necrophobia (fear of death or dead things) and phasmophobia (fear of ghosts), or a mania like enosimania (a pathological belief that one has sinned). Such devices can aid character development in exploring the guilt, shame, and horror of such actions, and perhaps drive the investigator to seek acts of redemption.

Note that the punishment for committing murder is severe. While there are some sections of society where such crimes may go unnoticed or uninvestigated, the investigators need to be looking to the upper echelons of the caste system in order to get the best components. Even the Tokabhaya would be hard pressed to save the investigators from a murder charge unless it could be shown to be self-defense, so the characters need to use guile and cunning to make sure they don't get caught if this is the way they decide to go.

Animal or creature bones (such as those of any pisachas the investigators might encounter) are not suitable for making the instruments, so going hunting for them won't provide the necessary materials.

A DARK HARVEST

The materials the investigators recover (bones or bodies) affect the degree of processing that needs to be undertaken before the components are ready for use. If they find cleaned bones from a sky burial site or from a very old grave or mausoleum (*stupa*), then they have little to do but wash them, as the flesh and connective tissues have already largely been removed (except in the case of a mummified *lama*).

If, on the other hand, the bones are still inside a corpse, the investigators will need to get them out. Depending on the age of the cadaver involved, this may require minimal dismemberment, particularly if the body is relatively old and the soft tissues are already withering away. A fresh corpse, though, needs far more work.

The investigators may wish to leave any sky burial bodies for the vultures and jackals to clean down first (if they have not already done so). This can take less than an hour if the creatures are hungry, but the investigators run the risk of the bones becoming damaged or being dragged away. Then there's the issue of having to drive animals with talons, teeth, and claws away from their food—never an easy thing to do. As mentioned in **The Bamboo Grove** (page 169), use the average condor and dog profiles (pages 336–337 of the *Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook*) for encounters with vultures and jackals, respectively.

If the investigators recover a corpse that is mostly intact and don't want to let the animals do the work for them, they must dissect the appropriate body part and remove the skin, muscle, and cartilage. Suitable skills for cutting off the correct pieces are **Science (Biology or Zoology)**, **Medicine**, **Natural World**, **Survival**, and **Fighting (Brawl)**—if the person in question specializes in using a knife in combat. In addition, those with a career or background in butchery or a similar profession may be best placed to undertake such grisly work. **First Aid** can be used if no one has a more

suitable skill, although such rolls would be at Hard difficulty. A successful skill roll (per body) is required to remove bones without damage; higher levels of success merely indicate that the dismemberment is carried out more quickly and cleanly.

Once the requisite body parts have been detached, the soft tissues must be dealt with. The cleanest way to do this is to boil them, cooking the flesh and permitting it to fall away easily; although in the case of the head, the investigators may wish to remove the brain beforehand (requiring a successful **Science (Biology or Zoology)**, **Sleight of Hand** (fine dexterity), or **Medicine** roll to do so without damaging the skull). An Egyptologist could attempt to use a combined **Archaeology** and **History** roll to test out their theories of just how this was done historically but, as with First Aid (above), the roll becomes Hard.

But, it isn't just bones the investigators are after; they also need enough skin to cover both drumheads and to make the leather handle for the *damaru* and the cords for its beaters. They may also want additional leather to adorn the *kangling*, although the *lama* assures them that a simple bone is enough for the ritual trumpet. Those with hunting or medical skills are best suited to flaying a corpse, using the same skill set as previously mentioned for dismemberment.

A Regular success is required to remove sufficient skin in a suitable condition for tanning (if from a fresh corpse); higher levels of success not only reflect the cleanliness of the flaying (less fat and other tissue left attached to the skin), but also mean that the skin itself is marred by fewer flaws, nicks, or tears. If the investigators plan to recover the skin they need from a mummified holy man, they need to first soak the body in water or milk for several hours to give the skin the necessary flexibility to be able to remove it.

Don't forget that Tenzin Kalsang carries a *katari*, a ritual flaying knife perfectly suited to the job of carving up corpses and removing their skin. Use of the *katari*, as opposed to any other knife, grants a bonus die to any cadaver preparation rolls it is involved in.


The investigators need to choose a suitable site for their operations, as their actions are likely to cause alarm if viewed by unsuspecting members of the public. Depending on where and when the bones or corpses are acquired, some of these actions may need to take place almost immediately—after all, bits of a body are easier to conceal and transport than an entire cadaver; however, time and conditions may not permit the full removal or cleaning of the required pieces, necessitating a second location where the rest of the job can be carried out undisturbed. The southwestern charnel ground at Veluvana is ideal for this, in part thanks to its lower flow of visitors and fewer workers, but because it also has several secluded corners and a number of caves in the hillside above that are easily accessible (and tucked safely away from prying eyes).



DEAD RECKONING

Failing a Sanity roll while hunting for the musical instrument components should be met with body-related repercussions. If the roll is failed without inducing temporary or indefinite insanity, then perhaps the investigator experiences the sensation that their skin and flesh is peeling away from their bones, or a delusion in which those around them appear briefly as moldering corpses or skeletons.

Suitable phobias and manias for those experiencing bouts of madness under these circumstances include: necrophobia (fear of dead things), taphophobia (fear of cemeteries or being buried alive), aichmomania (an obsession with sharp objects, such as knives), and coimetromania (an obsession with cemeteries); perhaps even tomomania (a desire to perform surgery) or its related fear of surgical procedures, tomophobia. Other potentially suitable consequences can be found in the tables on pages 160–161 of the *Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook*.



Unless the investigators are immune to Sanity losses from such interactions, watching or participating in the bone and skin harvest triggers a **Sanity** roll (1/1D4+1 loss). This roll is not required if the dismemberment takes place almost immediately after the body is acquired, as the Sanity check for finding the corpse in the first place is sufficient to cover it. A second roll should only be called for if there is a time delay between recovering the body (or part of it) and any further processing.

The rules for **Getting Used to the Awfulness** (*Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook*, page 169) apply here. Once an investigator has lost the maximum amount of Sanity from handling or witnessing dead bodies and their subsequent vivisection (1D4+1, therefore 5 in total), they are subsequently immune to further Sanity losses regarding the same until they have sufficient time to recover from their numbness.

FIFE AND DRUM

As soon as the investigators have secured all the necessary components, they need to assist Tenzin Kalsang in the ritual to create the instruments.

HELL FOR LEATHER

If the investigators have taken the skin from a mummified *lama*, the ritual occurs as soon as all of the pieces are gathered in one place. If, however, they are using a fresh skin, it first needs to be cured. Those with at least 10% in Science (Botany or Pharmacy) or Natural World are recruited by the *lama* to assist him in foraging for the plants the tanning process relies on, while anyone with 10+% in Science (Geology) is asked to look for rocks containing copper and iron salts (if there is no one who can do this, the *lama* undertakes these tasks). Everyone else is sent to the market in Rajgir to purchase beeswax, milk, curds, and ghee (clarified butter). This last part happens regardless of whether or not a fresh skin is used—the so-called “three white substances” (milk, curds, and ghee) are an important part of both the curing process and the instrument crafting ritual, and are used to purify the individual components before use. The beeswax is necessary to mold a mouthpiece for the *kangling*.

The best location to search for the herbal ingredients is, unsurprisingly, the southwestern charnel ground at Veluvana. As the area was once home to a Buddhist *vihara*, many plants used in the faith's religious ceremonies can be found there, or around the remains of the *vihara* itself. With time, all of the plants Tenzin Kalsang wants can be found, with skill rolls merely determining how long the search takes—the higher the level of success, the more quickly the various herbs are identified and harvested. Scouring the hills around Rajgir, including Sitavana and the old palace site, uncovers rocks containing the necessary mineral salts; again, the level of success with a **Science (Geology)** roll determines how long the search takes.

Failure on a roll indicates that it took the best part of an entire day to find what the investigators were looking for, meaning they may have to delay carrying out the curing ritual until the next day. A fumble is the only result that means the search was unsuccessful, indicating a trip to the market is in order, as all of the ingredients are available there. In fact, in the case of the mineral salts, buying them has the distinct advantage of their being ready-ground and refined; otherwise, the investigators need to grind the ores down to a rough powder to use them.

Once all the ingredients have been gathered, a place of power must be chosen for the curing ritual. The skin needs to be buried with the herbs and salts, so a rock-floored cave is out of the question. As before, the Veluvana charnel ground has several quiet areas that could be used; no one would object to a Buddhist priest carrying out devotional rituals there during the day, as long as it isn't obvious that he's tanning human skin. And, no one is going to venture there after dark... (**Handout: Bones 2**)

Part One: Ritual Preparation of the Components

Unlike the later rituals required to create the instruments, this rite does not require a specific time of day for its casting. To begin the ritual, Tenzin Kalsang asks the investigators to light several small, green juniper branches. As the aromatic smoke curls around them, the investigator with the highest STR is asked to dig a hole for the skin and, if the mineral salts haven't been prepared, whoever found them is asked to smash them into suitably small pieces (only if necessary, and if they haven't done so already).

Investigators who took part in the plant hunt are asked to chew the various herbs they recovered in order to release their active ingredients, and make a successful CON roll to resist the narcotic effects of said active ingredients. Thankfully, none are more toxic than a very mild poison, so besides some stomach cramps, blurred vision, and light-headedness, there are very few side effects, although a failure leads to vomiting. Cruel Keepers may also wish to impose a penalty die on any subsequent skill rolls until the effects of the plants wear off a few (1D4) hours later.

When he isn't issuing instructions, the *lama* chants in what sounds like Sanskrit. His voice is surprisingly deep and resonant. A successful POW roll enables the investigators to sense the energy in the words Tenzin Kalsang is using—the hair on the backs of their necks stands up, and the air feels charged with static, as if a thunderstorm is brewing.

Once everything is prepared, Tenzin Kalsang asks the investigators to wash the skin first in the milk, then the curds, and then the ghee, and to pour each of the white substances into the hole after they have been used. He then asks the investigators to place a layer of salts and a layer of herbs into the pit. Very reverently, chanting as he does so, the *lama* lays the skin on top, before asking the investigators to cover it with yet more of the salts and herbs. Finally, he asks the investigator who dug the hole to fill it in again, and tops off the resulting mound with the smoldering juniper branches.

Although ideally the skin should be left in this way for at least a month, due to the constraints on their time, Tenzin Kalsang decrees that it should be sufficiently cured for their purposes in 48 hours. They can spend that time preparing the bones (if that hasn't already been taken care of), visiting the holy sites and hot springs of Rajgir (**The Royal Mountain**, page 154), or studying their roles in the upcoming ceremonies (**Preparation**, nearby, along with **Handout: Bones 5**).

Keeper note: if the Keeper feels the players are relying too much on Tenzin Kalsang to recover the bones and skin needed for the ritual, one option is to have the *lama* wander off in search of the plants, herbs, and other materials he

needs for the ritual while they search the charnel ground(s) for the necessary body parts. Tenzin Kalsang trusts them to do a good job (why else would the gods have selected them?). He will, of course, come back and give them a hand if they are struggling with their allotted task—but not before the investigators have had a chance to get themselves into all manner of mischief.

Part Two: Danse Macabre

As long as the investigators have a cured or preserved skin and enough bones to make the *damaru* and *kangling*, then they are ready to begin the ritual to assemble the final instruments. Tenzin Kalsang chooses the sky burial site at the Veluvana charnel ground as the most fitting location to perform the rites, as this will avoid any (further) conflict with Aghor Kalidasji. The rite will begin at sunset and carry on until dawn the following day, by which time, if the spirits are compliant, the investigators will have two powerful artifacts with which to drive back the King of Fear.

In order to ensure that they are aware of what will happen this evening, Tenzin Kalsang hands the investigators a piece of yellow parchment detailing the ritual's various steps (**Handout: Bones 5**). Once they have read it, he begins selecting who will be responsible for which element during the rite, as well as assigning various tasks in preparation for the night's activities (**Preparation**, following). The investigators have much to learn, and time is limited.

Preparation

Each investigator has a duty to perform in the forthcoming ceremony. If any of them know any spells, have the Occult skill above base, or a POW of 70 or higher, the *lama* teaches them a short, repetitive chant. When the time comes, each investigator should roll their INT to see how well they remember it (**Part Three: First Steps**, page 176). A Regular success indicates that they stumble a little when asked to repeat the chant on their own, while a Hard success means that they have the words and rhythm down pat; with an Extreme success, they quickly learned the chant and can reproduce it perfectly at will.

If they have appropriate craft skills, such as Art/Craft (Painter, Sculptor, Fine Art, and so on), the investigators are tutored in how to paint or carve the skulls and femur with the necessary *mantras*. Those with hunting skills (Natural World, Track, and/or Survival) are shown how to prepare the leather thongs and cut the drumheads. If an investigator is lucky enough to have invested skill points in Art/Craft (Drum, Trumpet, or an allied instrument), Tenzin Kalsang takes them through the steps needed to create the finished objects (Drum for the *damaru*, Trumpet for the *kangling*, etc.). For each task, the *lama* draws in the dirt with the tip

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of his *khatvanga* and describes every stage in detail; he is a patient teacher, always willing to go back over any point the investigators are not fully clear on.

If none of the investigators have the exact skills required, then related skills may be substituted instead, as described in the **Skill Specializations** section on page 54 of the *Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook*. Alternatively, those with above base skill in Sleight of Hand (or the person with the highest DEX), are entrusted with the task of decorating the bones and/or preparing the skin. If necessary, the person with the highest combined DEX and INT can be shown how to create the *kangling*, and the person with the highest combined STR and CON how to make the *damaru*. These should not be the same person, for the reasons discussed in **Part Five: Enchanting the Instruments** (page 177). Tenzin Kalsang acts as a tutor throughout; kindly Keepers may wish to award a bonus die to any rolls associated with crafting the instruments, thanks to the *lama's* gentle but precise guidance.

Hopefully, this should mean that all of the investigators are busy learning the tasks they are to perform during the ritual; however, if there are any investigators left without anything to do, they are put to work clearing out a circular space at the center of the sky burial site and sweeping it with

juniper branches, as instructed by the parchment. They are also responsible for making sure there is more juniper ready to be set alight to purify the area, and for building the fires needed to provide light to perform the ritual by, and to keep wild animals at bay. If everyone is already busy learning their roles, then they are all expected to take part in creating the ritual space once they have finished their studies.

There is one final position that must be filled. Tenzin Kalsang selects someone to act as a guardian for the others once the rite begins, preferably the investigator with the best combat skills and who isn't already involved in creating either of the instruments or chanting. Ideally, there should be at least one person guarding the proceedings and at least one chanting; technically, while there is nothing to stop this from being the same person, it is preferable to have more than one person involved, just to cover unforeseen eventualities.

While the *lama* assures the investigators that he expects no trouble, spirits will be drawn to the ceremony's power, and the guardian must do their best to stop them from interfering or distracting the other participants, or the ritual will fail. Besides the spirits, there are also more mundane threats wandering around India's charnel grounds at night that may need to be kept at bay.

Handout: Bones 5

First: clear the chosen ground with the branches of the juniper tree, which is favored by the gods. The space prepared should be shaped like a circle and large enough for all celebrants to carry out their allotted tasks within its bounds.

Second: set fires and burn juniper around the circle's edges to sanctify and purify the ground within. Without this consecration, the circle remains impure and the ritual unlikely to succeed.

Third: let the guardians take up their positions, backs to their comrades within. Those who stand ready at the edge of the light must be unwavering in the face of the watchers. Hold fast, and all will be well.

Fourth: let the chosen one fix the world navel with his holy staff, then circle it as the liturgy is recited.

Fifth: those within not without must wash the bones with the three white substances, then adorn them with the holy mantras as instructed, that they may receive their due when the time is right. Let those who are without duty join their voices with the one who circles the holy mountain, their hymn in support of his.

Sixth: when all is prepared, let the song of the soul pour forth from the one chosen to play the bone horn, giving it the breath of life.

Seventh: when the breath of life has been bestowed and approved, let the beat of the heart pound through the holy drum so that it, too, knows life and approbation.

If all goes well, and the gods are gracious, then a great gift is now yours for the using in rituals great and small.

Above all, do not forget to show respect to those who guard the sacred ground. For, in the end, all must one day join their dance, unless they find the way to free themselves from *samsara*.

Part Three: First Steps

Provided nothing interrupts their preparations, all is ready by sundown. The *lama* gathers everything they need into the center of the circle the investigators have prepared, and then asks for the fires and small piles of juniper to be lit. Once they are ablaze and everyone is in position, the rite begins. First, the *lama* plants his *khatvanga* in the very center of the circle, muttering a *mantra* that rapidly rises from a whisper to a shout.

Smiling, he asks that the bones are washed with milk, then curds, and, finally, ghee. Anyone working on the skulls and femur then decorate them as they were shown with the pigments the *lama* brought from Tun-huang for this very purpose, while the cords and drumheads are readied with the *katari*. The Keeper should ask for a suitable roll (the skills used to decide who is responsible for each task; see **Preparation**, page 174), with a successful result indicating how much time is taken to produce the finished items (the better the result, the faster the task is completed). A failure indicates that a mistake has occurred; the roll can be pushed (for example, by asking the *lama* for further guidance) or Luck points could spent to overcome the failure, but a pushed failure or an initial fumble indicate that the components are irreversibly damaged. The ritual can't proceed any further until new bones or skin are acquired; they will have to come back and try again another time.

As the instruments are being prepared, those taught the chant are asked to repeat their invocations as Tenzin Kalsang weaves another *mantra* through their own, his voice rising and falling in waves. Don't forget to have the investigators roll their **INT** to see if they've remembered their chant correctly; a failure or a fumble means that the words have gone clean out of their heads but, as long as one investigator manages to keep the chant going, all is well (see **Part Five: Enchanting the Instruments**, page 177, for the consequences of failing to do so). None of the investigators need to make a **POW** roll to feel the build-up of energy created by this ritual; the air around them is positively crackling with it.

Those on watch have been positioned facing outward, peering into the surrounding darkness of the charnel grounds, while those working on the instruments and chanting face inward toward Tenzin Kalsang, who walks in a counter-clockwise direction around his tantric staff while the materials for the instruments are being prepared.

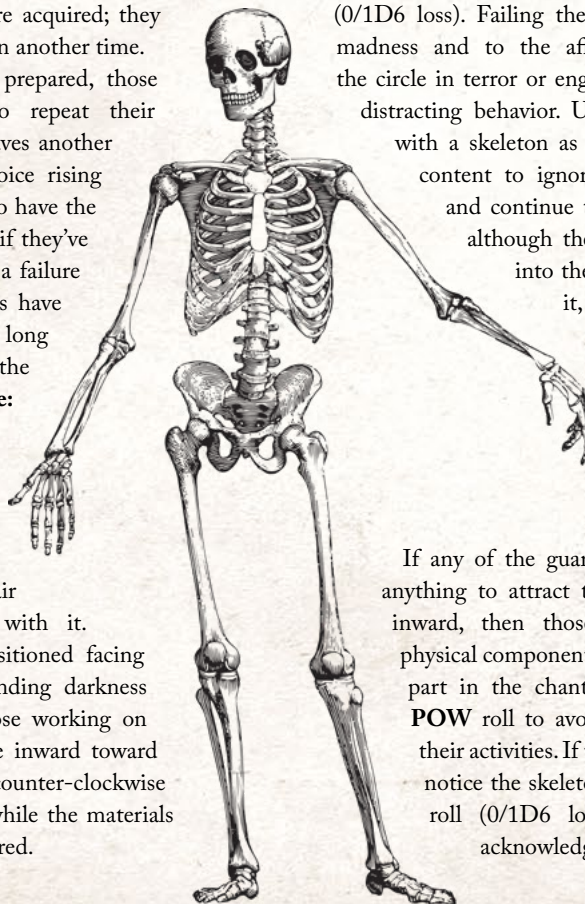
Part Four: Company Arrives

Shortly after the ceremony begins, the guardians (those facing outwards) should make a **Spot Hidden** roll, with success meaning they can see shapes moving out there in the shadows. Depending on whether or not the Keeper wishes to wrong-foot the investigators before hitting them with the supernatural, these shapes could merely be scavengers, such as jackals and pi-dogs, which can easily be scared off with shouts and burning branches.

If, however, the Keeper wants to start as they mean to go on, then the shapes do not look like animals at all, but are too concealed by the darkness and the surrounding foliage to fully discern—for the moment. As the rite progresses, the shapes become more obvious, moving out from the cover of the bamboo toward the firelight. These are skeletons attracted by the ritual (profiles for six **Skeletons** are provided in the **Creatures and Monsters** section at the end of this chapter.) The number of skeletons depends on the quality of the bones being used in the ritual (see **Skeleton Watchers**, page 177). If a mixed quality of bones is being used, split the difference; so, if the ritual was being performed with a mixture of bones from a poor-quality corpse and a superb quality one, the number of attending skeletons would be eight.

Those seeing the skeletons must make a **Sanity** roll (0/1D6 loss). Failing the roll may lead to a bout of madness and to the affected investigator(s) fleeing the circle in terror or engaging in some other form of distracting behavior. Unless they attempt to tussle with a skeleton as they flee, the creatures seem content to ignore any escaping investigators and continue to draw nearer to the flames, although they make no attempt to cross into the circle or attack those within it, even if provoked—unless, of course, the aggressor is foolish enough to step beyond the circle of flames, at which point the skeletons attack anyone who has previously assaulted them.

If any of the guardian investigators flee or do anything to attract the attention of those facing inward, then those engaged in creating the physical components of the instruments or taking part in the chanting must make a successful **POW** roll to avoid becoming distracted from their activities. If they do become distracted and notice the skeletons, they must make a **Sanity** roll (0/1D6 loss). While Tenzin Kalsang acknowledges the skeletons' presence, he



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does not pause in his chanting and circling; after all, he was expecting “something” to show up.

Once the instruments’ components are prepared, Tenzin Kalsang hands them to the investigators responsible for crafting the finished objects. These may or may not be the same people who decorated the bones or shaped the skins and thongs. His chant changes again and he directs the chosen characters to complete their task. The person creating the *kangling* must succeed at either their relevant skill roll (**Art/Craft Trumpet** or allied instrument) or a combined **DEX** and **INT** roll to produce a functional instrument, while the person crafting the *damaru* must succeed with an **Art/Craft (Drum)** or allied instrument roll or a combined **STR** and **CON** roll (if they do not have a relevant skill).

As before, the degree of success on these rolls indicates the length of time it takes to create the finished instrument. Failures can be pushed or the investigator can spend Luck points to ensure their instrument is completed; but a pushed failure or a fumble means that irrevocable damage has been done to the components—the ritual must be abandoned and more bones recovered for another attempt.

Provided at least one investigator keeps up with their own chant while they or another create their instrument, then the ritual continues to its conclusion (see **Part Five: Enchanting the Instruments**, nearby, for what happens if they don’t). Since he has performed the ceremony several times in the past, there is no need to roll to see if Tenzin Kalsang completes his part correctly. Finally, after several

hours of careful construction, all under the unblinking, eyeless gaze of the skeletons, who sway from side to side in time with the *lama’s* chanting, the instruments are ready to be imbued with power.

Keeper note: as well as the phobias and manias mentioned in **Dead Reckoning** (page 173), suitable additional complications arising from a bout of madness during this ritual include: trompetaphobia (the fear of trumpets), demonophobia (the fear of demons and spirits), ostiophobia (fear of bones), skelephobia (fear of skeletons), or even choromania (an uncontrollable urge to dance).

Part Five: Enchanting the Instruments

Tenzin Kalsang begins a new chant, and after a few repetitions, he nods to the investigator with the bone trumpet, indicating that they should begin playing. It doesn’t matter what the musician plays, and no skill roll is required (even the worst strangled ululations are sufficient—all that matters is that the *kangling* makes a noise).

As soon as the music begins, the skeleton observers start to dance, circling first clockwise and then counter-clockwise around the circle, changing direction with each complete revolution. Two new figures appear at the edge of the circle of firelight: Shri Chitipati, the Glorious Lord and Lady of the Charnel Grounds (see **Creatures and Monsters** at the end of this chapter, page 184), who begin to leap around outside the circle, clacking their teeth—a hard, surprisingly loud sound that echoes through the darkness. As with the skeletons, a **Sanity** roll (1/1D8 loss) is required for those seeing the pair; but they, too, do nothing to interfere directly with the ritual (unless they are attacked first).

Similar to the skeletons’ arrival, if someone reacts in such a way that might distract the other ritual participants from their tasks, the Keeper should ask for a **POW** roll to see if they can maintain their concentration in the wake of the new arrivals. As long as the person involved in imbuing the *kangling* continues to play it and nothing happens to prevent Tenzin Kalsang from continuing with his chanting, the ritual continues. If either (or both) of the above happen, this part of the ritual fails and must be attempted again another night.

Both the *kangling* and the *damaru* require someone to permanently sacrifice POW to fully enchant them—this is why the *lama* made sure that two different investigators were responsible for constructing the final artifacts, thereby establishing the bond between them and the instrument necessary for the enchantment to work—one donation of POW per person is enough.

The actual number of POW points the investigators are required to sacrifice depends on the quality of the bones used. To fully activate, the *kangling* needs a total of 5 POW,

SKELETON WATCHERS

Quality of Bones	Number of Skeletons
Poor (died of natural causes after puberty, or of old age)	4
Reasonable (died from disease, a violent death, or was murdered)	6
Good (almost perfect bones)	10
Superb (perfect bones)	12

while the *damaru* requires 10 POW as it consists of two bones, not one. As mentioned in **All in the Bones** (page 168), the different bone types possess different amounts of their own intrinsic POW, which determines how much more POW needs to be invested. So, for example, if a mixture of reasonable and good quality bones were used to make the *damaru*, they already carry a total of POW 3 and therefore require 7 more points of POW to give them spiritual potency and a mechanical benefit. Whoever sacrifices POW to imbue the instruments must make a **Sanity** roll (1/1D4 loss for the *kangling* and 1/1D6 loss for the *damaru*). If correctly activated by the additional POW, each instrument grants a bonus die to any roll required to cast a spell while using them. The *damaru* also provides the person playing it a bonus die to any opposed POW rolls that arise as a result of such a spell.

The POW required to enchant the *kangling* is, as mentioned, taken from the person who crafted the instrument and is now playing it. They feel the automatic transfer as a warm breath drawn from the very core of their being into the bone trumpet, which makes the instrument glow briefly with a faint red light. Once their POW has been invested, the instrument acquires its full potential and the glow fades. Tenzin Kalsang takes the *kangling* from them and shows it to the Lord and Lady who, just for a moment, grow still and nod their approval of a job well done. The *lama* then places the bone trumpet in the somewhat-breathless investigator's lap with a grin.

The process begins again for the *damaru*. Tenzin Kalsang slips the handle over the investigator's right wrist and then demonstrates the correct twisting motion to play it. As the drumbeats sound, the skeletons' dancing becomes stiff and formal, but their steps keep perfect time with the drummer no matter how the individual beats vary.

As with the bone trumpet, the investigator must sacrifice the requisite amount of POW to fully enchant the drum. They feel the exchange first as a deep pounding in their chest, which then spreads as a tingling sensation up their right arm and out through their fingertips to dance across the drumheads as a pale blue light. If the person playing the instrument has above base skill in either Medicine or First Aid, it feels unnervingly like a mild heart attack, but involving the wrong arm. As before, once the instrument has drawn down the POW it requires, the glow fades. Tenzin Kalsang then takes the instrument, shows it to the Lord and Lady for their approval, and places it back in the investigator's lap, nodding in approbation.

Providing the *lama* makes it all the way through the stages of the ritual without being interrupted (either by being struck during combat or because all the investigators succumbed to one form of insanity or another and ran away), the end result is two very useful instruments—or two purely decorative ones if only poor quality bones were used—remember, such poor bones cannot be imbued

with POW and therefore cannot be enchanted (this particular outcome is most likely if Tenzin Kalsang did not travel with the investigators to Sitavana, or they have been extremely unlucky in their attempts to find suitable corpses).

With the task accomplished, there is an unearthly howl as the Shri Chitipati vanishes and the skeletons skulk back into the surrounding bamboo grove. If all has gone according to plan, the sun comes up shortly after the final skeleton disappears from view. If it has not, and the ritual was disrupted for any reason, the Glorious Lord and Lady scream in frustration before disappearing, while their skeletal attendants clack their jaws angrily as they vanish into the depths of the bamboo grove. Provided the bones (or instruments) have not been damaged, the ritual can be attempted again the next night, picking up at whichever point things went wrong.

Keeper note: there are a finite number of times the investigators can realistically attempt to complete the ritual, either before they run out of suitable components to scavenge, or before they attract the attention of the British authorities in Rajgir. It is suggested that, at most, they are given three opportunities to do so before either Tenzin Kalsang admits defeat, or they are forced to leave town due to official interference of some sort. If he is present, the *lama* is disappointed to be leaving without these powerful aids to his mission against the King of Fear, but he attempts to be upbeat, reassuring the investigators that all will be well. They can acquire mundane items to accompany the final ritual before they reach the Valley of the White Ape, even if those instruments won't be able to bolster their attempt to close the Gates of Agartha.

LORDS OF THE DEAD

If the Keeper prefers, Shri Chitipati may not be a benign presence during the ritual. In their aspects as guardians of the sacred burial grounds and protectors against thieves, they could be trying to stop the ritual, particularly if the bones have been stolen from graves, rather than having been harvested from Buddhist corpses or from those who were unwanted. This option works if the investigators are part of a large, more combat-oriented (or pulp) group who might otherwise have little involvement in the ritual. The guardians may also attempt to stop the ritual because they instinctively know what purpose the instruments will be put to upon completion.



INSTRUMENT CREATION SUMMARY

Part One: Ritual Preparation of the Components

- If curing their own skin, Tenzin Kalsang chants and instructs the investigators what to do:
 - Investigators light green juniper branches.
 - Investigators dig a hole and prepare mineral salts (if necessary).
 - Investigators chew herbs to release their active ingredients (CON roll).
 - The skin is washed in the three white substances (milk, curds, ghee) and the substances poured into the hole after use.
 - Investigators layer salts and herbs on top of the three white substances in the hole.
 - The *lama* adds the skin to the hole.
 - The investigators layer on more salts and herbs.
 - The hole is filled in and topped with the smoldering juniper branches.
 - Forty-eight hours later, the skin is ready to use.

Part Two: Danse Macabre

- Tenzin Kalsang gives each participant a parchment describing the ritual (**Handout: Bones 5**), then assigns everyone tasks to complete during it.
- The *lama* talks the investigators through the ritual's steps and:
 - Teaches one or more investigators a *mantra* to chant during the ritual (Occult/POW 70+).
 - Tutors investigators with relevant Art/Craft skills (or Sleight of Hand/highest DEX) how to decorate the bones during the ritual.
 - Shows investigators with hunting skills (Natural World/Track/Survival) how to prepare the skins.
 - Teaches investigators how to make the *kangling* (relevant Art/Craft or highest DEX+INT) and the *damaru* (relevant Art/Craft or highest STR+CON)
- Any investigator without a specific task to learn clears a circular ritual space with juniper branches then builds fires and additional piles of juniper around it.
- Tenzin Kalsang assigns at least one investigator to act as a guardian during the ritual.

Part Three: First Steps

- Tenzin Kalsang gathers all the ritual components in the center of the cleared ritual circle.

- The investigators light the fires and piles of juniper then join the *lama* inside the circle.
- The investigator(s) assigned to guard duty are positioned facing outwards.
- Tenzin Kalsang plants his *khatvanga* in the center of the ritual circle and begins to chant, accompanied by any investigator who was taught the *mantra* (INT roll).
- The assigned investigators wash the bones in the three white substances.
- Once washed, the bones are decorated (suitable skill roll to determine how long it takes; see above).
- While the bones are being decorated, the skins are also prepared (suitable skill roll to determine how long it takes; see above).

Part Four: Company Arrives

- Skeleton watchers arrive to watch the ritual (**Sanity** roll for guardians; **POW** roll for distracted chanters/crafters).
- Tenzin Kalsang hands the prepared materials to the investigators tasked with the final steps of creating the instruments.
- Tenzin Kalsang begins a new chant while the investigators continue with their previous one.
- The assigned investigator creates the *kangling* (relevant Art/Craft or combined DEX/INT roll).
- The assigned investigator creates the *damaru* (relevant Art/Craft or combined STR/CON roll).

Part Five: Enchanting the Instruments

- Tenzin Kalsang changes chant again while the assigned investigators still chant their original one.
- The investigator who created the *kangling* plays the instrument to enchant it.
- The skeleton watchers begin to dance and are joined by Shri Chitipati (**Sanity** roll for guardians, **POW** roll for distracted chanters/musicians).
- Tenzin Kalsang shows the enchanted *kangling* to Shri Chitipati for their approval then gives it back to the investigator.
- The investigator who created the *damaru* plays the instrument to enchant it.
- Tenzin Kalsang shows the enchanted *damaru* to Shri Chitipati for their approval then gives it back to the investigator.
- Shri Chitipati and the skeleton watchers howl then disappear back into the darkness.

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BELLS AND WHISTLES

Hopefully, now armed with a magical *damaru* and *kangling*, all that remains for the investigators to do is to clean up any signs that a ritual has taken place at the sky burial site. This task includes scattering the ashes from the fires, disposing of the three white substances used to wash the bones, and reinterring any bits of skin or bone fragments left over from the ceremony.

If there was a fight with the skeletons, there are likely some additional bones to get rid of. Fortunately, this being a charnel ground, dispersing the remains to avoid notice is quite easily accomplished, provided that the Dalits who work in the charnel ground haven't arrived for their next shift before the investigators complete their task—determined by

a group **Luck** roll. The Shri Chitipati, as spirit entities, leave no bones behind.

Even if the Dalits do stumble across the investigators cleaning up, they are unlikely to say anything—they're not the first pilgrims to carry out rituals here, even if they may be among the oddest. But, if the group **Luck** roll resulted in a fumble, then a grieving family, arriving early for the cremation of their loved one, also turn up at the charnel grounds. Although this may give the investigators a moment of panic, as Buddhists, the mourners are unlikely to be any more fazed by the group's presence than the Dalits. The only real inconvenience is that they ask Tenzin Kalsang to join them in the service, which delays the investigators' departure by several hours.

KAPALAS

As mentioned in **New Bowls, Please** (page 168), if the investigators have already visited Peshawar (**Chapter 3**) and lost the ritual bowls somewhere along the way to Rajgir, then this is the perfect place to create their own bowls from yet more skulls. A similar ritual to the one already performed is required, although with far fewer components. If the investigators are not in Rajgir when they attempt this ritual, then any other auspicious charnel, cremation, or burial ground will do, such as those in Benares (Varanasi) (**Chapter 3: Missing Pieces?**, page 141).

Once the skulls have been stripped of all remaining flesh (if necessary; **A Dark Harvest**, page 172, for suggested methods), the *lama* teaches all of the investigators involved a short invocation, different to any they've learned so far, along with the symbols they will need to decorate the skulls. That done, seven small fires are lit to burn juniper during the ensuing ritual. As the juniper burns, the rite begins. The Keeper should ask each investigators for an **INT** roll to see how well they remember the required chant. As in **Part Three: First Steps** (page 176), as long as one investigator manages to successfully repeat the litany, the ritual succeeds. The skulls are washed with the three white substances (milk, curds, and ghee) and then decorated (a successful relevant **Art/Craft**, **Sleight of Hand**, or **DEX** roll). As with the instruments, a fumbled and failed pushed roll indicate that the skull has been irrevocably damaged and a replacement must be acquired.

Each bowl must be enchanted while held in the cupped hands of the person who is to sacrifice the magic points necessary to attune the *kapalas* to each other. As long as the bones are of a sufficiently good quality (**All in the Bones**, page 168), then they can be harmonized. The number of magic points required to bring about attunement is equal to 5 minus the inherent **POW** of the skull: 4 magic points are needed to attune a reasonable quality skull, while only 1 magic point is necessary for a superb quality one. The transfer of magic points feels like a warm, tingling sensation, rushing from the investigator's chest, down both arms, and through their hands into the skull, which momentarily glows a very faint blue.

If there are sufficient people present (seven, one for each *kapala*), all of the bowls can be enchanted at once, dramatically cutting down the time needed to complete the procedure. Otherwise, the ritual must be repeated until all of the bowls have been enchanted, one batch at a time. If everything goes to plan, each pass of the ritual takes approximately one hour.

Providing the ritual is successful, the set of *kapalas* acts just as the Gandharan rituals bowls do (**On Display**, page 128). As this is a less powerful enchantment than was needed for the musical instruments, fewer skeletons are attracted by it: one if the majority of the bones are reasonable, two if the majority are good, etc., up to a maximum of four. Unless all of the bones are of superb quality, the Shri Chitipati do not bother to make an appearance.

MOVING ON

Provided the investigators haven't ruffled the feathers of any local ruffians or aroused the suspicions of the authorities in Rajgir, they can now move on to their next destination—most likely Chakdara (**Chapter 3**) or Derge (**Chapter 5**).

If the investigators have been following a clockwise route in accordance with Tenzin Kalsang's somewhat ambiguous advice (**Which Way?**, page 86), they may already have visited Derge Parkhang (Derge Sutra Printing House) and collected the ritual scroll, leaving them only Lake Danakosha and the ritual bowls as an objective (**Chapter 3**). On the other hand, if the investigators have been following an anti-clockwise *kora*, they may already have claimed the ritual bowls and have only one more place left to go to collect the final component for the ritual: the printing house of Derge Parkhang (**Chapter 5**).

If the investigators decided not to follow the *lama's* directions, or didn't ask for any, Rajgir may have been their first destination, meaning that they have a choice as to where to head next, although if traveling from Rajgir, then Chakdara and Lake Danakosha are probably the easiest to reach (**Chapter 3**). If, however, Rajgir was their final stop, having already collected the copy of the Gate-closing ceremony from the printing house and the ritual bowls from Peshawar, then they are ready to make their way to Tibet and the Valley of the White Ape (**Chapter 6**).



Kangling and Damaru

DIFFICULT REFLECTIONS

Given what they have had to do to gain the *damaru* and *kangling*, including having to permanently sacrifice POW during the ritual, the investigators may be questioning why they're following the *lama* and engaging in what they may see as grossly blasphemous acts against the dead. Any investigator who poses such questions to Tenzin Kalsang is treated to a sympathetic smile. The *lama* asks that they sit with him to discuss the matter, allowing him to explain that, while in some cultures using someone's bones in such a way might be seen as disrespectful or degrading, Buddhists believe that their bodies should be useful to others after death. This is the reason why many Buddhists prefer to have their corpses committed to a sky burial rather than be cremated, so that their last act is a gift to the hungry, be they animal or spirit. Using the bones in a ritual is just another facet of that final gift-giving. Whether or not the investigator accepts that argument is up to the player.

Alternatively, a more mechanistic approach can be implemented. If the investigator has at any point suffered from a bout of madness as a result of creating the instruments, the Keeper can have them make an INT roll: if failed, the *lama's* argument seems perfectly rational and reasonable, and they accept it without question. If, however, they succeed, their lingering doubts remain, which may have consequences further down the line, including affecting their willingness to participate in any further rituals.

If any investigators do decide that enough is enough, Tenzin Kalsang does not prevent them from leaving. He, and the remaining investigators, soon begin to have dreams of the new character (i.e. a replacement investigator) who will take their place, as the Tokabhaya are quick to organize a replacement.

THE END OF THE ROAD: SITAVANA

Any investigators who leave, whether by choice, incarceration, or through death, injury, or illness/insanity, could be replaced by any of the many religious pilgrims in the town, or by one of Rajgir's resident merchants, craftspeople, or scholars. It's even possible that the British authorities may decide to send one of their lesser spies or officials to tag along with the investigators to keep an eye on them, depending on how much fuss they've created during their stay. And, as elsewhere in India, Dr. Paira Mall's network of contacts could also be called upon to bolster the investigators' ranks, or to act as handy experts in their fields, should the investigators require them (**Wellcome's Man in India**, page 142).

CREATURES AND MONSTERS

Scorpion Demon, *arachnid terror*

STR 110 CON 100 SIZ 80 DEX 50 INT —
 APP — POW 80 EDU — SAN — HP 18
 DB: +1D6 Build: 2 Move: 8 MP: 16 Luck: —

Terton: scorpion demons are sensitive to the power given off by sacred and magical texts and, if so instructed, can lead their summoner to such items provided they are within a radius of 80 yards from where the summoning ritual took place.

Combat

Attacks per round: 3 (pincers and stinger)

Attacks twice with its pincers (or performs one grab) and once with its stinger per round. It can strike up to three separate victims, as long as all the targets are within close range of one another. Summoned scorpion demons are sufficiently intelligent to follow straightforward commands and defend their summoner against a variety of worldly and otherworldly threats, if properly bound. If the binding fails, the scorpion demon attacks once with its stinger and then leaves.

Stinger Poison: if hit by the scorpion demon's stinger, the victim should make an Extreme CON roll, with success halving the poison damage (half of 1D10, round down), although they still suffer 1D3 damage from the hit; otherwise, the poison and hit combined inflict 1D10+1D3 damage.

Grab (mnvr): as an alternative to inflicting damage with its two pincers, the scorpion demon may grab a target and pull them to its 9 mouths to eaten for 3D3+DB damage.

Fighting	45% (22/9), damage 1D6+DB (pincer) or 1D3+1D10 poison damage (stinger)
Grab (mnvr)	45% (22/9), damage 3D3+DB
Dodge	35% (17/7)

Armor: 3-point chitinous scale armor.

Sanity Loss: 0/1D6 Sanity points to encounter a scorpion demon.

Shri Chitipati, Lord and Lady of the Charnel Grounds

STR 90 CON — SIZ 95 DEX 80 INT —
 APP — POW 100 EDU — SAN — HP —
 DB: 0 Build: 0 Move: 7 MP: 20 Luck: —

Combat

Attacks per round: 1 (club)

The Lord attacks with a corpse club, as does the Lady (whose flowering head of grain transforms into another corpse club as soon as she is engaged).

Resistant to Harm: once manifested in corporeal form, the Lord and Lady's dried bones are relatively brittle, meaning that they are likely to shatter if hit with a heavy blow from a blunt weapon, which forces them to return from whence they came. Any blow striking either the Lord or the Lady has a chance of destroying the entity: multiply the damage dealt by 5 and then roll 1D100; if the roll is equal to or below the multiplied damage, the Lord or Lady is destroyed. For example, if the Lord or Lady were hit by a club for 6 points of damage, there would be a 30% chance that the blow would splinter their bones completely, thus destroying them. If the multiplied damage roll fails, they remain totally undamaged. One penalty die should be applied to all attacks made with an impaling weapon (including bullets), since much of the target is simply air.

Fighting	55% (27/11), damage 1D8
Dodge	40% (20/8)

Skills

Art/Craft (Dance) 90%.

Armor: none; resistant to harm (see above).

Sanity Loss: 1/1D8 Sanity points to see the Shri Chitipati.

Scorpion Demon



OLD BONES
- SITAVANA, INDIA -

SKELETONS, DANCING DEAD

	1	2	3	4	5	6
STR	60	60	70	60	80	60
CON	—	—	—	—	—	—
SIZ	65	70	85	75	50	50
DEX	65	55	40	70	50	70
INT	45	75	70	45	65	35
POW	05	05	05	05	05	05
HP	—	—	—	—	—	—
DB	+1D4	+1D4	+1D4	+1D4	+1D4	0
Build	1	1	1	1	1	0
Move	8	7	7	7	8	9
MP	1	1	1	1	1	1

Resistant to Harm: any blow striking a skeleton has a chance of destroying it equal to or less than the damage done multiplied by 5 (as rolled on 1D100). Apply one penalty die on attacks made with an impaling weapon (including bullets).

Combat

Attacks per round: 1 (club or sword)

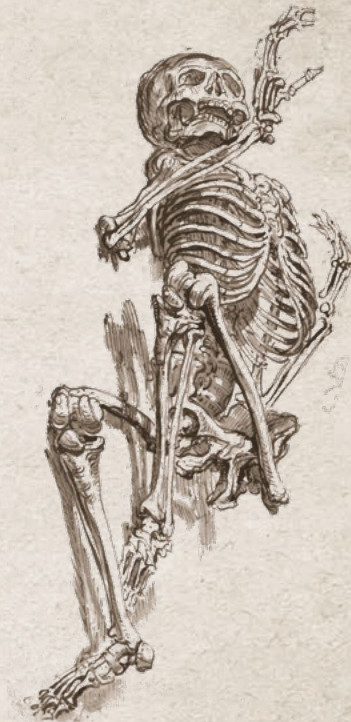
Animated skeletons use weapons rather than attacking unarmed, perhaps because they shatter so easily.

Fighting 45% (22/9), damage 1D3+DB,
or club/sword 1D6+DB

Dodge 30% (15/6)

Armor: none; resistant to harm (see above).

Sanity Loss: 0/1D6 Sanity points to see an animated skeleton.





FEAST AND FAMINE

- DERGE, TIBET -

A land often closed to outsiders by the theocracy that rules it, Tibet, the so-called Roof of the World, has long held a mystical allure for those wishing to learn its secrets. Gaining entry to such a place requires great courage when faced with the many challenges involved, as the investigators are about to find out.

The original scroll containing the rite Tenzin Kalsang needs to prevent the King of Fear from entering the world has disappeared from the sealed cave at Tun-huang (**A Change of Plan**, page 86). To find a replacement, the investigators and their *lama* must journey to a famed printing house, located in the ancient Kingdom of Derge in Kham, eastern Tibet.

The events of this chapter may be the first time the investigators attempt to secure one of the items Tenzin Kalsang has listed as essential for their quest to succeed—for example, if they followed the eastern, clockwise path suggested by the *lama* (**Which Way?**, page 86). On the other hand, the ritual scroll may be the last of the components they need if they have already collected the ritual bowls from Peshawar (**Chapter 3**) and created the *damaru* and *kangling* in the charnel grounds of Rajgir (**Chapter 4**).

This chapter assumes that the investigators took Tenzin Kalsang's advice and followed the western, counter-clockwise *kora*, and are currently in Rajgir in Bihar and Orissa (present day Bihar). Advice on how to reach Derge from other locations, as well as how to navigate the challenge of entering Tibet in general, is provided below.

An overview of what the investigators are likely to know about Tibet can be found in **What Your Investigator Knows 6: Tibet** (**Appendix C**, page 352).

THE LAND OF SNOWS

According to their own mythology, the people of Tibet are descended from the offspring of Old Father Monkey (an avatar of their principle deity, Chenrezigs, also known as Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Ultimate Compassion) and the white demoness, Srinmo (herself an avatar of the protector goddess, Drölma/Tara). After the waters covering the earth at that time receded around the sacred Gangpo Ri in Tsetang in the Yarlung Valley, the pair took up residence in a cave on the mountain and began raising their family. Their six children, who later gave rise to the six ancient clans of Tibet, were taught the secrets of agriculture by their father and sowed their crops in the first field, Sothang, at the foot of their mountain home. And so, the people of Tibet came into being and flourished in that revered place.

SECRETS OF TIBET

While the *Call of Cthulhu 7th Edition* sourcebook *Secrets of Tibet* (Chaosium, Inc.) is not required to run either this chapter or **Chapter 6** of this campaign, it does contain a more in-depth overview of the country's history, geography, and potential Mythos threats that Keepers may find of use, particularly if they wish to include additional encounters for the investigators during their journey across the Tibetan Plateau, or intend for them to spend any time in the country's capital, Lhasa.

The valley that contained both the Gangpo Ri and Sothang later gave its name to the mighty Yarlung Dynasty, which ruled the country from the royal palace, Yumbu Lagang, for around 900 years. The dynasty was founded in the 2nd century BCE by the legendary first King of Tibet, Nyetri Tsenpo. The land's first kings were believed to be the immortal offspring of a hideous beast called a Theurang; the creature was so vile to look upon that it was exiled from the heavens to the Yarlung Valley, whose residents believed it to be a god and accepted it as their lord and master. When each king's reign was over, they ascended back to the heavens on the same silken rope the Theurang had first used to descend to its earthly kingdom. Unfortunately for the dynasty, the eighth King, Drigum Tsenpo, fell out with one of his court officials (stories vary as to the official's exact identity), leading to a terrible duel, during which the heavenly cord was cut, condemning all future kings to earth and, worse, making them mortal.

A DEVELOPING EMPIRE

During the late 6th and early 7th centuries CE, the country became a military force to be reckoned with. Under the guidance of the 32nd King, Namri Songtsen, Tibet extended its boundaries by seizing Chinese territory and the kingdom grew into a fledgling empire. After Namri's death, his son, Songtsen Gampo, and Gampo's heirs after him, continued to expand the country's borders. At the height of the Tibetan Empire's power in the 9th century CE, under the rule of King Ralpachen (also known as Trisug Detsen), it covered land from the Tarim Basin in the north to the Himalayas and Bengal in the south, and from the Pamir Mountains in the west to Kansu (Gansu) and Yunnan in the east.

It was Songtsen Gampo who was first credited with introducing Buddhism to Tibet in the mid-7th century CE through his political marriages to the Chinese Princess Wengcheng and the Nepali Princess Bhrikuti, though there is little to suggest it took hold anywhere other than among the ruling family. A second, more successful introduction took place in the mid-8th century, when King Trisong Detsen asked Santaraksita, the Abbot of Nalanda University (see **Chapter 7: A Dangerous Gift?**, page 270), and Kamalasila, his main disciple, to visit the country. Santaraksita also asked the great Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava; **Handout: Gates 4**) along, so that he could use his tantric magic to deal with the demons that plagued the country and which continued to prevent the construction of a temple at Samye. By the late 8th century, not only had Trisong Detsen established Buddhism as the official state religion, he had also conquered Tun-huang and taken his armies as far as the Chinese capital of the time, Chang'an (Sian/Xian; **Chapter 2: Chang'an**, page 51).

But, no empire lasts forever, and the 41st King of Tibet, Ralpachen, was assassinated in 841 CE, plunging the country into civil war and chaos during a period known as the Tibetan Dark Age. Order was not fully restored until the end of the 10th century, and even then only in the Kingdom of Guge, far to the west of the ancestral home of the fallen Yarlung Dynasty. By that time, China had reclaimed nearly all the territory it had lost to Tibet over the previous centuries.

Into the Light

As Tibet emerged from its dark age, Buddhism had spread far beyond the royal court. According to some historians, many of the country's Tantric Buddhist practices probably developed their distinctly Tibetan flavor during the Dark Age, as people were left free to experiment with and evolve their faith, able to incorporate elements of the country's earlier Bön religion and other animistic faiths without the interference of the royal court and the once-powerful monasteries.

As the 11th and 12th centuries progressed, the monasteries regained much of their former power, only to fall prey to a wave of Mongol invasions during the 13th century. The country soon came under the rule of the Khans while maintaining a large degree of autonomy, in part thanks to the influence of various Tibetan Buddhist priests on the Mongol court. So great was their influence that, under Kublai Khan, control of Tibet was split between the abbot of the Sakya school (**Religion in Tibet**, page 190), the imperial preceptor (also Sakyapa), and a secular governor.

Mongol rule over Tibet collapsed around 100 years later, leading to yet more political fragmentation and uncertainty as various factions across the country (and from outside its borders) vied for control. In the mid-17th century, after years of shifting allegiances and infighting between the various Khans and petty kingdoms, Gushri Khan handed both secular and religious control of the country to the Great Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Losang Gyatso, fully returning the country to a theocracy (as it had been under the Sakyapas).

The title Dalai Lama (meaning Ocean of Wisdom) was originally granted to the third head of the Gelug order, Sonam Gyatso, by Altan Khan after he converted the Mongol ruler to Buddhism in the late 1570s. Gyatso kindly backdated the honorific to his two predecessors, making himself the third Dalai Lama. The Great Fifth was so named because of his triumph in reforging Tibet as a unified kingdom and maintaining its fragile peace. So important was his personal prestige to the country's stability that his death was hidden for 12 years for fear the country would fall apart again without him.

Independent rule by the Dalai Lamas did not continue for long; after the Great Fifth's death was finally revealed,

FEAST AND FAMINE - DERGE, TIBET -

Mongol attempts to regain control of the country escalated and the Ch'ing Dynasty became increasingly involved in Tibet's politics. In the end, the Chinese Emperor installed two political viceroys (*ambans*) in Lhasa, supported by a thousand Chinese troops, to oversee the Dalai Lama and his ruling council—turning Tibet into a Chinese protectorate.

The Coming of the British

Throughout the 18th century, British interest in India's northern neighbor grew, although what little contact they had was lost in the late 1780s. By the 1850s, all foreigners were banned from entering Tibet by the Gyeltshab, the acting regent, and all foreigners in residence were summarily ejected. Only the native citizens of those countries that shared a border with Tibet were permitted to enter, in order to maintain the ancient trade routes the country relied upon. None of this deterred the British, who began to secretly map Tibet under the auspices of the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India project, using spies known as the **pundits** (see **Pundits**, nearby).


During the 19th century, the British crept ever closer to Tibet's southern borders, eventually annexing the Kingdom of Sikkim, which lay between Nepal and Bhutan, and turning it into a British protectorate. Tensions in the region continued to rise as the three great empires (Britain, Russia, and China) vied for political control and a share of Tibet's resources, culminating in the 1903–1904 Younghusband Expedition to Lhasa, when British troops invaded the country and forced the signing of the Anglo-Tibetan Accord, opening Tibet up to the British—much to the annoyance of the Ch'ing Dynasty, who had not been privy to the negotiations. As a result, China refused to recognize the accord, particularly as it would effectively turn Tibet from a Chinese protectorate into a British one. A second treaty, signed two years later in 1906, rectified matters by acknowledging Tibet as a Chinese suzerainty. The signing of the Anglo-Russian Convention in 1907, which defined British and Russian spheres of influence in Asia, also helped deescalate the tensions caused in the region by the Great Game (**All Fun and Games**, page 21).

The Chinese Emperor made one last push to exert total control over Tibet in 1910, invading the country even as his own empire was tearing itself apart. The 13th Dalai Lama fled to Sikkim to seek refuge with the British, further strengthening the relationship between the two countries. He did not return to Lhasa until after the last Manchu troops were escorted out of Tibet in 1912, at which time he declared Tibet's independence from China. The Tibet which the Dalai Lama now controlled was much smaller than it had been (covering roughly what is currently known as the Tibetan Autonomous Region), as China still held onto



PUNDITS

Named after the first (and probably greatest) of their company, the pundit (and former school principal) Nain Singh Rawat, this extraordinary group of men became the eyes and ears of the British in Tibet while the country's borders were officially closed. Trained at the Great Trigonometrical Survey's headquarters at Dehra Dun, United Provinces (Uttarakhand) in British India, they traveled the length and breadth of Tibet. Usually disguised as traders and pilgrims, the pundits carefully used clandestine surveying techniques to slowly but steadily map the unknown wildernesses of the Tibetan Plateau, frequently under extreme conditions of hardship and personal danger.



former Tibetan territory in the Kansu, Chinghai (Qinghai), Szechuan (Sichuan), and Yunnan regions.

With increasing British influence and support, the 13th Dalai Lama attempted to modernize the country, much to the consternation of the heads of the various monasteries, who could see their own grip on power slowly ebbing away. The move toward modernization eventually led to a conservative backlash, which rapidly undid most of Tibet's efforts in this regard.

THE LAY OF THE LAND

The Tibetan plateau formed many millions of years ago when the two huge landmasses of India and Asia rammed into each other, pushing up the Himalayas and elevating the waters of the Tethys Ocean far above sea level. The ocean's salty remains can still be found in the brackish lakes of the Chang Tang, the desolate wasteland covering much of the country's north. While Tibet's average elevation is around 13,000 feet (4,000 m), a good portion of it sits at about 16,500 feet (5,000 m); the air at this altitude is thin, and any sunlight is exceptionally strong regardless of the time of year.

There are many regions within Tibet, each with their own customs and traditions.

- **Western Tibet:** Ngari—largely barren apart from along the banks of the great rivers which run through it. Once home to the fallen kingdoms of Shang Shung and Guge, this area is also the location of the holy Mount Kailash and Lake Manasarovar.

- **Central Tibet:** Ü-Tsang—mild, fertile valleys along the region's many rivers, contrasted by wide, desolate plains in the north. Home of the ancient heart of Tibet—the Gangpo Ri and the Yarlung Valley—as well as the country's capital, Lhasa.
- **Northeastern Tibet:** Amdo—mostly mountains and grasslands. Home to the famous Kumbum Monastery, built around the spot where Tsongkhapa, the founder of the Gelug order, was born (**One Hundred Thousand Images of the Buddha**, page 203). By the 1920s, much of the region had been annexed by the Chinese and incorporated into Kansu, Chinghai, and Szechuan.
- **Eastern Tibet:** Kham—a mixture of high plateaus, lush forests, and precipitous river gorges (particularly at its eastern edge where it drops sharply to the Szechuan plains). By the 1920s, China had annexed parts of Kham into Chinghai, Szechuan, and Yunnan.

AN AGE OF EXPLORATION

Although Westerners and other outsiders had attempted to enter and explore Tibet throughout the previous several hundred years, the 1920s saw a veritable explosion in the number of adventurers visiting the plateau. Although the country was still technically closed to foreigners, except by invitation of the Tibetans or with official British permission and an accompanying passport, the borders (particularly between India and Tibet) were not as heavily guarded or patrolled as they had been in the 19th century. A determined explorer could gain access to the country with relatively little difficulty, trusting to good fortune that afterward, they would not be caught and expelled before they reached their goal. Indeed, this was about the safest time for those looking to gatecrash Tibet, providing they avoided the attentions of bandits and steered clear of Lhasa, where they were most likely to be unmasked. During this period, famous explorers visiting Tibet—legally or illegally—included the following people.

- **Brigadier-General George Pereira**—who traveled between Peking and Lhasa (largely on foot) during 1921–1922. He died in 1923 near Batang while traveling the Tibet/Yunnan border.
- **Frank Kingdon-Ward**—a noted botanist and “plant hunter” who explored Pemakö in 1924 (see **Chapter 6: The Plant Hunter**, page 229).
- **Alexandra David-Néel**—a French explorer and Buddhist scholar who, also in 1924, became the first Western woman to successfully reach Lhasa.
- **Nicholas Roerich**—the Russian artist, Theosophist, and mystic who toured Central Asia between 1926 and 1928. He ultimately ended up stranded in terrible conditions in Tibet, thanks to British suspicions that he and his family were Bolshevik spies.
- **Giuseppe Tucci**—the Italian archaeologist and later fascist, who first arrived in Western Tibet in 1927 and continued to travel through the area on and off for the next 20 years while he explored the ruins of the Kingdom of Guge.
- **Joseph Rock**—another botanist and geographer, known as the National Geographic’s “Man in China,” who spent much of his time in Eastern Tibet during the late 1920s.

RELIGION IN TIBET

Even though Buddhism wasn't officially introduced to Tibet until the arrival of Songtsen Gampo's two brides, according to legend, its holy scriptures had been present for several centuries, even if no one could read them. It is said that several volumes of *sutras* miraculously fell into the waiting hands of the 28th King, Lhato Tori, as he stood on the roof of the Yumbu Lagang. The *nyenpo sangwa* (Awesome Secret), as the gift became known, was kept safe until a time when it could be translated. In fact, it's believed that the Tibetan script may well have been developed by the monk Thonmi Sambhota in the 7th century CE in his efforts to translate Sanskrit *sutras* into Tibetan. Before this time, Tibet had no writing system of its own.

Although primarily developed from Indian Buddhist teachings brought into the country by a series of learned scholars over the course of several centuries, Tibetan Buddhism has many unique elements that separate it from both the Indian and Chinese versions of the faith, such as the huge pantheon of Tibetan demons, gods, and spirits added during the Dark Age, as well as the concept of compassionate violence, an apparently contradictory tenet for a religion based on empathy and pacifism (**Compassionate Violence**, page 92).

In simple terms, Tibetan Buddhism represents the so-called Middle Way between a life of sensual indulgence and a strict ascetic existence, where compassion is more important than intellectual rigor and the ultimate goal is not full enlightenment but achieving the status of a *bodhisattva*, with elements of tantric practice thrown in for good measure.

By the 1920s, there were four main schools of Tibetan Buddhism. The oldest, the Nyingma (Ancient) School—also called the Red Hats, after their crested ceremonial headgear—dates from around the 8th century CE and is directly based on Padmasambhava's translations of Buddhist scripture. The Nyingmapa sect's teachings contain a high degree of tantric practice and ritual, and the school was once renowned for its ability to perform war magic (so much so that Kublai Khan gave it a tax exemption in exchange for such services rendered on his behalf). Members of the tradition often sailed close to the wind in terms of what was, and was not, acceptable in Buddhist practice, and shared much in common with their shamanic Bön forebears.

MANY VOICES 3: TIBETAN DIALECTS

Like Chinese, written Tibetan is largely universal throughout the country, whereas local dialects and variant pronunciations mean that the spoken word is not always understandable between one region and another. For the purposes of this campaign, the catch-all skill Language (Tibetan) is used throughout to simplify matters for the Keeper and applies to both the spoken and written forms of the language.

The other three schools were established in the 11th and 12th centuries, after Tibet emerged from its dark age. The Sakyapa, Kagyupa, and Kadampa (the New Schools) were based around fresh readings of the holy texts, as many feared that the older faith had become dangerously corrupted during the chaos of the previous two centuries. The Kadampa, the first of the new schools, was later subsumed by the Gelug (Virtuous) School—the Yellow Hats—a more austere and scholastic tradition established by Tsongkhapa in the 15th century, whose head, the Dalai Lama, eventually assumed the role of the country's spiritual and temporal leader.

DZOGCHEN: THE GREAT PERFECTION

Transmitted directly from Vajrapani—one of Sakyamuni Buddha's protectors in the Mahayana tradition from which Tibetan Buddhism developed—down to Padmasambhava and on through his *termas* (revealed texts), Dzogchen is a school of Nyingmapa teaching that, according to Alexandra David-Néel, was the last of the Nyingmapa sects to fully develop. Meaning "the Great Perfection," it is the abstract contemplation of the ultimate nature of reality in an attempt to find enlightenment in the here and now. It is considered to be the most advanced of the so-called nine vehicles (practices and doctrines) of Buddhism that can lead a practitioner to liberation.

The investigators may have the opportunity to visit the home of the Great Perfection while performing a task for Derge Parkhang in return for their missing ritual scroll (*A Change of Scenery*, page 208).



TRAVELING IN TIBET

There is no fast or convenient way to cross Tibet, which, in the 1920s, is little different to the Tibet of the previous century when it comes to travel. There are no roads to speak of—at least not paved ones—and certainly none good enough to drive an automobile on, making the Indian Government's 1907 gift of a motorized vehicle to the Panchen Lama (second in power to the Dalai Lama) something of a hollow gesture. In fact, there are no wheeled vehicles in use anywhere in the country—every goods item that enters, leaves, or crosses Tibet does so on the back of yaks, mules, or people; carts of all kinds are wholly unsuited to the mountain passes and the frequently narrow and precipitous trade routes that zigzag across the country.

All major routes across Tibet are split into *satsigs* (relay stations) located half-a-day's walk apart. As in the Taklamakan Desert, it is unusual for beasts of burden to make the entire cross-country trip, with these relay stations allowing those with the correct permits to exchange their animals for fresh ones, which are provided at no charge as part of a tax system known as *Ula*; food and shelter are also part of the deal, if requested. Any travelers who do not have official permission to be in Tibet cannot make use of this system, meaning that they must use the animals they brought with them for their entire journey, or pay for new ones somewhere along the way, but at a risk of being identified as interlopers.

Tibet's rivers pose another potential difficulty, particularly in the east of the country. Where the waters are broad and slow-flowing, coracles made from green yak hide are the preferred crossing vehicle (for people and goods). Any pack or riding animals may need to swim, hopefully avoiding the danger of being swept away. Chain ferries and cable crossings are frequently used where the current is stronger, providing safe travel to both people and animals. In the steep gorges of Pemakö and Kham, string bridges can be found. While many such bridges are made using plant fibers, others are far sturdier and constructed with iron strings (such as those built by Thangthong Gyalpo; **The Land of Benevolence**, page 195); some are little more than a couple of ropes slung across a ravine, while others can accommodate pack animals with relative ease.

If you can't ride a pony, yak, or mule, then the only way to travel is on foot. In some places, the paths are too dangerous or steep to ride, meaning that any mounts must be led or abandoned altogether.

ENTERING TIBET

Entering Tibet is something of a challenge during the 1920s, even for the most enterprising traveler. The difficulties posed

COIN OF THE REALM: TIBET

Prior to 1912, all currency in Tibet was based on the silver *tangka* (not to be mistaken for the similarly spelled *thangka*, a religious image). After 1912, with the Dalai Lama's declaration of independence from China, paper money (*tam*) was introduced (in denominations of 5 and 10 *tam*); however, the new coins and notes were (mostly) restricted to Tibet's cities and trade stations. In the countryside, bartering was the order of the day, partly because money had little practical use so far from the towns and cities, but also because it was the safer option. For those brave (or foolish) enough to deal with outsiders, the ownership of coinage—especially foreign coinage—could invoke the death penalty (see **Summary Justice**, page 193), whereas the acquisition of sheep or goats was far less likely to arouse suspicion. As a result, many expeditions into Tibet traveled with additional animals specifically for bartering.

by the harsh terrain, erratic weather, and the ever-present threat of bandits may be magnified by the travelers' direction of approach, particularly if they're coming from India. Those entering Sikkim were required to sign a statutory document declaring that they wouldn't attempt to enter Tibet illegally, although many went on to do exactly that.

Although far less common than in the previous century, there were still some patrols stationed close to Tibet's border with its southern neighbor, and trade caravans and pilgrim parties were scrutinized for the presence of *philings* (foreigners) in disguise, who were typically escorted straight to the nearest border and summarily ejected (this is what happened to Sven Hedin, Dr. Susie Rijnhart, and Alexandra David-Néel, among others). Tibetan soldiers at toll bridges and local *dzongs* (fortresses) also kept an eye out for unwanted strangers inside the country. *Philings* entering the capital, Lhasa, without official permission were similarly likely to be identified and removed at the first opportunity.


During the campaign, investigators planning to enter Tibet without the proper papers may need to make use of the Disguise and/or Acting skills if they wish to assume the identities of either native traders or devout religious (usually Buddhist) pilgrims, all of whom are permitted to travel freely across the country. For obvious reasons, those investigators who are not of Indian, Chinese, or Central and Southeast Asian descent suffer a penalty die to any Disguise attempts during encounters with Tibetan patrols.

FEAST AND FAMINE - DERGE, TIBET -



SUMMARY JUSTICE

While there were no public executions in Tibet in the 1920s, justice was still brutal. Minor offenses usually resulted in flogging, while more serious crimes were met with mutilation (such as the loss of a hand or eye). Those caught aiding and abetting foreigners entering the country could be beheaded or imprisoned for life in dreadful conditions; in some cases, perpetrators were even sewn into animal skins and thrown into the nearest river to drown—although this was less common in the 20th century. In this way, pious administrators could keep their karmic hands clean on a technicality, as they had not directly killed anyone—the deaths were entirely down to the river.



Due to Tibet's political climate in the 1920s, even those with official permission to be in the country may not be afforded the warmest of welcomes. In contrast to the general friendliness and hospitality of the Tibetan peoples, the residents of some regions, particularly Kham, regard foreigners as responsible for the taxes Lhasa has imposed on them since it wrested control back from China—taxes that are deeply resented.

Permission to Enter

To gain legal entry into Tibet, one must be a trader native to one of the bordering states, such as the Bhotias from the Johar Valley in British India (from whose villages the first pundits were recruited); Ladakhis from the cold desert of the Northern Indian princely state of Jammu and Kashmir; the Bashahr horse traders from the Punjab; the Lepchas of Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan; the Mongols; or Hui merchants from China. Apart from such traders, only Buddhist pilgrims from Mongolia, China, or the few Indian states where the religion persists were allowed to enter Tibet.

Depending on the nationalities and faiths of the investigators, they may be able to cross the border as members of one of these categories, with only minor assistance from their Acting or Disguise skills; however, if they are not and nevertheless decide to use the disguise of a trader or pilgrim to expedite their entry, the investigators not only have to succeed at an appropriate skill roll (potentially subject to a penalty die, as previously discussed), but they may also need to succeed at a **Lore (Buddhism)**, appropriate **Language** (such as **Chinese, Tibetan, or Hindustani**), and/or a Hard

Know roll (at the Keeper's discretion) in order to convince petty officials and suspicious guards that they are who they claim to be.

Traveling disguised as a pilgrim or trader while part of a genuine group of such individuals can alter the difficulty of such rolls, as well as providing safety in numbers from potential bandit attacks, although the investigators will need to convince the head of the caravan that they are who they say they are; the caravan leader is responsible for the entire group, and could face serious consequences if the investigators are caught. Few caravans knowingly take foreigners with them, unless the caravans aren't quite what they appear to be either.

Alternatively, one could cross into Tibet if in possession of an invitation from someone high up in the Tibetan government, or from the head of a prestigious monastery. If any of the investigators are diplomats (such as Charles Lockhart, **Appendix G**), civil servants, or priests, they may have the contacts needed to arrange such a letter, although this may take a little time. Sadly, any connections of this sort that Tenzin Kalsang once had are long since dead; however, if the Keeper wishes to unnerve the players (and their investigators) a little, then they may wish to arrange for an invitation from the abbot of either the Buchu Sergyi Monastery near Nyingtri (Nyingchi)—Tenzin Kalsang's mother monastery—or the Dzogchen Monastery at **Rudam** (page 208) to be waiting for them at the nearest convenient border town to speed their journey. After all, the Tokabhaya aren't limited to sending prophetic dreams to just the investigators and their *lama* in order to bring their plan to fruition, and similar visions may have been "gifted" to these abbots to prepare the way for Tenzin Kalsang and the investigators.

Finally, if in British India, an official permit (passport) could be obtained from the authorities in Simla (during the summer), New Delhi (during the winter), or Darjeeling (any time). Being granted a permit requires an interview with a suitably high-ranking civil servant (use the **Government Bureaucrat** in **Appendix A**, page 327, as required). During the interview, the investigators must find success with a social skill roll (such as **Charm, Fast Talk, or Persuade**) to convince the official that their trip won't infringe on the terms of the Anglo-Tibetan Accord (that is, they won't be entering into any trade negotiations while they are in the country, or brokering any diplomatic pacts) and that they haven't come to spy for another country or foment political unrest (this may be tricky if any of the investigators are from nations the British have frosty relations with, such as the Soviet Union). Diplomatic investigators, or those with outstanding public and professional reputations, may receive a bonus die to their social skill roll during



SEATS OF GOVERNMENT

To effectively govern a country the size of India, the British utilized many state capitals, as well as the country's main capital, New Delhi. Those in the plains were primarily used by government offices during the winter; in summer, India's civil servants moved lock, stock, and barrel up into the mountains to the various hill stations to escape the heat. Those administrative centers that may be of use to the Keeper in *The Children of Fear* are briefly described below:

New Delhi: undergoing massive redevelopment during the 1920s (under the guiding hand of architect Edward Lutyens), Delhi is the country's new capital; the former capital was Calcutta (Kolkata), but the British decided to move to a more central location in 1911, although New Delhi isn't fully inaugurated as the capital until the 1930s. The diplomatic enclave used by the British Raj is centered on Victory Square (Vijay Chowk), around which various government buildings are currently being constructed.

Simla: the Raj's summer capital long before the winter one was moved to New Delhi, Simla (Shimla) is located in the Himalayan foothills of the Punjab (Himachal Pradesh), far from the stifling heat of the plains. It was host to the Simla Convention in 1914 between Britain, India, China, and Tibet, which discussed the location of Tibet's borders. During the convention, the McMahon Line was drawn up, detailing the position of the northeastern border between India and Tibet, although it was largely ignored by the Government of India for several decades (as it was not in accord with the 1907 Anglo-Russian Convention, which the British subsequently denounced in 1921)—see **Chapter 6: A Disputed Border**, page 226, for more information.

Darjeeling: the summer capital of Bengal under the British, Darjeeling is also known as the Queen of the Hill Stations and is allegedly named after the Dorje Ling Monastery that used to sit on Observatory Hill. Developed by the British as a sanatorium town in the 19th century (thanks to its beneficial climate), it is surrounded by tea plantations and, on a clear day, has a commanding view of the world's third-highest mountain, Kanchendzonga. It is also a traditional stopover on the trip up to Tibet.

the interview, while those with dubious reputations or a history of crossing the British may suffer from a penalty die instead. Of course, if an investigator is actually a spy working for the British (or possibly another power), the Keeper can award them another bonus die (as the political wheels have been greased for them).

Depending on whether or not the investigators helped the injured government messenger in the optional encounter in Chapter 2 (**The Runner**, page 117), any social skill rolls associated with such an interview may also be subject to an additional bonus or penalty die as the Keeper sees fit (to a maximum of two). If the investigators acted in a truly exemplary manner, not only saving the runner's life but also delivering his precious missives to his British paymasters, then the interview may be purely a formality, and the paperwork is issued without need for a roll at all.

Of course, the vast majority of historical explorers merely snuck illegally over the border in some remote area—often encouraged to do so by British officials and military officers who should have known better. Such was the case with Sir Francis Younghusband and Ernst Schäfer's notorious German *Schutzstaffel* (SS)-sponsored expedition to Tibet in the late 1930s. Once in the country, such interlopers kept moving until they were either caught and ejected or reached their goal. For most, this strategy ended in disappointment, but that usually didn't stop them from trying again at a later date (and from a slightly different direction). A border so huge is utterly impossible to monitor successfully at all points and all times, meaning there is always hope for the truly determined to sneak in undetected.



LESS IS MORE

It is recommended that the Keeper avoid over-using encounters with officials who can potentially have the investigators thrown out of Tibet. Perhaps, employing such an occasion once might be reasonable, should the investigators really go about things poorly, but repeatedly having to sneak back into the county only to be escorted out again can soon become frustrating for all concerned, so use sparingly for the greatest effect.

THE LAND OF BENEVOLENCE

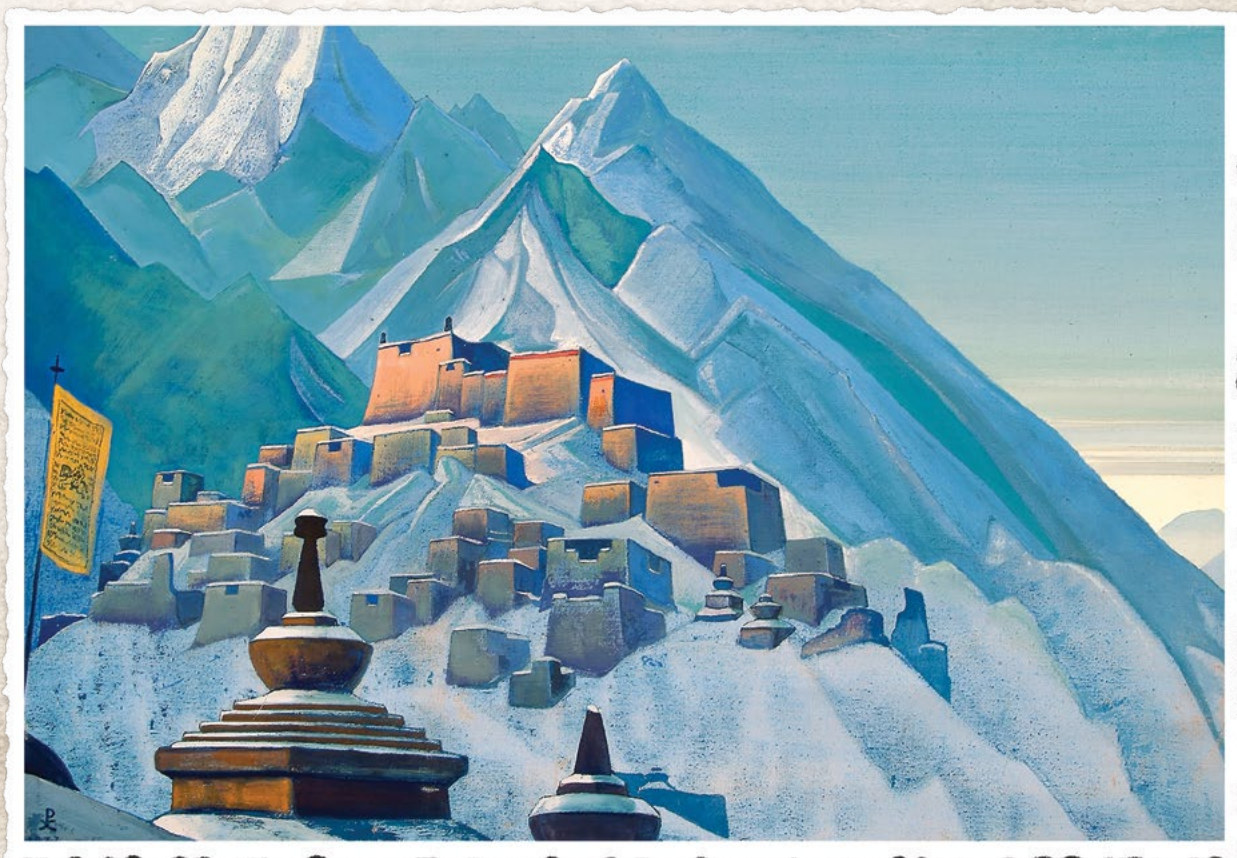
While not officially founded until the mid-17th century, the Kingdom of Derge (whose name means either “land of mercy” or “land of benevolence”) had effectively existed since the 13th century, after the Mongols appointed Tibetan officials to oversee the region on their behalf. In 1727, the kingdom, along with several others in the wider region, fell under control of the Chinese, becoming part of Kham. Six years later, it was effectively granted independence by the Yungcheng (Yongzheng) Emperor, although the king was still expected to pay His Imperial Majesty an annual tribute.

The Chinese reclaimed Derge in 1895, when the Governor-General of Szechuan invaded, seized the royal family, and imprisoned them in Chengdu (formerly the capital of Szechuan). By the time the Chinese troops left Derge, the king was dead, leading to a struggle for succession between his two sons. In 1908, as part of a deal to prevent his brother from gaining the throne, one of the sons gifted the kingdom to the Chinese. Lhasa eventually wrested control of the region back from the Republic of China in 1918. In modern times, the area forms the core of Dege County, Sichuan, China.

The kingdom’s main town is also called Derge (Dege). Regarded by many as the heart of Kham, it stands on the banks of the Sugchu River, a tributary of the mighty Yangtze. Once a thriving religious, political, and industrial center, the town’s main claim to fame in the 1920s is the Derge Sutra Printing House, or Derge Parkhang. Built in approximately 1730 by Tenpa Tsering, the 40th King of Derge, it is the greatest (and largest) of the three major Tibetan printing houses—the other two are at Narthang Monastery, near Shigatse, and at the Potala Palace, Lhasa.

A ten-minute walk from the center of town, the Derge Parkhang sits on a hillside just below the Sakyapa Derge (Gonchen) Monastery, founded by Thangthong Gyalpo in the 15th century. A distinguished polymath and often called Tibet’s own Leonardo da Vinci, Gyalpo not only founded the monastery, but also the Tibetan Opera (Ache Lhamo); in addition, he was an acknowledged *terton* (a discoverer of ancient hidden texts) and also built numerous iron bridges across Kham—a far safer way to traverse the region’s rivers than the precarious rope bridges found elsewhere.

The Kingdom of Derge is also renowned for its rich and unusual flora, and as such it is a magnet to those in search of rare magical and medicinal herbs.



Tibet, Himalayas by Nicholas Roerich

SET UP: UP ON HIGH

Although they may already have journeyed far and wide in their attempt to aid the mysterious Tibetan *lama* Tenzin Kalsang, the investigators must now travel on into the wild and largely uncharted lands beyond the Himalayas to collect a rare and precious manuscript. But, not everyone is happy with the *lama's* intended course of action, and those who are tasked with Tibet's protection are keen to stop the investigators before they do more harm than good.

TIBETAN WEATHER

As is typical of such a huge country, Tibet's weather is somewhat variable. In general, winter falls roughly between December and February, and tends to be freezing and windy but largely dry, while summer falls between May and September, with temperatures varying widely depending on location. Even on warm days, temperatures drop rapidly after nightfall, and it is always cool above 13,000 feet (4,000 m), where it often plummets to below freezing even in summer. Unsurprisingly, the north of the country is always colder than the south.

Western Tibet suffers from monsoon rains from July through September, and these, along with glacial meltwater, can cause severe flooding and landslides across the region. Parts of Eastern Tibet are also affected by the summer monsoons, and the country as a whole receives half its annual rainfall in July and August (which are also its warmest months). Oddly, for a place called the Land of Snows, the average snowfall for the whole country is only around 18 inches (46 cm), thanks to the rain shadow of the Himalayas, but some regions (particularly those with high altitude mountain passes) do receive far more.

Situated in the east and at an elevation of a little over 10,000 feet (3,000 m), Derge sees an average daytime summer temperature of about 57 degrees F (14 degrees C), and drops to an average of around 26.6 degrees F (-3 degrees C) in the winter months, when it tends to be rather windy. The town gets most of its rain from June to September (which is its wettest month, with an average of 8 inches/20 cm of rain), and most of its snowfall from March to May (approximately 16 inches/40 cm in April, the snowiest month). Derge has its appeals, but sunshine is not one of them.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The key NPCs for this scenario are detailed below. Generic characters, such as bandits, monks, and government bureaucrats, can be found in **Appendix A**.

Yonten Phuntsok, age 65, head monk at Derge Parkhang

Yonten Phuntsok knows no other life than the *sangha* (monastic community), having been raised at Derge Monastery after his parents died when he was a small boy. As a gifted poet and artist, bookish and creative, the young Phuntsok was the obvious choice for a successor when the old monk (who previously oversaw the Parkhang) retired and sequestered himself away in his final meditation retreat.

Phuntsok is proud of the work his lay-craftsmen produce and is a stickler for detail and precision, making him an exacting taskmaster. But, he is as unstinting with his praise and encouragement as he is with his criticism, and under his leadership the Parkhang's reputation for quality manuscripts has exceeded itself. Notably, he risked imprisonment under the last era of Chinese control for his outspoken defense of the Parkhang and its library.

Those who take the old man for a sheltered scholar are sorely mistaken. Phuntsok has a lively sense of humor and a razor-sharp mind, and it is a rare day when anyone gets the better of him.



Yonten Phuntsok

FEAST AND FAMINE - DERGE, TIBET -

- **Description:** stick thin and wiry, with a mischievous twinkle in his dark eyes.
- **Traits:** demanding but fair, with a surprising sense of humor. Phuntsok believes that beauty can be found wherever you look—in words, in art, and in nature. The examination of that beauty and the understanding of where it comes from gives his life meaning.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** an unwitting coconspirator in the Tokabhaya's plans. Despite the potential language barrier, Phuntsok is an expert in his field when it comes to all things printed, as well as the Tibetan Buddhist faith, and is therefore a valuable source of information for the investigators.

Kunchen Chodak, *age 52, korpa and Tokabhaya agent*

Even as a child, Kunchen Chodak had an avaricious streak—something his parents hoped a life of monastic piety might correct. Sadly, it did no such thing. Chodak's natural ability with numbers meant that he rose swiftly through the treasurer's office at Dzogchen, even as his esoteric studies faltered.

Old monasteries contain many powerful artifacts, especially those devoted to tantrism and magic. The Tokabhaya recognized Chodak's greed and potential at an early stage and have cultivated him accordingly. They gave him a shortcut to the esoteric power he coveted but had been

unable to achieve through the rigorous practice demanded by **Dzogchen: the Great Perfection** (page 191). In return, he gifted them with choice items from the Dzogchen Rinpoche's collections.

While the monastery's accumulated wealth (technically) belongs to its abbot and, by extension, the *sangha* (the community), Chodak very much sees it as his and his alone. And, although there are some at the monastery who doubt Chodak's faith, they cannot deny his ability to manage the monastery's finances. The stern monk is never happier than when carrying out a stock-take of the monastery's inventory, caressing each object lovingly before returning it to its rightful place in storage—or secretly handing it over to the Children of Fear.

- **Description:** stocky and well-fed, Chodak wears immaculate robes, although his fingers are often ink-stained. His movements are ponderous and deliberate.
- **Traits:** intelligent, but with a tendency to laziness, and an accomplished liar. Chodak knows that power comes in many forms, and he wants to have it all, even if he can't be bothered to work for it.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** as the *korpa* (treasurer) at Dzogchen Monastery in the Rudam Valley, Chodak is awaiting the delivery of a fine *thangka* (a Buddhist painting on cotton or silk) from his Sakyapa counterpart in Derge. Despite



Kunchen Chodak



One of the Seven Sisters

his work for the Tokabhaya, Chodak is a valuable resource for the investigators as an authority on tantric artifacts and accounting, should the investigators need to talk to him about such matters. He is more than happy to discuss their upcoming ritual if they mention it, though he is careful not to reveal that there is anything untoward about it.

The Seven Sisters, *divine protectors*

Known as *khandromas* (sky dancers) to the Tibetans, these creatures are perhaps better known by their Sanskrit name: *dakinis*. These are a type of sacred spirit in Hinduism and Vajrayana Buddhism, sometimes thought to feast on human flesh.

- **Description:** the Seven Sisters are, according to tantric wisdom, worldly *dakinis*, existing in two guises: that of beautiful women and/or men (*dakas*; Tibetan: *parwo*—warrior) and their demonic, flesh-eating other selves. As demons, the Sisters are tall, muscular humanoids whose leathery wings match their body color. Their eyes glow an unearthly shade of green; this is less noticeable when in human form.
- **Traits:** wrathful and avenging, the Seven Sisters are tasked with protecting Tibet from otherworldly threats. In their less wrathful forms, they are instructors in divine mystery.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** the Sisters know that all is not as it seems with Tenzin Kalsang's quest and are determined to put an end to it by any means necessary.

GETTING TO DERGE

As **Chapters 4 to 6** can be played in any order, the investigators may find themselves approaching Tibet from any one of a number of directions. As always, where such huge distances are involved, we recommend red lining most, if not all, of the journey, apart from potential moments of sightseeing and dealing with various officials (or bandits) along the way.

While exactly how long it takes to cover these distances depends on the investigators' mode of transport (by train, on horseback, on foot, and so on) and the difficulty of the chosen path, approximate journey times are given for each potential route. Apart from in India, where the trains speed up travel dramatically, it is assumed that the investigators manage an average of around 12 miles (19 km) per day if they are walking or are part of a large caravan, and a little more than double that if they are on horseback.

FROM RAJGIR

If the investigators are planning to travel from Rajgir (**Chapter 4**) to Derge, having already crafted their musical instruments in the charnel grounds of Sitavana, then the most straightforward way to get to Tibet is one of the most obvious and well-used—and the one that could pose them the most problems, depending on their actions so far.

In practical terms, the investigators' best course of action is to catch the train from Rajgir to Bhaktiyapur (potentially the same way they reached Rajgir in the first place (**Getting to Sitavana**, page 158)). From Bhaktiyapur, they can hop onto the main service down to Howrah Station, Calcutta, and then take the night train from Howrah to Siliguri.

From the railhead at Siliguri, the investigators can look forward to a bone-rattling—but very scenic—journey on a train of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, which takes anywhere between six and nine hours to crawl its way up the 55-mile (88 km) narrow-gauge track to Darjeeling. The main route from Darjeeling to Tibet then leads down into the Kingdom of Sikkim, to Kalimpong and Gangtok, before crossing either the Jelep La or Nathu La into the fertile Chumbi Valley in Tibet via Yatung (Yadong)—*La* means pass in Tibetan. The investigators are now following the Tea Horse Road, the ancient trade route from the tea plantations in Yunnan and Szechuan to Tibet and India.

Provided the investigators are traveling into Tibet with official permission, they can make use of the string of British government rest houses that run all the way from Sikkim to Lhasa. Known as *dak* bungalows, these government-managed caravansaries are free to use for government officials, and cost only a small amount for anyone else looking for a clean and comfortable night's sleep. Illegal entrants to the country would do well to avoid them, lest they be discovered by government agents.

Once in the Chumbi Valley, the trade route passes up through the little town of Phari. Situated at an elevation of 15,000 feet (4,500 m) in the shadow of the *dzong* (fortress) that guards the head of the valley; the town is notoriously filthy, with human and animal waste piled high in the fetid streets. Phari is not alone in being described as stinking and squalid—most Tibetan towns and villages mentioned by Western writers of the time suffer from equally damning reviews, although Phari is held to be the worst. The Keeper may wish to call for a **Hard CON** roll to see if the investigators can pass through without being overcome by the stench and the choking clouds of dried excrement dust kicked up by passersby.

From Phari, the trail leads up through the Red Idol Gorge (full of red-painted statues of the Buddha and covered in flapping prayer flags) and across lush fields to the town of Gyantse. Home to the famously gigantic Kumbum chorten (not to be mistaken for the Kumbum Monastery; **One**

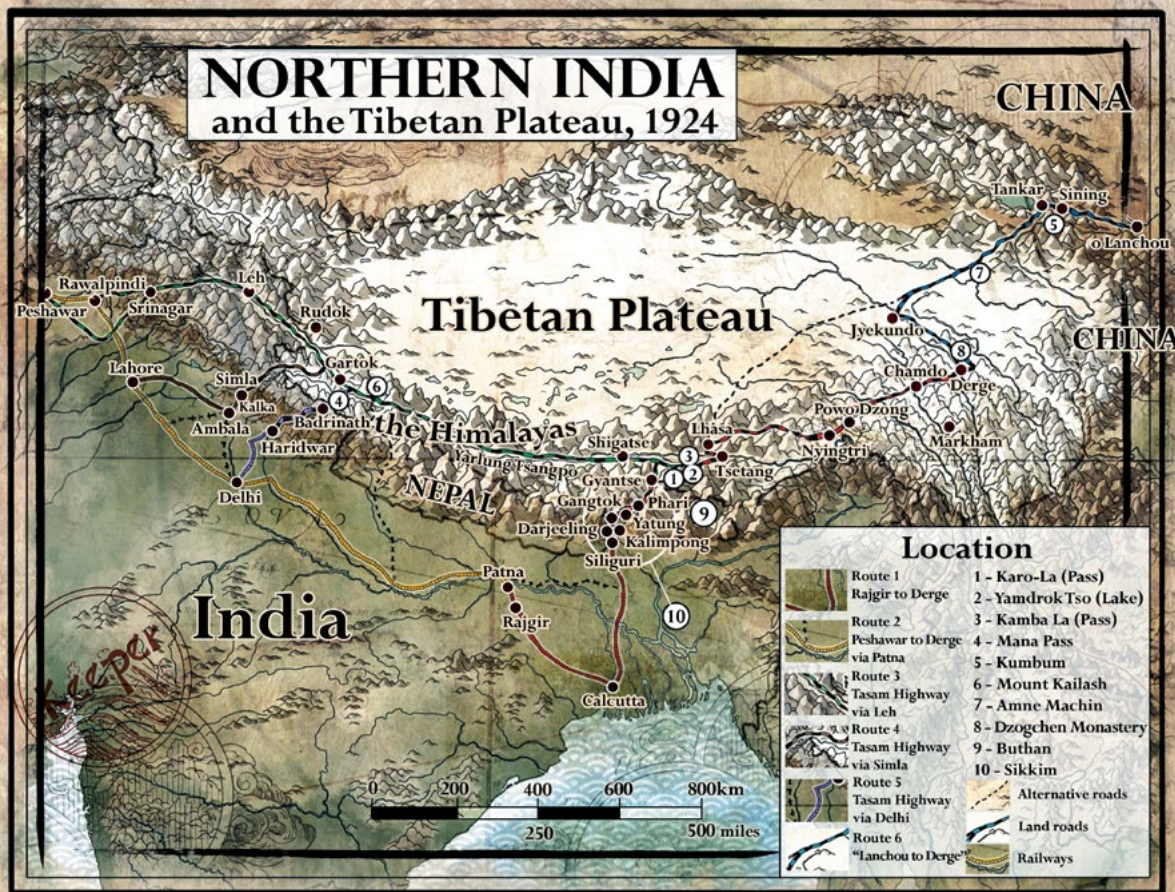
FEAST AND FAMINE - DERGE, TIBET -

Hundred Thousand Images of the Buddha, page 203), Gyantse is also where the Changlo (British Trade Agency) maintains a watch on all those traveling toward Lhasa.

Unless the investigators have business in Shigatse or at the Tashilhunpo Monastery, home of the Panchen Lama—although by 1924, he had fled to China after a falling out with the Dalai Lama over the country's modernization—then, the shortest way toward Lhasa is to take the Karo La to Yamdrok Tso, the Kamba La, and on to the Yarlung Tsangpo Valley—*Tso* means lake in Tibetan, and Yamdrok Tso is one of Tibet's four holy lakes. The Karo La is a haunted place, disliked by Tibetans, as it was the site of the slaughter of the Tibetan army by the Younghusband expedition in 1904. The bleached bones of the soldiers still dot the craggy landscape, and the Keeper may wish to stage a spooky nighttime encounter with either the ghosts of the dead or their skeletons, particularly if there are British investigators present (use the profiles presented in the *Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook*, pages 333–334, and **Chapter 4: Creatures and Monsters**, page 185, as required).

SIKKIM

The Kingdom of Sikkim has passed through a variety of hands over the years, including those of Tibet, China, British India, and its two next-door neighbors, Bhutan and Nepal. Previously ruled from the 17th century on by the Chogyals, a line of Buddhist priest-kings, by the 1920s the country is a British protectorate and an important staging post for travel into Tibet. Its capital, Gangtok, sits on a ridge at about 5,500 feet (1,600 m) above sea level. Flanked by two rivers, it is frequently shrouded in fog.



Northern India and the Tibetan Plateau map



THE TEA HORSE ROAD

During the T'ang Dynasty (7th–10th centuries CE), Tibetans developed an almost insatiable taste for tea, which they traded with the Chinese in return for their fine horses. As well as brick tea and horses, the route also carried salt and sugar, traveling all the way from China to India via Tibet—a far safer route, despite its many dangers and hardships, than attempting to go through the mountainous territory belonging to the various ferocious headhunting tribes in Burma (Myanmar) and northeast India. As with the Silk Road, there were multiple routes along the road's southern and northern forks, which came together at the town of Markham (Mangkam) in Tibet.

Tibetans drink between 50–60 cups of their butter tea (*bō cha*) a day. The tea is churned with yak butter, milk, salt, and hot water in a wooden tube until it is sufficiently brewed. Western visitors in the 19th and early 20th centuries recommended it be taken in small sips as it was something of acquired taste—it was somewhat uncharitably referred to as, “tasting like a beggar’s armpit” by one author, while another described it as having the consistency of sump oil. Nevertheless, it is an important method of combatting dehydration and gaining the energy needed to sustain prolonged activity at such high altitudes.



ON A WING AND A PRAYER

Mountain passes in Tibet (both on the border and within the country itself) are always festooned with prayer flags. The five colors (blue, white, red, green, and yellow) represent the five elements (space, air, fire, water, and earth, respectively). They are usually faded and tattered from the unceasing winds which, along with the *lungta* (wind horse) printed in the center of each flag, carry the prayers written on the flags to the heavens, purifying the air as they go.

Once in the Yarlung Tsangpo Valley, the investigators could head off toward Lhasa if they wish, although as already discussed, if they are in the country illegally this is not necessarily a very good idea. If the Keeper does wish to have the investigators visit Tibet’s capital, further details and adventure seeds can be found in Chaosium’s *Secrets of Tibet* sourcebook. It is 400 miles (640 km) from Darjeeling to Lhasa, which can be covered in 11 days if riding at speed. The reporter Henry Landon, who accompanied the Younghusband expedition, not only matched that timeframe, but managed to get all the way from Lhasa to London in 35 days in 1904!



VISIONS IN THE DARK: DERGE

As well as continuing to become more apocalyptic, the visions and dreams the investigators suffer from as they travel can be used to foreshadow their upcoming meeting with the Seven Sisters (**Date with a Dakini**, page 211), and may even hint at the bizarre ingredients of Tenzin Kalsang’s nectar *rilbu* (**A Bitter Pill**, page 210). Additionally, if any of the visions the investigators had in Peking or Tun-huang have now come to pass, they may still be witnessing them, but now the dreams are subtly altered each time—so that the investigator begins to doubt what was real and what exists purely in their imagination. Example visions include:

- The nighttime journey through the fruit and nut trees (**Chapter 1: Visions in the Dark**, page 40) continues, revealing the glowing light to be that of a huge fire, around which dance shadowy, naked figures that beckon and call to the investigator (linking to **The Gathering Circle**, page 212).
- The investigator sees themselves in a rocky, barren field, surrounded by partially dismembered bodies, human and animal alike. There is a large mallet in their hands, which they repeatedly swing at a human cadaver to break open its bones. A vulture delicately picks the marrow out of the shattered long bones, and then offers it to the investigator (linking to **A Bitter Pill**, page 210).
- The Russian graffiti in the soldier’s cave at Tun-huang still drips ominously down the walls (**Visions in the Dark: Sian and the Kansu Corridor**, page 58), but the letters have changed to read Они ждут вас. The investigator instinctively knows that the words mean “They are waiting for you.”

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To reach Derge, the investigators may continue to follow the Tea Horse Road and skirt around Lhasa on the way to Gyam-do (Kongpo Gyamda) and Chamdo (Qamdo), which sits a mere 100 miles (160 km) from the border with China in the 1920s, before branching off to the northeast and Derge itself. Alternately, they can avoid Lhasa altogether by continuing up the Yarlung Tsangpo Valley, and then following the road on to Chamdo and Derge as before.

All in all, it should take investigators between five and seven days to reach Gangtok from Rajgir, and another three and a half months to Derge if walking (and avoiding Lhasa), or a little under two months if riding. Unless, of course, they have access to the variant of Tenzin Kalsang's *khatvanga* and its Gate spells (**Footsore and Travel Wary**, page 89).

FROM PESHAWAR

If the investigators' sights turn toward Derge after they have retrieved the ritual bowls from Peshawar Museum (Chapter 3), then they have four potential paths into Tibet. One takes them by train to Calcutta and up to Darjeeling and the Tea Horse Road as previously described. While this is not ideal in terms of fulfilling a *kora*, as it potentially requires doubling back on themselves if the investigators have already visited Rajgir, it is the fastest way to reach the Derge Parkhang. Official permission to enter Tibet can be obtained in Darjeeling, thus avoiding the need to visit either Simla or New Delhi. On the other hand, sneaking into Tibet *without* official permission is far harder using this route.

The other three routes all eventually lead the investigators to Lhasa via the ancient trade route known as the Tasam Highway (or the Jong-lam). The well-used path takes its name from a *tasam*—a staging post used to change horses. The route via Leh offers the best chance of avoiding any unwanted entanglements with the British and gives the investigators an opportunity to pass by two of Tibet's most holy sites, although it, too, may involve some degree of backtracking, depending on the investigators' previous destinations. The route via Simla, on the other hand, is the only one that offers travel times close to that of taking the easier journey via Calcutta and Darjeeling, particularly if riding.

For the sake of time, it is recommended that the investigators take the first option via Calcutta and Darjeeling unless they have very good reasons for doing otherwise; however, if they have plenty of time on their hands, or are of a superstitious nature, they may wish to continue along the *kora* they have chosen.

The Route via Leh

As mentioned, if the investigators choose not to take the train to Calcutta, they have the option of journeying over the mountains toward Leh in Ladakh (**Chapter 3: Through the Mountains**, page 110). From Leh, they then join the Tasam Highway as it follows the Indus River Valley direct to the trading encampment of Gartok. Investigators should be warned, however, that Gartok is actually two places, at least according to British soldier and diplomat Cecil Rawling: one a summer trading encampment (Gar Yarsa), the other a more permanent winter base some 34 miles (54 km) away (Gar Gunsu). Depending on the time of year, either site may be practically deserted or overflowing with caravans and merchants.

After Gartok, the highway leads the investigators past the sacred Mount Kailash and Lake Manasarovar, before entering the valley of the Yarlung Tsangpo River, which it follows practically all the way to Lhasa. Much of the route lies above 15,000 feet (4,500 m) and it can be an arduous trek, especially during certain times of the year.

Once in the Yarlung Tsangpo Valley, the investigators can choose to either visit or skirt Lhasa (as described in the preceding section) before heading on to Derge. Traveling from Peshawar to Derge via Leh (avoiding Lhasa) should take around seven months if walking, and about half that if riding.



THE PRECIOUS JEWEL OF THE SNOWS

To the outside world, it is known as Mount Kailash, one of the most sacred mountains in Tibet and the focus of many pilgrimages by members of the four faiths that venerate it: Buddhism, Hinduism, Bön, and Jainism. It is the home of gods and goddesses (for Tibetan Buddhists, Demchok and his consort Dorje Phagmo, the Thunderbolt Sow and queen of all the dakinis; for Hindus, Lord Shiva and Parvati), the site of an epic battle between the Bön and Buddhist faiths (wherein Bön lost and gave way to Buddhism as Tibet's main religion), and a site where holy men can attain enlightenment. It is also regarded as a representation of the Axis Mundi, Mount Meru, the center of the known world.

The Route via Simla

If the investigators plan to enter Tibet legally with official permits from the British, then, besides heading for Darjeeling, they also have the option of visiting the hill station at Simla—providing it is summer, of course. Otherwise, they should head to New Delhi (see following). Simla can be reached by train from Peshawar via Lahore on the New Delhi line, changing at Ambala to reach the railhead at Kalka before transferring onto the Kalka-Simla Railway, which, if all goes well, takes around six hours to reach its terminus. Alternatively, they could drive or ride along the Grand Trunk Road to Ambala instead (for more information, see **Chapter 3: The River of Life**, page 140).

Provided they manage to acquire the necessary permits, the investigators can then travel up the Chini (Kinnaur) Valley to the Shipki La, crossing over into Tibet on what was known as the Old Hindustan-Tibet Route, before entering the Yarlung Tsangpo Valley and picking up the Tasam Highway. Even if their meetings with the Indian authorities go badly, the investigators could, of course, just sneak over the high mountain pass and hope they don't encounter any British or Tibetan border patrols along the way.

It should take only a day or two to reach Simla from Peshawar by train. After that, it takes approximately five and half months to walk from Simla to Derge, or a little under three months if riding.

SELF-IMPROVEMENT: ON THE ROAD TO DERGE

No matter which path they choose, it's going to take the investigators a while to reach their destination, even if they're not traveling with Tenzin Kalsang but are merely on their way to meet him. As a result, there is another golden opportunity here to improve their knowledge and skills.

Depending on their chosen route, skills that could be learned or improved include: Ride, all relevant Language skills, Navigate, Survival (Desert, Mountain), Lore (Buddhism), Natural World, Swimming (there are many lakes along the way), and Fighting (Brawl) if traveling with a Mongolian caravan.

The Route via Delhi

Delhi can be reached from Peshawar by either the train or the Grand Trunk Road. From Delhi, with or without permits, the investigators could join one of the many pilgrim parties heading up to the Hindu shrine to Lord Vishnu at Badrinath, although the shrine is often cut off due to bad weather in the winter. The path, when accessible, travels from Delhi up through Haridwar on the edge of the plains, and then along the Alaknanda River valley into the mountains. From Badrinath, the route continues over the Mana Pass into the former Kingdom of Guge along the pilgrim trail to Mount Kailash, where the investigators can join the Tasam Highway. There are also many other passes in these mountains that experienced local guides could lead the investigators through—ones under less official scrutiny.

To reach Delhi by train from Peshawar should only take a day or so. On foot from Delhi, it takes approximately another six months to reach Derge, or a little under three months if riding all the way.

FROM CHINA

The most likely reason for the investigators to approach Derge from China is that they have decided to visit the Parkhang before any other destination (i.e. after **Chapter 2**). If this is the case, then the most straightforward way to Derge is to retrace their steps back down the Kansu Corridor from Tun-huang to Lanchou (Lanzhou), and then head west to the walled city of Sining (Xining). From Sining, the trade route heads down through the town of Tankar (Huangyuan), the last town inside China before the border with Tibet. If the investigators have brought carts with them from Tun-huang, they will have to be stored or abandoned in either Lanchou or Sining, as they cannot traverse the numerous mountain passes that lie ahead.

While a Chinese passport is technically required for entry into Tibet from this direction, unless the investigators fancy returning to Peking to obtain one, they may wish to ignore this particular restriction. Provided they have done nothing to upset the local *ambans* in Lanchou or Sining, then it is easy enough for them to evade notice by the authorities in the bustling frontier town of Tankar.

From Tankar, the main route runs down across the plains and river valleys of Amdo and Kham to Jyekundo (Gyegu) in sight of the magnificent and holy mountain of Amne Machin. According to Brigadier General George Pereira, who walked the 518 miles (834 km) between Tankar and Jyekundo in 43 days, this part of the route was plagued by fearsome Ngolok bandits, so safety in numbers amid one of the gigantic Mongolian merchant caravans (often accompanied by more than 2,000 yaks) that pass this way would be the most

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sensible option for travel on what is, otherwise, one of the easiest routes into Tibet. From Jyekundo, the investigators head off southeast to Derge and the printing house, taking them past the Rudam Valley, home to Dzogchen Monastery, which they may have the opportunity to visit as part of their ongoing quest to retrieve a copy of the ritual scroll (*A Change of Scenery*, page 208).

In total, it should take around four and half months to walk from Tun-huang to Derge, or two months to ride the distance.

FROM THE TAKLAMAKAN DESERT

The investigators have the option of getting into Tibet from the Tarim Basin; this was the route taken by Sven Hedin and Colonel Nikolai Prejevalsky of the Imperial Russian Army before him. This path takes them from Cherchen on the Southern Silk Road over the Kun Lun or Altyn Tagh Mountains and onto the Chang Tang. This is an immensely difficult and dangerous route no matter what time of year it is attempted, due to the lack of food and water in the vast wilderness that covers Tibet's far north, and the scarcity of static communities that could help the investigators if they get into difficulty.

Any path across the Chang Tang could be taken, including the way to Lhasa, but the investigators would be best served by heading for either Jyekundo or Chamdo, and then following one of the routes already described to Derge. If they do, it should take them around six months to complete the trip on foot—providing the weather and the marauding bandits of the Chang Tang do not slow them down too much—or a little under three months on horseback.



Kumbum Jampaling

ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND IMAGES OF THE BUDDHA

Famed for its butter sculptures and applied embroideries, Kumbum Jampaling—better known as Kumbum Monastery (the literal meaning of Kumbum is 100,000 images)—lies around 15 miles (25 km) to the southwest of Sining. The monastery is built around a sacred white sandalwood tree that sprang from the soil when drops of blood from Tsongkhapa's umbilical cord splashed upon the ground after his birth (Tsongkhapa was a famous teacher of Tibetan Buddhism). The tree was covered with 100,000 leaves, which it never shed, each of which carried an image of the Buddha Sinhanada. The tree's trunk was also covered with marks depicting the Buddhist seed syllables (for example, Om) and important religious implements. Sadly, the original tree died at some point in the mid-20th century—possibly during the late 1930s/early 1940s—and its remains were enclosed within a stupa. The temple is one of the most important Gelugpa shrines, as well as a pilgrimage destination for practitioners of Vajrayana.

WITH CURIOUS EYES 4: THE HOMECOMING

Regardless of the route taken, as soon as Tenzin Kalsang enters Tibet, he pauses to perform a traditional prostration, first raising his arms above his head and clasping his hands together as if in prayer. He then kneels and slides forward to lie flat on his face with his arms outstretched and his palms to the ground. When he stands, his face is warmed by a serene smile. If the site is a mountain pass, the *lama* cries out his traditional greeting to the gods, "Lha gyalo! De tamche pham!" ("The gods win! The demons are defeated!") before adding a stone to one of the numerous *labtse* (cairns) that mark the pass. "It is good to be home again after all this time," he says quietly, with tears in his eyes.

START: THE BOOK SANCTUARY

Like many towns in Tibet, Derge is a cluster of small houses spread up the hillsides of the valley in which it resides. Many of the wooden buildings (which are unusual in Tibet) are painted red and decorated with blue, gold, and white, particularly those structures associated with the monastery. The Parkhang itself is not difficult to locate, and anyone the investigators meet can direct them to the rectangular three-story building where Tenzin Kalsang believes they will find the scroll they need.

Once through the entrance portico of the printing house, the investigators find themselves in a small, shadowy vestibule, beyond which are rows upon rows of wooden shelves, all filled to capacity with narrow wooden printing blocks. Light streams into the corridors formed by the shelves, emanating from further back in the building, and the outlines of several people bent over their work can be glimpsed up ahead. While the building is not silent, there are no voices to be heard, only the sounds of quiet industry: printing, carving, washing, and the rustle of moving paper.

Almost as soon as they enter, the investigators are greeted by a thin, shaven-headed monk dressed in red robes. He looks at Tenzin Kalsang curiously before bowing to him three times, and then turns to the investigators and bows to them once. “Welcome to our scripture printing house,” he says in Tibetan. “I am Yonten Phuntsok, overseer of this revered establishment. How may I be of service to such auspicious visitors?” Those who speak Tibetan can translate for Phuntsok; otherwise, Tenzin Kalsang relays the greeting and translates any comments the investigators make regarding the reason for their visit. Phuntsok is also fluent in Chinese and, if no one in the party speaks Tibetan, he immediately switches to that instead.

If the investigators do not describe the scroll they are looking for, Tenzin Kalsang informs Phuntsok that he has come to this marvelous repository of Buddhist wisdom in search of the Ritual for the Closing of the Ways, his own copy having been stolen by thieves during his meditation retreat. He is noticeably cagey regarding how long he has been in said retreat and exactly what he needs the scroll for, politely but firmly brushing off Phuntsok’s enquiries with a smile, and replying that the scroll is needed to complete a vow he made as a young priest.

Tenzin Kalsang goes on to explain that he has come to Derge for the replacement because he has heard that this house not only has over 200,000 printing blocks, covering everything from traditional medicine to the holiest of scriptures from all of Tibet’s Buddhist schools, but also that

their prints are of the finest quality, known to contain virtually no errors. Anyone who understands the conversation and is watching Yonten Phuntsok during this exchange notices that the monk’s frame swells with pride at the praise the *lama* heaps on the Parkhang’s work; otherwise, a successful **Psychology** roll notices the change in the monk’s demeanor.

While he thinks it unlikely that they have a ready-printed copy of the scroll to hand, Phuntsok is almost certain that they will have the necessary printing blocks in their archive, allowing them to produce a new one, although he will have to check the catalogue to be certain. While he does so, he invites the *lama* and the investigators to enjoy a cup of butter tea in the courtyard, leading them through the shelves, past the printers (all civilian craftsmen, not monks), and into the interior courtyard. On the upper levels, sheaves of printed paper hang from every available joist, drying in the breeze.

Phuntsok sends an apprentice to fetch the tea and, as soon as the refreshments arrive, he disappears into the building beyond the courtyard where the library volumes—and yet more print blocks—are stored. Depending on how much butter tea the investigators have already drunk, the Keeper may wish to have them make a **CON** roll to see if they can stomach the oily liquid without gagging. Tenzin Kalsang has no such trouble, downing the salty beverage quickly and smacking his lips in satisfaction.

The investigators may amuse themselves by watching the printers at work while they wait for Phuntsok’s return. The men sit in pairs in a well-lit verandah that opens onto the courtyard. One holds a printing block at an angle for his partner and inks it, while the other lays down a fine sheet of paper taken from a table beside him, and then presses it with an ingenious wooden roller to copy the woodblock. The printed page is then laid on a table to his other side, alongside all the other previously-produced copies of that page. At regular intervals, an apprentice comes along and takes armfuls of the pages out into the courtyard, scampering up steps and ladders to the highest floors to spread them out to dry.


If they decide to explore a little further from the courtyard, the investigators discover a room on the ground floor where apprentices clean the print blocks ready for storage, as well as a room where two men sit with huge wooden tubs between their legs, pounding and mixing the ink with massive wooden staves. Another room on the ground floor is home to the printing house’s papermakers. Rooms on the higher floors are home to the woodblock carvers, as well as more storage shelves for print blocks and completed manuscripts.

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IN ABSENTIA 3

If the investigators are traveling separately from Tenzin Kalsang, then the *lama* has already visited Derge and collected the scroll he needs while they were busy in Peshawar and Sitavana. He has also crafted the *rilbus* (sacred pills) needed for the gate-closing ritual. The investigators are assumed to join him at a prearranged location (for example, at Chamdo) before journeying on with him to Pemakö. The encounter with the Seven Sisters (**Date with a Dakini**, page 211) should now take place in the first suitable location once everyone is reunited.



A PROFITABLE EXCHANGE

After perhaps half an hour or so, a flustered-looking Yonten Phuntsok returns to the courtyard. He apologizes for the delay, claiming that a mistake in the library's catalogue sent him on a wild goose chase for a copy of the ritual Tenzin Kalsang requested—while they undoubtedly did have it at some point, the copy appears to have been misfiled and, so far, he has been unable to track it down. Thankfully, however, they do indeed have the nine print blocks it requires, and although it has been some time since they were last used, they are still in good condition and should not need recarving; the printers should be able to produce a new copy within a week or so.


If the investigators express surprise at the monk's time estimate, Tenzin Kalsang explains that, while the printing of the scroll will undoubtedly be quick, preparing the special paper it requires take much longer. First, it must be stained black with charcoal, and then the edges of the pages dyed red to represent its Nyingmapa lineage. After that, the ink makers must make a very special batch of white ink from the ground bones of a tantric master which, Yonten Phuntsok assures them, the printing house has on hand. Everything must be done according to a strict protocol and given time to dry thoroughly in between each step. On top of that, the finished pages must then be backed onto a length of silk for strength, and the woodcarvers need to prepare a box for the finished scroll to protect it.

Keeper note: should the investigators attempt to persuade Phuntsok to make the scroll faster, without the necessary steps outlined, both he and Tenzin Kalsang smile and shake



TIBETAN BOOKS AND SCROLLS


Unlike traditional Indian manuscripts, which are written or printed on palm leaves, Tibetan books consist of thin sheets of paper, which produce larger pages. These pages are never bound, but stored pressed flat between carved wooden covers (*pechas*) and wrapped in cloth (often fine silk). Scrolls, on the other hand, are stored rolled in boxes or jars.



PAPER

During this period, some paper in Tibet is imported from China, but the Tibetans also make their own from the pulped inner bark of the paper tree. At Derge, the craftsmen use a different material, taking the root of a white flower known as rama richot instead. The resulting paper contains the poisons found naturally in the root, meaning that manuscripts printed on it are highly resistant to the depredations of insects and beetles.

Investigators with more than 20% in **Biology (Botany)** or **Natural World** can identify the root being used by Derge's papermakers. Otherwise, the papermakers are happy to tell the investigators what materials they use, but none will speak for any longer than is absolutely necessary, as they do not like to disturb the peace and quiet of the Parkhang.



their heads. Such a thing cannot be done. The procedure must be followed to the letter; there can be no other way.

"Now, there is the matter of payment," Phuntsok adds, once the *lama* has finished speaking. Through a translator (Tenzin Kalsang or an investigator, if necessary), the monk explains that foreign money is not acceptable as they have no use for it here; he also seems unwilling to accept tangka coins or tam notes. Instead, he informs the investigators that the Abbot of Gonchen Monastery has a gift to send to the Abbot of Dzogchen Monastery in the Rudam Valley, approximately 40 miles (64 km) to the northeast. The Parkhang would be most happy to print and finish the investigators' ritual scroll in

return for their delivering the gift, which was only completed yesterday. The investigators' arrival could not have come at a better time—truly, these are auspicious circumstances!

If the investigators are happy to accept the deal, Phuntsok goes off to make the necessary arrangements for them to reach Dzogchen Monastery, including fresh ponies to ride and a small number of mules to carry supplies, which the monastery also provides. One of the junior monks from Gonchen will accompany the investigators to show them the way (use the **Novice Monk** profile provided in **Appendix A**, page 332).

While he is keen for the investigators to set about their task as quickly as possible, Phuntsok is a gracious enough host to arrange for board and lodging in the adjacent monastery if the investigators wish to rest for the night before setting out again. If they are openly carrying weapons, the monk requests that they hand them over for safekeeping until they leave; no Tibetan ever enters a monastery bearing arms. If the investigators refuse to let go of their weapons, Phuntsok instead arranges lodgings for them in town.

If the investigators ask Tenzin Kalsang's advice regarding whether or not they should accept Phuntsok's terms, he asks to see the printing blocks. Phuntsok leads the *lama* and any investigators who wish to follow into the stacks on the uppermost floor of the building. In a poorly lit corner where

the blocks are stored, the monk pulls out each of the nine carvings in turn. Tenzin Kalsang examines them, thanks the monk, and announces that a visit to the Rudam Valley will give him the opportunity to acquire several other ingredients he needs to complete the ritual. They should, indeed, agree to deliver the gift on the abbot's behalf.

If any of the investigators wish to examine the blocks for themselves, they may do so. Phuntsok hovers protectively over them, anxious that no harm comes to his precious carvings. Those with above base in a relevant Art/Craft skill (such as Woodcarving, Printing, or Sculpture) or Appraise can see how fine the craftsmanship is.

Understanding the Print Blocks

Two people may collaborate when attempting to translate and understand the blocks. A successful **Language (Tibetan)** roll is required to read anything of the text; a penalty die applies to the roll as the print block is carved in mirror image and is, therefore, harder to read. A successful **Occult** or **Lore (Buddhism)** roll (also subject to a penalty die) is needed to make any sense of what is written, as the language used is vague and laden with analogies. Alternatively, one person may attempt a combined **Language (Tibetan)** and **Occult** or **Lore (Buddhism)** roll, each of which must be successful



The print block library

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to understand anything of the ritual; only one penalty die should be applied to a combined roll of this type. If anyone does manage to understand a portion of the ritual, it appears to be for a symbolic sacrifice, combining elements of various tantric liberation and self-awareness rites (**Handout: Feast 1**).

Questioning Tenzin Kalsang about the ritual brings a knowing smile, and he promises to explain it fully when the time is right, as part of the initiation they must undergo before they carry out the ceremony. For the moment, they must concentrate on completing their present duty, rather than worrying about what is still to come. A successful **Lore (Buddhism)** or Hard **Occult** roll reveals that, in tantric practice, before anyone can carry out a given ritual, they must be initiated into its mysteries by a qualified teacher in a three-fold rite of empowerment, transmission, and explanation of the ritual concerned.

Regardless of whether or not the investigators accept their roles as couriers immediately, the *lama* still asks to see the

printing blocks before they leave so that he can check what ingredients he should be on the lookout for as they travel through the mountains around Derge. Even if they refuse to visit Dzogchen Monastery, Tenzin Kalsang still takes the time to thoroughly examine the print blocks for the recipes he needs.

Provided the investigators do decide to help Yonten Phuntsok, the scenario continues with **A Change of Scenery** (following) and then **Date with a Dakini**, page 211.

If the investigators don't fancy trekking 40 miles (64 km) out of their way in return for the scroll, Phuntsok remains polite, but his disappointment is obvious. It is now up to the investigators to haggle with the monk to come to a suitable arrangement regarding payment for the scroll. Keepers may wish to boil any negotiations down to a single dice roll, subject to a penalty die to reflect Phuntsok's frustration over his failure to secure couriers for his monastery's valuable gift to Dzogchen Monastery; the scenario now continues instead with **A Bitter Pill** (page 210), followed by **Date with a Dakini**, page 211.

Handout: Feast 1

There are many so-called "liberation" rites in tantric Tibetan Buddhism. One of the most famous (or infamous) is Chöd, the "cutting practice," a type of mystery play performed in a charnel ground or other suitably gruesome or terrifying spot, such as a haunted crossroads. Here, the lone practitioner visualizes themselves being beheaded by a wrathful goddess, then devoured by the demons they have summoned with a kangling and a specific type of damaru used only in liberation rites. Also known as "the red meal," the practitioner offers up his body as a feast in return for spiritual power or to fulfill karmic debts. Those not sufficiently mentally prepared have been known to drive themselves insane while trying to complete the ritual; it should not be carried out lightly.

Another form of liberation rite potentially involves human sacrifice, although whether or not such sacrifices were true historical occurrences is a hotly debated topic among scholars. The victim, predominantly male, is usually guilty of one of the five major crimes against Buddhism (including murder or fomenting trouble within the faith). The ritual is intended to ensure that the victim is reborn in a good incarnation (in one example, found in the documents Aurel Stein brought back from Tun-huang, the rebirth is in the realm of the gods) rather than being condemned to numerous journeys through the Narakas (hells) to pay off their karmic misdeeds.



A CHANGE OF SCENERY

Provided the investigators agree to take the abbot's gift to Dzogchen Monastery, Yonten Phuntsok arrives shortly before they are due to leave, carrying a carved wooden box approximately 2 feet (60 cm) long. He opens it to reveal a roll of blue brocaded silk attached to two wooden rods. He asks one of the investigators to remove the fabric bundle and unroll it. Inside the roll is a piece of rainbow silk, behind which is hidden a highly detailed, multi-colored printed *thangka*.

"Our very special gift to the Dzogchen Rinpoche," explains the monk. *"See, here, in the center, is Guru Pema Rigdzin, founder of the monastery. Around him are the great teachers of whom he is an emanation. This one is Guru Rinpoche—although you may know him better as Padmasambhava. This one is the arrow shooter, Saraha, one of the founders of Vajrayana. And, finally, we have the Great Pandita, Vimalamitra, who passed on his wisdom to Guru Rinpoche. The scenery is of the monastery's own sacred valley and displays the various plants and creatures found in the area. We are very proud of this piece—the print blocks are exceedingly fine—and we hope that the abbot will find it a pleasing addition to his collection."*

Yonten Phuntsok takes the *thangka*, rerolls it, and places it back in its traveling case. *"Please deliver this to Kunchen Chodak, Dzogchen Monastery's korpa*, so that he may add it to their inventory and present it to the abbot on the next holy day. And please, take good care of it."* With that, he hands the box to the investigators and makes his goodbyes.

**Korpa* (treasurer).

THANGKAS

Although usually thought of as intricate religious paintings, *thangkas* can also be embroidered (stitched or applied) or printed. The image can be of a particular deity, *mandala*, or landscape—or even a medical diagram—meaning the *thangka* can be used as a focus for personal meditation practice or as a teaching aid. When not in use, the *thangka* is kept rolled. Due to its small size (usually 1–2 feet/30–60 cm in height and slightly narrower than they are tall), the *thangka* is also highly portable, although some gigantic "monastery festival" *thangkas* do exist.

RUDAM

One of the Nyingmapa sect's six mother houses, Dzogchen Monastery (or, to give it its full name, Dzogchen Rudam Orgyen Samten Chöling), was founded in the late 17th century by Pema Rigdzin, the first Dzogchen Rinpoche. It sits on one side of the sacred Rudam Valley, to the northeast of Derge. The valley is surrounded on all sides by impressive mountains, and a spring high in the hills feeds the monastery's river. Legend has it that Pema Rigdzin was sent to Kham by the Great Fifth on a quest to find a suitable site to build a monastery devoted to Dzogchen, and was guided to this exact spot by a crow that stole his tea bowl as he rested in the next valley over.

The most direct route to the monastery—and the one followed by their young monk guide—takes the investigators along the main river valley above Derge before branching off into the smaller valleys leading over the mountains to the monastery's southwest. The final climb is a hard one, and all ponies and mules must be carefully led over the pass.

Throughout the journey, which should take 3–4 days, Tenzin Kalsang frequently wanders off to scour the hills for ritual components. He is happy for the investigators to accompany him, particularly if they have above base skill in either the Natural World or Science (Botany) skill. What leaves, flowers, and seeds he does find are carefully stored in his satchel, and the *lama* is happy to chat about their traditional uses and symbolism. Virtually all of the specimens are unknown to Western science.

The monastery's buildings are very similar to those in Derge: red-painted wood-and-mud-brick boxes of varying size spread across the hillside, with larger and more ornate temples dotting the space between. Soon after entering the valley, the investigators are greeted by a young *ani* (nun), who has come down from the monastery to meet them. She welcomes them to the holy canyon and asks after their business. Provided they explain their purpose, the *ani* quickly shows them to the monastery's visitors' quarters and, as at Derge, asks them to surrender any obvious weapons. Once that has been dealt with, she hurries off to inform Kunchen Chodak that guests have arrived. Butter tea and *tsampa* (dough balls made with roasted barley flour, yak butter, and tea) are brought to the investigators and their *lama* to refresh them after their arduous trip. If they haven't eaten *tsampa* before now, the investigators would do well to learn from Tenzin Kalsang, who dips each dough ball into his butter tea to moisten it before biting off a mouthful.

It isn't long before the young nun returns to escort them to Kunchen Chodak's office, one of a series of rooms within one of the monastery's larger buildings. A low desk is half-hidden under papers and scrolls, some of which are covered in writing, others with only a few annotations. Shelves

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full of scrolls, all carefully kept in clay pots, line the office walls. Kunchen Chodak is an unremarkable-looking monk in his late 50s. He dismisses their guide, and greets Tenzin Kalsang by bowing to him three times and then bows once to the investigators. In a clear, commanding voice, he says (in Tibetan or Chinese, depending on the investigators' language skills), "*The girl tells me you have a gift from the Abbot of Derge for the Dzogchen Rinpoche. May I see it?*"

Kunchen Chodak waits patiently for the investigators to hand over the traveling case containing the *thangka*. He clears a space on his desk and sets down the box, opening it reverently. He lifts out the *thangka* and unrolls it with its back toward the investigators (so they cannot see the print it contains). It is clear from his frown and surprised exclamation that all is not well. If the investigators ask him what is wrong, he replies, "*I thought this was supposed to be a print of Dzogchen Pema Rigdzin and his masters, sitting here in our valley?*"

If the investigators insist that is indeed what it is, the bemused monk turns the *thangka* toward them. Instead of the image Yonten Phuntsok showed them in Derge, the print now displays Tenzin Kalsang in the *yab-yum* (sexual union) position with a red-skinned woman (Dorje Phagmo; a successful **Lore (Buddhism)** or **Occult** roll to identify), sitting on a lotus flower in the center of a lake in a heart-shaped valley ringed by mountains and waterfalls. Tiny figures of white apes can be seen clambering the slopes. Surrounding the mountains are representations of the investigators, each framed by a circular rainbow.

Keeper note: a **Sanity** roll (0/1 loss) may be called for at this point, either due to the unexpected change in image or as a result of its sexually explicit nature (which may be challenging for any investigators of a more prudish or sheltered nature).

Tenzin Kalsang expresses his surprise and then delight, taking the scroll's transformation as a good omen. Unless the investigators can prevent him, he tells Kunchen Chodak all about their mission to the Valley of the White Ape in Pemakö to perform a special ritual, although he stops short of saying what that ritual is meant to do. Chodak nods sagely, and replies, "*Ab, your visit to us is a most auspicious one, for clearly there must be nagas or dakinis at work for such a wonderful treasure to have been revealed to us through you. This is indeed a most precious gift for our abbot. Please relay our great thanks to the Abbot of Derge for his generosity in sending you to us.*"

Those who succeeds with a Hard **Psychology** roll sense that Chodak is, in reality, unsurprised by both the *thangka's* transformation and the *lama's* story. If questioned on the matter, he grudgingly admits that he was expecting them, having dreamt of their arrival. This is the truth—the Triumvirate did

indeed send dreams to let him know the investigators were on their way—not that he will admit that to them.

The investigators are treated as honored guests for the rest of their stay at Dzogchen, and many of the monks approach Tenzin Kalsang for his blessing. The *lama* also spends some time debating with the senior monks on esoteric and theological issues. The investigators are welcome to attend these discussions, but unless they have over 50% in both Language (Tibetan) and Lore (Buddhism), the conversations are impenetrable.

A group of Chinese Buddhist monks are currently visiting the monastery, and they are more than happy to chat with the investigators and, as experts in their field, are able to answer any questions the investigators might have regarding their faith and their own journeys (refer to the **Religious Pilgrim** from **Appendix A**, page 334, as required). These monks can converse in hesitant but comprehensible English if none of the investigators speak sufficient Chinese. If the investigators do not travel to Dzogchen Monastery, then the Chinese monks visit the monastery in Derge instead, and act in the same capacity.

Before they leave, Tenzin Kalsang speaks with the monastery's tantric masters and purchases from them the nectar *rilbus*, (sacred pills), which the monastery, as the most revered seat of Nyingmapa esoteric practice and instruction, keeps readily available.

As on their journey from Derge, the monastery provides fresh animals and supplies for the investigators' return trip, which—unless the Keeper wishes to include a specific encounter—passes smoothly and without incident.

Keeper note: see **A Bitter Pill** (following) for more information about the nectar *rilbus*.

ALL CHANGE

Don't forget that agents of the Tokabhaya are shadowing the investigators' footsteps wherever they go. Unless the investigators left the *thangka* case completely unattended at any point during their journey—giving the Tokabhaya an opportunity to physically switch out the original print for this one (a disappointingly mundane solution)—the change in appearance can be attributed to Kunchen Chodak casting the Mask of Reason illusion spell (**Appendix B**, page 343) on the *thangka*; an illusion that gradually fades to reveal the true print underneath after the investigators leave the monastery.

A BITTER PILL

If the investigators rejected Yonten Phuntsok's deal and successfully made their own arrangements to pay for the ritual scroll, they now have a week to cool their heels (while the Parkhang's craftsmen carry out their commission)—unless, of course, they are off fulfilling their own arrangement with the printing house.

The Keeper may wish to skip over the intervening time. Alternatively, the investigators could accompany Tenzin Kalsang as he searches the river valleys around the town for a variety of plants, or shops in the local market for herbs and spices (such as mustard seeds, cardamom, nutmeg, saffron, and cloves). Anything the *lama* buys is paid for with performances of *mos* (divinations) for the stall holders. Each time, he reaches into his satchel and draws out three dice: two white, one black. He rolls these on the ground and studies them intently while muttering to himself, before relaying what he's seen to the stall holder. All of the traders seem impressed with his predictions; some even slip additional treats his way in thanks.

Tenzin Kalsang also spends some time away from the investigators in the monastery, coming back only to share meals with them. If asked what he is doing, he explains that he is preparing the nectar *rilbus*—special pills they need for the ritual. A successful **First Aid** or **Medicine** roll notices that, one evening, the *lama* looks particularly pale and exhausted. If asked why, he explains that it has been a long and tiring day, and that he has gathered four of the five nectars needed for the *rilbus*: human feces, semen, blood, and urine from himself, leaving only one—marrow—to collect, and for that he needs to look further afield.

If the investigators become curious and decide to follow the *lama* without his knowing, the next day he leads them to a Hui butcher's stall, where he purchases a variety of meats—little more than scraps, but meat nevertheless. Prior to this point, the investigators have never knowingly seen him consume animal flesh. In payment, as before, he performs a divination for the butcher. Unless the investigators deliberately make themselves obvious, there is no need to ask for a group **Stealth** roll while they observe this scene; Tenzin Kalsang is sufficiently focused on his task to be oblivious to their presence. A successful **Language (Tibetan)** roll identifies the meats the *lama* asks for as yak, horse, and dog.

Either on this occasion or another, Tenzin Kalsang makes his way to the town's *dürtro* (sky burial site), where he chats with the *ragyapas* (the bone breakers who deal with the corpses of the dead) who are preparing a body for disposal. After around ten minutes of conversation, one of the *ragyapas* takes his knife, slices off a piece of flesh from the dismembered corpse and hands it to the *lama*, who places it in his satchel. The *ragyapa* then uses his knife to skillfully remove one of the corpse's thigh

bones, which he smashes with a heavy mallet. He carefully selects part of it and shows it to the *lama*, who nods and adds it to his satchel. Tenzin Kalsang then bows and leaves.

Keeper note: if the investigators wish to hear the conversation with the *ragyapa*, a group **Stealth** roll is required if they don't want to be noticed; otherwise, they can watch from a safe distance. If they manage to get close enough to hear what's being said, a successful **Language (Tibetan)** roll hears that Tenzin Kalsang needs the human flesh and bone marrow as ingredients for a rite he must perform. Should the investigators fail the group **Stealth** roll, the *lama* quickly concludes his business with the *ragyapa* before coming over to greet them.

If, after seeing and/or hearing the interaction with the *ragyapa*, the investigators decide to challenge the *lama* on his activities, he invites them to the small, one-room building the monastery's abbot has designated as his workroom. There, on the floor, is chalked out a simple square *mandala*, with a path leading to its center. In the middle of the *mandala* is a large, flat stone, upon which rest a mortar and pestle and bowls containing the herbs and spices Tenzin Kalsang bought in the market; another bowl contains a noisome brown goop (the four nectars). The *lama* places the meats into an empty bowl, and then uses a thin stick to pry the marrow out of the leg bone the *ragyapa* gave him, before adding it to the foul-smelling bowl. A tiny *torma* (effigy) of an elephant, apparently made from flour and butter, painted in garish colors and adorned with gold leaf, sits among the bowls, along with a pot of honey and another of curds. There also appears to be a small branch from a white sandalwood tree—a successful **Lore (Buddhism)**, **Natural World**, or **Science (Botany)** roll to identify—among the ephemera, although its usually pleasant aroma is somewhat overpowered by the odors wafting from the bowl of nectars.

TORMAS

Made as ritual offerings and quite possibly as a substitute for animal sacrifice, *torma* sculptures are, at their simplest, made from yak butter, *tsampa* flour, and water. Other ingredients, such as the three white substances (milks, curds, and ghee), the three sweet substances (sugar, molasses, and honey), and even meat (if the offering is for a wrathful deity) can be added, depending on who and what the *torma* is for.

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If anyone successfully managed to translate any part of the print blocks they saw at the Parkhang (**A Profitable Exchange**, page 205), they recognize that the ingredients arranged on the stone were all listed for use in the ritual. If not, Tenzin Kalsang explains that all of the ingredients they see are specified in the printing blocks; each is vitally important to the rite they must perform if they are to close the Gates of Agartha.

Permit the investigators a **Lore (Buddhism)** or **Occult** roll to realize the tantric significance of each of the ingredients. If successful, they know that the five nectars represent the five senses, each of which must be alert to every sensation during the ritual. The five meats (yak, human, dog, horse, and “elephant”—either real elephant meat or a substitute *torma*)—represent the five elements, as well as the five poisons, which must be driven out if the ritual is to succeed. The herbs, spices, honey, and curds are used to make the pills more palatable, but also because they each have their own symbolic role to play.

If they fail the roll, Tenzin Kalsang explains the reason for the ingredients’ presence, bemoaning the lack of actual elephant meat but insistent that the symbolic offering (the effigy) should be enough, as he managed to obtain some hair from one of the monastery’s elephant skins. There are still other items he must gather for the ritual, but his work is proceeding apace, and he should have the necessary ingredients mixed and compounded into tablet-form before the scroll is finished.

Of course, if the characters don’t discover what their *lama* is creating, either because they choose not to investigate while they are at Derge or because he obtains the nectar *rilbus* ready-made from Dzogchen Monastery (**A Change of Scenery**, page 208), then they remain blissfully unaware of the contents of the pill Tenzin Kalsang asks each of them to take before the Gate-closing ritual begins (**Chapter 6**).

A SPOONFUL OF SUGAR

If the knowledge of what’s in Tenzin Kalsang’s nectar *rilbus* is likely to be a game breaker for either the players or their investigators, we recommend keeping them in the dark about the pills’ actual contents. Proceed as if the *lama* is well-aware of the squeamishness of his traveling companions—in this case, he uses the monastery’s most junior monks and nuns to fetch his ingredients whenever possible, and carries out his work in secret during the night so as not to derail the group’s progress toward the Valley of the White Ape.

DATE WITH A DAKINI

After a week, the ritual scroll is ready for collection, provided the investigators have completed whatever tasks they agreed to perform in payment. Yonten Phuntsok hands over the scroll, backed onto a length of rainbow silk (identical to that used to screen the *thangka*,) and wishes them well on their journey to Pemakö, which he refers to as, “*the embodiment of our great goddess, Dorje Phagmo.*” If asked to explain, he tells the investigators that the goddess lies over Pemakö (provide **Handout: Feast 2**), and that the valley within the shadow of the mountain is the place they seek.

Of course, while the investigators may think that the scroll contains the ritual Tenzin Kalsang identified as the Closing of the Ways, the Tokabhaya hid the Parkhang’s printed manuscript and replaced several of the original print blocks with versions of their own, corrupting the rite so that it now contains the spell Open the Gates of Agartha (**Appendix B**, page 344). Yonten Phuntsok is not aware of these changes and honestly believes he has delivered the ritual scroll the *lama* requested. The *lama* is also convinced the new scroll is the real thing, as it’s been over a millennium since he last looked at it and the alterations are both subtle and devious.

Now that they have the scroll, there is plenty of opportunity for the investigators to restock their supplies and arrange



The ritual's components

for guides and pack animals, if they do not have their own already. (The monastery does not permit them to take any of the beasts they may have borrowed to travel to the Rudam Valley away with them when they leave Derge.) And of course, if the investigators don't have official permission to be in Tibet, they still need to be careful about alerting the authorities to their presence.

The investigators' ultimate direction of travel depends on what else they have left to collect (**Moving On**, page 219), but all routes, initially at least, lead to the southwest and the town of Chamdo (which they may have passed through on their way to the Parkhang). After two days of travel, they reach the bottom of a broad, dry valley. Although not the most hospitable place to make camp, to push on further

would involve a steep climb back into the mountains and the prospect of a far colder (and rockier) campsite for the night.

THE GATHERING CIRCLE

While camped, at some point during the night, the investigators are woken by the sound of singing coming from all around them. Upon waking, they find they are, apparently, no longer camped in the valley bottom, but in a verdant grove. A successful **Lore (Buddhism)**, **Natural World**, or **Science (Botany)** roll identifies the trees as mango, banana, pippala (sacred fig, or bodhi), arjuna, and walnut—all sacred trees of the charnel grounds, none of which should be growing here. All appear to be in fruit.

Handout: Feast 2

Also known as the Diamond Sow, Dorje Phagmo is an important goddess within the Tibetan tantric pantheon as well as the queen of all the dakinis. An incarnation of Tara, and consort to Demchok (Chakrasamvara), she is both a wrathful deity and a yidam (personal meditation deity), most closely associated with the Kagyu school of Tibetan Buddhism.

• One living tulku (incarnation) of the goddess, Samding Dorje Phagmo, is always a woman; her lineage is the only one where this is the case. Her line, started in the 15th century by a princess called Chokyi Dronma, is the third most powerful in Tibet, outranked only by those of the Dalai and Panchen Lamas. A famous legend about the lineage, whose monastery lies near the holy lake of Yamdrok Tso, is that to protect her monks and nuns from invading Mongols, the 6th Samding Dorje Phagmo turned them all into pigs and sows, which scared the soldiers away.

The region of Pemakö in Tibet is said to represent a very different type of physical embodiment of the goddess. The Yarlung Tsangpo River forms her spine and flows through her chakras (energy centers), although there is some debate between the various schools as to exactly where those chakras lie. Some claim that the holy Kagyupa monastery of Rinchenpung, where the goddess' dakinis and dakas gather in abundance, sits at her navel. And the mountain Namche Barwa, which stands at the entrance to the great baeyul of Pemakö, is claimed to be her right breast.



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Apart from the trees, the rest of the campsite appears just as it did when they went to sleep.

Those looking up at the night sky see that the phase of the moon has changed—whatever it was before they settled down for the night, there is now only a thin sliver of the waning moon riding high in the sky. A successful **Science (Astronomy)**, **Occult**, or **Lore (Buddhism)** roll identifies the shape of the moon as it would appear on the night of the 25th lunar day. This discovery seems to greatly excite the *lama*, and if the phase of the moon was identified by an investigator with a successful Occult or Lore (Buddhism) roll, grant them **Handout: Feast 3**. They know that this is the time when tantric practitioners offer up a great feast known as *ganachakra* (*tsok* in Tibetan) to the dakinis in order to gain their blessings. In older legends, it was also the time when dakinis held riotous feasts of their own. If none of the investigators have a relevant skill, or fail their roll, Tenzin Kalsang can inform them of this fact and the handout's contents.

The Sisters' Plan (An Overview)

The Seven Sisters wish to prevent the investigators and their *lama* from traveling further toward Pemakö, as they know that their mission is compromised and that they are, in reality, working for the King of Fear, and not on behalf of the

Kulika King as Tenzin Kalsang believes. In accordance with the laws they are bound by, each Sister must first attempt to dissuade the investigators with kindness, offering them an endless feast with which to satiate themselves, but only if they give up their quest and stay here with their consort until they are ready to begin their journey home. Of course, the investigators could also simply choose to stay forever; at least they wouldn't die hungry.

If that strategy fails, the Sister resorts to the granting of favors; in this case, sexual, as befits the practice of the *ganachakra*, where sexual congress was an essential part of the ritual, at least in its unsanitized, earliest forms. Why would the investigator wish to carry on with their journey when they could stay here and indulge in sensual practices that will bring them to enlightenment? The Sister takes on the sexual form most pleasing to the investigator in a bid to convince them to accept the offer. As with the feast, if an investigator tires of the union, they are free to leave, but only if they return to their former life without assisting Tenzin Kalsang any further.

If that also fails, the Sister turns to verbal and physical (but not sexual) intimidation; if they have not already shifted form, the Sister assumes one that matches the investigator's chosen gender—or, to make the encounter even more

Handout: Feast 3

As well as a name used for experienced and enlightened female tantric practitioners (such as Padmasambhava's treasure-hiding consort, Yeshe Tsogyal), *dakini* (khandromas in Tibetan) is used in legend to indicate mystical creatures with wild, playful natures. They are the messengers of the gods, teachers, guides, tertons, and even tricksters when the need arises. They also frequently take on the role of dharmapalas, wrathful protector spirits who are as comfortable creating obstacles as they are removing them. There are two types of *dakini*: wisdom dakinis, who have achieved enlightenment, and worldly dakinis, who are still caught within the endless cycle of samsara. These dakinis move between the human and celestial realms in order to carry out their duties. Tibetans hold that their Pure Land is Khechari, while their earthly kingdom is in Oddiyana, which also happens to be the home of Lake Danakosha, Padmasambhava's birthplace.



disconcerting, each Sister assumes the opposing investigator's actual physical appearance while retaining their personal skin color. They issue dire threats, detailing exactly what they will be forced to do if the investigator refuses to give up their current course of action—if the investigator does not swear to leave Tibet immediately, never to return, they will be torn to shreds and the Sisters shall feast on their corpses! If the investigator agrees, they are free to leave in peace; the Sisters will not bother them again.

Should any of the investigators resist all three attempts to coerce them into abandoning Tenzin Kalsang (who holds firm regardless of what he is offered), then, finally, the Sister resorts to physical violence as a last-ditch effort to achieve their aims. They transform into their monstrous form and attack the investigators.

Decisions

While it is possible that some investigators may accept one of the offers or give in to the threats made against them, in all likelihood, at least one investigator will resist until the final stage, and the sight of a traveling companion being set upon by a winged demon may encourage the other investigator(s) to change their minds and spring to their colleague's defense. While the Sisters will not ordinarily attack an investigator who succumbed to them, should one of their number be assaulted, this violates the terms of any deal made, triggering the corresponding Sister's transformation and subsequent attack.

Only if all of the investigators refuse to comply with the Sisters' wishes will all seven be transformed into their monstrous selves. If this is an early chapter of the campaign, and the investigators are likely to struggle if confronted with all of the Sisters in their demonic form, then the Keeper should decrease the number attacking.

Tenzin Kalsang, (erroneously) secure in the knowledge that this is indeed a test of devotion to his cause (rather than an attempt by the Sisters to prevent catastrophe), refuses to be tempted or cowed. If, for whatever reason, there are no investigators left to accompany him, he flees the scene using the *Fleetness of Foot* spell (**Appendix B**, page 343) and goes in search of new companions to complete his quest. Alternatively, new investigators could be recruited by the Lords of Shambhala after the *lama* has successfully triggered the opening of the Gates alone (see **Chapter 6: Fresh Blood**, page 258, for further details on this option). As an option, while somewhat uncharacteristic of the *lama*, Tenzin Kalsang could repeat his warning that the investigators are being tested, which may help to make the players decide on their course of action in the face of the Sisters' promises and threats.

The following sections—**Feast**, **Favor**, **Threat**, and **Violence**—detail how the encounter plays out and its possible progression.

Feast

The flickering light of a fire can be glimpsed through the trees a short distance from the investigators' campsite, and other strange lights can be seen dancing in the air. If the investigators are traveling with porters, they refuse to leave their tents to see what's going on, warning their employers to follow suit. Tenzin Kalsang poo-poops any such comments; as he sees it, if the dakinis have come to them, it must be for one of a small number of purposes. He suggests to the investigators that, most likely, the dakinis are here to honor them for their labors or to grant them knowledge of the paths they must take. Their quest is a just and noble one, and they have nothing to fear, but they must be on their guard in case the dakinis are here, instead, to test their resolve—something they are also known to do. If that is the case, the investigators must prove their worthiness by resisting all temptation.

If the investigators approach the firelight, the singing grows louder, although even those fluent in Tibetan can't quite grasp the meaning of the words. After a few minutes, the investigators emerge into a clearing, in the center of which is a roaring fire. There is something on the fire, but it is partially obscured by the forms of seven dancing women, naked but for the ornaments they each wear (girdle; necklace; bands about their upper arms, wrists, and ankles; and a headdress of some sort). Three of the women have pink skin the color of cotton candy; of the other four, one has midnight black skin, one has skin the color of bleached bone, one has cobalt blue skin, and the final woman has bright red skin. The sight of the Seven Sisters (for that is what the women are) triggers a **Sanity** roll (0/1D3 loss).

Keeper note: should any of the investigators ask, Tenzin Kalsang makes it clear that, although she shares the same skin color, the red dakini is not Dorje Phagmo, the woman depicted in the altered *thangka*.

Entering the clearing attracts the Sisters' attention, and they move to welcome the investigators and their *lama*. The dakinis shift form to mirror the investigators' genders based on their physical appearance; this may also reflect an individual investigator's sexual preference, but for the moment, at least, that is not the Sisters' primary goal. If the Keeper desires, witnessing the transformation may trigger an additional **Sanity** roll (0/1 loss).

Up close, it becomes clear that the Sisters' headdresses consist of five miniature skulls set into a crown. Those with more than 30% in First Aid, Lore (Buddhism), Medicine, Occult, or Science (Biology) also realize that the Sisters' other decorative ornaments are made from carved bone.

The creatures attempt to draw the investigators nearer to the fire. An investigator can resist, if they wish, with a

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successful **STR** or **POW** roll (whichever is highest); if the investigator succeeds, the dakini begins to dance with them instead, singing all the while. Any investigators who do not resist find themselves growing hotter as they near the flames, which lick up the sides of a cauldron. A wonderful aroma rises from the pot, and an appetizing stew appears to be bubbling away merrily inside.

The red-skinned dakini, who partners herself with Tenzin Kalsang, turns to address the crowd—everyone hears what she says in their own native language. “*You have traveled long to reach this place. Feast, dance, and sing as our guests. You are welcome here. Stay with us now and rest for as long as you require.*”

Unless the investigators object, the Sisters arrange themselves and their guests around the fire, each sitting between an investigator. One Sister then ladles steaming bowls of meaty stew from the cauldron, while another moves between the trees gathering fruits and flowers. Two more disappear between the trees and return with a large wooden bucket, from which they ladle out an alcoholic-smelling white liquid into yet more bowls—this is *chang*, Tibetan barley beer, which the investigators may or may not have already tasted on their journey; it is quite thick (like gruel), and rather potent. The remaining three Sisters engage in conversation with those around them, passing the bowls along as they do so.

The investigators may be surprised to see Tenzin Kalsang eating the meat stew and drinking the *chang*. If challenged about this, he smiles and points out that, as a tantric practitioner, he can partake of such impure substances in moderation as part of a ritual, and a *tsok* most definitely qualifies.

Keeper note: the *lama* considers this to be a test of his powers and devotion to join the feast and honor his hosts while not giving himself up to wanton sensual indulgence. Besides, if he doesn't partake of everything on offer, he cannot take part in the associated rite.

The Sisters encourage the investigators to eat and drink as much as they want. The Keeper should call for a **POW** roll from each investigator to resist gorging themselves on the unbelievably tasty and refreshing feast before them.

- Any investigator who fails the roll is offered the Sister's deal: give up your quest and stay feasting for as long as you wish. In addition, the investigator becomes sleepy from all that conspicuous consumption; to avoid dozing off, they must make a successful **CON** roll. If anyone does fall asleep, they are plagued by vivid and terrifying dreams of their traveling



companions being torn apart by seven winged demons; their dismembered corpses are then tossed into a cauldron made from a gigantic, unearthly skull, from which the demons pull steaming chunks of flesh, gobbling them down with obvious relish—upon waking, a **Sanity** roll (0/1D3 loss) is required.

- A fumbled or failed pushed POW roll suggests that the investigator stuffs themselves with food and alcohol until they vomit, incurring a penalty die on all subsequent physical skill rolls during this scene due to the force and frequency with which they're sick.
- If an investigator achieves an Extreme success when resisting the urge to indulge (or at any other time during the Sisters' tests), their vision blurs and they see things as they truly are. Their strange companions are not beautiful humans, but tall, powerfully built demons with leathery wings, provoking a **Sanity** roll (1/1D8 loss). The cauldron is a gigantic skull of unknown origin (definitely not of this earth). Neither are they in a beautiful sacred grove; they are, instead, sitting on a carpet of rotting corpse-flesh surrounded by misshapen trees, whose leaves are razor-sharp and whose fruits drip with poison. Even worse, the bowls the investigators have been using to eat and drink from are made from human skulls, and intuitively, they understand that the meat in the stew is also human flesh, which may cause them to vomit if they fail a **CON** roll. There also appear to be strange flowers floating in the stew, which a successful **Natural World** or **Science (Botany)** roll identifies as being from the Indian thorn apple (a member of the *Datura* family, and a known hallucinogen).

Keeper note: given an Extreme success, the reality of the situation may be enough to trigger a bout of madness and associated insanity (temporary or indefinite), causing an investigator to flee, start screaming in horror, attempt to persuade their compatriots of the danger they are in, or even attack the nearest Sister. If an attack does follow, the attacked Sister attempts to dance so as to transfix the investigator (see the **Seven Sisters** profile, page 220, for further details). Only if that fails does the Sister attack back with their *katari*, and does not reveal its true form unless receiving a major wound. Should an investigator force one or more of the Sisters to reveal their true identity through their actions during a bout of madness, then it's possible that all of the Sisters assume their demonic personas in response. Use the guidelines in **The Sisters' Plan** (page 213) for handling this situation, with respect to appropriately scaling the challenge for inexperienced, experienced, and pulp groups alike.

HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

If the investigators are suspicious about their encounter with the Seven Sisters, they may discover the truth of the situation using the *melong*. As described in the **Side Effects** box (**Chapter 3**, page 126), this risks the onset of bleed-through for the investigators, but it conveniently reveals the dakinis for what they truly are. Instead of rolling against their History skill, if the investigator using the *melong* loses 5 points of Sanity while viewing the Sisters, they roll to see if they gain an advance in either **Occult** or **Lore (Buddhism)**—their choice—as well as an appropriate phobia or mania.

- If anyone achieves a Hard success on the POW roll, they catch a fleeting glimpse of what is really happening in the glade, but not enough to trigger the associated Sanity rolls.

Those who succeed with the POW roll, regardless of the degree of that success, now become subject to the Sisters' next stratagem: the granting of favors—as do any investigators who refuse the request to abandon their *lama*. As might be expected, Tenzin Kalsang cannot be swayed in this manner.

Favor

The Sisters now begin to make sexual advances toward the investigators who have not given themselves up to the delights of the food and drink they were offered. Describing sexual union as an integral part of the *tsok* ritual (which a successful **Lore (Buddhism)** roll or, failing that, Tenzin Kalsang confirms), the Sisters attempt to persuade the investigators to couple with them so that they may embody the sacred principle of *yab-yum* (compassion and wisdom) and through it gain enlightenment. Again, the investigators may be surprised to see the *lama* willingly engaging in sex with the red-skinned dakini in a near-exact reenactment of the image on the *thangka* they may have delivered to Dzogchen Monastery; however, he only does so once, politely refusing to join with her again (or to renounce his quest).

All those who refuse the offer of sex or who refuse the subsequent request to give up their journey in return, must then face the next stage of the Sisters' plan: intimidation.

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CONSENT IS EVERYTHING

While the **Favor** section of the encounter is sexual due to the nature of the dakinis and the ancient *ganachakra*, no player should be coerced or pressured into roleplaying through situations that make them feel uncomfortable or unsafe—nor will the dakinis force their sexual attentions where they are not wanted. No means no. As such, there are no rolls associated with this part of the encounter—the player either agrees to engage in relations through roleplaying, or they don't—their decision. The same goes for you, in your role as Keeper—don't be drawn into anything that makes you feel uncomfortable or unsafe either.

If anyone at the table feels uncomfortable regarding the actions of another player during this stage, we advise that the Keeper draws a veil over the action and moves the scene on without dwelling on the intimate details of any encounters herein. We also advise you to visually assess whether anyone in your group is struggling with the scene's content; some players may not feel able to express their concerns in front of their peers. It is then up to you, as Keeper, to maintain their comfort and engagement by moving swiftly on. As their Keeper, you know your group best and how to handle the situation with respect and sensitivity for everyone involved.

If, as Keeper, you do not feel confident or safe running this particular phase of the dakinis' plan for your players, or you know it will make them too uncomfortable, then feel free to remove it altogether, moving from Feast directly to Threat. The same is true if you know your players won't enjoy it.



Threat

The demeanor of the Sisters attending those investigators who have spurned them suddenly changes (as might their form; **The Sisters' Plan**, page 213). Gone are the friendly smiles, the kisses and flattery, and the invitations to eat, dance, and sing. Instead, the Sisters' faces grow angry, and they begin to harangue their targets with vile threats and insults. The barrage is intense, and the Keeper should call for a **POW** roll to see if the investigator in question can stand up to the force of the invective directed their way.

Should the **POW** roll be failed, those investigators are cowed by the Sisters' ranting, and all mental skill checks for the rest of the encounter are subject to a penalty die. A fumbled roll suggests a **Sanity** roll is also in order, so frightened are they by the tirade (1/1D3 loss). Whether this

abject terror is sufficient to make the investigator capitulate and agree to return home immediately is up to their player. Of course, if the **Sanity** loss triggers a bout of madness, then they may flee involuntarily from the scene, which is enough for the Sister involved—for now, at least.

As before, succeeding at the **POW** roll or refusing the demand to quit Tibet forever advances the Sisters to the final confrontation: **Violence**. An Extreme success with the **POW** roll immediately reveals the Sisters' true forms, as described in **Feast**, above, with a Hard success granting only the swiftest glimpse of the truth.

Tenzin Kalsang remains resolute in the face of all the shouting and mayhem, encouraging the investigators to do the same, repeating once again that this is all a test and that no real harm can come to them if they stay true to the vows they made to him in Tun-huang.

Violence

As discussed in **Compassionate Violence** (page 92), killing is permissible in Tibetan Buddhism under certain circumstances. The Seven Sisters are worldly dakinis, meaning that, ordinarily, murder would incur dreadful consequences for them in terms of their future rebirths; however, killing to protect others would not, and they currently believe that the deaths of the investigators and their *lama* fall into that category. By removing them, they will save the lives of countless others from the horrors the Triumvirate aim to bring into this world, as well as prevent the investigators from staining their souls through their own—albeit unknowing—complicity.

See **The Sisters' Plan** (page 213) for advice on how to handle this section should events get this far. Before the dakinis attack, give the investigators an opportunity to flee—this is a tough encounter that may cost one or more investigators their lives, something that should be obvious the moment the Sisters assume their demonic forms. Even if the investigators do decide to stand and fight, if things start going badly for them, the Keeper should remind them that they can always break from combat and make a run for it. If the investigators do decide to make their getaway, the Sisters let them go, convinced that their work is done—at least for now.

During a fight, the *lama* uses his **Sword Siddhi** spell (**Appendix B**, page 346) to engage with the red Sister; however, if everyone else is dead, or he feels he is about to die, he flees using the **Fleetness of Foot** spell (**Appendix B**, page 343). The Keeper should stage any physical confrontation between Tenzin Kalsang and the Sisters as a dramatic backdrop to the investigators' own fights, rather than actually roll any dice to act it out in real time—after all, he's a powerful *lama* and much tougher than he looks thanks to his magical skills. It would also be a rather anti-climactic end to the campaign

if he should die here, as the investigators will not be able to complete the Tokabhaya's schemes without him.

If the investigators dismiss or kill the Sisters, the grove and all its contents vanish, leaving the investigators back in the valley bottom, not far from their campsite.

Keeper note: Tenzin Kalsang expects the investigators to hold their own in any fight that arises against the Sisters. Ordinarily, he will not save them if they are in mortal danger—they are, after all, being tested to prove their worthiness for the task to come. If they fail (by dying), then it is because of their lack of commitment and suitability. The *lama* will choose better companions next time. He will heal any survivors, as they have proven themselves in his eyes. The only time we recommend that the Keeper use Tenzin Kalsang to rescue the investigators is if this is the first real fight with monsters the players have encountered—and it looks like there might be a total party kill. Under these circumstances, the *lama* obviously misjudged the investigators' readiness to face such a difficult test; they are clearly in need of further guidance and training, and the dakinis showed him the truth of this, for which he is thankful. He must work harder to prepare them for what is to come. Of course, if any surviving investigators are aware that the *lama* has done nothing to save their traveling companions, this knowledge may affect their relationship with him from that moment on.

FIGHT OR FLIGHT

By the end of this encounter, the investigators will have either stood firm in the face of the Seven Sisters' machinations, or some (or all) of them will have removed themselves from the proceedings by fleeing, capitulating, or getting themselves killed.

If any of the investigators survived, the Keeper may wish to use the Seven Sisters (if they've not been permanently dispatched) as an ongoing thorn in the party's side. Later, when the investigators realize the error of their ways, the Sisters may even become their allies against the Triumvirate, should they need some demonic assistance. Otherwise, assume that the Tokabhaya takes care of the dakinis to prevent any further interference.

Even now, Tenzin Kalsang insists that everything that has happened was necessary to prove their worthiness for the task ahead of them, as well as their determination to complete it. Whether the investigators believe him or not is another matter entirely.

Keeper note: if the investigators lost Tenzin Kalsang's *katari* at any point during their adventures so far, they can replace it with one of the Sisters' knives (which may be dropped during a transformation).

I CHANGED MY MIND!


Investigators who agreed to the Sisters terms are considered to have been removed to the dakinis' plane of existence, there to enjoy whatever pleasure they chose. Such investigators are removed from the game; however, the Keeper may elect to provide the following option, allowing those investigators the chance to escape from eternal pleasure should their players realize the error of the decision made. In this case, allow a final **POW** roll, which is the culmination of the investigator's desire to free themselves from the dakini (we advise that Luck points should be allowed to be spent to adjust this roll). If successful, the investigator is finally able to draw themselves away from the pleasures of the Sisters and is expelled back into the world. Of course, the passage of time is different in this other place and so the investigator reappears later in the campaign—at any point once the main group have left Tibet, as determined by the Keeper. With no knowledge of what has taken place since the encounter with the Sisters, the investigator is found by their colleagues and their *lama*, and may rejoin the group.

If the roll is failed, the investigator is expelled, but the passage of time means that they do not reappear until Chapter 7, when they investigators must repair the wrong they have wrought. A fumbled roll means the investigator's will is not strong enough, and they must endure an eternity of pleasure.



THE END OF THE ROAD: DERGE

Depending on where the encounter with the Seven Sisters occurs, the options for immediately replacing a dead investigator may be limited. If it took place before they reached Chamdo, then they may find someone suitable in this bustling town, such as a merchant or pilgrim. Otherwise, it might be best for the Keeper to red line to the next major urban center in their direction of travel; suggestions for new companions from **Chapters 3** and **4** can be found in their **End of the Road** boxes (pages 141 and 182, respectively). However, if the investigators now have everything they need and are heading into Pemakö, their best bet to find someone new is either in a chance encounter along the road (perhaps a spy or Western adventurer in disguise), or in one of the monasteries on the way to their destination (for example, a monk, merchant, scholar, or pilgrim).



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MOVING ON

Though potentially battered, bruised, and petrified, the investigators have, hopefully, managed to acquire the scroll they need to carry out the Gate-closing ritual. From here, they have three potential destinations: Lake Danakosha (**Chapter 3**), Sitavana (**Chapter 4**), or the Valley of the White Ape in Pemakö (**Chapter 6**).

If the investigators have yet to travel to India, they would be wise to check the largest repository of Buddhist wisdom and history in the world before they leave Derge to confirm their next destination. A **Library Use** roll can be used, at the Keeper's discretion, to determine how long it takes the investigators to trawl through the catalogue. A Regular success indicates several hours of searching, a Hard success an hour at most, and an Extreme success means that the investigators happen to flip to exactly the right page first time. Failure suggests that they require the help of Yonten Phuntsok and his staff to find the items they're looking for. As at Peshawar (**To the Cool Grove**, page 140), a successful **Language (Sanskrit or Tibetan)** roll is only required if the investigators wish to know all the details surrounding their chosen location. Key information that can be found is as follows.

Identifying Oddiyana (for Chapter 3)

There are numerous scrolls and books discussing Orgyen, the Kingdom of the Dakinis, and where said kingdom might be found in Oddiyana (and India). There are even more that discuss the legends of the great Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava). Most of these also discuss the location of Lake Danakosha, placing it firmly in the vicinity of Chakdara.

Identifying Sitavana (for Chapter 4)

A search through the Parkhang's library catalogue of manuscripts identifies several relevant texts discussing the eight great charnel grounds, both in Sanskrit and Tibetan, all of which point toward Rajgir in Bihar and Orissa, confirming Tenzin Kalsang's memories of where Fa Hsien and Hiuen-Tsiang placed it.

Identifying the Valley of the White Ape (for Chapter 6)

There are far fewer documents relevant to the investigators' destination in Pemakö, although what they do find suggests that the area is very different to the ones they've encountered so far: lush, leech-infested forests and mighty ravines brimming with mythical flora and fauna. As far as they can tell, the Valley of the White Ape lies somewhere on the southern flanks of the sacred mountain Namche Barwa, beyond the villages of Bayu and Gande inside the loop of the Yarlung Tsangpo, and that their best bet is to head for Powo Dzung, which they may well have already passed through on the Tea Horse Road on their way to Derge.

REWARDS

An investigator development phase should be permitted once the characters have dealt with the Seven Sisters. In addition, apply the following awards to each surviving investigator.

- Successfully delivering the *thangka* to Dzogchen Monastery (or successfully completing an independently arranged task to pay for the ritual scroll): +1 Sanity point.
- Discovering the contents of the nectar *rilbus*: -1D2 Sanity points.
- Successfully resisting the Seven Sisters: +1D8 Sanity points.
- Defeating a Mythos monster: ghost (optional) +1D6 Sanity points; skeleton (optional) +1D6 Sanity points; Seven Sisters +1D8 Sanity points.



White Stone by Nicholas Roerich

CHARACTERS AND MONSTERS

The NPCs and creatures found throughout this chapter are described below. For generic NPCs, such as bandits, bureaucrats, and monks or nuns, see **Appendix A**.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Yonten Phuntsok, age 65, head monk at Derge Parkhang

STR 60 CON 60 SIZ 55 DEX 55 INT 85
APP 55 POW 75 EDU 70 SAN 75 HP 11
DB: 0 Build: 0 Move: 5 MP: 15 Luck: —

Combat

Brawl 25% (12/5), damage 1D3
Dodge 30% (15/6)

Skills

Accounting 55%, Art/Craft (Painting) 55%, Art/Craft (Poetry) 65%, History (Buddhist) 65%, Library Use 70%, Lore (Buddhism) 71%, Persuade 70%, Psychology 60%, Spot Hidden 75%.

Languages: Chinese 51%, Sanskrit 70%, Tibetan (Own) 70%.

Kunchen Chodak, age 52, korpa and Tokabhaya agent

STR 50 CON 50 SIZ 65 DEX 45 INT 80
APP 60 POW 100 EDU 65 SAN 65 HP 11
DB: 0 Build: 0 Move: 5 MP: 20 Luck: —

Combat

Brawl 25% (12/5), damage 1D3
Dodge 25% (12/5)

Skills

Accounting 75%, Appraise 75%, Art/Craft (Acting) 55%, Fast Talk 65%, History (Buddhist) 45%, Library Use 60%, Lore (Buddhism) 41%, Lore (Tokabhaya) 31%, Psychology 40%, Spot Hidden 65%.

Languages: Chinese 51%, Sanskrit 41%, Tibetan (Own) 65%.

Spells: Breath of the Deep, Cloud Memory, Mask of Reason, Wrack, plus any others the Keeper deems necessary.

CREATURES AND MONSTERS

The Seven Sisters, *divine protectors*

More mundane dakinis can be summoned and bound with the appropriate spell, but the Seven Sisters are among the most powerful of their kind and have assumed the duties of guardians and protectors of their country. As such, they appear where and when they are needed, and it is a foolish mortal who tries to control them for their own purposes.



Dakini

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DAKINI IN HUMAN FORM

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Skin Color	Red	Blue	Black	White	Pink	Pink	Pink
STR	70	80	60	75	80	75	75
CON	75	70	55	70	65	60	70
SIZ	70	65	50	50	55	55	55
DEX	100	100	65	70	95	85	70
INT	75	65	65	60	65	60	60
APP	100	100	95	85	120	100	85
POW	85	80	65	70	60	65	85
HP	14	13	10	12	12	11	12
DB	+1D4	+1D4	0	0	+1D4	+1D4	+1D4
Build	+1	+1	0	0	+1	+1	+1
Move (walk/fly)	8/12	8/12	8/12	8/12	8/12	8/12	8/12
MP	17	16	13	14	12	13	17

Combat

Attacks per round: 1 (katari or power)

Besides their *katari*s (ritual flaying knives), the Seven Sisters have numerous mystical powers they can use in combat.

Eye of the Beholder: may assume whatever form their target finds most appealing in order to effectively use their wiles against them. The result may be to cause distraction, pause, or garner a particular emotion (in all likelihood causing an investigator to stop their next attack). The target must succeed with an opposed POW roll to negate the dakini's manipulation.

Invisibility: unless a dakini wishes to be seen, it can remain invisible; although may be revealed by the Powder of Ibn-Ghazi. The dakini may become visible with the expenditure of 1 magic point. Attempts to hit an invisible dakini suffer one penalty die.

Seductive Dance: a dakini in its beautiful human guise has the power to entrance a true human with their seductive dance. Unless the target succeeds with an opposed POW

roll, they fall under the dakini's spell for 1D6 rounds and are frozen to the spot, unable to move or act.

Brawl 40% (20/8), damage 1D3+DB
or *katari* 1D6+DB
Dodge 40% (20/8)

Skills

Art/Craft (Dance) 90%, Listen 65%, Spot Hidden 65%.

Languages: any (as required) 75%, Khandro Dayig (the twilight language of the dakinis) (Own) 95%.

Armor: none.

Spells: Summon Khandroma*.

Sanity loss: 0/1D3 Sanity points to encounter a dakini in human form.

*See *Appendix B*.



FEAST AND FAMINE
- DERGE, TIBET -

DAKINI IN DEMON FORM

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Skin Color	Red	Blue	Black	White	Pink	Pink	Pink
STR	90	90	100	95	100	95	100
CON	90	85	90	80	95	80	95
SIZ	90	100	100	95	95	105	90
DEX	100	100	105	70	95	85	80
INT	75	65	65	60	65	60	60
POW	85	80	65	70	60	65	85
HP	18	18	19	17	19	18	18
DB	+1D6	+1D6	+1D6	+1D6	+1D6	+1D6	+1D6
Build	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Move (walk/fly)	7/12	7/12	7/12	7/12	7/12	7/12	7/12
MP	17	16	13	14	12	13	17

Combat

Attacks per round: 1 (claw, bite)

Once transformed, the Seven Sisters dispense with their *kataris*, using their claws and bite instead. They still have access to the Invisibility special power, but their change of form negates their ability to use the other powers available to them in human form.

Invisibility: unless a dakini wishes to be seen, it can remain invisible; although may be revealed by the Powder of Ibn-Ghazi. The dakini may become visible with the expenditure of 1 magic point. Attempts to hit an invisible dakini suffer one penalty die.

Claw	50% (25/10), damage 1D8+DB
Bite	35% (17/7), damage 1D6+DB
Dodge	45% (22/9)

Skills

Listen 65%, Spot Hidden 65%, Stealth 65%.

Languages: any (as required) 75%, Khandro Dayig (the twilight language of the dakinis) (Own) 95%.

Armor: 3-points of tough hide.

Spells: Summon Khandroma*, +1D3 spells of the Keeper's choosing if their POW is greater than 75.

Sanity loss: 1/1D8 Sanity points to encounter a transformed dakini.

*See *Appendix B*.

Opposite: Dakini from a Tibetan thangka



dwel

LIBERATION

- PEMAKÖ, TIBET -

Having already faced many dangers on the long road they have traveled from Peking, the investigators now venture deep into one of the last great untamed wildernesses: Pemakö, a fearsome land of lush forests and temperate weather that stretches across the borders of Tibet and British India.

If the investigators have acquired everything they need to close the Gates of Agartha—the ritual bowls from Peshawar (**Chapter 3**), the damaru and kangling from Sitavana (**Chapter 4**), and the ritual scroll from Derge Parkhang (**Chapter 5**)—then there is one final step they must take: performing Tenzin Kalsang’s ritual in the Valley of the White Ape. An act that should prevent the King of Fear from entering the world until the properly appointed time.

Even if the investigators have failed to secure one or more of the required items, and have not found or crafted suitable alternatives (for example, as described in **Chapter 4: Kapalas**, page 181), Tenzin Kalsang encourages the investigators to travel to the heart of the lotus-shaped secret land, which some believe is home to the mythical kingdom of Shambhala. He trusts that the gods will provide a solution for them when the time comes, given the importance of their mission. Unbeknown to the lama, the Valley of the White Ape is a false *baeyul* (**Hidden Gems**, page 226), and its gatekeepers—the Triumvirate—are not as picky as those said to guard Pemakö’s true secret haven.

What little the outside world knows about the region is detailed for the players in **What Your Investigator Knows 7: Pemakö** (**Appendix C**, page 353) and **Handout: Liberation 1**.

THE LOTUS DISPLAYED

Located in the southeast of Tibet, Pemakö straddles the McMahon Line (**A Disputed Border**, page 226) that separates the country from the province of Assam in British India (now in Arunachal Pradesh). Bounded to the west by the end of the Himalayan mountain range and on its other three sides by the deep gorges of the Yarlung Tsangpo River, the sacred land is difficult to enter, and only the most determined (or foolhardy) dare to try. The mountain passes are clear of snowfall for only a few months every year, and the fury of the river as it tumbles from the Tibetan Plateau down into the plains of India makes crossing it an extremely hazardous affair. Add to this the near-impenetrable forests, the swamps, the avalanches and landslides, the earthquakes, the profusion of insects (there are well over 2,000 known species in Pemakö, many of them blood-sucking), the leeches, the giant stinging nettles, the venomous snakes, the bears, tigers, and leopards (and large, goat-like creatures called takin), the incessant rain, and the presence of a poisoning cult (**A Poisoned Chalice**, page 241), and it is understandable that Pemakö is also often referred to as “the greatest of all charnel grounds.”

According to several Buddhist texts, Pemakö also contains a *baeyul*—a divine land hidden away by Padmasambhava that reveals itself only in times of grave danger. Concealed somewhere in the shadow of Namche Barwa, the easternmost (and, therefore, last) mountain in the Himalayas, this *baeyul* has been described as a Pure Land (the Buddhist equivalent of the Christian Heaven), although it is far from a paradise on earth, serving instead as a means to test the faith and devotion of those who seek to open its doors.

While one Tibetan yogi had previously found hidden tantric texts in caves on the flanks of Namche Barwa in the late 14th century CE, it wasn’t until the 17th century that the first of the *termas* written by Padmasambhava—describing

Opposite: Under the control of the Tokabahaya

the hidden land of Pemakö—were found by the *lama* Jatsun Nyingpo. One of his disciples, Rigdzin Duddul Dorje, traveled to Pemakö in search of its *yangsang ney* (innermost secret place), but, sadly, failed to find it. He was not, however, the last to go looking for it.

Around 1901, Jedrung Rinpoche, a *lama* and *terton* (treasure revealer), discovered another *terma* related to the *baeyul* in Pemakö. Less than a year later, along with one hundred followers, Rinpoche fled from the forces of Chao “the Butcher” Erhfeng (Zhao Erfeng) after the notorious Ch’ing warlord invaded Jedrung’s home, the Kingdom of Kham. Rinpoche’s group first settled in the Kingdom of Powo, which claimed Pemakö as part of its domain, and later moved to Assam. There, they settled around Mipi (now in Arunachal Pradesh) and built the Karmoling Temple, which they used as a base during their search for the crystal mountain that allegedly marked the sacred valley. Two thousand more refugees, including many from Derge, joined

them in 1903—but most of the survivors left six years later, disappointed and dejected, having not only failed to find the *baeyul*, but also having suffered from starvation and near-constant violence at the hands of the fierce and warlike local Mishmi tribes.

These Khampas (people from Kham) were not the first to settle in Pemakö while searching for a promised land. At the end of the 18th century, Monpa tribesmen from Monyul, eastern Bhutan (now in Arunachal Pradesh), made their way into the region following clues left in their own holy texts. They came up through the territory of the Chulikata Mishmis (the tribe who would cause the Khampa refugees so much trouble 100 years later) before spreading out into the heart of Pemakö itself, largely settling around what would become the town of Metok (Medog). As a result, some of Pemakö’s original inhabitants, the Lopas (of whom

A DISPUTED BORDER

Drawn up by Sir Henry McMahon during the 1913–1914 Simla Convention held between Britain, Tibet, and China, the McMahon Line was heavily based on the survey work carried out by Bailey and Morshead during their travels in Pemakö (**A Most Perplexing Riddle**, page 227). Running primarily across the crest of the Himalayas for around 550 miles (885 km) and on from Bhutan to 160 miles (258 km) east of the Great Bend (see **Handout: Liberation 1**), the line formed the boundary between British India and what was then known as Outer Tibet.

The McMahon Line—along with everything else drawn up and signed during the convention—was denounced by China. The country’s official walked out of the talks due to the belief that Tibet was sovereign Chinese territory. The fledgling Chinese republic proclaimed that Tibet had no rights to negotiate or sign anything without its say-so. The new border and its associated treaty were also rejected by the Government of British India, as they contradicted an earlier agreement between Britain and Russia over their spheres of influence in Tibet and Central Asia. Regardless, the British behaved as if the territory gained under the contested agreement was theirs, even though the line didn’t officially appear on any British maps until 1937. The precise location of the Sino-Indian border is still heavily disputed to this day.

HIDDEN GEMS

Prophesied by the great Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava) in his *termas*, *baeyuls* are hidden valleys that only manifest to provide refuge for the faithful. Largely located along Tibet’s southern borders, they open and close as necessary, and unless those seeking them are properly prepared, know the correct rituals, and have the blessings of the *baeyul*’s spirit guardians, they cannot gain entry. Purportedly free from war, hunger, and disease, these mystical places guarantee longevity through their healing springs and rare magical/medicinal herbs. Each *baeyul* has many levels—outer, inner, secret, and ultimately (or innermost) secret (*yangsang ney*)—each of which corresponds to a level of spiritual development.

The exact nature of *baeyuls* is tricky to define. They are both real places you can physically visit but also hypothetical constructs devised to guide the faithful on the path toward enlightenment, with each level representing a more advanced stage of spiritual development. How a visitor experiences a *baeyul* depends on their own beliefs and preconceptions.

Termas, on the other hand, are revealed texts—written in a “twilight language” that can only be interpreted by knowledgeable and devout *lamas*, often with the assistance of dakinis. Allegedly all hidden by Padmasambhava’s consort, Yeshe Tsogyal, *termas* are invariably written on yellow parchment and, like *baeyuls*, only appear when the world is ready for them. Note that some ritual instruments may also be classed as *termas*.

LIBERATION - PEMAKÖ, TIBET -

the Mishmis are one of the largest tribes), were driven south into Assam.

In the 1920s, Pemakö's residents include Monpas, Lopas, and Tibetans (from Kham, Kongpo, and Powo), although most of these live around its fringes. Only Monpa hunters dare to regularly venture deep into the inner gorges in search of their prey: takin, goral (an antelope-like creature whose red skins the Monpa use for weatherproof cloaks), big cats, and bears. Monpas are regularly hired as guides for their knowledge of the region, although they guard the secrets of their hunting grounds very carefully indeed. Lopas, on the other hand, tend to be employed purely as porters.

A MOST PERPLEXING RIDDLE

To the Western world, Pemakö presented a geographical conundrum: where exactly did the Yarlung Tsangpo River go when it entered the gorge country, and was there a gigantic waterfall somewhere along its length that could account for its massive drop in altitude between the Tibetan Plateau and where it emerged on the plains of India as the Brahmaputra? (See **Handout: Liberation 1**.) This riddle of the falls, as Frank Kingdon-Ward called it, would vex British surveyors for well over a hundred years, and a definitive answer would not be reached until the very end of the 20th century.

Kinthup: The Sikkimese Tailor

Kinthup, a Lepcha man from Sikkim, India, was a remarkable and resourceful man. While traveling in 1878 with another pundit, Nem Singh, he managed to extend Nain Singh Rawat's initial survey of the Yarlung Tsangpo River from Tsetang all the way up to the beginning of the gorge at Gyala. Kinthup returned to Tibet two years later for what

would become a horrific and epic adventure through the gorges of Pemakö. Sent there by the Survey of India in 1880 to solve the mystery of where the river emerged in Assam, Kinthup was sold into slavery by his companion, a supposed Chinese *lama*, before he could even enter the gorge. After ten months of servitude, Kinthup managed to escape and flee south to Marpung Monastery, where he was purchased by the abbot to save him from his pursuers.

A devout Buddhist, through hard work and piety Kinthup eventually won his freedom and enacted the plan his commissioner, Lt. Henry Harman, had originally devised to identify the Yarlung Tsangpo's course. Sadly, the plan failed, as Harman never received word that Kinthup was still alive and carrying out his original orders, albeit several years late. Kinthup attempted to return to British India by following the Dihang back to Assam, but fierce Abor tribesmen forced him to turn back a mere 35 miles (56 km) from the border.

Kinthup returned to his home in Darjeeling four years after he'd left it, although it would be another two years before the Survey of India finally called him in for a debriefing. As he was illiterate, Kinthup had memorized the details of his surveying work and recounted it all in Hindustani to a scribe, who translated the work into English. Although most of the translation was recorded accurately, one error led to the assumption that a 150-foot (46 m) waterfall—the so-called Falls of the Tsangpo—lay within the river's inner gorge. Much of Kinthup's report was doubted until Bailey and Morshead's 1913 expedition (following) documented virtually identical findings.

Kinthup went on to work as a tailor in Darjeeling, and was largely forgotten about until Eric Bailey tracked him down and lobbied for a pension on Kinthup's behalf in honor of his work for the Survey. The request was refused on the grounds that the faithful former agent might live to a ripe old age and thus cost the Indian Government too much money; he instead received a lump sum of 1,000 rupees, as well as a certificate of service. Sadly, Kinthup died in his late fifties—only a few months after being denied his pension.


Morshead and Bailey

Due to the nature of his flight from captivity, Kinthup hadn't managed to close the gap in the as-yet unmapped upper gorge, and the possibility of the great falls' existence still vexed the British. Several other expeditions to explore this tantalizing "blank area" on the map were proposed, but the political situation in Tibet stymied all efforts until 1913, when Capt. Frederick Marsham "Eric" Bailey and Capt. Henry Morshead made an unofficial visit to the region after carrying out survey work in Chulikata Mishmi territory around Mipi, east of the Dibang River in Assam.



A CONFUSION OF NAMES

The Tibetans of the time tended to refer to every non-Tibetan who lived in the jungles of Pemakö as "Lopa." They considered the jungle inhabitants to be little better than "barbarians," a view they shared with the Chinese, who also briefly controlled parts of the region in the early 20th century. The various tribes of Lopas were widely believed to be cannibals, and the Chinese (it was said) even believed that the Mishmis had tails like monkeys, requiring them to dig tail-sized holes in the ground in order to sit comfortably.



Rising from a glacier in the Kailash range in the west of the country, the Yarlung Tsangpo, Tibet's longest river, is reported to be a little over 1,750 miles (2,800 km) long. After meandering across the Tibetan Plateau through wide, flat valleys, it falls sharply into gorge country in the east as it passes between the twin mountains of Namche Barwa and Gyala Pelri. The river then forms what is known as the "Great Bend" where it meets its tributary, the Po Tsangpo, before doubling back on itself for around 60 miles (96 km). It eventually drops into Assam, where it becomes the Brahmaputra River. As the Brahmaputra, the Tsangpo finally winds its way down to the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean beyond.

The British first began to clandestinely survey the Yarlung Tsangpo in 1874 because they were convinced that the Yarlung Tsangpo was connected to the Brahmaputra but were unsure which of the river's major tributaries it became. Thanks to the pundits (the British Empire's secret team of native surveyors—in particular Nain Singh Rawat, Keshan Singh, and a Sikkimesse tailor named Kinthup), it was confirmed that it fed into the Dihang in Assam, but much of the gorge it passed through on its way there remained a mystery due to the rugged terrain and the tribespeople who guarded it.

In 1913, Capt. Frederick Marsham "Eric" Bailey and Capt. Henry Morshead made an unofficial visit to the region after carrying out survey work in Chulikata Mishmi territory around Mipi, east of the Dibang River in Assam. Despite the weather and the local officials' best attempts to stop them, the pair managed to describe the river's Great Bend and reduce the unexplored gap within the gorge to around 40 miles (64 km). However, they still failed to put to bed the rumor that a gigantic waterfall lay somewhere along the river's length, one that could account for its massive drop in altitude between the Tibetan Plateau and where it emerged on the plains of India as the Brahmaputra.



According to Buddhist texts, 75 waterfalls were meant to lie hidden in a 14-mile (22.5-km) stretch of the upper gorge where no outsider had allegedly ever trod (although Monpa hunters had been happily traversing that very area for over a hundred years in search of game). Upon their return to Simla, having narrowed the gap in geographical understanding of the region somewhat, the expedition was able to confirm Kinthup's survey and discover the error that gave rise to the belief that a waterfall well over 100 feet (30 m) had been spotted by the Sikkimese pundit.

Some, however, remained convinced that a great waterfall (to rival those at Niagara) still existed somewhere downstream of Kinthup's more modest 30-foot (9 m) cataract. Another expedition set out to finally put these rumors to rest in 1924, when the plant hunter and surveyor Frank Kingdon-Ward journeyed to Pemakö with the 5th Earl of Cawdor, John "Jack" Campbell. Financed in part by the Earl of Cawdor, Kingdon-Ward was there to also collect plants for the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew, London, the Natural History Museum in London, and the 13th Dalai Lama.

Despite the fact that their explorations still left a 5–10-mile (8–16 km) blank on the map, upon his return to England, Kingdon-Ward declared that the Falls of the Tsangpo were a myth. He did give a name to the Rainbow Falls, which he estimated at between 30–40 feet (9–10 m), although surveys carried out in the late 1990s showed that he'd made an error in his calculations and had underestimated their height by half. Around the same time, it was also discovered that Kingdon-Ward had been mistaken about the existence of the great falls. Not very far downstream from the Rainbow Falls, the Hidden Falls were revealed; at over 100 feet (30 m) high, their identification finally solved the puzzle that had exercised the Survey of India for so long.

SET UP: WHERE THE GODDESS LIES

Finally, the time has come to enter the *baeyul* that is Pemakö, the geographical embodiment of the goddess Dorje Phagmo, and home to the site where the investigators must play their part in the drama unfolding around them. But, all is not as it seems, and in truth the investigators are mere pawns in a plan to bring about the very destruction they aim to prevent. Will they discover this trickery in time or will they be called upon by the Lords of Shambhala to deal with the consequences of their misguided actions? One way or another, this is the last time they will journey with their *lama*, Tenzin Kalsang. His fate at the hands of the Triumvirate is all but sealed.



THE PLANT HUNTER

The son of a Cambridge don, Francis Kingdon Ward had his own university education cut short by his father's untimely death. Later, he shortened and hyphenated his name to the more familiar Frank Kingdon-Ward. He spent some time in Singapore as a teacher, before becoming a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, and later journeyed to Yunnan and Tibet (in 1911) as a plant hunter. After a frustrating return trip to the same region in 1913, Kingdon-Ward ended up working as a censor for the Indian Army during the Great War. He returned to Tibet in 1921 and 1922, and in 1924 mounted the expedition for which he is most famous: his trip to Pemakö with Lord Cawdor, detailed in his book *The Riddle of the Tsangpo Gorges* (1926).

A small and tenacious man, with green eyes and a fondness for playing the ukulele, Kingdon-Ward looked much older than his actual age due to the rigors of his time spent collecting plants in the Himalayas. He had a reputation for being difficult to travel with, often ignoring his companions for days at a time; this reticence and focus on his work certainly caused friction between him and the Earl of Cawdor.

While working as a spy for the British during the 1930s, he was arrested by the Tibetans for crossing the Se La into Tawang without permission. During World War II, he trained airmen in jungle survival techniques, and also hunted for downed aircraft in Burma. After the war, he managed a tea plantation in Assam, but always returned to plant collecting at one point or another. He died in England in 1958 at the age of 72 after suffering a stroke.

Keeper note: Kingdon-Ward and the Earl of Cawdor are in the Pemakö region from the spring of 1924 through to early 1925. They spend several months collecting plants around Tumbatse, close to the Nyima La, before traveling to Pe and over the Doshung La into Pemakö itself. In November 1924, Kingdon-Ward and Lord Cawdor venture to Gyala and into the gorge to the monastery at Pemakochung, and then on to Luku and the Monpa village of Bayu, and up to the Great Bend and the pretty Lopa/Powo village of Tsachu (Zhachu). They briefly reenter gorge country in December 1924 before making their way back to central Tibet. Should the Keeper wish, depending on when the investigators reach Pemakö and which route they take to get there (**Getting to Pemakö**, page 234), they may run into the dour plant collector and his adventurous but frustrated young companion.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The following are the main NPCs for this chapter. If the Keeper requires statistics for Monpa and Lopa guides and porters, they should use the **Tribal Member** profile in **Appendix A** (page 339).

The Triumvirate, leaders of the Tokabbaya

The Triumvirate currently consists of one man and two women: Andrei Osipovich Vitsin, once a Cossack in Tsar Nicholas II's army; Mariam Sandrine, a former member of the Leopard Society from the Ivory Coast (Cote d'Ivoire); and the leader of the three, Hine Roimata, an elderly Maori warrior. Each of these characters possessed a desire for power and had, at one time or another, engaged in cannibalism—both traits making them attractive and susceptible to the King of Fear. Each of them holds knowledge beyond their years, having consumed the brains—and thus the memories and powers—of their predecessors. Thankfully, due to the human form's inability to hold and comprehend so much information, they are nowhere near as strong as their superior intellects would suggest; however, they are still formidable foes. The backgrounds, descriptions, and traits of the individual members of the Triumvirate follow.

- **Roleplaying hooks:** posing as the Guardians of the Gate, the King of Fear's three warped human envoys aim to ensure that the ritual to free their lord and master goes off without a hitch. The Triumvirate are also, technically, experts in their field, and as the King of Fear's lieutenants, they can be used to answer any questions the players might have about just what's been going on since they joined Tenzin Kalsang on his misguided quest—all answers are, of course, delivered with a healthy dose of gloating, as befits the campaign's major antagonists.

Andrei Osipovich Vitsin, age 47, former Cossack

Once a soldier in Tsar Nicholas II's feared Cossack regiments, Vitsin experienced the best and worst times of his life during the early years of the 20th century. Not long recalled to Saint Petersburg after the failure and humiliation of the 1904 campaign of the Russo-Japanese War, Vitsin was present at the Bloody Sunday incident in the city (January 1905) where he and his comrades opened fire on unarmed protestors as they marched on the Winter Palace to petition the Tsar for better workers' rights. Strikes and uprisings followed, leading to the creation of the October Manifesto, which paved the way for the eventual downfall of the Romanov dynasty.

Vitsin's bitterness against those he perceived as traitors to his country and the failure of his beloved Tsar to maintain his grip on power, coupled with Vitsin's own violent nature



Andrei Osipovich Vitsin



Mariam Sandrine

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and ruthlessness, marked him out as an excellent agent for the Tokabhaya. They promised him the means to bring about a glorious new world order where men of his talents would be properly appreciated, ruled over by the mightiest of all tsars—the King of Fear. Vitsin's hunger for power and recognition saw him rise rapidly through the Children of Fear's ranks, eventually taking up his position as a member of the Triumvirate around the time of the 1917 revolution.

- **Description:** although he prefers to dress in the traditional Cossack uniform of gray great coat, black knee-length boots, and large, black fur hat, to better fit his role as Guardian of the Gate Vitsin is dressed in a hooded robe of midnight blue. His face is haughty and arrogant, his eyes cold; his graying hair and mustache are closely trimmed and oiled into precise position.
- **Traits:** ruthless, bitter, and quick to anger.

Mariam Sandrine, *age 30, former Leopard Society priestess*

The last person to join the Triumvirate, and the youngest of its members, Sandrine was one of many bastard offspring sired by her French plantation owner father among his native workforce. A bright and imaginative child, she survived her grim living conditions by throwing herself into learning all the myths and legends of her people. As she grew

increasingly inured to the violence she witnessed on a daily basis, she was drawn to the macabre stories of the Anyoto Aniota, the Leopard Society, whose members were believed to transform themselves into wild beasts to enact vengeance or even kill to appease evil spirits.

Using guile and cunning, she tracked down the local cult and offered herself as a willing recruit. Always a quick learner, she soon rose to become a priestess in the society, and was instrumental in the upswing in cult activity in her area during the Great War. Finally, she exacted her revenge on her father for his abuses, feasting on his liver before fleeing the plantation forever. She ran straight into the arms of the Tokabhaya, who had heard rumors of her prowess and charisma, and were not disappointed with what they found. For her part, Sandrine was keen to exploit the opportunity to gain the knowledge and power the Children of Fear offered her.

- **Description:** a young biracial Black African woman. Beneath her blue Guardian of the Gate hooded robe, Sandrine wears a simple white blouse coupled with a brightly-colored *pagne* (length of fabric) wrapped around her lower half to form a skirt. A length of identical fabric is wrapped around her head, hiding her hair.
- **Traits:** cunning, intelligent, and hungry for power.

Hine Roimata, age 79, former *Maori warrior and leader of the Triumvirate*

One of the few surviving participants in Titokowaru's War against the British colonizers on New Zealand's North Island during the last years of the 1860s, Hine Roimata has little patience for white men and their lies. As her parents' only child, she grew up big and strong, and took up the mantle of the *toa wahine* (female warrior) to defend her home when the British came. Desperation drew her to the Hauhau movement; she hoped that its cannibalistic rituals would grant her and her fellows the power they needed to drive the invaders off their lands once and for all, and was bitterly disappointed when the British ultimately emerged victorious.

Once driven into exile, Roimata's hatred for her oppressors and her familiarity with cannibalism led her to the Tokabhaya, who welcomed her with open arms. As the longest-serving of the Triumvirate, she knows she's almost out of time, and now hopes to see their plans come to fruition before her death and subsequent consumption by her chosen successor.

- **Description:** Roimata's wavy, bone-white hair parts down the center and falls below her shoulders. Her non-traditional facial tattoos cover her forehead, chin, and throat, illustrating



Hine Roimata

her history as a Tokabhaya. Unlike the plain robes of her compatriots, her aged form is shrouded by an all-covering robe of midnight blue bird feathers. She goes barefoot.

- **Traits:** haughty, proud, and determined to see the King of Fear set free before she dies.

The Migyu, *Pemakö's true white apes*

The Tibetan word for the yeti (also known as the abominable snowman from 1921 onwards) is *migyu* or *mi-go* (wild man). Around the Valley of the White Ape, there are both large white primates (*migyu*)—often hunted by the local Monpas—and actual *mi-go* (the space-faring aliens from Yuggoth).

- **Description:** though slightly smaller than an average adult human, the white apes of Pemakö are both feared and respected by the local hunters who venture into their territory around Namche Barwa.
- **Traits:** *migyu* are usually peaceable, but have been known to attack and kill humans if angered; the burning of impure substances within their domain is a known trigger for such attacks, although what exactly constitutes an impure substance is open to debate. Some Monpas claim that the scent of foreigners can send the creatures into a terrifying rage, although this may just be a tall tale designed to discourage the presence of outsiders in the Monpas' favorite hunting grounds.



Migyu

- **Roleplaying hooks:** the white apes are attracted to the investigators by the ritual implements they carry (and, quite possibly, their behavior within the *migyu*'s territory), and may well prove to be valuable allies if the investigators can win their trust.

Abominable Mi-go, *research scientists from Yuggoth*

Residing in small, high-altitude enclaves hidden in Pemakö's mountains, the region's *mi-go* mine various minerals, both rare and abundant (such as the sulfur found in the cold springs on Namche Barwa's northern flanks). Indeed, their mining machines may be responsible for some of the area's many earthquakes and landslides. They also hunt for the rare and potent herbs mentioned in Padmasambhava's *termas*, which they use to manufacture various elixirs, such as the Plutonian drug and space mead.

- **Description:** *mi-go* are approximately 5 feet (1.5 m) tall with multiple legs and, possibly, wings or dorsal fins, which they can fold flat against their bodies. Their brain-like heads are covered in short antennae and change color when they communicate with each other. While those that live at extreme altitudes elsewhere in Tibet wear protective bio-armor (which distorts the air around them in such a way as to make them look like they are wearing furs), the *mi-go*



Abominable Mi-go

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found in Pemakö tend to dress in the actual skins of the migyu, giving rise to their colloquial name: yetis.

- **Traits:** dangerous, inquisitive, and intelligent.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** any mi-go in the vicinity of the Valley of the White Ape are enticed by the presence of the strange metals in the ritual bowls the investigators carry with them (**The Abominable Snowmen**, page 238), as well as the surge in otherworldly power created by the ritual the investigators have come to perform.

The Lords of Shambhala, regents of the Kulika King

The hidden kingdom's regents are charged with its protection until the Kulika King is ready to assume his mantle and lead them in the war against Agartha.

- **Description:** varies, depending on each investigator's karmic balance (**An Expression of Gratitude**, page 256).
- **Traits:** ineffable and inscrutable.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** should the investigators fail to realize that they are being duped in time, or fail to prevent Tenzin Kalsang's death and/or the opening of the Gates of Agartha, then the Lords of Shambhala will summon them to a meeting in the golden city. The Lords count as experts in their field and can be used to provide additional information to the investigators as required.



The Lords of Shambhala



PEMAKÖ'S WEATHER

Described by Eric Bailey as, "an abomination of desolation," Pemakö is a challenging region to visit, not least because of its atrocious weather. Frank Kingdon-Ward was equally damning in his description of the area, claiming that the gorge country's seasons were simply "wet and more wet."

Thanks to the monsoon rains' ability to penetrate the various gorges well into the heart of Pemakö, as well as the loss of the Himalayan rain shadow, the area is more than a little damp. Metok, in the lower gorge, receives over 10 feet (3 m) of rain a year, most of it between July and September, when it rains virtually every day. Other parts of Pemakö can see up to 40 feet (12 m) of rain in a year. Although there is technically a dry season (October through December), it isn't really all that dry, as Kingdon-Ward noted; even if it isn't raining, there is often little sun and the humidity rarely dips below 100%. Snow tends to arrive between January and March, but it has been known to fall as late as June, and can linger in the high mountain passes well beyond August; it rarely clears from some of the more northerly peaks.

The temperatures in Pemakö range from tropical to arctic depending on the exact latitude, longitude, and altitude. The lower gorge is very hot and humid, while the central gorge tends to be cooler, thanks in part to its higher elevation. The spring of 1924 is especially bleak and unpleasant, with extreme levels of rain and wind; many of the southern mountain passes remain blocked with snow long after they would usually be clear enough to cross.

The local Monpas believe that the weather foretells how successful your trip to Pemakö will be: clouds indicate that there is trouble ahead, whereas sunshine is a good omen (which is unfortunate, as this weather is a relatively rare occurrence). The Monpas also believe that the claw of a garuda (a giant, mythical bird that embodies both the animal and the divine) can drive the rain away. Should there be one or more Chinese investigators in the party, any Monpas they encounter will be most surprised if the skies do anything but pour with rain or snow heavily during their time in Pemakö—thanks to Chinese depredations in the area, the Monpas believe that Chinese people are cursed to bring nothing but terrible weather with them wherever they go.



GETTING TO PEMAKÖ

The route into Pemakö very much depends on the investigators' direction of approach. Although, as ever, we suggest that much of the journey be red lined, descriptions of the places they may pass through are included for flavor, and three optional encounters tied to these areas are detailed in **The Abominable Snowmen** (page 238), **Seemingly Simian** (page 241), and **A Poisoned Chalice** (page 241).

FROM DERGE

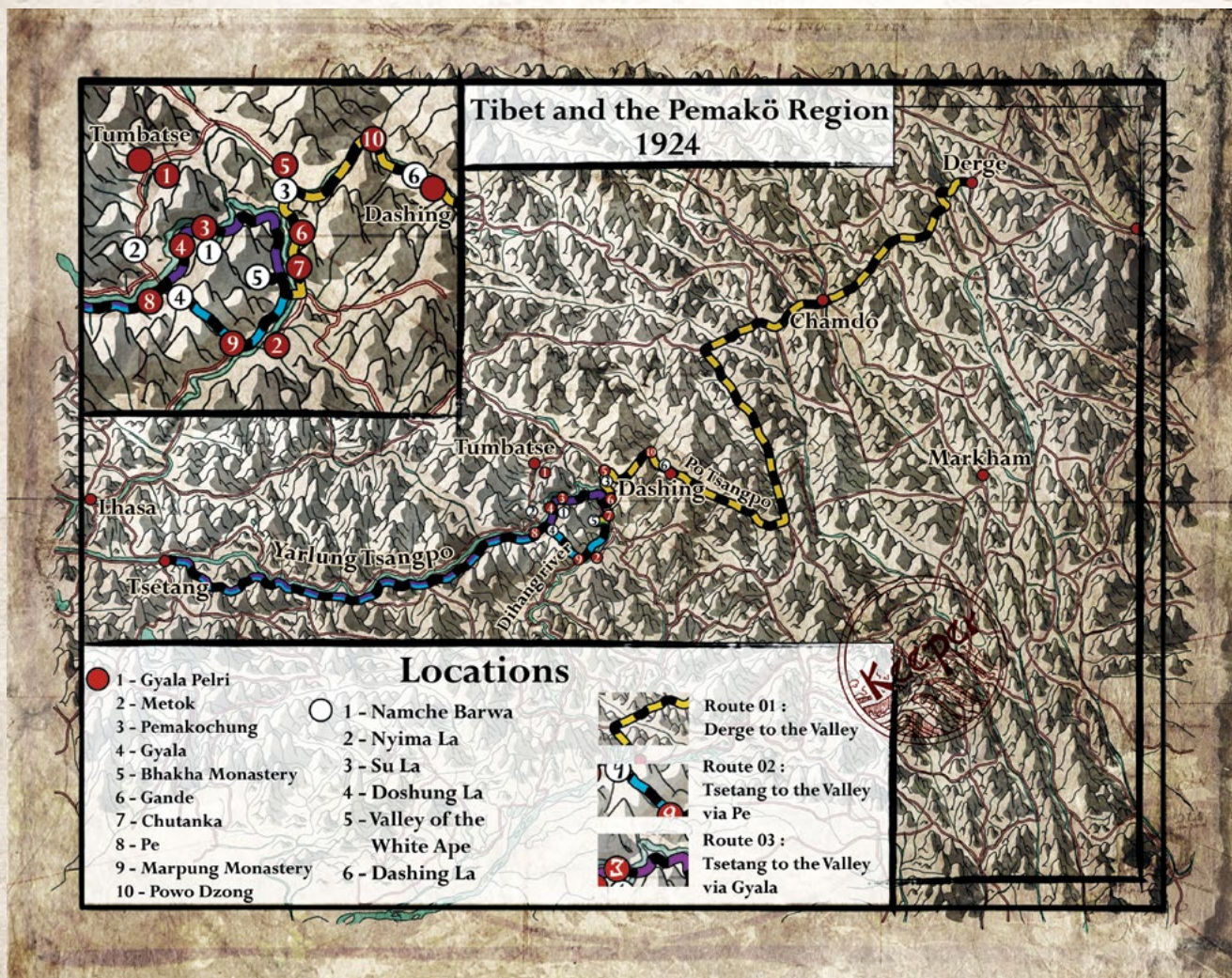
If the investigators' last stop was to collect the ritual scroll from Derge (Chapter 5), then the most straightforward way to reach the Valley of the White Ape is to journey first to Chamdo and then on toward Powo Dzong (Pomi) on the trade routes (Chapter 5: **Getting to Derge**, page 198). Before they reach the *dzong*, they can detour past Bhakha

Monastery and over the Su La, descending into the dripping, leech-infested jungles on the other side.

Heading south from the village of Gande leads to the Lopa village of Chutanka, which sits on a rocky shelf high above the river. Here, the investigators can see the first evidence of why their destination has its name: Chutanka's houses openly use the skins of white apes taken by their hunters as floor coverings. From Chutanka, the investigators can cross the gorge via a terrifyingly unstable cable bridge to gain entry to the secret valleys in the shadow of Namche Barwa, where their destiny awaits.

It should take the investigators about a month to walk from Derge to Powo Dzong (or around two weeks if riding). Once across the mountains and inside Pemakö, the thick forests and steep slopes give them no choice but to walk. The route via Bhakha Monastery and Chutanka to the Valley of the White Ape should take them another five days, if the going is good—bear in mind that in the densest jungle, they may only be able to manage between 5 and 8 miles (8–12 km) a day.

Tibet and the Pemakö Region map



FROM INDIA

If the investigators arrive from India, the most direct route follows the Yarlung Tsangpo through Tsetang. From there, they have two options: either head out from Pe on the key trade route over the Doshung La toward Metok and the rest of the lower gorge, and then turn northeast toward the Valley of the White Ape, or journey up from Pe to Gyala at the mouth of the gorge before continuing downriver toward the monastery at Pemakochung and beyond.

If they choose the Doshung La path, their first obstacle is the river at Pe, which can be crossed by a rickety ferry formed from two dugout canoes connected with planks to make a crude deck. After that, they must climb up a boggy trail through the forest to the rhododendron-filled Pass of Sharp Stones (the literal translation of Doshung La) and the alpine meadow beyond. Depending on the time of year, this meadow may be filled with avalanche debris, burying the profusion of plants Kingdon-Ward spent his time in the area collecting.

The investigators are most likely to experience what Kingdon-Ward referred to as the Doshung La's rain-wind, but if the weather is clear, they can see both Gyala and Metok—the northern and southern entrances to the gorge—from the top of the pass. After traipsing through yet more forests, they reach Marpung Monastery—where Kinthup spent the final days of his indentured servitude—before turning northeast toward the Valley of the White Ape. The investigators must take great care when accepting hospitality from any Monpas they come across in this region, as the area surrounding Metok is infamous for its poisoning cult (**A Poisoned Chalice**, page 241).

Gyala, on the southern bank of the Yarlung Tsangpo, stands on a tributary of the main river opposite the falls of Shinje Chogyal (the Lord of Death)—the source of confusion regarding the existence of a 150-foot (46 m) waterfall in Kinthup's report. Below the village's dozen or so stone and

wood houses, the river gathers into a still, calm pool before plunging down between Gyala Pelri and Namche Barwa at the start of the upper gorge. The gorge is at its deepest here, with fathoms three times the depth of the Grand Canyon.

From Gyala, it is a 4–5 day walk to Pemakochung along steep and treacherous pathways and past cold, oozing springs of bright yellow sulfur. Even steeper and more hair-raising is the route above the monastery up to the Khandro Sang La, the Secret Pass of the Dakinis, which leads into the Valley of the White Crystal, where Kingdon-Ward and Lord Cawdor reportedly lost all sense of time for four days during their visit to the area. Depending on whether or not the Seven Sisters have been fully dealt with (**Date with a Dakini**, page 211), the investigators may be wary of visiting a valley believed to house the hidden forest of the dakinis. From the valley, the investigators can trudge on through jungle and swamp toward their true destination.


The journey from Gangtok in Sikkim to Pe via Tsetang should take the investigators a little under two months if walking, or just under one month if riding. Reaching the Valley of the White Ape from Pe should take them another five to seven days on foot, depending on the conditions. If, on the other hand, they approach from Gyala, it takes an additional week to ten days, minimum, to reach the valley.

As a side trip before the investigators arrive in Pe, if the Keeper wishes, Tenzin Kalsang may suggest a visit to his former monastery at Buchu Sergyi, which can be reached by following the course of the Gyam-do Chu north from its confluence with the Yarlung Tsangpo. Unless they arrive very early in 1924, they are unlikely to bump into Kingdon-Ward and Lord Cawdor, who also visited the demoness-subduing temple on their way to Pemakö.




A HELPING HAND

Lopa porters can be hired from any of the towns, villages, and monasteries on Pemakö's borders, such as Powo Dzong, Gyala, or Pe. While they may act as guides to get the investigators into Pemakö, they do not have the local knowledge of the area necessary to find the Valley of the White Ape. For that expertise, investigators will need to hire Monpa guides from the villages hidden within Pemakö's valleys and jungles.



THE BLAZING METEORITE

Namche Barwa (whose name means Blazing Meteorite) and its sister, Gyala Pelri (Glorious Peak), stand guard at the northern entrance to Pemakö. Some identify both mountains as Dorje Phagmo's breasts, although others see Namche Barwa as the goddess' right breast and Gyala Pelri as her head. Standing at around 25,500 feet (7,770 m) high, Namche Barwa is the tallest mountain in Pemakö, and its shoulders are crisscrossed with hidden passes leading to mysterious and sacred valleys. The Valley of the White Ape sits somewhere on its southern flank.



PREPARING THE WAY

Regardless of how the investigators approach Pemakö, during their journey Tenzin Kalsang begins to tutor them in what they must do when they arrive at the Valley of the White Ape. Those who volunteered their POW to create the *kangling* and *damaru* (**Five and Drum**, page 173) are given the responsibility of playing them during the ritual in support of the investigator (or investigators) leading the rite. If they ask what they should play, Tenzin Kalsang replies: *“What is in your heart, your essence, and your mind. Only that, nothing more.”*

The *lama* chooses who will conduct the ritual based on who has the highest POW; if more than one investigator has the same POW, Tenzin Kalsang teaches all of them the ritual. It takes 1D8 days, each rolled individually, for them to learn it by rote in Tibetan from the *lama*, and requires a successful Hard INT roll to fully commit it to memory. If any of the investigators learning the ritual managed to translate some of it while at Derge (**A Profitable Exchange**, page 205), they gain a bonus die on this roll. As ever, pushed rolls are permitted, but failing again (or a fumble on the initial INT roll) results in a **Sanity** roll (1/1D6 loss) as the investigator realizes what is being asked of them: the apparent murder and devouring of the holy man.

Challenging the *lama* about the specifics of the ritual as a result of a failed pushed or fumbled roll is greeted with his—by now familiar—smile, and the following: *“What must be done is purely symbolic and part of many such rituals belonging to my faith. As long as you remain focused and strong, no harm will come to any of us, no matter what you think you see or do.”*

SELF-IMPROVEMENT: PEMAKÖ

It is unlikely that there will be much opportunity to improve existing skills or learn new ones as the investigators travel through Pemakö—partly due to the rigors of traveling through such harsh terrain, but also because the *lama* is busy tutoring at least one person in the ritual chant they will need to perform once they reach the Valley of the White Ape. However, if the investigators have hired guides or porters, they may still be able to pick up something along the way; see the **Tribal Member** profile in **Appendix A** (page 339) for potential skills they could learn/improve.

Tenzin Kalsang underlines the fact that there is more to the ritual than the instruments and the chants he has taught them, but he will talk them through every step as they perform it in order to ensure everything goes the way it should. If asked exactly what he means by that, providing no one has had the grisly flash of insight described above, he simply asks that they remain patient; all will be revealed at the correct time and in the correct place. Until then, they have other things to worry about, such as safely reaching their destination.

START: IN THE SHADOW OF THE BLAZING METEOR

A terrible thunderstorm breaks out as soon as the investigators cross the pass into Pemakö. The sky is split by streaks of lightning, and rain lashes down in torrents. Although the investigators do not know it, the storm has been conjured up by the Tokabhaya as part of their “set dressing” to convince the investigators that the opening of the Gates of Agartha is imminent.

With a successful **Spot Hidden** or **Listen** roll, the investigators are aware of something else: the ritual bowls they are carrying vibrate with a loud hum every time there is a lightning strike. The person carrying the bowls may feel the vibration through their packing, or a fellow investigator may see the pack vibrating around them. The sound itself is just at the edge of the audible spectrum: a set of rich, warm tones resonating in perfect harmony that quickly dissipate as the lightning fades.

If the investigators have forgotten that the bowls contain blazing sky iron, permit them a **Know** roll to remember this pertinent information (alternatively, the *lama* can inform them). A successful **Ocult** or **Lore (Buddhism)** roll recalls that objects containing such metal are believed to sing whenever lightning strikes close by. Tenzin Kalsang laughs once the discovery has been made. The storm dies out once the investigators work their way down from the mountains and into Pemakö itself.

GETTING TO THE VALLEY

Although the investigators have found their way to Pemakö, they still have to locate the Valley of the White Ape. They are likely aware of its rough location on the slopes of Namche Barwa from their time in Derge, but will need help identifying its actual position. Unfortunately, any Monpa guides they hire are extremely reluctant to talk about the valley’s existence, even in the presence of Tenzin Kalsang, as they believe it to be an extremely holy site—potentially Pemakö’s ultimate refuge, its *yangsang ney*.

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It takes a **Hard Charm**, **Fast Talk**, or **Persuade** roll, plus a donation of suitable trade goods (food, clothing, boots, weapons, etc.), to convince a Monpa hunting party to show them the way (a very generous donation may supply a bonus die). It's possible that one of the investigators knows the **Alter Weather** spell (**Appendix B**, page 340) and, if so, they could engineer a bonus die on the roll by making sure the weather is gloriously sunny during any discussions with Monpa villagers regarding the valley's whereabouts. The exact cost of the spell is determined by the prevailing weather conditions at the time—see **Pemakö's Weather**, page 233, for details on what those conditions might be, depending on the time of year).

Another way for the investigators to find the valley is to listen for what Tenzin Kalsang calls the dream song of the dakinis. Many pilgrims to Pemakö report hearing the sound of beautiful female voices raised in song while they sleep at night. The melodious singing is said to be accompanied by musical instruments, as well as sweet, enticing fragrances, such as food and perfume. The Triumvirate, well aware of the local legends and determined to assist the investigators to the ritual site, are quite prepared to fake the dream song if the investigators are struggling to find their own way there. A successful **Listen** roll is all that is required to identify the song, which they can follow toward the site.

Alternatively, the investigators may track the white apes from which the valley takes its name. A successful **Spot Hidden** roll identifies the presence of an ape nearby, while a successful **Track** roll allows the investigators to follow the creature back to its hidden home. Or, if the investigators somehow lose their Lopa or Monpa guides—for example, during the optional **Abominable Snowmen** encounter (page 238)—they could use **Navigate** to figure out the direction the guides were taking them before they were abandoned.

If all else fails, Tenzin Kalsang happily leads the investigators toward the valley, using his memory of the holy scriptures he studied at Derge Parkhang to guide his footsteps. He seems completely unaffected by the atrocious conditions, and frequently sings to himself as he walks, taking great delight in pointing out the many beautiful flowers and birds along the way.


Aside from the fir and hemlock branches the *lama* encourages the investigators to gather for use in cleansing the ritual site, Tenzin Kalsang takes great interest in one plant in particular. He stops to check it for either flowers, fruits, or seedpods (depending on the season), and picks only the ripest specimens after careful examination. A successful **Natural World** or **Science (Biology, Botany, or Pharmacy)** roll identifies the plant as an Indian thorn apple (*da dbu ra* in Tibetan), a member of the *Datura* family, renowned for its toxic nature and hallucinogenic properties. If asked why he's gathering a potentially poisonous ingredient, he replies



VISIONS IN THE DARK: PEMAKÖ

Unlike in previous chapters, the Tokabhaya now begin to infuse the investigators' visions with a tinge of hope so as to convince them that the end is in sight. Shadowy images of strange rituals haunt their dreams—never enough to figure out quite what's going on, but always followed by the storm clouds clearing and, as the day of the ceremony approaches, by scenes of the investigators returning to their former lives, with the world safe once more thanks to their actions. Sample visions include:

- The investigator sits on a beach under the light of a waxing moon, surrounded by their traveling companions. They toast one another and drink rich red wine from the ritual bowls while Tenzin Kalsang performs a ritual dance for them. Three shadowy figures dressed in all-concealing hooded dark blue robes hover just on the edge of sight. When the *lama* concludes his dance, the sun rises over a crystal mountain, dazzling the investigator and filling them with a sense of happiness.
- The investigator stands by a lakeshore. A terrible storm rages all around them. The gale-force wind whips and tears at their hair and clothes, and they can barely hear the sound of chanting above the roaring thunder. When the chanting stops, so does the storm. The clouds clear to reveal a shining rainbow that starts and ends in the waters of the lake. The air is filled with the sound of soothing birdsong.
- The investigator is somewhere very familiar to them (possibly their Meaningful Location, if appropriate), surrounded by their Significant People (as long as they're still alive), all of whom are overjoyed to see them. (If the investigator has already had visions where either their Meaningful Location or their Significant People were destroyed, this should make for a refreshing change.) Aware that they're being watched, the investigator turns to look over their shoulder and sees, in the distance, three figures dressed in all-concealing hooded dark blue robes. The figures wave to the investigator, and then disappear.



that the plant is yet another essential part of the ritual to come. Those who are aware of the thorn apple's properties—provided they also succeed at a **Lore (Buddhism)** roll—realize there is a problem: Tantric Buddhists are not supposed to consume hallucinogens as part of their practice. Mentioning the thorn apple's pharmacological effects to

Tenzin Kalsang and questioning the necessity of its use is only met with confusion. *“The terma says we must use it, and we cannot doubt its word. Are you sure this ingredient does what you say? Could you be mistaken?”*

It is possible to convince the *lama* not to use the thorn apple in the upcoming ritual, but this requires a successful Extreme **Persuade** roll. If they fail to dissuade him, the *lama* continues to collect the plant and will go on to use it as described in **Groundwork** (page 242), certain that the investigators have made a mistake in their identification.

THE ABOMINABLE SNOWMEN (OPTIONAL)

This optional side adventure helps to reinforce the existence of many strange things hidden in the forests and mountains of Pemakö—and to remind the investigators that, even though their goal is in sight, there are obstacles that must be overcome within the *baeyul* as a whole—including terrifying creatures pursuing their own agenda. The premise relies on the investigators’ possession of the ritual bowls acquired in Peshawar; if they do not have the bowls, this encounter can be skipped.

Alternatively, the Keeper could make use of the two other diversions described in the **Seemingly Simian** (page 241) and **A Poisoned Chalice** (page 241) sections. If, however, the Keeper wishes to simply speed ahead to the performance of the ritual, they should move on to **The Most Secret Place** (page 242) instead.

Unbeknown to the Children of Fear, the thunderstorm they sent to plague the investigators as they entered Pemakö did more than just set the ritual bowls a-ringing. It also attracted the attention of a group of *mi-go* working in one of Namche Barwa’s hidden valleys. The team of *mi-go* scientists took up residence in Pemakö to experiment with adapting the region’s mystical flora into a suitable alternative food source for the Fungi from Yuggoth. Unfortunately, their research is not yielding positive results. But, when their equipment detected the vibrations of the ritual bowls during the storm, the creatures believed that this might provide the answer to their problem: transmutation of biological matter through resonant frequency oscillation. They had toyed with the idea of using blazing sky iron previously, but the rarity of the material in Pemakö led them to discount such research as a purely theoretical exercise. Now, though, a small team of the scientist *mi-go*, disguised in the skins of the local white apes, have set out to track down the bowls and take them for themselves. Initially, they headed in



Attack from the abominable snowmen

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the direction of the original vibrations (which stopped when the storm did), and then began shadowing the investigators through Namche Barwa's forests.

Although they suspect the investigators have the bowls, the mi-go cannot confirm this until there is another storm, and, for the moment, are merely biding their time. Permit the investigators a **Spot Hidden** roll to notice fleeting white shapes following them through the jungles—any Monpa guides are likely to advise that the migyu (white apes) are watching them. Any attempts to follow the watchers leads to disappointment—the mi-go are determined not to reveal themselves until they are sure they have the right targets. Alternatively, the Keeper may opt to stage a run-in with Namche Barwa's actual white apes (**Migyu**, page 265, at the end of the chapter).

LIGHTNING STRIKES TWICE

Fortunately for the mi-go, the Tokabhaya—still determined to convince the investigators that time is of the essence—send another thunderstorm to plague them soon after they enter the shadow of Namche Barwa. Shortly after the storm begins, the mi-go strike. A successful **Spot Hidden** roll picks up on the creatures' presence (as they have drawn in closer than before), as well as an eerie, phosphorescent glow about their heads. A successful **Listen** roll identifies a strange buzzing sound almost inaudible above the thunder and lightning. Use approximately one abominable mi-go per investigator; less if the group is not combat-oriented. Sample **Abominable Mi-go** scientist profiles can be found in the **Creatures and Monsters** section at the end of this chapter (page 264).

As these mi-go are scientists and therefore slightly smaller than their brethren, their primary aim is to snatch the bowls and retreat rather than engage in a head-to-head confrontation. As such, one of the mi-go (marked as 1* in the table on page 264) keeps back a little and attempts to use its hypnosis special ability to “freeze” the investigators and any accompanying guides while the others rush in and steal the bowls, which are once again vibrating with each lightning strike. If the investigators fail their opposed **POW** roll versus the mi-go's hypnosis, they stand transfixed as the creatures, resembling man-sized white monkeys (thanks to the skins they wear), calmly walk in and help themselves to the ritual bowls. It takes a successful **Spot Hidden**, **Natural World**, or **Science (Biology)** roll to realize that these creatures aren't all they appear to be, triggering a **Sanity** roll (0/1D6 loss) when the mi-go beneath the disguises are revealed.

Those who succeed in winning the opposed **POW** roll are free to act. As already mentioned, the mi-go are not interested in a flat-out fight, although they defend themselves if attacked. If the investigators' defense proves too much for them, the mi-go flee—ideally, taking at least one of the bowls with them,



APING THE MI-GO

If the Keeper wishes the migyu to have a greater role in this scenario, one possibility is that, instead of the mi-go scientists mounting the attempt to snatch the bowls, they send their minions instead—white apes whose brains have been replaced by those of captured Monpa hunters. The mi-go have promised to restore their brains to their rightful bodies if the brain-swapped migyu can successfully retrieve the bowls. Whether they make good on this promise or not is another matter entirely, meaning the investigators could either stumble upon the mi-go carrying out surgery to restore the Monpas' brains, or the grisly aftermath of prior surgeries as they explore the mi-go research station, accompanied by additional **Sanity** losses (1/1D4+1 points). They may even find some white apes and Monpas to rescue (either before or after their alterations).

If the mi-go fail in their initial attempt to steal the bowls, they may resort to sending their brain-swapped white apes along to see if they can do a better job against these tricky outsiders. If running *The Children of Fear* as a pulp campaign, we heartily recommend adding in this extra level of surgical body-swapping horror.



but prioritizing their own lives above all else. Now that they have confirmed their suspicions are correct, even if they leave without the bowls, they are likely to return at a later date to try again, at the Keeper's discretion.

If any porters or guides accompanying the investigators fail their opposed **POW** roll against the mi-go, then, as soon as the effect stops (either by injuring or suitably distracting the “singing” mi-go, or when the mi-go flee), they abandon the investigators to their fate. Any who succeed and survive the encounter demand additional payment before they agree to continue any further.

Down on the Farm

If the mi-go manage to snatch one or more bowls, the investigators must retrieve them if they are to complete the gate-closing ritual. The mi-go's flight from the scene of the attack may instigate a chase scene.

Alternatively, the investigators may use **Track** or **Spot Hidden** to follow the creatures after the encounter is over, or even **Navigate** to work out the rough direction in which the false white apes fled. It is also possible to use the *melong* to see where the mi-go went, albeit at

the continuing risk of bleed-through (**Side Effects**, page 126). If the investigators still have some guides or porters with them, they may be able to lead the investigators to the mi-go, but convincing them to do so requires yet more trade goods and a successful Hard social skill roll.

If the investigators manage to successfully follow the mi-go back to their hidden research station, they find themselves climbing up through dense patches of rhododendrons along a barely-discernable track to a set of offset stone pillars. After squeezing between these pillars, the investigators emerge into a narrow defile that opens out onto a small, bowl-shaped valley. There is sufficient cover near the valley's entrance to hide behind while observing the scene below; a successful group **Stealth** roll may be required to do so, at the Keeper's discretion.

The valley has been sub-divided into what appear to be fields, each section carefully cordoned off from its neighbors, with colored tags attached to the tapes. A successful **Science (Biology or Botany)** or **Natural World** roll determines that these sections contain different plant species. There appear to be two buildings of some sort on the opposite side of the valley—one is the mi-go's residence, the other is their laboratory. What these buildings are constructed of is impossible to say, especially when viewed from a distance.

The mi-go are milling around a strange contraption set up a little way from one of the buildings (the laboratory). They have shed their ape skins, triggering a **Sanity** roll (0/1D6 loss) for anyone who did not realize what they were during the attack. The apparatus appears to consist of half a dozen, warty, door-knob-shaped lumps of metal mounted on poles and connected to each other by a halo of twisted wires.

As the investigators watch, the mi-go disconnect some of the wires to form an opening, and then carefully place the stolen bowl(s) within the center of the ring. They pour something into the bowl(s)—possibly water, but it's hard to tell from more than a few feet away—then add what appears to be plant material, selected from a number of different sections, depending on the number of bowls they stole (a different plant for each bowl). They reattach the wires while one mi-go proceeds to fiddle with one of the lumps of metal, before taking a step back, apparently to admire its handiwork.

The mi-go scientists all stand and watch as the lump begins to spark; a reaction that soon spreads to all of the entangled objects. Arcs of electricity surround the bowls, causing them to vibrate and produce the same sound the investigators heard during the storm. Apparently satisfied, the mi-go disappear into one of the buildings (Keeper's choice), leaving the apparatus sparking away on its own.

With the bowls now left unguarded, it is possible for the investigators to sneak down into the valley and attempt to retrieve them; a successful **Stealth** roll may be required, depending on the circumstances. Alternatively, more gung-

ho investigators may wish to execute an outright assault on the mi-go facility in order to retrieve their bowls. If attacked, the mi-go defend themselves, but, again, will ultimately flee if their lives are in danger. That said, there is always the option for them to return—now or later—with a few tougher members of their kind (*Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook*, page 301), should the Keeper desire a follow-up encounter.

If the investigators have interacted with the actual migyu at any point and managed to win their trust, should the fight appear to be going against the investigators, the apes could arrive to aid them. While the white apes fear the mi-go, who hunt them for their skins, they move to engage if the odds appear to be in their favor.

Those attempting to recover the bowls from the apparatus first need to deactivate the lightning rig, requiring a successful **Mechanical Repair**, **Electrical Repair**, or **Science (Engineering)** roll. Failure delivers a nasty shock to the investigator (1D4 damage), while a failed pushed roll or fumble inflicts the increased damage of 1D10 on the investigator, who must then make a successful **CON** roll or fall unconscious for 1D6 rounds.

Even though the bowls may only have been in the rig for a short period of time, the biological transmutation of the plants they contain has already begun. A successful **Science (Biology or Botany)** or **Natural World** roll indicates that the plants are subtly but noticeably different to other specimens from the various sections they were taken from, even though the investigators cannot precisely identify the original plants—these are the magical herbs written about in the various *termas* describing Pemakö, which a successful **Lore (Buddhism)** roll, or Tenzin Kalsang, can confirm.

It is left to the Keeper to decide what, if any, side effects may result from physical contact with these mutated plants. Suggestions include skin rashes, nausea, hallucinations, and hay fever-like symptoms (including sneezing that might attract the mi-go if a stealthy attempt to recover the bowls is in progress, or streaming eyes that may impose a penalty die to physical skill rolls).


Once they have recovered the bowls, the investigators can beat a hasty retreat and continue their journey on to the Valley of the White Ape. Before they leave, however, they may wish to destroy the mi-go research station, although this course of action is bound to have repercussions later, perhaps in a separate scenario of the Keeper's own design.

It may be that the investigators are forced to flee without retrieving some or all of the bowls. Under such circumstances, Tenzin Kalsang declares that they must proceed with the ritual regardless, as they do not now have time to craft or find a suitable alternative. He is sure all will be well, although a successful Hard **Psychology** roll reveals that he is not quite as confident as he claims.



BRIGHT SPARKS

The mi-go have adapted their electric guns (*Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook*, page 270) into an artificial lightning rig so they may test their transmutation theory using the bowls' resonance. They began building the contraption as soon as they were aware of the bowls' existence, so that it would be ready for activation the moment they secured the artifacts.



Keeper note: the Triumvirate recovers any missing bowls once the investigators have left the area, taking them to the ritual valley and placing them on the beach by the heart-shaped lake ready for the investigators to find (**The Most Secret Place**, page 242).

SEEMINGLY SIMIAN (OPTIONAL)

If the investigators are not tracking Pemakö's white apes in order to find their destination, and don't encounter them during any interactions with the creatures' mi-go impersonators, then they may instead come across the migyu as they near the valley's hidden entrance. The migyu's reactions depend very much on how the investigators approach them.

If the investigators have been respectful of their environment, they are greeted with curiosity, particularly as the apes are attracted by the blazing sky iron in the ritual bowls the group carries (assuming they still have them). If, however, the investigators have caused excessive damage to the forests around the valley, hunted Pemakö's animals for sport rather than for food, discarded their belongings, or abandoned their rubbish wantonly throughout the area, then the apes are likely to attack in an attempt to drive them away.

Statistics for the **Migyu** are in the **Creatures and Monsters** section at the end of this chapter (page 265). As the apes are not meant to prevent the investigators from entering the valley, it is recommended that no more than one ape per investigator takes part in any attack—or fewer, if the characters are not combat-oriented. Loud noises and flames are surefire ways to scare the migyu off, should the investigators prefer a non-violent solution.

A POISONED CHALICE (OPTIONAL)

Those traveling through the remote villages around Metok would do well to decline any hospitality they are offered, particularly *chang* (barley beer) or a place to sleep. The area is notorious for its Monpa poisoning cult, whose practitioners seek to steal their victims' merit and good fortune so that they may themselves experience a better rebirth.

The *dugmas* (female poisoners, also known locally as witches) brew their toxin from the drained venom of snakes, mixed with aconite, poisonous mushrooms, toxic plant roots, venomous frogs, and rotten eggs. This noxious mix is buried and left to ferment until the next full moon. The witch then braids half of her hair and paints half her face black with soot before digging up the poison and swearing to use it on the highest merit person she comes across. If she does not do so within two weeks, she must use the poison on either herself or a member of her family—it cannot be disposed of in any other way. Use the **Tribal Member** profile (**Appendix A**, page 339) for the *dugmas*, as required.

The toxin, in its powdered form, is secreted beneath the *dugma's* thumbnail. She first offers *chang* to her chosen victim, drinking from it herself to prove that it is safe before she slips the poison into the drink from its hiding place under her nail. If this fails, she instead scratches her victim while they sleep in her house or barn.

Should the investigators succeed at a **Spot Hidden** roll when approaching a village in the southern gorge area, they notice the carcass of a snake hanging low in a tree a little distance away from the trail. If they choose to investigate, they find a small quantity of a milky, amber liquid contained in a bowl beneath the affixed corpse. Those with Science (Biology or Zoology) or Natural World above base skill can identify it as the snake's venom. This should put the investigators on guard during any upcoming interactions with the locals—even if the investigators are initially unaware of the find's significance, their guides are sure to fill them in and suggest that the group moves swiftly on.

Regardless of whether or not they spot the snake, the investigators should receive a separate **Spot Hidden** roll later to notice a *dugma* hostess attempting to slip poison into any offered *chang*. If the *dugma* instead tries to scratch an investigator as they sleep, permit them a **Listen** roll to hear someone creeping into their sleeping quarters.

If the *dugma* is successful in administering the poison, the results are not immediate. The toxin takes anywhere between three days and three weeks to kill its victim—a slow and lingering end during which time the body gradually bloats and blackens from within. The poison powder is Lethal

(4D10 damage); an Extreme CON roll reduces this damage by half. If the poison causes enough damage to result in the investigator's death, the Keeper should roll 2D10+2 to determine how many days the investigator has left (divide the damage by the number of days to determine the number of hit points lost per day). The Keeper may also wish to impose increasing penalties on all physical and mental skill rolls to simulate the investigator's deteriorating health, such as increased difficulty levels or penalty dice.

Officially, there is no known antidote to the *dugma's* foul concoction, but rumors persist of magical herbs in Pemakö that can cure even this most potent of poisons. Should an investigator be poisoned, Tenzin Kalsang or any other suitably qualified character can attempt a **Lore (Buddhism)** roll to identify the necessary plants and make the necessary concoction to negate the poison's effect (assume 1D3 hit points are healed per day, to normal maximum).

THE MOST SECRET PLACE

Even after the investigators reach the right area, they must still find the door into the Valley of the White Ape. If they approach during the summer, tall grasses in the adjacent valley hide the way; in any other season, the entrance is shrouded by dense mists that cannot be dismissed, even by magical means. The surrounding peaks are too precipitous and unstable for humans to climb into the valley—the only way in is through the hidden door, as befits a *baeyul*.

A successful **Spot Hidden** roll draws the investigators' attention to the rainbows ringing one of the half dozen or so waterfalls in the valley, which appear regardless of the weather; a successful **Lore (Buddhism)** or **Occult** roll identifies the presence of the rainbow (*ja* in Tibetan) as a most auspicious sign, one which must surely mark the way forward. Searching in the vicinity of the waterfall identifies a narrow pathway leading behind the cascade to a small cave, its walls painted with rainbows and primitive drawings of white apes. Any guides or porters the investigators may have with them refuse to enter the cave; no degree of financial inducement, persuasion, or threat of harm can encourage them to go any further. From here, the investigators are on their own.

A tunnel at the rear of the cave stretches out into darkness. Tenzin Kalsang is convinced that this is the hidden door to the *rten* (place of power) they have been seeking; however, even the smallest investigator must crouch down to enter the tunnel, while the largest (SIZ 80+) must crawl on their hands and knees from the outset. Those with a phobia of enclosed spaces must master that fear before they can go any further—this shouldn't be a problem as long as they are

sane, but for any investigator suffering from an underlying insanity, all actions requiring a skill roll while in the tunnel suffer from a penalty die.

Shortly after they enter the tunnel, the investigators become aware that they are no longer crawling across stone, but a fragrant carpet of pink and white petals. Any investigator who dreamt of Tenzin Kalsang in his hidden cave at Tun-huang (**Chapter 2: Within the Secret Cave**, page 78) recognizes these immediately, as does anyone with above base skill in Natural World or Science (Biology or Botany), as peach blossoms. The *lama* takes this as a sign that they are indeed on the right path.

The tunnel gradually shrinks the further the investigators go, until everyone is wriggling along on their bellies. After what seems like an interminable amount of time (in reality, around an hour due to their enforced slow progress), the investigators and their *lama* emerge into a strangely-lit valley ringed by high peaks. The sky is a dark purple, split frequently with sickly green lightning, while the low growl of distant thunder echoes across the valley. A heart-shaped lake can be seen in the center of the valley, its surface stirred by a cold wind that seems to come from every direction at once. The investigators may recognize the view before them—it is a version of the *thangka* scene revealed to them by Kunchen Chodak at Dzogchen Monastery (**Rudam**, page 208).

The ritual bowls they carry begin to vibrate with an eerie, discordant, keening tone, very different from the sound they emitted in proximity to lightning outside the valley. Tenzin Kalsang turns to the investigators and says, "*We must hurry. The Gates of Agarthā are almost open. There is not a moment to lose. Follow me.*"

THE LITURGY OF DEATH

The *lama* leads the investigators down to a flat, sandy area by the lakeshore, where he begins to empty out the contents of his bulging satchel: water skins, pots of various sizes, some leather pouches, and any of the various ritual elements the investigators aren't carrying themselves. As he does so, he asks the investigators to prepare the area by sweeping it with the branches they've been carrying. A cold rain begins to fall as they do so. The *lama*, once his satchel is unpacked, busies himself collecting driftwood from along the lakeshore.

GROUNDWORK

Once the ritual area has been cleaned, Tenzin Kalsang draws a large triangle in the sand, with one of its sides running parallel to the water's edge. He asks the investigators to set three fires, one at each of the triangle's points, using the driftwood he has collected. Bizarrely, the falling rain doesn't

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DEUS EX

As mentioned in **Chapter 3 (Missing Pieces?)**, page 141), if the investigators failed to acquire the ritual bowls from Peshawar and have only managed to craft substandard replacements (**Kapalas**, page 181), then the Tokabhaya ensure that the bowls are waiting for them on the beach by the lake, having sent their own agents to retrieve them. The same is true if the investigators lost the bowls during the **Abominable Snowmen** encounter (page 238). Tenzin Kalsang is overjoyed to see the artifacts and claims it is a sign that the gods are indeed helping them in their quest to close the Gates of Agartha.

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

If the investigators haven't already encountered them, the Keeper may wish to include abominable mi-go in this part of the scenario as an added distraction for more combat-oriented (or pulp) groups. If so, while the investigators are sweeping the ritual area, a successful **Spot Hidden, Natural World**, or **Track** roll reveals the presence of odd impressions in the sand—marks resembling footprints, but strange and unidentifiable. A successful **Cthulhu Mythos** roll identifies these for what they are: mi-go tracks (0/1 Sanity loss). The mi-go may attempt to steal the seven bowls either prior to the ritual or during it, although they may face the ire of the Triumvirate if they do so—meaning that, for a little while at least, the Tokabhaya and the investigators may be temporarily fighting on the same side.



The hidden door to the rten

prevent the wood from catching alight, although the fires do sizzle and pop as the raindrops hit them, sending little plumes of smoke into the swirling winds. The flames climb higher as the *lama* throws handfuls of juniper and fir onto the fires to purify the ritual space they have created.

As the aromatic smoke snakes around them, the *lama* asks for the ritual bowls. He takes as many as there are investigators, mutters a brief prayer over them, and then hands one to each of his companions before taking a bowl for himself. Indicating that the investigators should follow his example, he fills his bowl halfway with water from the lake and then places it onto one of the fires to heat. Once the bowls are warming, he adds black tea to each of them and leaves them to come to the boil. Throughout, he is careful not to set foot inside the triangle of fires and advises the investigators not to do so either. He then fills any remaining bowls with water before nestling them in the sand along the lakeshore.

While the tea brews, Tenzin Kalsang begins the investigators' initiation ceremony. He encourages those with the *kangling* and *damaru* to make as much noise as possible with their instruments while he fetches one of the spare bowls of water, chanting all the while. He offers the water to each of them, giving them a symbolic sip, before touching each investigator's forehead, throat, and heart with each of the three *gau* he usually wears about his neck. Finally, he holds up the *melong* in front of each investigator's face, but not long enough to trigger its effects; if one of the investigators is carrying the *melong*, Tenzin Kalsang makes sure to retrieve it before the initiation begins; if they no longer have the stone mirror, the *lama* skips this final step.

The investigators' empowerment now complete, the *lama* hands them a translation of the ritual's key actions to read (**Handout: Liberation 2**; the gameplay logistics of these steps are discussed in **Running the Ritual**, page 247). Once the tea is ready, the *lama* carefully removes the bowls from the flames and beds them in the sand to cool.

Tenzin Kalsang fully answers any questions the investigators might have, explaining everything previously left undiscussed about the type of rite they are about to perform (**Handout: Feast 1**). He underlines how they must use their minds and, just as importantly, their imaginations to achieve their aim rather than physically performing the acts they have read about. *"If you give yourselves up to the ritual, it will feel as though you are truly slicing my flesh. But don't worry, none of it is real. The items we have gathered are merely tools to help focus your energy so that you may visualize in your mind's eye what must be done. I have sacrificed myself in similar ways several times and, as you can see, I am still here."* A successful **Psychology** roll indicates that the *lama* truly believes everything he says.

If the investigators succeed at a **Language (Tibetan)** roll (or ask Tenzin Kalsang), they discover that *kyilkhor* is merely the Tibetan word for a *mandala*, a meditational aid that will assist them in focusing on their aims during the ritual. Tenzin Kalsang explains that this one is triangular in shape, rather than the round ones they may be used to, in part because of the "violent" nature of the ritual that will take place on it, but also because the energy it releases will be directed against a malign being: the King of Fear. A successful **Occult** or **Lore (Buddhism)** roll confirms that triangular mandalas are often associated with wrathful deities and black magic.

Keeper note: if the investigators achieve an Extreme success at any time during this conversation with their Lore (Buddhism) or Occult skills, they know all the relevant information regarding the ritual and do not have to roll again; a Hard success means they know most of the information, with Tenzin Kalsang merely providing the more obscure details.

Tenzin Kalsang gives his *khatvanga* (ritual staff) to the investigator with either the highest relevant **Art/Craft** skill or the highest **DEX**, and then draws their attention to the pattern on both the ritual scroll they received in Derge and its translation. *"This is what you must reproduce in the shi-sa when the time comes. That part, at least, is real."*

A successful **Language (Tibetan)** or **Lore (Buddhism)** roll reveals that *shi-sa* translates to "dying ground". As before, if no one succeeds at the roll, Tenzin Kalsang relates the word's meaning. He goes on to say that it is merely the name given to places of power where tantric practitioners, such as himself, enact a symbolic death. Typical locations for a *shi-sa* are charnel grounds, haunted places, and anywhere else that inspires the ritual's performer with a true sense of supernatural dread. He laughs, *"I don't know about you, but I think we may have outdone ourselves on that front!"*

If they uncovered the secret of the nectar *rilbus* the *lama* was making at Derge, then the investigators are aware of what the five nectars and the five meats referred to in the ritual description are. If they did not learn of the *rilbus*' contents, the identity and significance of their ingredients can be deduced with a successful **Occult** or **Lore (Buddhism)** roll. In any case, Tenzin Kalsang reaches into a small leather pouch and brings out the nectar pills, handing one to each investigator. They are approximately one inch (2.5 cm) in length by ¼-inch (6 mm) in diameter, yellowish in color, and smell of cardamom, cloves, nutmeg, and sandalwood. There also appear to be little flecks of gold in them. He is more than happy to explain what is in them, along with the reason for each ingredient's inclusion (refer to **A Bitter Pill**, page 210).

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Handout: Liberation 2

To close the Gate:

First: the ground must be cleansed and purified with smoke and fire to remove all obstruction, both material and spiritual; it should be remembered that the scent of fir and juniper is most pleasing to the gods. And as the goddess has three attendants, let there be three fires, arranged as a triangle.

Second: once the land is ready, the kyilkhor must be inscribed within the consecrated space by the holy staff.

Third: those who are to partake in the ritual must then arrange themselves outside the shi-sa and drink deep of the five nectars and eat of the five meats, so that their senses are truly free to call upon the goddess and her consorts.

Fourth: those who are blessed to summon the spirits must play their instruments while the one chosen to lead the sacrifice proclaims the mantra that will draw down the goddess and her attendants. With eyes half-closed, the supplicants build the image of what is to come in their minds, willing it into being with each breath and thought.

Fifth: when the mantra ends, and the instruments have fallen silent, the one chosen by the goddess to be her avatar must envisage leading the sacrifice to the center of the kyilkhor and laying him on his back with his head towards the east. The sacrifice must be willing; his gift will be of no use if he does not gladly offer himself up. The chosen one must imagine drawing the five sacred seed syllables (Om, Hrih, Hum, Drang, and A) onto the offering's crown, his tongue, his heart, his secret place, and the soles of his feet with mustard paste so that his spirit will reincarnate in the realm of the gods in recognition of the purity of his selfless act.

Sixth: taking the blade of the dakinis, the avatar must then picture themselves slashing open the sacrifice's belly and pulling out his entrails, which they and their companions should use to bind him in a kneeling position, face towards the east. After the offering is bound, the petitioners will call into being the goddess' attendants: three spirits, each hungry and watchful.



Seventh: now, the avatar must assume the goddess' form and, seizing the victim by his hair, imagine slicing off his head with one clean stroke. All should now see the indestructible drop—no more than the size of a mustard seed, red below, white above, the sacrifice's most precious gift—rise from his severed throat and float towards the three guardians. They cannot make use of its power yet, though, for first these guests must feast.

Eighth: the goddess incarnate and her supporters must now visualize tossing the victim's head to one side (but still within the bounds of the kyilkhor, or else the ritual will fail), then separating his body into blood, bone, flesh, and organs, placed in the seven sacred bowls that sing without voice. These bowls, overflowing with the five poisons of desire, anger, ignorance, pride, and jealousy, are now ready to present to the spirits for their sustenance. The avatar and her supporters must picture the spirits descending on the bowls like vultures at a sky burial, gorging themselves until sated on this, the sacrifice's last gift, so that they, and he, may be purified.

Sanctified, the guardians may now be seen to approach the indestructible drop, whose power is the key to close the Gate.

The next step should be obvious to the investigators: to play the *kangling* and *damaru* they created at Sitavana. They should have already decided who will play the instruments (**Preparing the Way**, page 236) and who will recite the *mantra* (ritual invocation).

Another successful **Lore (Buddhism)** or **Occult** roll identifies the meanings of the sacred symbols mentioned in the ritual. If the investigators fail the roll, the *lama* traces the shapes in the sand with his finger for the investigator(s) who will lead the ceremony, and then gives them a jar of mustard paste from his pile of artifacts to act as a helpful focus.

It also takes a successful **Occult** or **Lore (Buddhism)** roll to identify which goddess the investigators are invoking in the next step—who at least one of them will also embody later in the ritual (if they fail the roll, Tenzin Kalsang can describe her for them). It is Vajrayogini, in her wrathful form of Dorje Phagmo, protectress of Pemakö. She is often depicted as a naked woman with ruby red skin, and for the

purposes of this ritual, she also has the head of a pig. She wields a *katari* (the blade of the dakinis) in her right hand while holding a *khatvanga* (ritual staff) in her left. As to the appearance of her attendants, the lama is unsure: “*They will manifest in a form that is befitting the sacrifice*,” is the best he can offer. Tenzin Kalsang gives the *katari* to the person who will chant the *mantra*, if they don’t already have it; if more than one person will perform the chant, he gives it to the participant with the lowest current Sanity.

As they speak, the storm continues to build. The necrotic purple light grows darker, and the lightning casts increasingly distorted shadows across the hidden valley. The rain falls more heavily, soaking the investigators to the skin. Thunder roars above them, the wind tears at their hair and clothes, and the occasional bolt of lightning strikes the lake with a loud crack and sizzle. The static electricity is thick enough in the air to make the investigators’ hair stand on end in spite of the dampness.

MANY HANDS

It is important that every investigator has at least one part to play in the ritual so that their players feel invested in the unfolding drama. This may require some rearrangement on the Keeper’s part as to who is assigned what, which can be based on each investigator’s various skills and experiences. Some examples include:

- Someone without an assigned role could be responsible for drawing the seed syllables on the *lama* during the fifth step, particularly if they have a DEX of 60 or more.
- As those playing the instruments only need to do so until the spell is cast, they can then assume responsibility for tying up the *lama* with his entrails during the sixth step, especially if they have hunting or animal handling skills.
- If there are two people chanting the spell, then one might carry out the disembowelment, while another cuts off the *lama*’s head. If there are three chanters, and no one has been assigned the seed syllable step, then one can draw, one can disembowel, and the final one can behead.
- Everyone can get involved in dismembering the *lama*’s body during the eighth step, if the ritual gets that far. While surgical or hunting knowledge would certainly speed this process up, it’s far from essential.

COMPASSION, VIOLENCE, AND SACRIFICE

Whether or not ancient tantric Tibetan Buddhist rituals really did involve human sacrifice, or—as is quite likely—substituted paper or *torma* effigies in the victim’s place, violent acts were believed to be justified if they could save the victim’s soul or benefit society as a whole. Such “compassionate” violence was the moral exception rather than the rule, as most Buddhists were firmly against killing under any circumstances.

Rigdzin Garwang, a Nyingmapa *lama* (1858–1930) from Nyarong, in Kham, was one of those who warned against the dangers of flesh offerings—real or imagined—during rituals involving compassionate violence. In his book *The Dangers of Blood Sacrifice* (c.1895), he discussed how similar flesh offerings of any sort were to actual blood sacrifice, and how easy it would be during such rituals for demons and evil spirits to replace the deities for whom the sacrifice was originally meant. In these cases, the unwitting practitioner would end up closely resembling the misguided acolyte who became the demon Rudra as a result of his sins; the demon whose mythic death, perversely, helped set the boundaries for when compassionate violence was acceptable. See also **Chapter 2: Compassionate Violence** (page 92).

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Once he has answered all of their questions, Tenzin Kalsang snatches up the water skins and adds their contents to the bowls of black tea. If asked, he says that it is *chang* (barley beer). He then scatters in the thorn apple component (unless the investigators have convinced him not to; **Getting to the Valley**, page 236) and asks them each to add their nectar pill to a bowl of their choosing. A successful **Lore (Buddhism), Natural World, Occult, or Science (Pharmacy)** roll reveals that the alcohol in the barley beer is needed to dissolve and activate the *rilbus'* ingredients, while the thorn apple's hallucinogenic properties will undoubtedly help with the visualization part of the ritual. If the thorn apple isn't included, ignore its effects in the following descriptions.

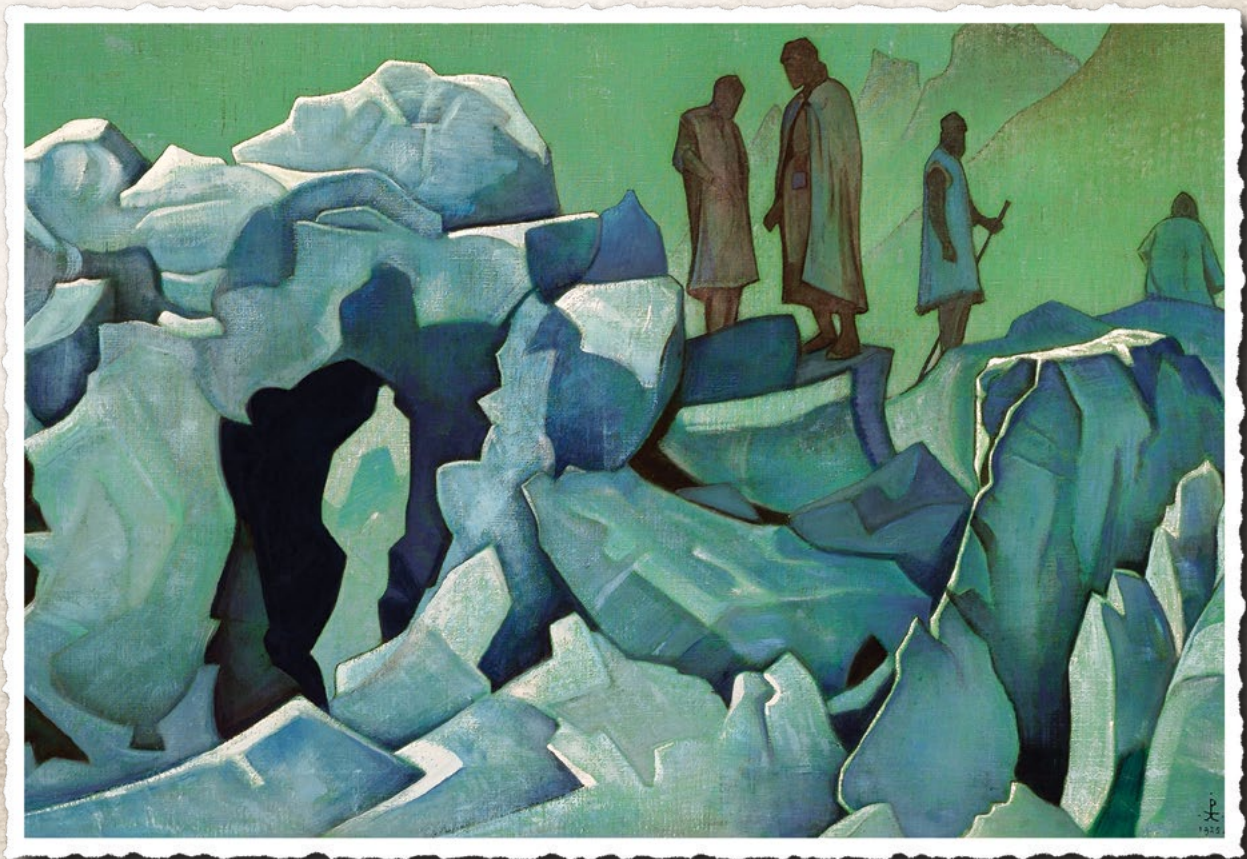
As the group finishes preparing the ritual draught, Tenzin Kalsang glances up at the sky. A successful Hard **Psychology** roll suggests that he is tense and a little nervous, an emotion he has not displayed before. If challenged about this, he replies that he fears they are running out of time. He finishes by saying: *"Do not worry about remembering everything you read now. As I promised, I will talk you through each step of the way. Listen to me and all will be well. The gates will close, and we can all go home knowing the King of Fear must await the proper time for his battle with the Kulika King."*

RUNNING THE RITUAL

All is now ready for the ritual to commence. Tenzin Kalsang asks that everyone collect their bowls of "tea" and take up a position around the perimeter of the *kyilkbor*, with at least one person stationed on each side of the triangle if possible. This arrangement allows at least one person to have their back to the lake during the ceremony. The *lama* instructs the investigators to keep their ritual implements in their laps to act as a focus for what they must imagine, before stripping down to his loincloth and taking up his position outside the ritual triangle in front of the fire farthest from the lake.

Each step of the ritual is broken down for the Keeper in the sections below, including the skill rolls they should ask the players to make as the ritual progresses and what the investigators are likely to see and feel as a result, as well as the various points at which the investigators may realize something is wrong, and what will happen if they attempt to stop the ritual.

Failed rolls during the various peripheral steps of the ritual should be noted, but Tenzin Kalsang encourages the investigators to continue on regardless—in fact, such failures should help to establish a degree of guilt among the participants when things undoubtedly go wrong, potentially



Patrolling the Himalayas by Nicholas Roerich



even preventing them from realizing they've been duped by the Tokabhaya.

Remember: the ritual is largely smoke and mirrors, set up by the Triumvirate to look like a genuine Gate closing ritual. The spell *does* need to be cast correctly to pave the way to release what the Tokabhaya need: Tenzin Kalsang's "indestructible drop," which provides the power to open the Gates of Agartha. The rest is set dressing and spectacle, designed to coerce the investigators into committing murder—or, failing that, to present the Triumvirate with a viable opportunity to do so in their stead.

As the first step of preparing the ritual has been taken care of, we now move to the second step.

The Second Step

Once everyone is settled, Tenzin Kalsang nods to the investigator tasked with creating the *kyilkhor* to step into the triangle and begin drawing the required shape with the *khatvanga's* ferrule. The Keeper should ask for either a relevant **Art/Craft** or **DEX** roll. If the investigator fails, they believe they have recreated the symbol from the scroll but have accidentally scuffed some part of it when resuming their position outside the *shi-sa*; alternatively, they think they've managed to reproduce it, but are left with a nagging doubt that something isn't quite right. If they fumble, they are utterly convinced the design is correct, but later in the ceremony they realize their mistake and must make a **Sanity** roll (0/1 loss), as the potential repercussions of their error dawn on them.

If the investigator has the sense to take the drawing of the *kyilkhor* into the triangle with them as a reference, they gain a bonus die on the roll. Referring back to the original drawing is also sufficient justification for a pushed roll.

The Third Step

With the *kyilkhor* drawn—correctly or not—Tenzin Kalsang asks the investigator to retake their place outside the *shi-sa*. Once they are seated, he begins to drink the black tea nectar concoction from his ritual bowl, draining it dry. He indicates that the investigators should follow his example.

Those who drink the tea should make a **CON** roll: with an Extreme success, they manage to resist the effects of the thorn apple and maintain a clear head; any other result leaves the investigator in question at the mercy of the drug-induced delirium that follows, making it very difficult to distinguish fantasy from reality. Mechanically speaking, succumbing to the

thorn apple inflicts a penalty die on all subsequent Listen and Spot Hidden rolls, all mental ability skill rolls, and rolls (such as POW) to resist spell effects.

Fumbling the CON roll or failing a pushed roll means the investigator has suffered an adverse reaction to the bizarre brew. Treat it as a Mild poison, inflicting 1D10 damage, along with vomiting, convulsions, sleepiness, and severe delirium; a successful Extreme CON roll halves the damage incurred and reduces the symptoms to nausea, muscle weakness, and confusion.

If anyone refuses to drink the concoction or mimes drinking it, they remain fully aware of everything that follows and are completely in control of their own actions, at least up until the spell is cast (**The Fourth Step**). No CON roll is required if the thorn apple was never added.



A DIFFERENT POINT OF VIEW

For Keepers who are concerned that imagining Tenzin Kalsang's ritual slaughter might be a step too far for their players, there is an alternative way to present the event. This could also be used by truly devious Keepers to delay the investigators from realizing what is really going on, with the full horror of their actions only becoming apparent when the veil is finally lifted from their eyes.

Should the investigators balk at imagining the ritual as described, the *lama* reframes it and asks them to instead imagine a small peach tree covered in ripe fruit—often used as a symbolic representation of sacrifice—in his place. Slicing through the trunk at its midsection represents the disemboweling; they will need to strip bark and young, flexible branches to bind the tree in place of intestines. Cutting off the tree's crown represents the beheading stage, while picking the peaches, stripping the remaining bark and branches, and collecting the deep red, sweet-smelling sap is a less gory way to visualize breaking down his body to offer up in the ritual bowls.

Any investigators caught up in either the thorn apple's or the spell's effects may figure out what is actually happening at the same points in the ritual regardless of how it is presented. Various alternate clues can also be dropped for those following this arboreal version: for example, the sap smells sharply of blood, rather than sweet and enticing as sap should; the parts taken from the tree feel pliant, more like flesh than plant material; and any fruit consumed from the tree tastes exactly like raw meat (which, of course, it is).



The Fourth Step

In accordance with the instructions, it is time for the chosen investigators to play their instruments. As Tenzin Kalsang told them on the journey, what they play doesn't really matter—as long as the investigators make some sort of noise with the *kangling* and *damaru*, then all is well.

Once the investigators start to play their instruments, the *lama* encourages those tasked with performing the ritual's mantra to begin chanting. The chanting takes five hours, although those under the full effects of the ritual draught have no grasp on the passage of time. At the completion of the chanting, the investigator holding the *katari* should attempt a Hard **POW** roll to cast Open the Gates of Agartha (**Appendix B**, page 344).

There are numerous factors that may affect the caster's chances. If they use the Gandharan ritual bowls they acquired in Peshawar, the difficulty level of the casting roll is reduced to Regular (see **Keeper Note**, page 130); this is also the case if they successfully enchanted their own skull bowls (**Kapalas**, page 181). They also gain a bonus die each from the *kangling* and *damaru*, provided they are being played when the chant ends (and assuming they were correctly imbued with power at Sitavana; **Part Five: Enchanting the Instruments**, page 177). If, of course, the investigator has cast a Gate spell before, a lenient Keeper may forego asking for the casting roll—which will undoubtedly intrigue (or alarm) the investigator's player!—with the investigator automatically paying the 15 magic points and 3D3 Sanity point cost associated with a successful casting.

Providing the spell is cast successfully, the Keeper should ask each investigator to make an opposed **POW** roll (versus the POW of the investigator holding the *katari* and casting the spell). Those suffering from thorn apple delirium suffer a penalty die, while the person playing the *damaru* receives a bonus die (the two may cancel each other out). As, embedded in the ritual is a boobytrap—something disturbingly similar to the Mental Suggestion spell (*Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook*, page 260), which causes any investigator failing the opposed POW roll to be compelled to physically act out the steps of the ritual for real, rather than just visualizing them; thus, such affected investigators actually kill the *lama* during the ritual!

Success with the opposed POW roll has different effects depending on whether or not the person succumbed to the narcotic properties of the thorn apple. If the investigator is clearheaded, they can see exactly what is going on and may act accordingly (once they realize what is happening). If they are delirious with the drug, the investigator imagines the relevant parts of the ritual being carried out as the scroll describes them; even if someone deviates from that description as a result of the spell's compulsion, the drug-

addled viewer reinterprets those actions to fit in with their idea of what *should* be happening. Unless they can be roused in some way—say, by an unaffected person (a successful Hard CON roll following some appropriate action to wake them from their stupor)—then they are unlikely to realize what is really going on or attempt to interfere with the proceedings.

As with the nectar tea, Tenzin Kalsang does not attempt to resist the effects of the spell, convinced it is all part of a genuine ritual to close the Gates of Agartha. At the end of this step, each investigator should be in one of the following states:

- Fully aware of their surroundings, unaffected by the drug or the Mental Suggestion spell, and free to act as they wish.
- Under the influence of the drug but not the spell, as described above.
- Fully aware of their surroundings but compelled to physically act out the steps of the ritual, depending on their role within it. If that role is to exact the *lama's* disembowelment and/or beheading, then they have one final opportunity to resist the Mental Suggestion spell with another opposed POW roll (during step six or seven); if they fail this roll, they carry on with the rest of the sacrifice, incurring 1/1D10 Sanity loss the moment the *lama* is beheaded (step seven). If another person originally assigned to sacrifice the *lama* fails in their task, the compelled person must take over to ensure Tenzin Kalsang's death.
- Affected by both the drug and the spell, compelled to physically carry out the *lama's* murder but unaware they are doing so. They, too, have one last chance to resist the spell with an opposed POW roll, but are subject to a penalty die due to their intoxication; however, because they are convinced they are imagining the whole thing, they don't incur any Sanity loss until the effects of the drug wear off and they become aware of just what they've done.

What if They Fail?

It is possible that the investigator might fail the POW roll needed to cast the Gate opening spell. If they do, then they have two options:

- They may push the roll by chanting for an additional hour, or
- They may start the chant again from the beginning, permitting them to make a new skill roll

If the second option is taken, Tenzin Kalsang joins in the chant, giving the caster another bonus die—to a maximum of two—on their casting POW roll. Luck can be spent on this roll to turn it into a success, but cannot be spent if the roll is pushed. In addition, if the chant is started again from the beginning, each investigator affected by thorn apple delirium may attempt another Hard CON roll to shake off the drug's

effects. If successful, any previous penalties they suffered as a result of their intoxication are removed.

If the POW roll fails again, then the ritual is over. Tenzin Kalsang collects the bowls of water, douses the three fires, and kicks over the traces of the *kyilkhor*. Obviously disappointed, he tells the investigators that he has just enough ingredients with him for them to attempt the ritual one last time. But first they must rest, and then he must tutor them further. After a soggy night's slumber and either the same caster or a new one undergoing some additional training, they may attempt the ritual again. The caster gains a bonus die on the POW roll (to a maximum of two bonuses).

In the unlikely event that the investigators still fail to cast the ritual, the Triumvirate, who have been watching each attempt with mounting frustration, finally decide to step in. Remember, if the spell isn't successfully cast at this step, there is no point in continuing with the rest of the ritual to liberate the *lama's* indestructible drop, as there is no Gate for the released power to unlock. **Hine Roimata** (profile, page 231) uses her powers to possess the caster and, using the voice of the caster, encourages the other investigators to give it one last try, beginning the chant again from the beginning. This time, the casting roll uses Roimata's POW (120 if Regular, 60 if Hard).

Should the ritual somehow still not be successful, the Triumvirate allows the rest of it to proceed as a purely symbolic sacrifice. It's become obvious to them that the investigators are a lost cause, so they fake a happy ending along the lines of the one described in **Farewells** (page 255) and then set about recruiting a new group of dupes to actually open the Gates of Agartha (**Patsy Cake, Patsy Cake**, page 257). Similar to the situation described in **Continuing the Campaign** (page 257), one year and one day later, the investigators are recruited by the Lords of Shambhala to put right the damage caused by this second group.

At any time should the investigator fumble the POW roll or fail their pushed roll, then they do succeed in opening a Gate, just not the intended one. There is a sudden flash of mauve light and a loud cracking noise, and each investigator is flung to a random location they visited on their way to the Valley of the White Ape (at a cost of 3 magic points). In addition, the caster loses 15 POW and 1D3 Sanity points. Each investigator has with them only what they were carrying or wearing at the time, and may not realize what has happened until the effects of any thorn apple delirium wear off (1D6 hours or a successful Hard CON roll). Their companions are nowhere to be seen. While this may end the investigators involvement for the moment, even if they do nothing else, they receive a visit from the Lords of Shambhala in a year and a day to help deal with the now open Gates, the Triumvirate having found someone else to do its dirty work.

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TAKING THE LEAD

It may be that the *lama* is the only participant under the Triumvirate's magical influence at the end of step four. If this is the case, Tenzin Kalsang continues to recite what must be done, walking himself into the *shi-sa* to carry out step five, unless stopped by any clearheaded investigators. Those still under the influence of the drugged nectar tea see nothing wrong with what is happening, believing it all to be in their imagination and subconsciously adjusting any deviations to fit their expected narrative.

Under these circumstances, once the *lama* has completed marking himself with the seed syllables, the Triumvirate manifests early, as described in **The Sixth Step**. Hine Roimata moves to disembowel the *lama* before assuming the role of the goddess, while Andrei Vitsin and Mariam Sandrine assist with the binding. The trio then carry out the rest of the ritual as quickly as possible. Alternatively, rather than introducing the Triumvirate just yet, the Keeper may decide to have Tenzin Kalsang eviscerate himself, with Roimata and her cronies not appearing until after he has spilled his own intestines and bound himself in position.

Regardless of who carries out the disemboweling, by this point it should be clear to anyone fully in charge of their own faculties that something has gone very badly wrong.



The Fifth Step

Tenzin Kalsang's voice rings out above the noise of the storm, instructing the investigators to move on with the next part of ritual: visualizing the chosen investigator as the goddess Dorje Phagmo, who then leads him into the *shi-sa* and anoints him with the five seed syllables. If this step is purely taking place in someone's mind, there is no need to call for a skill roll; however, if someone is compelled by the spell to actually draw the syllables on the *lama*, then they physically lead him into the *kyilkbor* before beginning their task. The Keeper may wish to ask for a relevant **Art/Craft** or **DEX** roll from the person compelled to carry out this stage, with the same results as described under **The Second Step** (page 248), although a failed roll is unlikely to bother them until after the ritual has reached its grisly conclusion.

Keeper note: if different investigators have been appointed to carry out the anointing, the disemboweling, and the beheading stages, the *lama* exhorts everyone to imagine all

of the chosen ones as aspects of the sow-headed deity at the beginning of this step.

The Sixth Step

Still calm and focused, and now properly anointed, the *lama* instructs the investigator entrusted with the *katari* to imagine opening up his belly and spilling his guts. If an investigator is compelled to perform this act in reality, no roll is required as Tenzin Kalsang does not resist, although the investigator should be permitted a second and final opposed **POW** roll to shake off the Mind Suggestion spell (per step four). If all of the investigators resisted the effects of the Mental Suggestion spell, then the Triumvirate (or the *lama* himself) takes over, as discussed in **Taking the Lead** (nearby).

Disemboweling Tenzin Kalsang does not kill him, and he continues to explain exactly how the investigators should bind him with his own intestines; however, anyone still suffering from thorn apple delirium and who succeeds with a **Listen** roll (subject to a penalty die) realizes that the *lama's* voice has changed—for someone supposedly only suffering from an imaginary injury, he sounds as if he is genuinely in pain. This moment of clarity—along with the rich smell of blood in the air—permits the investigator another Hard **CON** roll attempt to fight off the drug's effects. Success permits them to see the grisly scene for what it truly is; however, if they are under the influence of the Mental Suggestion spell as well, they are not in control of their actions. Of course, anyone free from both the drug *and* the spell can see that the *lama* is in real trouble and can attempt to put a stop to the ritual, either before or after Tenzin Kalsang is gutted.

Assuming the Triumvirate have not felt the need to intervene, now is the time for them to make their grand entrance. Once the *lama* is in position, bound and bleeding, a bolt of green lightning hits the lake. In the glare of the afterimage, three shapes can be seen moving across the water—undoubtedly human, but somehow otherworldly (see their descriptions in the **Dramatis Personae**, page 230). They alight on the beach and take up positions at the three fires marking the points of the *kyilkbor*, remaining (for the moment) just outside the ritual space.

The Seventh Step

Tenzin Kalsang now presses the investigator playing the role of the goddess for the beheading to imagine coming forward to deliver the final blow so that his indestructible drop may be released. As before, no roll is required to actually decapitate the *lama*, unless the person carrying out this step has yet to make their second and final opposed **POW** roll against the spell (per step four).

Providing the act goes ahead, Tenzin Kalsang's head separates remarkably easily from his body with a spray of

bright arterial blood and a surprised groan. At the moment of his death, the *lama* finally realizes that he has been duped by the King of Fear's followers into opening the Gates of Agartha—but it is too late—the sacrifice was freely given.

All onlookers now see a small red-and-white sphere rise from the neatly sliced wound across Tenzin Kalsang's neck as his body slumps to the ground, his blood spilling into the swirls of the *kyilkhor* and filling the air with its hot, metallic tang. The drop hovers in the air above the *lama's* corpse, a glistening point of light in the growing darkness. Although the Triumvirate watch with greedy eyes, they make no move

to snatch it. Refer to **Memento Mori**, page 255, should the investigators obtain the indestructible drop for themselves at this point (a successful **DEX** roll to pluck it from the air).

Keeper note: tailor the outcome of this scene to the investigators' actions. Whatever the investigators do, remember that the Triumvirate's goal is to kill Tenzin Kalsang and steal his POW (manifested physically in the form of his indestructible drop), so that they can open the Gates of Agartha. They do everything they can to achieve this and will not let the investigators stand in their way. For

SUMMARY OF THE RITUAL

Preparation (Groundwork)

- Tenzin Kalsang draws a large triangle in the sand.
- Investigators set three fires (one at each point of the triangle).
- Juniper and fir thrown onto the fires.
- Ritual bowls half-filled with water, placed on the fires, and tea is added.
- Spare ritual bowls filled with water and placed on the beach by the lakeshore.
- Holders of the *kangling* and *damaru* make music.
- Empowerment: each participant takes a symbolic sip from one of the spare bowls while the lama touches the forehead, throat, and heart of each person with his three *gau*.
- *Melong* briefly held in front of each participant's face. Empowerment is complete.
- Tenzin Kalsang gives each participant a translation of the key actions (**Handout: Liberation 2**).
- Tenzin Kalsang answers any questions and states that the ritual's actions are symbolic, designed to be imagined or mimed, rather than actually be physically reproduced.
- The *lama* talks the investigators through an outline of the ritual. At the relevant time he:
 - gives his *khatvanga* (ritual staff) to the investigator with the highest relevant **Art/Craft** skill or highest **DEX**.
 - gives one nectar pill to each investigator.
 - gives the mustard paste to the investigator chosen to draw the five seed syllables.
 - gives the *katari* (ritual dagger) to the person who will chant the *mantra*.

- Tenzin Kalsang adds *chang* (barley beer) to the ritual bowls, as well as the thorn apple component.
- Investigators add their nectar pill to a ritual bowl of their choosing.
- Everyone takes up a position around the triangle; the lama stands in front of the fire farthest from the lake.

The Second Step

- Investigator holding the *khatvanga* steps into the triangle to draw the required symbol (**Art/Craft** or **DEX** roll).

The Third Step

- Investigator who drew the symbol retakes their place around the fire.
- Tenzin Kalsang and the investigators drink from their ritual bowls (**CON** roll).

The Fourth Step

- Holders of the *kangling* and *damaru* make more music.
- Those tasked with chanting the *mantra* chant for five hours.
- The investigator holding the *katari* attempts a Hard **POW** roll (casting Open the Gates of Agartha spell).
- If the casting succeeds, all investigators (including the caster) make an opposed **POW** roll versus the holder of the *katari*, with those failing now compelled to physically act out the ritual for real (Mental Suggestion).

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the most part, they prefer non-lethal means of retaliation and restraint, as they want the investigators to fully understand what they have failed to prevent. Refer to the profiles for **Hine Roimata**, **Andrei Vitsin**, and **Mariam Sandrine** at the end of this chapter (pages 263–264) for further details.

The Eighth Step

Depending on each investigator's mental state, they may be blissfully unaware that Tenzin Kalsang is now dead. When he speaks again (his voice emanating from his disembodied head), those still unaware of the reality of the situation get one final **Listen** roll (subject to a penalty die) to notice that the *lama's* voice has changed. The warmth and humor that have always marked his speech are gone; instead, there is an unnerving coldness to the tone. If the investigator achieved either a Hard

or Extreme success with the Listen roll, they realize that it isn't the *lama* at all, but a very good impersonation of him.

If anyone is still physically carrying out the ritual's instructions for real, then it is now up to them to butcher the *lama's* body and split it between the seven ritual bowls. If the investigators have, by now, resisted the Mental Suggestion spell and make no move to apportion the corpse as instructed, the Triumvirate move forward and fall on Tenzin Kalsang's mortal remains instead, tearing off chunks of flesh and cramming them into their mouths, wailing and gibbering in glee as they do so. If some of the investigators are still suffering from delusions, they perceive this act as a visualized ritual dismemberment, rather than a feeding frenzy. Those still under the influence of either the drug or the spell must succeed at a **POW** roll or join the Triumvirate in their feasting.

SUMMARY OF THE RITUAL (CONTINUED)

The Fifth Step

- Investigators told to visualize the ritual (imagine/mime it), the chosen investigator as the avatar of Dorje Phagmo leading the *lama* into the triangle and anointing him with five seed syllables (**Art/Craft** or **DEX** roll, if desired).

The Sixth Step

- Investigator holding the *katari* told to imagine/visualize/mime using the blade to open the *lama's* belly. (Opposed **POW** roll to resist if compelled to actually carry out the disembowelment.)
- Investigators told to imagine/visualize/mime binding the *lama* with his own intestines.
- (The Triumvirate appear in a flash of green lightning, taking up positions by each of the three fires.)

The Seventh Step

- Tenzin Kalsang tells the investigator playing the role of the goddess to imagine/visualize/mime coming forward to deliver the final blow (beheading the *lama*) so that his "indestructible drop" may be released. (Opposed **POW** roll to resist if not the same person carrying out step six.)
- Tenzin Kalsang dies, realizing that he has been duped by the King of Fear's followers into opening the Gates of Agartha.

- The investigators see a red-and-white sphere rise from the *lama's* severed neck. This "drop" hovers in the air. (**DEX** roll to take it at this point.)

The Eighth Step

- Tenzin Kalsang speaks (**Listen** roll to detect the deception).
- Those performing the ritual for real now butcher the *lama's* body and place pieces in the seven ritual bowls. If none of the investigators are still performing the ritual, the Triumvirate step in and feast on the *lama's* flesh.
- Investigators still under the influence of the drug or the Mental Suggestion spell must succeed with a **POW** roll or join the Triumvirate in their feasting.
- Hine Roimata summons the indestructible drop to her hand (Hard **DEX** roll to snatch it before it reaches her).
- Roimata turns the drop into a key. (Opposed **STR** roll to grab it.)
- All investigators regain control of their faculties and realize what they have done. (**Sanity** rolls.)
- The key rises in the air.
- If investigators don't take the key (Hard **DEX** roll), it explodes and enables the Gates of Agartha to open.

Keeper note: if any investigators do participate in the awful feast, once they come to their senses and realize what they have done, they should make a **Sanity** roll (1/1D6 loss), although this may be reduced to 1/1D4 loss (or less), at the Keeper's discretion, if such characters have willingly partaken of human flesh before.

Have any investigators who join the feast make a **Luck** roll: with a success, they somehow manage to consume some of Tenzin Kalsang's brain and, as a result, gain 10 points in Lore (Buddhism), as well as knowledge of one of the *lama's* spells—Keeper's choice, although Healing or Warmth of Mind would be appropriate options. In addition, such investigators must also make a **Sanity** roll (1/1D4 loss) when it dawns on them where their newfound knowledge came from.

If the Triumvirate are able to finish their unholy meal and proceed without disruption, Hine Roimata summons the indestructible drop to her hand, where it twists and transforms into a glowing filigree key approximately 2½ inches (6.4 cm) in length. The investigators have one final chance to snatch the drop for themselves as it flies toward Roimata (a Hard **DEX** roll). Alternatively, once it has been transformed into the key, they may attempt to rip it from the old woman's grasp with an opposed **STR** roll. If the investigators succeed, refer to **What Next?**, following. If they either fail or don't try to interfere, the *lama's* severed head begins to cackle and mock them for their foolishness. If any of the investigators are still delusional or magically compelled, then this is the moment they finally regain full control of their faculties and are struck with the awful reality of what they've done (accompanied by previously mentioned Sanity losses).

ON ACCOUNT

Don't forget that the investigators' actions throughout the ritual have an effect on their karmic balance (**Checks and Balances**, page 64). If in control of their actions, failing to act so as to protect the *lama* obviously has negative connotations, while attempts to save him—even if, in the end, they prove unsuccessful—should gain them merit. The investigators should not be penalized if their actions are compelled by the Triumvirate and their insidious magic.

WHAT NEXT?

The outcome of the ritual plays a significant role in what happens next in the campaign. If the investigators manage to snatch either the *lama's* indestructible drop or the glowing key before Roimata has a chance to open the Gates of Agartha, refer to **Memento Mori**, page 255, or **The Key to Success** (page 256) respectively, which deal with the events immediately following such an intervention.

Otherwise, the key rises into the air and explodes in a shower of turquoise and green sparks, which coalesce into a swirling vortex of sickly light. The mouth of the vortex—suspended vertically—grows rapidly, its powerful winds tearing at the investigators, who can try to flee if they wish. A hideous, atonal piping radiates from the ever-widening breach, accompanied by the screams of a million crazed voices raised in triumph.

Suddenly, with a huge crash of thunder, the vortex tears a hole in reality—the Gates of Agartha have opened! What the investigators see through the gates depends entirely on what the Keeper decides Agartha is (**Keeper Considerations**, page 15); its appearance has an effect on any Sanity loss the investigators incur as a result of peering into the void (somewhere between 1/1D6 and 1D4/1D10 is recommended, depending on the nature of the Mythos deity involved). A split second later, the investigators are sucked into vortex's maw. Their last sight is that of the bloody arena where the deadly rite took place. For what happens next, the Keeper should refer to **Paradise Found?**, page 257.

FOILING THE TOKABHAYA

If, at any point during the ritual, the investigators manage to foil the Triumvirate and prevent the Gates of Agartha opening, the scene's outcome is very different. The storm dissipates, replaced with the rosy glow of a new dawn. Through the rain, now turned gentle and refreshing, numerous circular rainbows can be seen forming high above the valley, and the sweet, heady scent of peach blossom hangs heavy in the air.

The possible ways to foil the Triumvirate during the ritual are explained below, but can be summarized as:

- The investigators realize what is happening in time to prevent Tenzin Kalsang's death—see **Farewells**, following.
- The investigators obtain the indestructible drop—see **Memento Mori**, page 255.
- The investigators obtain the key (the transformed drop)—see **The Key to Success**, page 256

FAREWELLS

If Tenzin Kalsang survives the ritual, he takes each investigator by the hand and thanks them for their service in preventing the opening of the Gates of Agartha, before bidding them a safe journey home. If asked about his own destination, he replies that he cannot leave—his task is done and there is no place left for him in the mortal world beyond the valley. He hopes that, if his intentions in these matters were pure enough, he will be reborn into Padmasambhava's Pure Land, Zangdok Pelri, and take his rest at the feet of the Great Guru. If not, he is sure he will see them all again someday in whatever form his next reincarnation takes. Refer to **An Expression of Gratitude** (page 256) for what follows next.

MEMENTO MORI

If the *lama* dies, but the investigators manage to snatch his indestructible drop before the Triumvirate can take it, there is only one way to dispose of it so that it cannot be used to open the Gates to Agartha: someone must consume it, putting it beyond the reach of the Tokabhaya forever. A successful **Lore (Buddhism)**, **Occult**, or **Cthulhu Mythos** roll can suggest this course of action. As soon as an investigator swallows the drop, any remaining members of the Triumvirate howl with rage, and lightning strikes the investigator in question, inflicting 1D10 damage unless they succeed with a **Dodge** roll. If the investigators make no further moves against them, the Triumvirate vanish, hurling abuse at the survivors as they disappear.

Providing they survive the lightning strike, the investigator who consumed the drop effectively gains an "experience package" (*Investigator Handbook*, page 61) passed on from Tenzin Kalsang, consisting of a number of bonus skill points equal to the *lama's* remaining POW (50 minus any POW that has been spent during the campaign so far). The acquired points must be divided between the skills possessed by the *lama* during his lifetime: Art/Craft (Instruments), Art/Craft (Painting), Charm, First Aid, History, Listen, Lore (Buddhism), Natural World, Navigate, Occult, Persuade, Psychology), as well as Language (Tibetan). The investigator also gains a permanent +1D10 POW increase and, at the Keeper's discretion, may also instantly learn 1D4 of the *lama's* spells—recommended spells include: Fleetness of Foot*, Flesh Ward, Healing*, Sword Siddhi*, and Warmth of Mind* (*see **Appendix B** for spell descriptions). Finally, the investigator must make a **Sanity** roll (1/1D4 loss) as they briefly hear Tenzin Kalsang's laughter in their mind. Refer to **An Expression of Gratitude** (page 256) for what follows next.



THE KEY TO SUCCESS

If the *lama* dies but the investigators acquire his indestructible drop after it has been transformed into the glowing filigree key, then they have several options open to them. The simplest is to swallow the key. While it might not be easy to do, the key is relatively small and can be choked down with a successful **CON** roll. As with the drop, a successful **Lore (Buddhism)**, **Occult**, or **Cthulhu Mythos** roll suggests this course of action. Swallowing the key bestows the same benefits as swallowing the drop.

If the thought of swallowing the key isn't an attractive one, the same roll also suggests an alternative. If the drop can be transformed once, it can be transformed again into something less dangerous and its energy dissipated by breaking the item. This might sound a little strange given that the drop the item is formed from is named as indestructible, but the drop is believed to melt away after death to release the person's energy ready for their next turn around the wheel that is *samsara*. (This drop will need help thanks to the Triumvirate's interference.)

Suitable items to transform the key into include the endless knot, which can be seen as a representation of *samsara*, or a lotus blossom, which can symbolize purity, renunciation, and liberation. Both of these suggestions are included among the eight auspicious signs in Tibetan Buddhism; any of the other signs would also be appropriate. The symbol can then be crushed or snapped (no roll required) and the power stored within safely released. If the key is transformed and broken in this way, peach-colored motes of light drift harmlessly into the sky. The person breaking the symbol gains no skill benefits or spells but must still make a **Sanity** roll (1/1D4 loss) as they hear Tenzin Kalsang's laughter floating away on the breeze. Of course, if the investigator transforms the key into something easier to swallow, then they do gain the same benefits as if they'd consumed the indestructible drop.

The last thing the investigators should do is snap the key while it is in that form. If an investigator states that is their intention, the Keeper should grant them a **Lore (Buddhism)**, **Occult**, or **Cthulhu Mythos** roll. If successful, they realize just in time that a key is designed to unlock a door just as much as it is designed to lock one. Destroying the key in this form and releasing its energy will undoubtedly open the Gates of Agartha, and they'd better think of another way of dealing with the problem (as discussed above).

Should the worst happen and the Gates be opened, refer to **What Next?** (page 254). Otherwise, refer to **An Expression of Gratitude** (following).

AN EXPRESSION OF GRATITUDE

Before the investigators leave the Valley of the White Ape, they notice a glowing ball of rosy light forming rapidly on the lake shore, beside the remains of the *kyilkhor*. The ball expands to form a portal, through which step three figures: the Lords of Shambhala. They arrive regardless of Tenzin Kalsang's fate. The Lords' appearance is dependent on the investigators' karmic balance.

- To those with a positive karmic balance, they appear as beautiful, powerfully built, graceful, and slightly leonine-looking individuals, sexless and completely naked, with milk-white skin, blood-red lips, and turquoise-green hair and eyes. The sight triggers a **Sanity** roll (0/1D4 loss). Their voices are beautiful and entrancing, almost like music.
- A neutral karmic balance presents them as Tibetans, dressed in snow-white robes trimmed with turquoise-green fur and wearing lion-masks (a successful **Lore (Buddhism)** or **Occult** roll brings to mind the masks' similarity to the mythical Tibetan snow lion, or *sengye*, said to be one of Shambhala's guardians). Their voices sound human.
- Observers with a negative karmic balance see them as massive leonine creatures with glistening white fur, turquoise-green manes and tails, huge fangs dripping with blood, and razor-sharp claws (a successful **Lore (Buddhism)** or **Occult** roll here reveals the creatures to be similar to the description of *sengye* (snow lions), but more massive and terrifying). The sight may trigger a **Sanity** roll (1/1D6 loss)—see **The Lords of Shambhala** profile in the **Creatures and Monsters** section on page 267. Their voices are like rumbling growls, and full of menace.

The leader of the three, exuding an aura of authority despite their shorter stature, steps forward and calls the investigators by name to speak with them. They thank the investigators for their role in preventing the King of Fear from entering the world before his time, and explain anything the investigators may be confused about (such as their, and Tenzin Kalsang's, role in the Tokabhaya's schemes), before offering to send them to any location of their choosing by way of reward.

If the *lama* is still alive, he reaffirms his desire to journey to Zangdok Pelri, and the Lords ask him to step into the light; the last the investigators see of him is a rapidly fading silhouette, eventually swallowed entirely by the glow of the portal. The investigators are then invited, one by one, to follow him through, so that they may reach their own destination. Of course, should the *lama* be dead, the investigators are invited to step through the portal as soon as they have decided where they wish to go.

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Once through the portal, the investigators each lose 1 Sanity point and up to 4 magic points, depending on how far away from Pemakö their destination happens to be (*Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook*, page 257). They appear at their chosen location in their present physical condition, which may rouse any manner of reactions from those they encounter upon arrival. For these investigators, the adventure is over, and it is time to return to their previous lives—the campaign is over, the investigators were successful in defeating the schemes of the Children of Fear.

Continuing the Campaign

For some groups, defeating the Children of Fear at this point may be a suitable climax to the campaign as a whole; however, for others, the opportunity to continue their investigators' journey to Nalanda (**Chapter 7**) and beyond would make for an even more satisfying conclusion. If this is the case, it is suggested that the investigators be drawn back into the war between the Tokabhaya and the Lords of Shambhala.

First, permit the investigators a development phase and give them the appropriate rewards for completing this chapter (**Rewards**, page 262). All lost hit points and magic points should be recovered, and they should be permitted to roll a new Luck score of $(3D6) \times 5$. Time has moved on, and the investigators are fully recovered from their adventures.

Then, the Keeper should ask the players to describe how their investigators occupy themselves during the following year. If any have an ongoing indefinite insanity, they should be permitted to seek recovery during this year (refer to **Treatment and Recovery** in the *Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook*, page 164). Once everyone has had a chance to discuss their ideas, the Keeper should relate that, the night after the first anniversary of their return from Pemakö, they find themselves experiencing a strangely familiar dream: they are floating down through a soft, peach-colored light, the air around them scented with delicate spring blossoms...

In fact, the investigators are not dreaming—they have been pulled through another portal by the Lords of Shambhala (and, subsequently, lose 1 Sanity point and 5 magic points for traveling through it). Their arrival in Shambhala plays out largely as described in **Paradise Found?** (nearby), with the following exceptions.

The Lords, appearing as they did the first time the investigators met them, explain that, as the ritual to open the Gates of Agartha was so nearly a success, the fabric of reality in the Valley of the White Ape was dangerously weakened, and the gates are about to tear themselves apart without any further interference from the Tokabhaya. Thanks to their involvement in bringing about the crisis, the investigators are now obligated to put right their previous mistakes and seal the ever-widening breach.



PATSY CAKE, PATSY CAKE

Alternatively, the Keeper may prefer that the Children of Fear were able to dupe another set of unwitting participants into enacting their diabolical plan. Thanks to the weakening of the gates, the Tokabhaya have been able to get away with using a less than ideal sacrificial victim this time around, but with just as devastating consequences. Thus, following the events of the investigators' ritual, another was set in motion but, this time, it was successful and the Gates of Agartha were opened. The Lords of Shambhala now call on the investigators to repair the damage, per **Making Amends**, page 261.



The investigators now have a choice to make: either accept the Lords' decision or refuse to comply. As described in **No Thanks, I'll Take My Chances** (page 260), they may be put on trial for declining the Lords' invitation and have to defend themselves against the accusation of knowingly attempting to release the King of Fear, a trial made particularly difficult if the investigators failed to properly explain themselves to the Lords on the lakeshore the year before.

If the investigators agree to help close the Gates of Agartha for real this time, then the events of **Making Amends** (page 261) play out largely as written.

PARADISE FOUND?

The following section assumes the investigators failed to stop the Triumvirate and the Gates of Agartha have been opened with Tenzin Kalsang's death. Parts of the following scene may also come into play if the Keeper and their players wish to continue the campaign despite apparently stopping the Children of Fear in their tracks (per **Foiling the Tokabhaya**, page 254)—if this is the case, then the following events should be adjusted accordingly.

With the Gates of Agartha open, the investigators are pulled into the vortex—the players might assume that all is now lost—but, this is not the case. The howling and screaming void suddenly changes around them. No longer do they tumble out of control toward oblivion, buffeted by violent winds and bathed in a dark, amaranthine light. Instead, they glide gently through a soft, peach-colored light that bathes everything in a warm glow. Gone is the sharp

smell of ozone and lightning, replaced with the delicate scent of spring blossoms.

Slowly, as they descend, a strange land appears through the glow. Although they may not realize it (a successful **Lore (Buddhism)** or **Occult** roll reveals the truth), they are approaching the fabled land of Shambhala.

As everyone has just passed through a Gate, they lose 1 Sanity point and 5 magic points (some of the cost of using the Gate has been defrayed by the Lords' intervention—without their help, the cost would be 10 magic points).

IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

Just how the investigators perceive the land of Shambhala depends entirely on their actions throughout the campaign so far, as recorded on their karmic balance sheet (**Checks and Balances**, page 64). The three possible views that await them are described below; thus, each investigator may perceive things quite differently.

FRESH BLOOD

As mentioned in **Chapter 5: The Sisters' Plan** (page 213), if none of the investigators survived their encounter with the Seven Sisters, the campaign can be reset by means of the Gate of Agartha's opening. Desperate to combat the King of Fear, the Lords of Shambhala take the opportunity created by the rift to recruit fresh proxies to combat the Triumvirate's plan, dragging the new characters through the Gate to Shambhala and presenting them with the opportunity to save the world after Tenzin Kalsang's sacrifice. The same mechanism can also be used to introduce new characters if anyone died during the ritual or its immediate aftermath, or to reintroduce those investigators who refused Tenzin Kalsang's offer back in the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas (**Chapter 2: That's a Pass**, page 87).

Unless the new investigators have anything of great merit or even greater sin in their backgrounds, they view Shambhala and the Lords as neutral observers. The cost of being pulled through the Gate is the same as it would be for any other investigator brought to the hidden city from the Valley of the White Ape. The Lords are more than happy to explain the situation to their—no doubt deeply confused—guests.

Positive Balance

At the center of a circular bowl of land, bounded by glittering diamond glaciers and an immense forest of trees whose leaves are living flames, sits a four-sided crystal mountain surrounded by rainbows. Two lakes lie to the west, and another to the east; all are shaped like lotus blossoms and overflow with jewels of exquisite beauty. To the south of the mountains is a park, centered around a square, nine-tiered palace; the park is full of strange, crystalline blossoms which perfume the air. Wild animals—some distinctly mythical in nature—roam freely through the grounds, living in perfect peace and harmony with one another. The palace itself is covered in gold, jewels, and other precious substances.

Outside the parkland are yet more golden buildings, reflecting all the traditional architectural styles the investigators have seen during their time in China, India, and Tibet. People of all races wander between the buildings, going about their daily business; one or two look up and spot the investigators, waving and smiling before returning to their own activities. Flying saucer-shaped cars flit through the sky, circling the central mountain and alighting on the roofs of buildings. Occasionally, one vanishes from view with a strange popping sound, only to reappear a moment later slightly displaced from its previous position. The aeronauts take no notice of the investigators whatsoever.

Neutral Balance

Shambhala's layout is as previously described: glaciers (albeit mere ice this time) surround a forest (leafy and definitely not made of flame) centered on a four-sided mountain of solid rock topped with glistening snow. The lakes are full of plain water rather than jewels; the palace is wood and stone, painted red and gold with turquoise and green accents. The plants are mundane in nature, as are the animals, although all are beautiful specimens of their kind. There are no flying cars gracing the skies, only birds. The people are still present, bustling about between buildings of brick, wood, and stone; they largely ignore the investigators, but are friendly enough during any interactions.

Negative Balance

Unless the Keeper wishes the veil to be completely removed and give the investigator a true glimpse of what Shambhala is (as determined by the Keeper; **Keeper Considerations**, page 15), along with any accompanying Sanity loss that is likely to cause, then the layout remains as described in the **Positive Balance** section.

Yet, instead of the gold, jewels, exotic beasts, crystal flowers, and fantastical modes of transport, the land is a charnel ground of immense proportions—a magnified and bloodier version of the glade of the dakinis they may have

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witnessed when leaving Derge (Chapter 5: Feast, page 214). The glaciers are built from stacks of skeletons; those on the lowest levels have been crushed to powder beneath the weight of the endless rows of dead above them. The glaciers' walls weep with blood and semen. Carrion crows perch on the skeletal remains to drink their fill, and the air echoes with their raucous calls. The forest is made of bleached-bone trees, their leaves like razors, and the land below is a carpet of rotting flesh and ordure.

Terrifying beasts stalk the parkland around the palace, and strange creatures swim in the lakes of boiling blood. The palace consists of three tiers: the lowest of freshly decapitated heads, their skin and flesh still attached, eyes staring sightlessly at the investigators; the middle of decaying heads, eyeless and stinking; and the uppermost of dry skulls, stripped of all their flesh—a gigantic, grisly mirror of the three heads atop Tenzin Kalsang's *khatvanga*. The doors and roofs of the palace, and of every other building they can see, appear to be made of skin, which the investigators instinctively know to be human in origin. The city's inhabitants appear fierce and warlike, garbed in bone armor and carrying terrifying swords of flame. They acknowledge the investigators' presence with shrieking howls. Needless to say, the sight of Shambhala in its charnel guise instigates a **Sanity** roll (1/1D8 loss).

WELCOME TO SHANGRI-LA

Regardless of what they perceive Shambhala to be, the investigators are drawn inexorably toward the parkland in front of the palace, where three figures wait to greet them. Again, the trio's appearance varies depending on each investigator's karmic balance, as described in **An Expression of Gratitude**, page 256.

The smallest of the trio steps forward as the investigators come to rest in front of the palace. The figure speaks: "*Welcome to the Northern City of Peace, misguided servants of the King of Fear. Be seated, then explain yourselves—for you have done great harm.*"

The three figures wait for the investigators to tell their story, listening calmly and dispassionately to whatever the investigators have to say, including their version of what happened during the ritual. They fill in any blanks in the investigators' version of events, and firmly correct any outright lies the investigators might tell in an attempt to justify their actions. If any of the investigators are injured or suffering from the effects of insanity, the Lords offer them what appears to be milk—a successful **Occult** or **Lore (Buddhism)** roll suggests that it is most likely snow lion milk, which is believed to cure all ills (see **Healing Properties**, nearby).




Song of Shambhala by Nicholas Roerich



HEALING PROPERTIES

The snow lion milk offered to the investigators acts immediately upon consumption, restoring 1D10 hit points to an injured character and/or 1D6 Sanity points to those currently under the effects of an insanity (temporary or indefinite). If the investigator has a major wound, that injury is also healed, while an insane investigator recovers from either the effects of their bout of madness (if still occurring) or the long-term effects of their insanity (if indefinite in nature). Anyone attempting to smuggle snow lion milk out of Shambhala find themselves disappointed—the substance immediately loses its potency once transported to the real world.



Once the investigators understand that the Gates of Agartha are open, and that they played a fundamental role in that opening, the Lords offer them a choice: return to the world to put right what they have done, or face justice for their actions here in Shambhala.

No Thanks, I'll Take My Chances

While those investigators with an above base skill in Law may feel that they have a chance of defending themselves against the charge of helping to bring about the end of the world, especially if they were compelled to do so by the effects of the Triumvirate's spell, a full trial is beyond the scope of this campaign—although the Keeper and players should feel free to roleplay the proceedings if they would like to.

Otherwise, the Keeper should determine any trial's outcome based on the eloquence of the investigators' arguments as represented by a combined **Law** and social skill roll (**Charm**, **Fast Talk**, or **Persuade**). Success with both skills clears the investigator in question of the charges and they are once again offered the chance to correct their mistakes, although no further action is taken against them

Handout: Liberation 3a

Where the holy ones who brought the divine knowledge to the Land of Snows first honed their understanding, seek out the jars that hold the key to locking what should never have been unlocked by mortal hands.

From there, travel to the Emperor's Gateway to the Narakas, built before he found enlightenment. Within are the implements to aid you in your quest: that which, when held in the right hand, represents skillful means, along with that which, when held in the left hand, represents wisdom.

Together, the sound of emptiness, the lord of stones' indestructible drop, and the words of the Precious Master form a powerful tool against the King of Fear. Wield them in the place that shares its name with where the Great Guru was born but not born, a mirror reflecting that which is lost and that which can no longer be approached, wherein lies the heart of the world, and hope that it is not too late to seal the Gates of Agartha.

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if they refuse; they are, instead, returned to Pemakö and left to their own devices, which may involve facing the King of Fear's impending reign of terror if their compatriots fail in their task of closing the Gates of Agartha (assuming at least one person takes on the challenge). Failure of either skill results in the accused's death in as gruesome a manner as possible—perhaps being torn apart by some very familiar dakini (any surviving Seven Sisters) or the city's actual sengye guardians (use the maximum possible stats for a lion, as found on page 338 of the *Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook*).

Making Amends

If the investigators accept the Lords' offer, either immediately or after surviving a trial, they are given a piece of yellow paper. If the investigators had a good relationship with Tenzin Kalsang, and—despite everything—still trust him, then it is in his handwriting (**Handout: Liberation 3a**); however, if the relationship with the *lama* was not good, and generated any degree of mistrust or suspicion, then the parchment is in a completely unfamiliar hand (**Handout: Liberation 3b**).

Before they have the chance to mull over the message's contents, there is a blinding flash of light, and the investigators find themselves not in the strange unearthly city, but in the middle of a tent full of tables, each covered in trays containing fragments of pottery and odd-shaped lumps of earth. Those with above base skill in Archaeology realize that they are in a finds tent, and therefore must be on a dig site somewhere. An Indian laborer, just entering the tent with a tray of freshly excavated material, stares at them in amazement before dropping the tray and rushing off, shouting in alarm. A young white man, who appears to be carefully cataloging the finds, looks equally bemused—*"I say, where on Earth did you just spring from?"*

Keeper note: just where the investigators have landed is detailed in **Chapter 7: Spirits of Earth**, which directly continues this scene the investigators find themselves in. And, as they have once again passed through a Gate, the investigators lose 1 Sanity point and 5 magic points.

Handout: Liberation 3b

Where the holy ones who brought the divine knowledge to the Land of Snows first honed their understanding, seek out the jars that hold the key to locking what should never have been unlocked by mortal hands.

From there, travel to the Emperor's Gateway to the Narakas, built before he found enlightenment. Within are the implements to aid you in your quest: that which, when held in the right hand, represents skillful means, along with that which, when held in the left hand, represents wisdom.


Together, the sound of emptiness, the lord of stones' indestructible drop, and the words of the Precious Master form a powerful tool against the King of Fear. Wield them in the place that shares its name with where the Great Guru was born but not born, a mirror reflecting that which is lost and that which can no longer be approached, wherein lies the heart of the world, and hope that it is not too late to seal the Gates of Agartha.



NEW HORIZONS

If the Keeper would prefer, the investigators may enjoy an extended stay in Shambhala before the Lords return them to the real world. While anyone with a negative karmic balance is unlikely to want to spend any additional time there, those with positive or neutral balances will undoubtedly find such a holiday both restful and stimulating.

If the Keeper does decide to give the investigators an extended stay, it is recommended to use James Hilton's Shangri-La, as described in *Lost Horizon* (either the book or film version), as a model for Shambhala—a tranquil haven of learning and enlightenment, where no one wants for anything and all the knowledge of the world is kept safe from harm. And, because Shambhala is a land out of time, the investigators find that no matter how long they've stayed, they return to the mundane world moments after the opening ritual ended.



MOVING ON

By now, the investigators have removed the immediate threat posed by the Children of Fear, are dead, or find themselves in an unfamiliar location somewhere in India (assuming they accepted the challenge given them by the Lords of Shambhala).

THE FINAL CURTAIN?

As already discussed in **Continuing the Campaign** (page 257), vanquishing the Tokabhaya at this stage need not be the end of the story. Even if the group decides not to continue their adventures via the mechanism described, they may still face consequences somewhere down the line for their roles in defeating the Tokabhaya. After all, the Triumvirate and the Children of Fear may be weakened by the ritual's failure, but they are by no means destroyed. If the investigators killed one or more members of the Triumvirate during their face off, then new ones arise from the Tokabhaya's ranks to carry on the organization's foul deeds. These new leaders, or even the old ones (assuming they're still alive), may seek out the investigators in order to exact vengeance upon them for

foiling their grand scheme or killing their predecessor(s). Alternatively, at some point in the future, the investigators may become embroiled in the Triumvirate's latest attempts to unleash the King of Fear on the world before the appointed time (as discussed in **Patsy Cake, Patsy Cake**, page 257), although the timing of such events may extend far beyond the year and a day mentioned there.

Depending on whether or not Tenzin Kalsang survived—and their role in his death if he didn't—the investigators may be carrying long-term psychological scars from their ordeal. These may manifest as underlying insanities they have developed as a result of their ordeals, or they may be plagued by nightmares about their time traveling with the *lama*.

If the investigators find themselves returned to Pemakö by the Lords of Shambhala, they have quite a challenge on their hands. Conditions are far worse than before, now that the Gates of Agartha are open, as the King of Fear's minions start to make their presence felt beyond Agartha's borders. If the investigators thought it was a treacherous place to visit the first time around, they will be in for a very nasty surprise upon their return. Plant and animal life within Pemakö rapidly mutates into strange and dangerous new forms as the kingdom's malign influence spreads to the area immediately surrounding the Gate, and Mythos entities, and servitors allied to the King of Fear, begin to increase in numbers accordingly.

REWARDS

Surviving investigators should be permitted a development phase once they have completed the challenges that face them in the Valley of the White Ape, and before they set off for pastures new (be that home or wherever they have landed in India).

Depending on whether or not the investigators managed to thwart the Triumvirate and save Tenzin Kalsang, the Keeper may also cleanse their karmic balance sheet and reset it to neutral. The Keeper may wish to do this even if the investigators weren't successful, based on their behavior during the ritual and in Shambhala. In addition, apply the following awards to each surviving investigator.

- Foiling or unmasking a *dugma* (optional): +1D2 Sanity points.
- Opening the Gates of Agartha: -1D8 Sanity points.
- Preventing the Gates of Agartha from opening: +1D8 Sanity points.
- Defeating a Mythos monster: abominable mi-go (optional) +1D6 Sanity points; the Triumvirate +1D10 Sanity points.

CHARACTERS AND MONSTERS

The NPCs and unique creatures mentioned in this chapter are described in the following section. For *Pulp Cthulhu*, certain NPCs have Luck values and pulp talents; these can be ignored for standard play. Generic NPCs, such as the various tribal peoples of Pemakö, are described in **Appendix A**.

THE TRIUMVIRATE

Suggestions have been made for what each member's first attack is likely to be in combat. These are particularly relevant if the investigators are not combat-oriented; the Keeper may also wish to downgrade the Triumvirate's fighting skills under such circumstances, so that they better fit the investigators' level of competence.

Each member of the Triumvirate is armed with a black, scorpion-hilted sword, whose tongue-like blade of meteoric iron is wreathed in flames. The body and tail of the scorpion form the grip, its sting forms the pommel, and its pincers form the guard. An Extreme success with the blade inflicts an additional 1D6 points of burn damage to the target. The swords are not immediately visible beneath the cloaks the Triumvirate wear in their guise as Guardians of the Gates.

Andrei Vitsin, age 47, former Cossack

STR 80 CON 80 SIZ 60 DEX 60 INT 65
APP 55 POW 80 EDU 90 SAN — HP 14
DB: +1D4 Build: 1 Move: 7 MP: 16 Luck: 40

Combat

Fighting: in a confrontation, Vitsin's first line of attack is usually to cast Dominate.

Brawl	60% (30/12), damage 1D3+1D4
Scorpion blade	70% (35/14), damage 1D8+1+1D4
Dodge	70% (35/14)

Pulp Talents

- **Heavy Hitter:** may spend 10 Luck points to add an additional damage die when dealing out damage in melee combat (die type depends on weapon being used).
- **Tough Guy:** soaks up damage; may spend 10 Luck points to shrug off up to 5 hit points worth of damage taken in one combat round.

Skills

Climb 60%, Cthulhu Mythos 50%, Firearms (Rifle) 65%, First Aid 50%, History 80%, Intimidate 85%, Occult 70%, Ride 75%, Stealth 60%, Survival 60%.

Languages: Other (as appropriate) 51%, Russian (Own) 90%.

Spells: Alter Weather*, Dominate, Mindblast, Observation from Afar*, Send Vision*, plus any other spells of the Keeper's choosing.

*See *Appendix B*.

Mariam Sandrine, age 30, former Leopard Society priestess

STR 50 CON 60 SIZ 70 DEX 80 INT 90
APP 75 POW 100 EDU 85 SAN — HP 13
DB: 0 Build: 0 Move: 8 MP: 20 Luck: 50

Combat

Fighting: in a confrontation, Sandrine's first line of attack is usually to cast Wrack.

Brawl	55% (27/11), damage 1D3
Scorpion blade	65% (32/13), damage 1D8+1
Dodge	70% (35/14)

Pulp Talents:

- **Smooth Talker:** gains a bonus die to Charm rolls.
- **Strong Willed:** gains a bonus die when making POW rolls.

Skills

Charm 75%, Climb 70%, Cthulhu Mythos 60%, History 80%, Jump 70%, Listen 50%, Lore (Leopard Society) 60%, Natural World 80%, Occult 90%, Psychology 60%, Science (Astronomy) 50%, Stealth 70%.

Languages: French (Own) 85%, Other (as appropriate) 61%.

Spells: Cause Disease*, Gate Box, Observation from Afar*, Send Vision*, Shrivelling, Wither Limb, Wrack, plus any spells (folk magic in particular) from the *Grand Grimoire*, Keeper's choice.

*See *Appendix B*.

Hine Roimata, age 79, former Maori warrior and leader of the Triumvirate

STR 70 CON 65 SIZ 65 DEX 80 INT 80
 APP 60 POW 120 EDU 95 SAN — HP 13
 DB: +1D4 Build: 1 Move: 3 MP: 24 Luck: 60

Combat

Fighting: in a confrontation, Roimata's first line of attack is usually to cast Fist of Yog-Sothoth.

Brawl 75% (37/15), damage 1D3+1D4
 Scorpion blade 85% (47/17), damage 1D8+1+1D4
 Dodge 75% (37/15)

Pulp Talents:

- **Scary:** reduces difficulty level by one or gains bonus die (at Keeper's discretion) to Intimidate rolls.
- **Shadow:** reduces difficulty level by one, or gains bonus die (at Keeper's discretion) to Stealth rolls; if currently unseen, the user is able to make two surprise attacks before their location is discovered.

Skills

Climb 60%, Cthulhu Mythos 70%, History 90%, Intimidate 75%, Listen 65%, Lore (Maori) 75%, Natural World 70%, Navigate 60%, Pilot (Boat) 60%, Swim 60%, Stealth 80%, Survival 70%.

Languages: Other (as appropriate) 61%, Te Reo Maori (Own) 95%.

Spells: Alter Weather, Breath of the Deep, Fist of Yog-Sothoth, Implant Fear, Observation from Afar*, Possession*, Send Vision*, Summon/Bind Fire Vampire*, plus any other spell of the Keeper's choosing.

*See Appendix B.

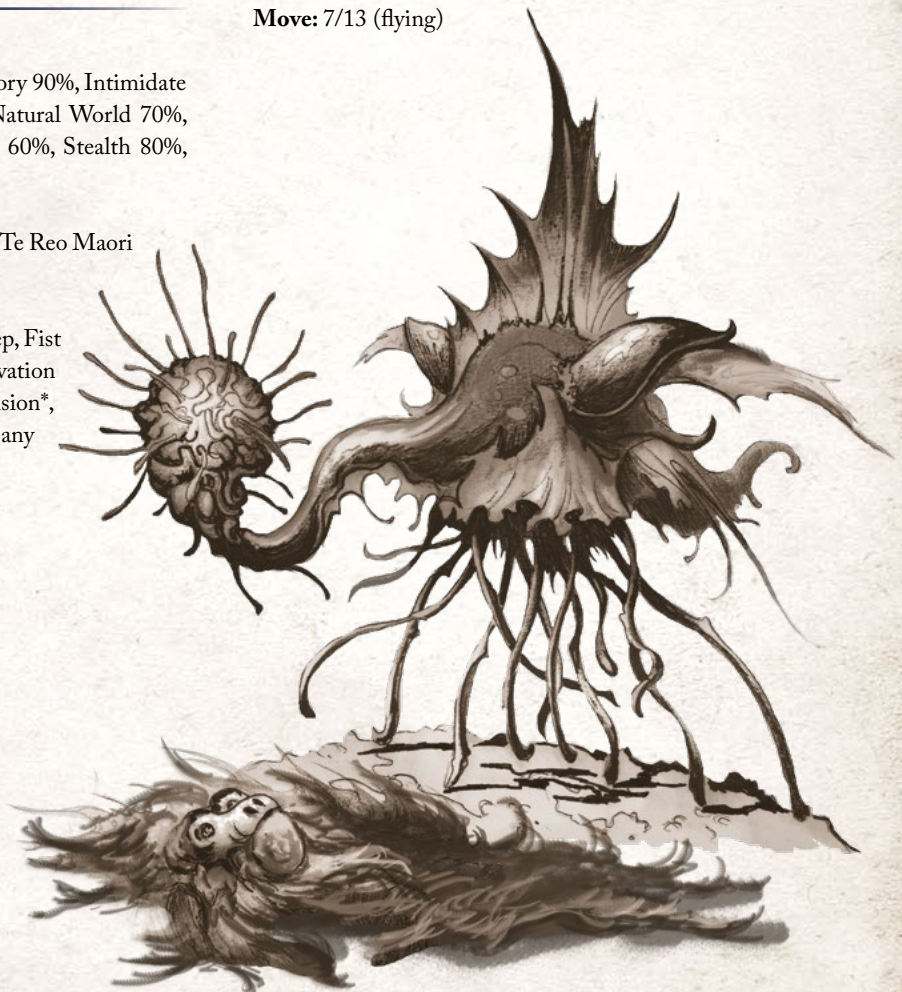
CREATURES AND MONSTERS

Abominable Mi-go, researchers from Yuggoth

Sample statistics for six abominable mi-go.

	1*	2	3	4	5	6
STR	65	45	40	55	60	55
CON	55	50	55	50	65	45
SIZ	55	45	45	50	45	60
DEX	85	80	75	90	85	60
INT	65	50	50	65	55	70
POW	75	70	70	50	70	60
HP	11	9	10	10	11	10
DB	0	0	0	0	0	0
Build	0	0	0	0	0	0
MP	15	14	14	10	14	12

Move: 7/13 (flying)



LIBERATION - PEMAKÖ, TIBET -

Combat

Attacks per round: 2 (claws), or 1 if using hypnosis or a weapon (see the **Mi-go Matter-Dissolving Horn** box)

Hypnosis: by introducing ultra-high and ultra-low frequency tones into its buzzing, the mi-go can put one or many humans listening into a trance state. Those within 40 feet of a buzzing mi-go must succeed on an opposed POW roll or become incapable of action. The mi-go must maintain the buzzing or the affected targets revive and are once more capable of action. Mi-go can also speak telepathically to humans, which costs 1 magic point per 5 rounds; human can resist the communication with an opposed POW roll.

Seize (mnvr): instead of attacking their target, the abominable mi-go can attempt to seize their opponent (if their victim's Build is smaller than or equal to their own), and then fly into the sky with them, with a view to either dropping the poor unfortunate from a great height or reaching an altitude where their victim's lungs rupture.

Fighting	40% (20/8), damage 1D6 + DB
Seize (mnvr)	40% (20/8), damage due to falling or 1D10 for every 1,000 feet above 24,000 feet*
Dodge	45% (22/9)

*Every 305 m above 7,315 m.

Armor: 1-point hide if wearing their furry disguise; no armor if lacking their migyu skin; the resonance of their bodies causes all piercing weapons (bullets included) to inflict only minimum damage.

Sanity Loss: 0/1D6 to see an abominable mi-go.

Migyū, Pemakö's true white apes

	Roll	Average
STR	(4D6)×5	70
CON	(3D6)×5	50-55
SIZ	(2D6+2)×5	45
DEX	(3D6)×5	50-55
INT	(2D6)×5	35
POW	(3D6)×5	50-55

Average Hit Points: 12

Average Damage Bonus: 0

Average Build: 0

Move: 9

MI-GO MATTER-DISSOLVING HORN

If the Keeper wishes to make an encounter between the mi-go and the investigators that little bit tougher (either during the investigators' attempts to recover the ritual bowls or during any repeat confrontations), one or more may be armed with a matter-dissolving horn. If the encounter takes place after the mi-go have a chance to disassemble their lightning rig, they may also have their lightning guns to hand as well. The mi-go have 35% (17/7) skill for both their lightning guns and matter-dissolving horns.

A matter-dissolving horn looks suspiciously like a *kangling* (simple horn made from human bone), and for each magic point expended while playing it, the horn dissolves 10 lbs (4.5 kg) of matter. When used against humans (or any other creature susceptible to its effects), the horn inflicts 1 damage for each invested magic point, twisting and burning the target's flesh, sinew, and bone. The base chance to use such an instrument is 5%, and the user declares how many magic points they wish to expend before making the skill roll. The target must be within 100 feet (30 m) to suffer the damage if the roll is successful.

All individuals within 100 feet (30 m) of a horn (when used) must make a **Sanity** roll (1/1D4 loss) due to the unearthly wailing noise the instrument makes.

Combat

Attacks per round: 2 (claw and/or bite)

Grapple (mnvr): if the migyu successfully strikes its target with both claws in the same round, it grapples them. In each subsequent round, it automatically inflicts 1 damage or its Damage Bonus (whichever is larger) until the victim is able to break free with a successful opposed STR or DEX roll.

Fighting	45% (22/9), damage 1D6 + DB
Grapple (mnvr)	45% (22/9), held, damage 1 or DB per round
Dodge	30% (15/6)

Skills

Climb 75%, Jump 75%, Stealth 45%.

Armor: 1-point skin.

Sanity Loss: none.

SIX SAMPLE MIGYU

	1	2	3	4	5	6
STR	95	95	100	105	85	55
CON	50	75	85	45	55	45
SIZ	45	50	55	50	60	50
DEX	40	60	55	65	65	50
INT	20	35	25	45	30	60
POW	50	55	60	50	75	70
HP	9	12	14	9	11	9
DB	1D4	1D4	1D4	1D4	1D4	0
Build	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	0
Move	9	9	9	9	9	9
MP	10	11	12	10	15	14



LIBERATION - PEMA KÖ, TIBET -

THE LORDS OF SHAMBHALA

While the Lords appear to take on one of three guises while interacting with the investigators, their fundamental statistics remain the same, as their outward appearances are merely an illusion formed by the investigators' minds; however, certain skills and methods of attack do vary between the guises (and should be described as appropriate to their illusory forms). These, along with any special maneuvers they may have, are listed separately for each relevant form.

Common Statistics

	1*	2	3
STR	105	70	90
CON	115	90	95
SIZ	75	80	90
DEX	95	75	100
INT	140	135	105
POW	110	100	95
HP	19	17	18
DB	+1D6	+1D6	+1D6
Build	+2	+2	+2
MP	22	20	19

*Leader.

Move: 9

Skills

Cthulhu Mythos 70%, History (Earth) 75%, History (Shambhala) 90%, Lore (Buddhism) 90%, Occult 90%, Psychology 75%, Spot Hidden 80%.

Languages: any (as appropriate) 100%.

Armor: none, but physical weapons only inflict half damage unless enchanted for use against Mythos creatures.

Spells: Curse*, Melt Flesh, Sword Siddhi*, Wrack, plus any other spells of the Keeper's choosing.

Sanity Loss: 0/1D4 Sanity points to see a Lord in humanoid form, 1/1D6 Sanity points to see a Lord in sengye form.

*See *Appendix B*.

Humanoid Forms

Combat

Attacks per round: 1 (razor-sharp fingernails or *phurba*—a three-sided Tibetan ritual dagger)

Brawl	60% (30/12), damage 1D3+1D6, or phurba 1D4+2+1D6
Dodge	50% (25/10)

Sengye (Snow Lion) Form

Combat

Attacks per round: 2 (Roar of Silence and either bite or claw)

Roar of Silence: as its first combat action, the sengye opens its mouth as if to roar; however, instead of generating any audible noise, it emits a silent shockwave. If its opponent fails to resist with an opposed POW roll, they are left stunned, providing the sengye with an immediate unopposed attack against them. If the victim succeeds with the opposed POW roll, they may dodge or fight back as usual.

Fighting	70% (35/15), damage 3D6
Dodge	60% (30/12)



Snow lions decorate the throne



SPIRITS OF THE EARTH

- NALANDA & PATNA, INDIA -

The birthplace of Buddhism, Bihar and Orissa has many other marvels beside the charnel grounds of Rajgir. As the investigators are about to find out, it is also home to one of the oldest educational establishments in India and one of its darkest legends—although one that ultimately leads to redemption.

Charged by the Lords of Shambhala with putting right the mistakes of the recent past, the investigators must locate and retrieve both the actual ritual that seals the Gates of Agartha and the implements that will enable them to do so. But, a difficult decision lies ahead. Will they have the courage and strength of character to see this mission through to the bitter end or will they let the world burn to avoid facing the consequences of their actions?

There are several ways the investigators could find themselves undertaking the challenges of **Chapter 7**. The main three routes are:

- They failed to stop the ritual in the Valley of the White Ape and so opened the Gates of Agartha for the Triumvirate (**Chapter 6: The Liturgy of Death**, page 242).
- They succeeded in stopping the ritual, but the Gates of Agartha are now opening for another reason (**Chapter 6: Continuing the Campaign**, page 257).
- Having initially refused Tenzin Kalsang's mission, they have been brought in to mend the damage caused by another group hoodwinked by the Children of Fear (**Chapter 2: That's a Pass**, page 87).

Regardless of the reasons for their arrival back in Bihar and Orissa, the investigators have plenty to do and very little time in which to do it. After all, the way is now open, and the Triumvirate's scheme to release the King of Fear into the world is finally coming to fruition.

THE HEART OF AN EMPIRE

As mentioned in **A Land of Kings** (page 154), Bihar and Orissa was once part of the kingdom of Magadha. The seat of some of India's most powerful and impressive royal dynasties, it rose to prominence after the fall of the Indus Valley Civilization. Thanks to its abundant natural resources and relatively stable climate, the kingdom flourished. While Bihar originally formed Magadha's core, Orissa came to be part of the kingdom only after a fierce and bloody campaign waged by the great Mauryan king, Ashoka. His name, which means "without sorrow" in Sanskrit, was more commonly lengthened at that time to Chandashoka: Ashoka the Cruel.

Born around 302 BCE in the then-capital of Magadha, Pataliputra (**Heaven and Hell**, page 284), Ashoka is said to have seized the crown from his elder half-brother following the death of their father, King Bindusara, after the anointed heir to throne "fell" into a flaming pit and burned to death. This led to a four-year interregnum during which

HERE WE GO AGAIN

As some of the investigators are likely to have already visited Bihar and Orissa by this point in the campaign, there is no new handout for this region. Instead, refer the players back to **What Your Investigator Knows 5: India, Bihar and Orissa** (**Appendix C**, page 351), if they wish to refresh their memories.

Chandashoka murdered all but one of his remaining 100 brothers and half-brothers, allegedly by throwing them down the so-called **Unfathomable Well** (page 285).

Once firmly established on the throne, Ashoka waged a brutal war against the neighboring kingdom of Kalinga (Orissa). So savage and horrific was the campaign that the king wholeheartedly threw himself into the Buddhist faith to atone for the atrocities he'd committed in the furtherance of his imperial schemes (at least according to one version of the story). Determined to be the ruler of a just and pious nation, he ordered that a series of edicts and proclamations be carved into rocks and pillars across his kingdom, laying out his vision for how his subjects should behave and what they could expect from him in return. As benevolent a ruler as he became, Ashoka still maintained a tight degree of control over his kingdom, and even employed a network of religious officers to ensure that his citizens toed the line drawn by his edicts and proclamations.

In addition to these carved pronouncements, the Lion of Sarnath (another of Ashoka's many titles) made Buddhism a major faith in India and developed Taxila (previously the Gandharan capital) and Nalanda into important centers of learning (**A Dangerous Gift?**, following). Later in his reign, Ashoka assumed another name: Dharmashoka, Ashoka the Righteous. As is often the way with such things, the edicts of his empire were put to rest a mere 50 years after his death, when the Shunga dynasty rose to power.

A DANGEROUS GIFT?

Although written records date the founding of the *Mahavihara* (Great Monastery, or university) of Nalanda to the 5th century CE, archaeological evidence uncovered in the early 20th century dated the oldest structure on the site (a *stupa*) to the reign of King Ashoka, aligning with the literary sources. The site chosen by Ashoka for his stupa was already important to both the Buddhist and Jain faiths due to its associations with Sakyamuni Buddha, who visited it many times, and Mahavira, the Jain Tirthankara, who lived there for a while.

Lying a little under 60 miles (96 km) to the southeast of Patna and only 9 miles (15 km) north of Rajgir, the ruins of the ancient university sit on a small plateau surrounded by flat, fertile agricultural land. The first planned university in ancient India, in its heyday, Nalanda was home to more than 10,000 students and around 2,000 teachers—all Buddhist monks—from across India and Asia. Hiuen-Tsiang was both a student and professor there during the 7th century CE.

No one knows the inspiration for the *Mahavihara's* name, although there are several theories. Some scholars maintain that it is named after Naganalanda, a naga (a

mythical serpent-creature) who lived in the lake in the university's mango grove. Others insist it comes from the word for lotus (*nalana*), which here represents the concept of knowledge, and the word *da* (to give), hence—quite appropriately for an educational establishment—Nalanda, the Giver of Knowledge. It is said that, when the university was ransacked around 1193 CE by the invading forces of the Turk Bakhtiyar Khilji, so stuffed full of manuscripts were its three massive libraries that they burned solidly for three months. While there is archaeological evidence that Nalanda was set ablaze, there are no physical remains to prove that the libraries ever existed.

The remains of an ancient Buddhist complex just south of the village of Burgaon were first reported among Westerners by Francis Buchanan-Hamilton (in 1812) while undertaking survey work for the British East India Company. They were not officially surveyed by the ASI until 1861 under the watchful eye of Sir Alexander Cunningham, later the organization's Director General, who used Hiuen-Tsiang's writings to help identify the various ruins. The systematic archaeological exploration by the ASI did not begin until 1915, after which the work carried on throughout the 1920s and beyond, initially under the guidance of D. B. Spooner (the only American archaeologist to work for the ASI, who also dug at Peshawar and Patna), and then under J. A. Page and G. C. Chandra.

THE GATEWAY TO HELL

Prior to his enlightenment and foundation of the earliest incarnation of the university at Nalanda, Ashoka was also allegedly responsible for the creation of a hideous



SPREADING THE WORD

Besides its huge influence on early medieval Buddhist art, literature, and architecture, Nalanda University also had a massive impact on religious belief. It was here that the foundations of Vajrayana were established before they were taken to Tibet by the Abbot Santaraksita and his associates, Kamalasila and Padmasambhava (**Chapter 5: The Land of Snows**, page 187). Many of the schools of Tibetan Buddhism, including the Kadampa and Sakyapa (**Chapter 5: Religion in Tibet**, page 190), trace their lineage directly back to Nalanda.



SPIRITS OF THE EARTH

- NALANDA & PATNA, INDIA -

place of torture, disguised as a palace surrounded by luxuriant gardens. Although frequently referred to as the “Beautiful Jail,” it is better known by its other name: Ashoka’s Hell Chambers.

Used by Ashoka to get rid of those who opposed or upset him, the Hell Chambers were allegedly designed by his chief executioner, Chandagirika (Girika the Cruel), based on the concept of the five great agonies as described in the *Balapandita Sutra* (*The Sutra of the Fool and the Wise Man*). The chambers were also believed to be linked to Patala, the Buddhist (and Hindu) underworld and, thus, also to the Narakas (hells) below. Apparently, the chambers so accurately reflected the various levels of hell that some people were convinced the king had actually visited them.

So vile were the acts allegedly perpetrated in the Hell Chambers that, according to Hiuen-Tsiang, stories about them continued to circulate some 900 years after Ashoka’s death. Laurence Austine Waddell, an army surgeon with the Indian Medical Service and an amateur archaeologist, claimed that even in the 1890s, a well (the Agam Kuan) he identified as part of the Hell Chambers (**The Unfathomable Well**, page 285) was widely associated with evil—so much so that no one drank the water from it.

The most famous legend connected to the Hell Chambers is relayed in the *Ashokavadana* (*The Story of Ashoka*, one of the *Mahayana Divyavadana*—divine stories—written about the lives of Buddhist saints) and concerns the king’s fervent embracing of Buddhism (**Handout: Spirits 1**—although this should not be given to the players until **The Road to Hell**, page 284).

The prophecy referred to by the monk Samudra was that of the Chakravartin king of Pataliputra (now, effectively, Patna), a mighty ruler sworn to uphold not only the rule of law but also strict moral and religious standards within his vast kingdom; a monarch who was the secular equivalent to Sakyamuni Buddha and destined to distribute his holy remains across the known world. According to Samudra, the king was supposed to be Ashoka, who would never be able to take up his prophesied mantle unless he mended his ways.

Despite the Buddha’s high hopes for Ashoka, as detailed in his prophecy, a legend recorded by Fa Hsien during his visit to Pataliputra in the 4th century CE notes that when he ascended the throne, Ashoka, like all Chakravartins, received the gift of a wheel from Heaven. The material the wheel was made from would determine both the length and quality of the king’s reign. Sadly, Ashoka received an iron wheel, indicating that his rule would be both short and of the lowest quality—something he presumably altered quite substantially once he accepted the Buddha’s teachings, given that he held the throne for roughly 40 years, about 30 of which as the benevolent Dharmashoka.



FIRE AND BRIMSTONE

The five great agonies that could be inflicted on a tortured soul all involved being stretched out on a red hot—and invariably flaming—metal floor, either on their back or on their face, depending on the intended agony. Following that, they could expect to have their jaws forced open with tongs while fiery balls of molten iron were inserted into their mouths to burn away their internal organs (the first agony); to have their jaws forced open and boiling copper poured down their throats (the second agony); to be marked up with a molten cord of iron before being systematically hacked into polygonal shapes with a flaming axe (the third and fourth agonies); or to be transfixed to the floor with iron stakes nailed through their hands, feet, and heart in the five-fold tether (the fifth agony).



AN ILL WIND

As both Nalanda and Patna are located in Bihar, they experience the weather conditions already described in **Chapter 4: A Land of Kings** (page 154). In addition, Patna suffers from dust storms in May, which cool the temperature as well as bringing showers, although most of the region’s rain falls in the monsoon season between July and August. While the rains bring welcome relief from the summer’s heat, they do nothing to quell the humidity.

One particular hot and unwelcome summer visitor to the region is the Loo wind, a blistering, dry afternoon wind that rises in the subcontinent’s great northwestern deserts before blowing all the way across northern India (including what is now Pakistan). The Loo winds are at their strongest between May and June and reach such high temperatures that they can cause heatstroke and death to those foolish enough to be caught out in them—cases of heatstroke at this time of year are known as “Loo *lagna*” (which loosely translates as “feel the hot wind”). Officially classified as a type of foehn wind (a warm, strong, and very dry wind), the Loo winds can raise the air temperature by anywhere between 25 degrees F to 58 degrees F (14 degrees C to 32 degrees C) in mere minutes, scorching and browning vegetation as they pass. The winds do not end until the monsoons arrive to dampen them down.



SET UP: A STEEP LEARNING CURVE

Unceremoniously deposited in an archaeology finds tent somewhere in India by the Lords of Shambhala, and armed only with their previous experiences and a handwritten note (**Handout: Liberation 3a or 3b**), the investigators must race against time to recover the artifacts necessary to thwart the Tokabhaya.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The following characters are the main NPCs for this chapter. Generic profiles for other NPCs the investigators may encounter while visiting Nalanda and Patna can be found in **Appendix A**.

Daniel Mortimer, *age 22, linguist and archaeologist*

Born in Calcutta (Kolkata) to a sitting member of the British judiciary in India, young Mortimer was fortunate in that his parents were also members of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. The Society's hallowed halls—located at 1 Park Street—

contained a treasure trove of Indian artifacts and manuscripts. There, the boy grew up surrounded by scholars and researchers, British and Indian alike. If he wasn't in the society's buildings, he could be found wandering the collections at the India Museum (where most of the society's more valuable items were kept) with his long-suffering *ayah* (Indian nanny) in tow.

Although he was sent back to England for schooling as soon as he was old enough to travel (like the vast majority of children born to British officials in India), the moment the long holidays came, Mortimer was back to prowling his two favorite places on Earth. Now, having completed his degree at Cambridge University, Mortimer has returned to the country of his birth as part of the ASI's team at Nalanda. He specializes in ancient languages, for which he has something of a gift.

- **Description:** a dark-haired, unremarkable-looking young man, moderately tanned by his time at the dig.
- **Traits:** amiable and enthusiastic. Mortimer has always been fascinated by history and is determined to emulate the linguistic achievements of his hero, James Prinsep.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** while young, Mortimer is an expert in the field of ancient languages and a font of academic knowledge regarding Nalanda University. He may be of invaluable service when it comes to translating the ritual scrolls hidden at Nalanda.



Daniel Mortimer



Mrinmoy "Tayapati" Mishra

SPIRITS OF THE EARTH
- NALANDA & PATNA, INDIA -

Handout: Spirits 1

Known officially as the Beautiful Gaol, the palace of torture created by King Ashoka to punish his enemies was better known as his Hell Chambers. No one who entered the palace grounds was permitted to leave alive, an edict which the king's executioner, Chandagirika, took great delight in enforcing. One day, a monk stumbled into the gardens and, realizing where he was, attempted to flee. Unfortunately, Chandagirika caught him and sentenced him to death. However, so pious was the newly enlightened monk that he survived the noxious death prescribed for him (to be boiled alive in a cauldron full of human blood, bone marrow, and feces); his prayers not only prevented Chandagirika from successfully boiling the foul liquid, but also provided a lotus leaf for the monk to sit on, thus keeping him away from the unclean substances.

Word quickly got around, and the king himself came to see the miraculous monk, who pointed out a few difficult truths to Ashoka, including how Ashoka, through his wicked behavior, was denying his role in a prophecy recounted by Sakyamuni Buddha himself. Stirred by the monk's words, Ashoka renounced his evil ways and embraced the Buddha's teachings, vowing to be the greatest ruler the Mauryan Empire had ever seen. But when he tried to leave, Chandagirika attempted to arrest him, as per the king's own instructions. The executioner was seized by Ashoka's guards and burned alive in his own torture chambers for his audacity, and the Beautiful Gaol was torn down. All that is believed to be left of it today is the Agam Kuan well in Patna.



Mrinmoy “Vidyapati” Mishra,
age 63, caretaker and night watchman

Vidyapati was born and raised in the village of Nalanda, and began his association with the nearby ruins of the *Mahavihara* at a young age. The men of his family have acted as the unofficial guardians of the site since time out of mind and he, too, became the site’s caretaker, helping the British archaeologists and surveyors after their return to the area nearly ten years ago, just as his father and grandfather had assisted British explorers in the previous century. It was the British who gave him the nickname “Vidyapati” (Master of Knowledge)—mockingly at first, he knows, but he has since proved his worth when it comes to identifying potential areas of interest.

Besides teaching all they knew of the ruins’ folk history, Vidyapati’s male family members were also careful to instill an abiding love and understanding of Bihar’s myths and legends in him. Over the years, this has kept Vidyapati in good stead with the British as well. There isn’t anyone on site who knows more about the place or loves it as deeply. The laborers, many of them local, all look to him for advice and guidance.

- **Description:** the old man wears the traditional *dhoti kurta* (loincloth and long-sleeved shirt), which matches his thick thatch of white hair.

- **Traits:** soft-spoken and watchful, he loves to share his knowledge of the Mahavihara. Vidyapati knows that Magadha has seen many rulers come and go; the British are merely the latest in a long line, and there will be others once their time is done. What matters is that the land and its gods and spirits are not forgotten.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** with his extensive knowledge of folk tales and local lore, the old gentleman is just as much an expert in his field as Daniel Mortimer (if not more so) and can be a valuable resource to investigators.

Nalanda’s Yakshini
divine resident of the mango grove

Yakshinis (and their male counterparts, yakshas) are usually described as nature spirits of the earth. Known to vary from playful to capricious, harmless to malevolent. As spirits of earth, yakshinis often become the guardians of buried treasures, and the one currently living in the mango grove at Nalanda is no exception. She was there before the monks came to build their *Mahavihara*, and has remained long after their departure. No one specifically tasked her with taking care of the earthenware jars buried beneath her favorite mango tree; she took it upon herself to protect them. Not only did she recognize their importance as *terma*, but she also understood just how much they meant to the monk who sought to protect them from the raiders who destroyed Nalanda’s beautiful libraries all those centuries ago.



Nalanda's Yakshini



Kumari Ma

SPIRITS OF THE EARTH - NALANDA & PATNA, INDIA -

- **Description:** beautiful, voluptuous, and largely naked, but for a long cloth draped across her hips and the vibrant garland of mango leaves and asoka tree blossoms around her neck.
- **Traits:** playful but protective of her mango trees, her hidden treasures, and her snake companions (**The Yakshini's Snakes**, page 299).
- **Roleplaying hooks:** as Nalanda's guardian spirit, it is within her power to deny the investigators the ritual scrolls they seek; however, if they impress her, she may be able to provide some guidance (albeit obliquely) regarding their visit to Patna.

Kumari Ma,

age 56, head priestess of the Sitala Devi Mandir

Gifted to the Sitala Devi Mandir (temple) in Patna as a child to honor the goddess' hand in healing her father's sickness (one which had already killed several of her siblings and her mother), Kumari Ma has known little of the world beyond the shrine. The blessings of the goddess are obviously with her as, despite her daily dealings with the sick and dying, she has never once suffered a bout of illness in her life.

While she is well aware that her father's gift to the temple was as much to rid himself of an unwanted daughter whose dowry he could never afford as it was to honor Sitala Devi, Kumari Ma has no regrets; she knows her life would have been that much harder beyond the temple's compound, and that she would probably have been dead long before now,

her body undoubtedly consumed by the pisachas who are now in her care.

- **Description:** fit and strong in spite of her advancing years, the only real signs of age that mar Kumari Ma's appearance are the increasing number of silver-gray streaks in her long, otherwise dark hair. Like all the priestesses at the shrine, Kumari Ma wears a red sari. Hers, as befits the head priestess, is not plain like those of her sisters, but patterned with white flowers and swirling, paisley-pattern borders. Beneath her sari, Ma wears a green choli (blouse).
- **Traits:** passionate and devout, with a keen sense of humor. The priestess knows that death and disease are all part of life; the goddess alone chooses who shall suffer and who shall be saved.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** as the high priestess of Sitala Devi, Kumari Ma has a close relationship with the pisachas who live beneath Patna—most of them, at least. She is aware of the tensions within the colony, but not their true cause.

Gulrukh Chaudhary,

age unknown, leader of Patna's pisachas

For decades now, Chaudhary has led the ancient colony of pisachas that lives beneath the Sitala Devi Mandir in the forgotten remains of Ashoka's Hell Chambers. Born a pisacha rather than becoming one, she has spent her entire



life in and around the Hell Chambers, the temple above it, and the portion of the Dreamlands the Hell Chambers secretly connect to. Chaudhary has known Kumari Ma since the head priestess was first brought to the temple as a small child, and considers her a great friend, as she did the other head priestesses before her.

- **Description:** heavily built yet grizzled with age; dressed in red rags that may once have been the robes of a Sitala Devi priestess.
- **Traits:** devout, protective (if a little brusque), and proud of her role as steward of both her people and Ashoka's treasures.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** with the rise in Sisirama worship among Patna's pisachas, Chaudhary fears for the future of her people. She knows the Charnel God's worshippers covet control of the colony and is saddened—though unsurprised—by Prasad's bid for leadership. Despite this, she is determined to protect her people however she can. As guardian of Ashoka's *ghanta* and *vajra*, Chaudhary is someone the investigators must impress if they are to succeed in their new quest.

Narayana Prasad, age 36, Sisirama worshipper and insurgent

Originally from Benares (Varanasi), one of the seven most holy cities in India (indeed, the holiest of them all), Prasad once entertained hopes of becoming an Aghori—not because of any spiritual calling, but for the power it would grant him over others. His perversions soon became clear to his guru, who cast him out with a warning that no good would come of his lust for power. Arrogant enough to believe he could teach himself the ways of the Aghori without mentorship, he drifted eastward from charnel ground to charnel ground, reveling in his acts of cannibalism and other taboo practices.

Prasad was already well on his way to transforming into a pisacha when the Tokabhaya found him. His devotion to Sisirama, strengthened by the Charnel God's whisperings in his mind and his own desire to control others, made him an easy target for recruitment. After being sent to Patna just before his transformation was complete, Prasad wormed his way into the pisacha colony there, reviving the near-extinct worship of his dark god and waiting for the moment he could seize power.

- **Description:** not long fully transformed into a pisacha, the stocky Prasad appears more human than many of his kind; however, his stench is just as potent, and there is always an angry gleam in his glowing red eyes.
- **Traits:** greedy, ambitious, arrogant, and cruel.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** as the leader of the Sisirama worshippers at Patna, Prasad may prove to be something of an obstacle to the investigators during their attempts to retrieve the artifacts they need.

START: THE TREE OF LIFE

Keeper note: this scene continues directly from **Making Amends** (Chapter 6, page 261).

Unless the investigators respond to the surprised young man's question immediately, he tries a different tack: "*Sorry, didn't hear you come in just now—who are you, and how may I be of assistance?*"

If the investigators have the presence of mind to introduce themselves in a suitably polite and friendly manner, the young man stands and holds his right hand out across the pile of trays and notebooks on his desk. "*Daniel Mortimer, Patna Circle. Wasn't expecting any visitors. Very odd. Pleased to make your acquaintance, though. Fancy a cup of tea? I'm parched. Thirsty work, cataloging.*"

If the investigators take him up on the offer, young Daniel Mortimer wanders over to the tent flaps and yells out for refreshments. If they are still struggling to articulate who they are, Mortimer assumes that a good cup of tea will help loosen their tongues—the tea appears a few minutes later in the company of a *chai wallah* (Indian tea maker).

While Mortimer calls for tea, a successful **Spot Hidden** roll highlights a fresh newspaper on one of the tables. The date corresponds to the investigators' last day on earth—the Lords of Shambhala have returned them to the world moments after they either completed the ritual in the Valley of the White Ape or were summoned to Shambhala having refused to journey with Tenzin Kalsang after their meeting at Tun-huang. Depending on each investigator's experience in Shambhala, they may feel like they've been away for a few restful days (positive karma) or like they've spent hundreds of years in abject misery (negative karma).

Looking around the tent, most of the archaeological finds seem to fall into one of two categories: broken earthenware pots and jars, and small pieces of statuary. A successful **Hard Spot Hidden** roll pinpoints a tray containing a set of dice, two white and one black, similar to the ones carried by Tenzin Kalsang (**A Bitter Pill**, page 210). A successful **Archaeology, Art/Craft (History)**, or **Lore (Buddhism)** roll identifies that the statues belong to the Nalanda school of art, dating from around the 8th–10th centuries CE.

If the investigators uncover this information via a successful **Archaeology** roll with a Hard success or better, they also recall that the Patna Circle of the ASI (**Chain of Command**, page 120) is currently excavating the ruins of Nalanda University, which should suggest their current location. The best way for the investigators to figure out where they are if they don't have the skills to identify the artworks on display in the tent is to question Mortimer, although he will be deeply confused and/or suspicious if the investigators flat-out ask him where

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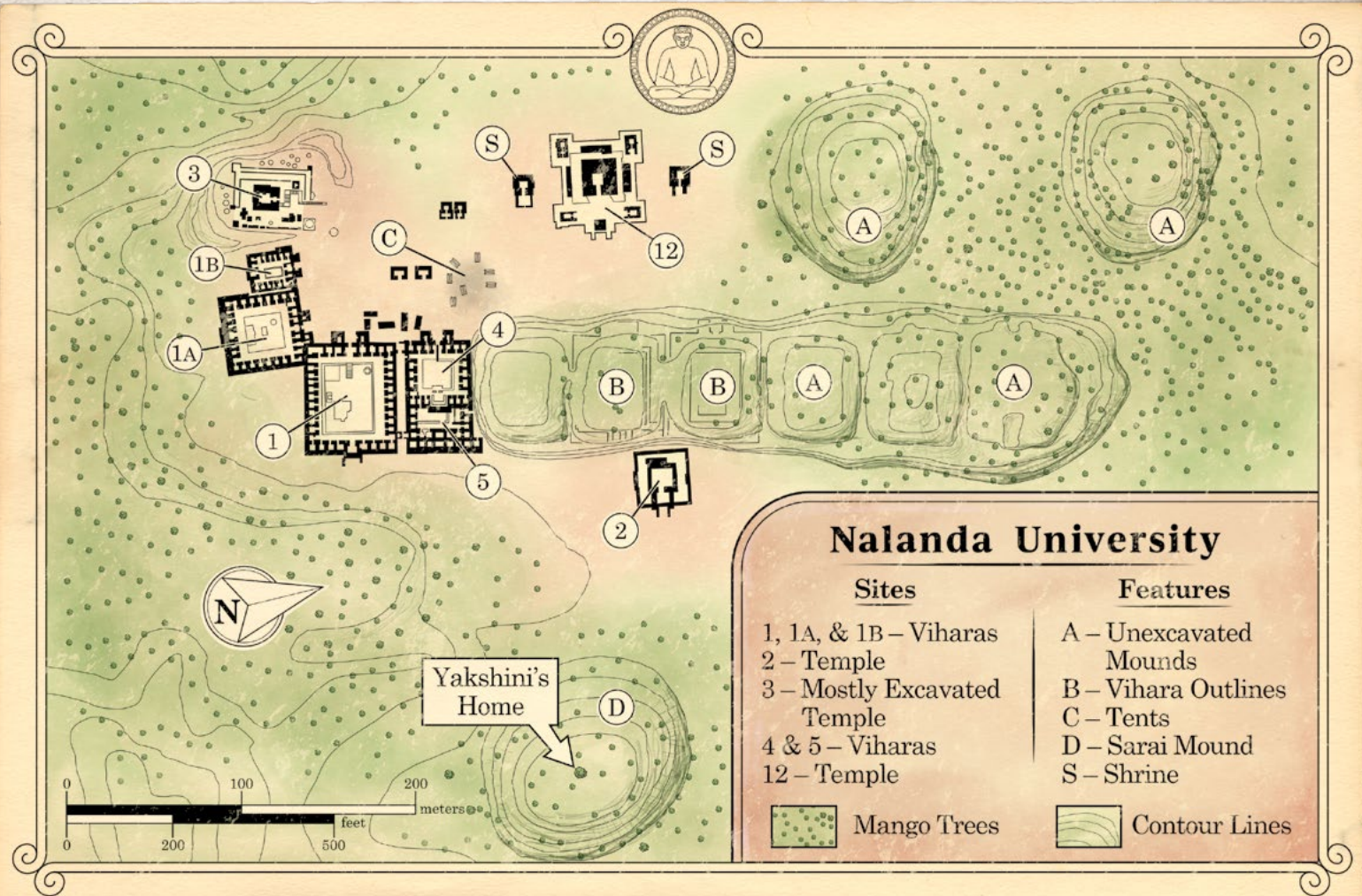
they are. A successful **Charm**, **Fast Talk**, or **Persuade** roll quickly smooths over the issue, convincing Mortimer that the investigators are merely playing a waggish joke on him as the new boy on the site.

Mortimer, as an expert in his field—albeit a very young and inexperienced one—can fill the investigators in on the site’s archaeological history (**A Dangerous Gift?**, page 270). If the investigators have the presence of mind to ask him about the jars (as such objects are mentioned in the note given to them by the Lords of Shambhala; **Handout: Liberation 3a** or **3b**), he explains that there have been many storage containers found in the remains of the individual *viharas* (monastic centers), most of which contain fragments of scrolls covering a variety of topics: science, astronomy, religious rites and practices, and so on. This should, hopefully, lead the investigators to realize that they are not looking for a key as such, but a ritual scroll capable of closing the Gates of Agartha—presumably the correct version of the rite Tenzin Kalsang believed they were performing in the Valley of the White Ape.

Questioning Mortimer about the expedition’s finds reveals that none of the recently-excavated jars contained anything like a liberation ritual or described “closing” anything. Mortimer adds that more jars are being unearthed every day and, intrigued by their questions, asks what their interest is in such matters. It is up to the investigators to come up with a suitable explanation to allay any suspicions the young archaeologist may now have about their reasons for visiting Nalanda.

Provided the investigators don’t alarm Mortimer to the extent that he sends a runner to Bihar Sharif (see following), he apologizes that the site’s main supervisors, Mr. Page and Mr. Chandra, who know far more about this sort of thing, are currently away in Patna preparing the annual dig report and supervising the transfer of some of Nalanda’s more interesting finds to the India Museum in Calcutta; however, he’s happy to arrange for a tour of the site, if they would care to view it. Provided they agree, Mortimer leads the investigators from the finds tent and out into the ruins of the *Mahavihara* in search of Vidyapati, the site’s caretaker and

Nalanda University map



(according to Mortimer) “the font of all local knowledge” (**The Gathering Storm**, following).

If the investigators are at all rude or threatening during their initial interview with Mortimer, he calls out for assistance, at which point half a dozen burly Indian laborers muscle their way into the tent to assist him. Use the profiles for the **Porters** (Chapter 2, page 91), but with the following skills: First Aid 50%, Intimidate 55%, Mechanical Repair 65%, Natural World 30%, Own Language (Hindustani) 55%, Other Language (English) 35%, Spot Hidden 50%, Throw 65%. Their brawling abilities are the same, although they lack the Rifle skill; however, they are a dab hand with a shovel when it comes to fighting (treat as a large club, 1D8+DB damage).

Should the investigators continue to cause trouble, Mortimer doesn't hesitate to send a runner to the nearby town of Bihar Sharif to inform the local authorities of their presence. Not only is this guaranteed to bring the police to Nalanda, but it will also tip off the Children of Fear that the investigators are still at large. The manner in which the police deal with the incident depends on the investigators' behavior when they arrive (unless they beat a hasty retreat before the police cover the 8 miles/13 km from Bihar Sharif), and whether or not they've had any unfortunate

run-ins with the British authorities in India over the course of their adventures. The investigators may also smooth any ruffled feathers either before or after the police arrive by mentioning James Strudwick's name (**Chapter 3: The Fate of Miss Abernathy** or **The Runner**, pages 108 and 117, respectively), as long as they haven't already called in any favors he may owe them! Otherwise, the investigators will have to succeed with a social skill roll (**Charm, Fast Talk, or Persuade**)—possibly at Hard difficulty, depending on the circumstances—to convince either Mortimer or the police that no harm was intended and it's all just been a rather unfortunate misunderstanding.

THE GATHERING STORM

Once outside the tent (C), the investigators find themselves in the middle of a bustling archaeological dig site. The north and south are occupied by scenes of intense activity—not just digging crews, but teams also working on repairing some of the more precarious-looking gigantic brick walls that make up large parts of the ruins. If asked about this work, Mortimer replies that the area is subject to the occasional earthquake, and they suffered quite a strong tremor shortly before the investigators arrived, hence the emergency repairs.



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“Didn’t you feel it?” he asks curiously. “I mean, as if that wasn’t bad enough, it seems we have quite the storm brewing over there. Although usually they come from the other direction. Still, it’s been that sort of a day, really.”

If the investigators look over to where Mortimer is pointing, they see that the sky on the far horizon is a familiar and unpleasant shade of deep purple, flickering with green-tinted lightning. A successful **Navigate** roll identifies the direction as roughly northeast—ominously enough, the same direction as Pemakö and the Valley of the White Ape.

Mortimer quickly seeks out Vidyapati and asks the old man to give the investigators a guided tour while he continues cataloging the latest finds. The old man nods and beckons the investigators to follow him toward the northernmost excavation site (one of the rectangular *viharas* with its individual monk’s cells; B on the map), proudly showing them numerous *stupas* and decorated plaster wall panels along the way. He amiably answers any questions they may have. Those with above base in Science (Biology or Botany) or Natural World can easily spot the numerous mango trees dotting the site; otherwise, Vidyapati informs them of how the *Mahavihara* was built among the *pavarikavana* (mango groves). While Mortimer’s focus was very much on the academic history of Nalanda University, his older counterpart’s stories deal more with its myths and legends, including its role in introducing Buddhism to Tibet (**A Dangerous Gift?** and **Spreading the Word**, both on page 270).

If they haven’t already discussed its contents with Mortimer, then Vidyapati’s comments about Santarakṣita and his followers visiting Tibet should hopefully remind the investigators about the note they were given by the Lords of Shambhala (**Handout: Liberation 3a** or **3b**); permit them an **INT** roll to recall that Tibet is the Land of Snows, if they have forgotten. Asking about jars brings a shrug—the archaeologists have recovered many such things from the ruins; some contain important documents, others only dust. Hopefully, the old man’s mention of documents gives the investigators the clue that they are looking for a new ritual, assuming they haven’t already realized this.

If the investigators level with Vidyapati about their search for a specific set of jars, he smiles. “*Auspicious treasures like the ones you speak of are usually well hidden and can be found only by those the gods favor when the time is right.*” If they’ve also explained exactly why they are looking for the jars, the old caretaker is unsurprised; after all, he is a devout man and believes deeply in the gods and their powers. “*The gods will surely give you a sign if it is your destiny to find these things. Be watchful, for you never know what form such a sign might take. Perhaps Naganalanda himself watches them for you!*”

As Vidyapati continues to show them around, permit the investigators a **Spot Hidden** roll: if successful, they detect a hot wind is starting to blow in from the northeast, and that the clouds on the horizon seem to be filling more and more of the sky. If they fail to notice the wind, Vidyapati brings it to their attention; “*Strange—the Loo winds usually blow from the west.*”

Those succeeding with a **Science (Meteorology)** or **Hard Natural World** roll knows that the Loo winds do, indeed, come from the west in the summer (**An Ill Wind**, page 271); they also know that it would be dangerous to be caught out in them. Depending on when the investigators arrive in Nalanda, the Loo wind may also be blowing at a completely wrong time of year, something Vidyapati comments on if necessary.

As soon as the nature of the wind is identified, either by the investigators or their visibly agitated caretaker, Vidyapati hurriedly escorts his charges to the nearest tent (C). He does not force anyone to go inside, although he certainly attempts to persuade them (an opposed roll against the investigator’s own **Persuade** skill, if necessary), pointing out the grave danger posed to anyone who dares face down the superheated winds. By this time, everyone can feel the wind picking up, and with it, the rapidly increasing temperature.

Anyone still out in the storm when it hits moments later must succeed with an Extreme **CON** roll or suffer 4 damage, plus a penalty die to all subsequent skill rolls until they receive proper treatment for severe heatstroke (a successful **Medicine** or **Hard First Aid** roll). Every round they remain exposed, they take another 1D4 damage due to the intense heat that blisters their skin. Once they’ve lost half their hit points to the Loo winds, the victim must make a **Hard CON** roll or fall unconscious. Those who succeed at their initial Extreme **CON** roll still suffer 1 damage per round until they reach shelter.

Even if they’ve taken cover, the investigators are still required to make a **CON** roll, although only at Regular difficulty level. If failed, they suffer 1D4 damage due to the onset of heatstroke (along with the attendant penalty die to subsequent skill rolls) but avoid any burn-related effects. The winds last for 1D6+1 rounds before disappearing as quickly as they came, only to be replaced with driving rain that lasts for a further 1D6+1 rounds.

Those foolish enough to remain outside sees the foliage on trees and plants across the site wither and burn in the scorching winds. Insects and small birds fall from the trees and sky, charred beyond recognition. Their remains, along with those of the blackened vegetation, quickly disintegrate into ash and then mud in the rain that follows. The lone exception is one mango tree, which seems miraculously untouched by the storm.

If everyone sensibly took shelter with Vidyapati, the sole surviving unblemished mango tree is immediately obvious when the investigators emerge from hiding. Hopefully this strange sight is enough to pique their interest—perhaps it's the sign Vidyapati spoke of. If they make no move to check it out, then Vidyapati insists on getting a better look at the mango tree up on the Sarai mound (D), with or without them.

SNAKES AND LADDERS

Upon closer examination, the mango tree has been completely unharmed by the strange Loo winds, unlike those around it that have lost all their leaves. Regardless of the time of year, this tree also appears to be in full fruit, with many ripe mangos hanging heavily from its branches. (In Bihar and Orissa, mangos are normally harvested between June and August.) All are completely unblemished by the burning storm that has just passed through.

The smell of the ripe fruit is both mouth-watering and intoxicating. If an investigator picks and eats one of the mangos, it is the most refreshing fruit they've ever tasted; it also immediately removes any penalty die inflicted by heatstroke. Other than this rather welcome medicinal side effect, the fruit appears to be perfectly normal.

A successful **Occult** or **Lore (Buddhism or Hinduism)** roll calls to mind the association of the mango tree with various deities (**King of Fruits**, nearby), and with the yakshinis, who are renowned as protectors of treasure—in fact, they were given

the task of distributing Sakyamuni Buddha's remains among the 84,000 *stupas* built to house them by King Ashoka as proof of his reformed character. If this roll is failed, Vidyapati can inform the investigators of these connections.

The moment the investigators disturb the soil around the tree's roots, either with their hands or with a shovel, the ripe mangos begin to fall from the tree, exploding on impact with the ground and spraying sticky orange pulp everywhere. The exposed pits darken before the investigators' eyes, and then rupture, releasing small, black, wriggling snakes that slither straight toward the investigators. While not venomous, the little snakes are capable of giving any investigators in their way a nasty nip (**The Yakshini's Snakes**, page 299).

If the investigators back away from the tree, the snakes move back to form a defensive ring around it. If either the snakes are attacked or if the investigators approach the tree again, these actions attract a new arrival: a voluptuous and half-naked young woman, who clambers down from the tree's branches to stand before the investigators. The manifestation provokes a **Sanity** roll (0/1D3 loss). A successful **Science (Biology or Botany)** or **Natural World** roll identifies that her garland (virtually her only article of clothing) consists of mango leaves and orange and red asoka tree blossoms. The figure, if they haven't already guessed as much, is a yakshini (**Nalanda's Yakshini**, page 274).

Provided they don't attack her, the yakshini demands to know why the investigators are disturbing her tree. If they are honest, and/or show her the note given to them by the Lords of Shambhala, she calls any remaining snakes to her, where they entwine themselves around her ankles, wrists, and upper arms in the manner of bracelets, always with a watchful eye on the investigators. With a smile and a nod, the

KING OF FRUITS

Immensely popular in India for several thousand years, the mango is not only the basis of the paisley pattern (resembling the fruit's shape) and the subject of numerous poems, but is also a symbol of wealth, love, and immortality. Hindus associate the mango tree with Saraswati, the goddess of art and knowledge (Yang Chenmo to Tibetan Buddhists). Similarly, Ambika, the Jain yakshini goddess who protects the Tirthankara (Jain equivalent of a saint), Neminatha, is usually depicted carrying a fruit or branch of the mango tree, and sometimes sheltering beneath its branches. In the Buddhist tradition, mango trees often provided shade and shelter for Sakyamuni Buddha and his disciples, as they reportedly did at Nalanda.

DIGGING DEEP

If the investigators still have the *melong*, they could use it to see if anything of note has happened at the tree before their approach. If they do so successfully, not only do they see the monk bury the pots, but also the yakshini taking up residence to guard them.

The *melong* may also be used in the Hell Chambers to see it in all its former glory and may potentially help locate Ashoka's Treasure, at the Keeper's discretion. As ever, though, when using the *melong*, there is the risk of bleed-through (**Side Effects**, page 126).

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yakshini invites the honored seekers to claim their treasure, gesturing to the soil around the tree. As they begin to dig, the yakshini tells the investigators that she will undoubtedly see them again soon, and that they should keep a careful watch for her. Before the investigators can ask her what she means, she vanishes, along with her snakes.

If the investigators lie or attack her, the yakshini attempts to drive them off. It is her sworn duty to protect the treasures buried beneath her tree, and she won't give them up without a fight. Any remaining snakes join with her to defend the treasures (see **The Yakshini**, page 298, for her profile). If the investigators succeed in forcing her to leave, they can dig to their heart's content, but will receive no further assistance from Vidyapati, who, disgusted by the investigators' lack of respect for the protector spirit, goes to inform Mortimer what is happening.

Buried Treasure

Secreted in a chamber formed by the mango tree's roots are three earthenware jars, sealed with what appears to be beeswax. The wax is brittle with age and crumbles away easily. Each jar releases the familiar smell of peach blossoms when opened, and contains two sheets of yellow paper not dissimilar to that on which the Lords of Shambhala left their note. The long and narrow sheets are covered on both sides in small, neat handwriting. There are also three images drawn on the sheets: a bell, a strange club-like object, and a triangular mandala identical to the one previously used in the ritual in the Valley of the White Ape.

The Ritual

Unfortunately, the manuscript appears to be in Sanskrit. A successful **Language (Sanskrit)** roll is required to skim through the pages and confirm that they do, in fact, describe a ritual known as the Closing of the Way. Thus, to successfully

perform the ritual, the investigators will have to fully translate the pages. If none of the investigators know Sanskrit, but are on good terms with Mortimer, he can translate the ritual for them. Mortimer is happy to do so in exchange for the original scrolls which, after all, do *technically* belong to the ASI as they were found on its dig site.

If the investigators are not on good terms with Mortimer—for example, if Vidyapati has informed him of the looting they've just engaged in beneath the mango tree—then the investigators must not only get the documents safely away from the site but will also need to contact one of their previous acquaintances, or one of Dr. Mall's (**Wellcome's Man in India**, page 142), to get assistance with the translation. Alternatively, they can seek help from the staff at Patna University's Ancient History Department or at the Kudabaksh Library, which is home to a collection of rare and important ancient manuscripts. Use the **Librarian/Academic Department Member** profile in **Appendix A**, page 330, for such people.

Translation

It takes approximately six hours to translate the scrolls with a successful **Language (Sanskrit)** roll, three hours if the success is Hard, and a mere 90 minutes if an Extreme success. Failure indicates that the language used to describe

STILL KEEPING TABS

Just because the investigators have spoken with the Lords of Shambhala doesn't mean that their current behavior no longer affects their karmic balance. The Keeper should continue to make a note every time the investigators perform selfless or selfish actions, as there will be repercussions for them further down the line in **Chapter 8: An Unexpected Meeting**, page 310.



The jars

To Close the Gate

First: the ground must be cleansed and purified with smoke and fire to remove all obstruction, both material and spiritual; it should be remembered that the scent of fir and juniper is most pleasing to the gods. As this is a wrathful work to dismiss powerful dark magics, let there be three fires, arranged as a triangle.

Second: once the land is ready, the kyilkhor must be inscribed within the consecrated space with the immutable thunderbolt, ensuring the enlightenment of those who step within its bounds.

Third: those who are to partake in the ritual must then arrange themselves outside the shi-sa and drink deep of the five nectars of the sacred cow, so that their senses and minds are purified, ready to receive the goddess.

Fourth: let the sacred bell be rung to liberate the sound of emptiness, while the one chosen to lead the sacrifice proclaims the mantra that will draw down the goddess. Let those who are supporting also send their voices to the void. With eyes half-closed, the supplicants should build the image of what is to come in their mind, willing it into being with each breath and thought.

Fifth: when the mantra ends, let the ghanta's voice ring on until the business is done, once and for all. The one chosen by the goddess to be her avatar must lead the sacrifice to the center of the kyilkhor and lay him on his back with his head towards the east. The sacrifice must be willing; his gift will be of no use if he does not gladly offer himself up in the full knowledge that his death is assured. The chosen one must draw the five sacred seed syllables (Om, Hrih, Hum, Drang, and A) onto the offering's crown, his tongue, his heart, his secret place, and the soles of his feet with mustard paste so that his spirit will reincarnate in the realm of the gods in recognition of the purity of his selfless act.

Sixth: taking the blade of the dakinis, the avatar must then slash open the sacrifice's belly and pull out his entrails, which they and their companions should use to bind him in a kneeling position, face towards the east. After the offering is bound, the petitioners must call the goddess into being, that she might deliver the death blow and be assuaged.

Seventh: now, the avatar must assume the mantle of the goddess and, seizing the victim by his hair, slice off his head with one clean stroke. All should now see the indestructible drop—no more than the size of a mustard seed, red below, white above, the sacrifice's most precious gift—rise from his severed throat and float free. The goddess' avatar cannot make use of its power yet, though, for first there must be a feast.

Eighth: the goddess incarnate must now toss the victim's head to one side (but still within the bounds of the kyilkhor, or else the ritual will fail), leaving the body where it lies for the animals, demons, and hungry spirits to feast upon like vultures at a sky burial, so that, by his final gift, the five poisons of desire, anger, ignorance, pride, and jealousy, held within his blood, bone, flesh, and organs, may be purified.

Sanctified, the goddess in her avatar may now approach the indestructible drop, whose power is the key to close the Gate and seal the breach.

with saffron to give the pills a suitably golden color. If a Hard success or better was achieved with the **Lore (Buddhism)** or **Occult** roll, the investigator recalls that the cow should be pregnant and carry at least one bezoar (intestinal stone) for its components be truly potent. Such pills are dissolved in *chang* (Tibetan barley beer) to release their tantric properties.

Gathering the Pieces

Unless the investigators still have the mustard paste and the *katari* used previously in the Valley of the White Ape—for example, if they were holding these when summoned to Shambhala by its Lords—then they will need to acquire them afresh before they can perform the ritual. While it is possible for them to buy the mustard paste in India, getting ahold of the other components will be trickier.

Although they might be able to steal a *katari* from a museum (such as the one in Patna) along the way to their final destination, there are no instructions within the scrolls as to how to prepare the five nectars; for that, they will need a Tantric Buddhist priest, who are not exactly common in India, even in this most holy of provinces. The locations of the remaining objects, and of their final destination, are discussed in **Where to Now?** (page 295).

The Road to Hell

After scrutinizing the translation and the pictures in the scrolls, the investigators should now know what else they are looking for—they just need to figure out where the *ghanta* and *vajra* are hidden. The clue to their location

is, as ever, in the riddle given to them by the Lords of Shambhala (**Handout: Liberation 3a** or **3b**). A successful **Occult** or **Lore (Buddhism or Hinduism)** roll reminds the investigator that Naraka is the term for Hell, so they are looking for somewhere considered to be an entrance to Hell in local legend.

A successful **History** roll, or a Hard success on the previous Lore (Buddhism) roll, brings to mind King Ashoka, whose capital was at Pataliputra (**Heaven and Hell**, page 284). He was rumored to have created such a horrific palace of torture that it was known as the Hell Chambers (provide the investigators with **Handout: Spirits 1**). According to some historians, one part of the Hell Chambers still exists: the Agam Kuan well at Patna.

Alternatively, if the investigators fail their rolls and they have not alienated Mortimer or Vidyapati, either may act as an expert in his field and can recount the tale of Ashoka and his Hell Chambers. Mortimer adds Laurence Waddell's claim that the Agam Kuan well was once part of the Chambers, whereas Vidyapati mentions that the well is often associated with the Chambers in local folklore. If the investigators wish to carry out any further research, they will need to visit the Patna Museum or Patna University's library, both of which can reveal their secrets regarding the Hell Chambers and the history of King Ashoka with a successful **Library Use** roll.

Once they have gathered the necessary information, the investigators must head to Patna to seek the Agam Kuan well (**Heaven and Hell**, following).

HEAVEN AND HELL

Having quite probably passed through Patna during their earlier journeys with Tenzin Kalsang, the investigators now find themselves heading toward the outskirts of the historic former capital of the Kingdom of Magadha. Situated on the eastern Indo-Gangetic plains, approximately 350 miles (560 km) northwest of Calcutta and some 630 miles (1,010 km) southeast of New Delhi, Patna stands on the banks of the River Ganges near its confluences with the rivers Sone, Gandak, and Ghaghara, making it a most auspicious and holy site. It was also a center for commerce and trade, renowned in ages past for its rice, paper, and glass. So attractive a location was it that the British East India Company (**The Jewel in Many Crowns**, page 153) set up a calico and silk factory here in 1620 before annexing the city completely in 1793.

Formerly called Pataliputra (another name whose origins are shrouded in mystery), by the time of King Ashoka's reign the city was one of the largest in the known world, a far cry from its start around 490 BCE as a small fort. Known to Fa Hsien as Pa-lin-fu, the city later fell out of favor with the

PRYING EYES

The longer the investigators remain at Nalanda, the greater the chance that word will reach the Tokabhaya of their planned interference in the coming of the King of Fear. As mentioned in **The Tree of Life** (page 276), this occurs sooner rather than later if the authorities become involved, but, one way or another, by the time the investigators reach Patna, the Children of Fear are aware of their presence and what they must be after, triggering a civil war between Patna's resident pisachas (**Sibling Squabbles**, page 286). If the Keeper wishes, the investigators may once again become aware of the Tokabhaya's presence with either a successful **POW** or **Spot Hidden** roll, as described in **Chapter 1: On the Way** (page 38).

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rulers who succeeded Ashoka, and was in a state of ruin by the time Hiuen-Tsiang paid it a visit. The city was eventually revived by Sher Shah Suri, a native of Bihar who briefly seized control of parts of the Mughal Empire before being killed in an explosion during a siege in the mid-16th century CE. It was he who gave the city its modern name of Patna.

Patna in the 1920s consists of several parts. West Patna was laid out by the British, whereas East Patna contains the old city, full of medieval streets, monuments, temples, and bazaars. The ruins of ancient Pataliputra lie in the Kumrahar district, around 3 miles (5 km) east of Patna Junction railway station. The Agam Kuan and the Sitala Devi Mandir (temple) rest a further 1,100 yards (1 km) to the east. D. B. Spooner, aside from his digs at Peshawar and Nalanda, also carried out excavations at Kumrahar between 1912–1915, unearthing the city's ancient past and links to the Mauryan Empire.

The Unfathomable Well

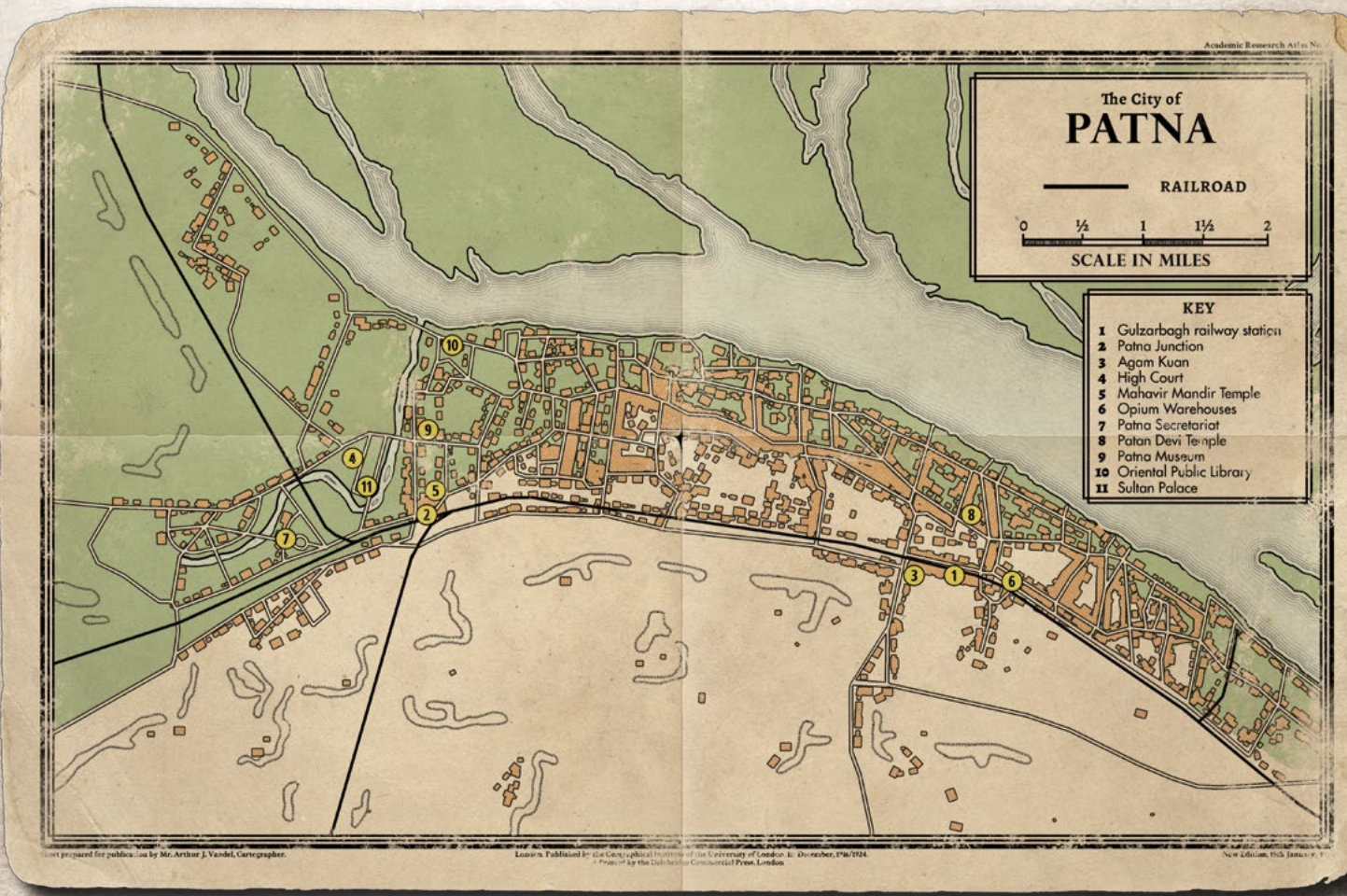
Tucked behind the Sitala Devi Mandir, the Agam Kuan does indeed date back to the time of King Ashoka. The roofed,

red-painted well was once believed to be a little over 100 feet (30 m) deep, but actually only goes down around 65 feet (20 m)—and is certainly not bottomless, as the legends claim. Its upper brickwork is pierced by eight arched windows; locals say that the main well contains nine smaller, hidden wells, and that there is a great treasure buried at its base.

As well as claiming that the well was linked with evil (**The Gateway to Hell**, page 270), Laurence Waddell also recounted that Muslim officials visiting Patna would first take a detour to the Agam Kuan, where they would throw in gold or silver coins to protect themselves from disease. This practice is undoubtedly linked to the presence of the Sitala Devi Mandir next to the well, and it is common to see visitors throwing coins into the Agam Kuan even in the 1920s (and today). Although no one drinks the water from the well, it is still used in rituals performed by Sitala Devi's priestesses.

The Sitala Devi Mandir adjacent to the Agam Kuan is also a very ancient building, although no one knows quite how old it is. Served only by priestesses, the square, five-tiered temple is home to an idol of the goddess, carved from black

The city of Patna map



stone. The white-walled, red-roofed building also holds relics of the Saptamatrikas (the Seven Mothers, all different forms of the goddess Parvati and the personified *shakti* (power) of their male counterparts). As a *shakti peeth* (shrine), the *mandir* is a significant place of pilgrimage and worship for those who seek to propitiate the goddess of disease or who require her healing touch (**The Cooling One**, nearby).

GETTING TO PATNA

The Agam Kuan lies just south of the railway lines that mark the edge of the city in the 1920s. Thankfully, Gulzarbagh Station is only a short (approximately 10-minute) walk east of the well, meaning that the investigators can catch a train toward Gulzarbagh from the tiny halt in the village of Nalanda, close to the ruins of the university. In fact, if they used the train to reach Rajgir (**Chapter 4: Getting to Sitavana**, page 158), then they've already experienced a large part of the journey on the Bakhtiyarpur Bihar Light Railway. As before, they must change at Bakhtiyarpur to join the main Howrah (Calcutta)-Delhi line, which takes them straight to Gulzarbagh Station. The journey takes around two and a half hours.

The only other point of note is that, because the Gates of Agartha are opening, the weather throughout this trip to Patna is particularly unseasonable. If it's the dry season when the investigators arrive, then the rains appear to have come far too early. Conversely, if it is monsoon season, then the rains are late; the landscape is parched, and the constant rumbling of thunder overhead never delivers the promised downpour.



THE COOLING ONE

The folk goddess known as Sitala Devi, or Sitala Ma, is revered and worshipped by many faiths in Northern India. Her name is usually translated as “one who cools” or “she who is cool,” but she is also occasionally known as Jagrani, Queen of Worlds. An incarnation of the supreme goddess, Durga, Sitala Devi is sometimes identified with Parvati, consort to Lord Shiva the Destroyer. She is widely described as a goddess of disease—both contagion and its cure—by Hindus and Buddhists alike. In particular, she is the goddess of smallpox and other infectious diseases. She is notably alleged to be the goddess of ghouls.



Closed for Business

When the investigators arrive at the site of the Agam Kuan and Sitala Devi Mandir, they are greeted by an anxious young Indian woman in a red sari, who politely informs them that the temple is closed for worship today. If asked, she identifies herself as a priestess of Sitala Devi and begs the investigators' forgiveness—she must return to the temple immediately to help with an unforeseen situation.

Questioning the young woman about this “situation” requires a successful social skill roll (preferably not Intimidate, if the investigators wish to remain on the priestesses' good side)—use the **Novice Nun** profile in **Appendix A**, page 332, for the priestess' profile—if any of the investigators are openly Hindu or Buddhist, no roll is required. Clearly distressed, the priestess explains that the temple's wards have somehow been sealed into the shrine's basement, and that the head priestess, Kumari Ma, is currently leading attempts to free them. If the investigators offer to help, the young woman considers them for a moment before agreeing to show them the way.

Even if the investigators fail to extract an explanation from the young priestess, they are quite at liberty to follow her when she leaves—she does nothing to stop them if they do, as her focus is on returning to the temple to help her sisters. Should anyone attempt to stop her, she cries for help, which brings **Kumari Ma** (page 274 and 297 for her profile) out to see what this new commotion is all about. Otherwise, the investigators simply meet the aging priestess when they enter the shrine.

Sibling Squabbles

Inside a room at the back of the temple, a group of six priestesses are gathered around a spot on the floor, although the subject of their attention is concealed behind the skirts of their red saris. One priestess, an older woman with silver-shot hair, appears to be wielding a crowbar. The walls of this back room are painted with a variety of brightly-colored images, including several of a four-armed woman—also in red—tending to what look very much like pisachas (instantly recognizable to any investigators who have met one before; otherwise, a successful **Cthulhu Mythos** or **Occult** roll to identify the ghouls). A successful **Lore (Buddhism or Hinduism)** roll reveals the figure on the walls to be the goddess Sitala Devi, armed variously in each of the room's paintings with her sacred symbols: a fan, a silver broom, a pot of water, and a small bowl.

As the investigators enter, the older priestess—Kumari Ma—glares at them. She repeats that the shrine is closed to worshippers today and asks that they leave. If the investigators ask what is wrong, she repeats what the young priestess may have already told them, although her wording

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is slightly different. Instead of saying that the temple's wards have become sealed in the basement, she calls them the goddess' children.

A successful **Psychology** roll suggests that there is more to it than that, while anyone who succeeded at the previous Lore (Buddhism or Hinduism) roll recalls that the goddess is a protector of ghouls and, therefore, pisachas. Indeed, anyone entering the room succeeding with a **Spot Hidden** roll notices the faint, dank odor of rotting flesh and moldy earth, a scent that should bring back memories of Peshawar for any investigator who encountered a pisacha during their time there (**Chapter 3: Unwanted Attention**, page 136).

Questioning Kumari Ma further about the situation requires either a successful **Charm** or **Persuade** roll or total honesty with the priestess about their reasons for visiting the shrine. If the investigators offer to help before questioning her, Kumari Ma hands the strongest-looking member of the group her crowbar and steps back to unveil a stout, cast iron trapdoor set into the shrine's stone floor. The scent of decaying meat and grave mold, while still faint, is definitely stronger in this part of the room and seems to be emanating from the hatch. No matter what they try, even an Extreme **STR** roll barely budes the trapdoor, but any attempts to open it, however futile, prove the investigators' willingness to

serve the goddess, and thus earns them a bonus die during any further social interactions with the head priestess. A fumble or a failed pushed roll snaps the crowbar in two but has no other detrimental effects.

If the investigators do succeed in convincing Kumari Ma to talk to them, she takes them back outside the temple to view the Agam Kuan, leaving the other sisters to continue their struggle with the obviously well-secured trapdoor. Once at the well, she encourages each investigator to throw in a coin "to honor our mother," before indicating that they should take a seat on the ground while they speak.

"Late last night, I thought I spotted someone I didn't recognize talking to one of our charges, a pisacha by the name of Narayana Prasad, but they'd both disappeared by the time I reached them. Then, this morning, we realized that the usual pisachas hadn't come to perform their dawn pujas—rituals—to our mother, Sitala Ma. When we tried to open the trapdoor to make sure they were alright, we found it tightly sealed. Something is very wrong, I know it."

Inquiring further with Kumari Ma about recent events at the temple reveals that there has been tension among the pisachas for many months now. Careful questioning may pinpoint that the trouble started around the time the investigators were recruited by Tenzin Kalsang to aid him in



Trying to pry the hatch open

his quest. Although most of the pisachas who live in the area revere Sitala Devi as their patroness and mother, another group who share the catacombs beneath the site hold the god Sisirama in higher esteem.

Keeper note: a successful **Cthulhu Mythos** roll (or **Occult**, if the campaign is following a non-Mythos path) suggests that Sisirama is another name for Mordiggian (**The Charnel God**, nearby).

During Kumari Ma's time at the shrine, this split in devotion occasionally caused a minor scuffle or two between the differing pisachas groups, but never anything serious or lasting. But, in recent times, the followers of Sisirama have grown more outspoken and militant over the passing months, urging their brethren to cast aside Sitala Devi and worship only the Charnel God. She assumes that whatever message Prasad, the leader of the Sisirama faction, received last night has led to this barricading of the entrance to the catacombs, and she is deeply concerned for all of the creatures trapped down there, as despite their personal beliefs, they are all the goddess' children and, by extension, hers.

If the investigators convinced Kumari Ma to talk to them by showing her the note given to them by the Lords of Shambhala (**Handout: Liberation 3a** or **3b**), she confirms

that the pisachas have, for untold generations, been the guardians of a great treasure allegedly belonging to King Ashoka himself, and that the subterranean remains of the King's Hell Chambers form the catacombs in which the pisachas live. Unfortunately, she has no idea what the treasure was, and is equally unaware of where within the catacombs the investigators might find it. For such information, they would need to speak to the leader of the Sitala Devi faction, a pisacha named Gulrukh Chaudhary, and it is she who must be persuaded to allow the treasure's removal.

On top of that, there's the small matter of the only confirmed entryway into the catacombs currently being blocked from the inside. Pressing Kumari Ma on entrances to the catacombs, prompts her to reveal that, given how quickly Prasad and his visitor disappeared last night, she suspects there must be another entrance close to where they'd met—but she doesn't know exactly where it is.

Keeper note: the Tokabhaya, alerted by their agents either at the Nalanda dig or in Bihar Sharif, sent someone to speak with the leader of the Sisirama-worshipping pisachas in Patna, having spent the last year or so cultivating their support. As in Peshawar, the pisachas loyal to Narayana Prasad and the Charnel God have been convinced that Sisirama is, in fact, an aspect of the King of Fear and that the two groups share a common cause. Thanks to Prasad, the Tokabhaya are well aware of the *ghanta* and *vajra* hidden in the remains of the Hell Chambers, and have a pretty good idea of why the investigators have traveled to the Agam Kuan. Informing Prasad that outsiders were coming to take away the objects he covets as a symbol of his "rightful" leadership over the pisachas had the desired effect: a civil war between the two pisacha factions, that should, the Tokabhaya hope, prevent the investigators from recovering the artifacts they need to close the Gates of Agartha.

ONE BIG HAPPY FAMILY

If Hasina Moiz (**Chapter 3: The Giantess Reborn**, page 111) survived her ordeal and joined the investigators as a player character, she is greeted warmly by Kumari Ma as one of Sitala Devi's beloved children. Although she was not a true pisacha, her experiences have marked her out to both the head priestess and the creatures she once believed herself to be. Hasina's presence not only grants a bonus die to any social interactions with the priestesses, but also to any encounters with Patna's pisachas.

Any of the other investigators who have undertaken acts of cannibalism during their wanderings (for example, during the Seven Sisters' *ganachakra*; **Chapter 5: Feast**, page 214) are also accorded a greater degree of honor and deference than any of their compatriots who haven't, although they only receive a bonus die to their social interactions with the priestesses and the pisachas if they have regularly made a habit of consuming human flesh.

THE CHARNEL GOD

An ever-metamorphosing mass of black shadow, never still, Mordiggian reeks of death. The deep chill of the grave is its constant companion, sucking in light and heat wherever the god goes. Although not currently one of the more commonly worshipped deities of the Mythos, some ghouls and, more frequently, their pisacha cousins, do pay homage to the dark god, offering up their dead and blessings to appease him.

DESCENT INTO THE UNDERWORLD

Although around half of the temple's grounds are flagged with stone, there is a large swath of trees at the rear of the compound and around the Agam Kuan that provide shade for the pilgrims and worshippers visiting the shrine. If the investigators ask to be taken to where Kumari Ma saw the two men talking the previous evening, the head priestess gladly shows them the way. Once she has led them to the spot, Kumari Ma returns to the temple to see to the rest of the day's *pujas* (ritual prayers).

If the investigators didn't notice the odor in the temple, they cannot fail to do so now: it is quite obvious here beneath the trees and is particularly pungent in the spot Kumari Ma brings them to. A successful **Spot Hidden** roll while searching the area turns up a reasonably fresh cigarette butt and what appear to be two sets of footprints in the soft soil beneath the trees. One is definitely human, while the other is more like a paw or hoof-like in nature. If the investigators saw the strange prints left behind at the museum in Peshawar (**Chapter 3: Museum Mayhem**, page 137), they recognize these markings as those of a pisacha. Otherwise, they can surmise the owner's identity from Kumari Ma's report of what she saw here, and from the familiar stench (although the Keeper may wish to ask for a **Cthulhu Mythos** roll to confirm this supposition if the investigators have never encountered a pisacha/ghoul before).

A successful **Track** roll is required to follow the tracks away from the area. Both sets lead to the heavily carved remains of a pillar set further back among the trees, close to the temple's rear boundary wall. The human footprints continue up to the wall and then vanish—although there are dirty scuff marks on the brickwork, suggesting that the stranger escaped the compound that way. The paw-hoof prints, on the other hand, end at the broken pillar. If the investigators fail their **Track** roll, then continuing to search among the trees uncovers the pillar (1) with a successful **Spot Hidden** roll; otherwise, a concerted search over the course of an hour reveals the pillar.

The carvings on the pillar are instantly recognizable as back-to-back depictions of the yakshini they met at Nalanda sheltering beneath a mango tree—she wasn't lying when she said they would see her again soon, she just failed to specify it wouldn't be in the flesh. Closer examination of the earth around the pillar's base reveals that it has been disturbed in some way, possibly by being shifted to the side.

A successful **STR** roll is enough to move the pillar on its hidden pivot mechanism, revealing a dark shaft plunging into the depths of the earth. The shaft is wide enough to accommodate a large person (SIZ 90) with relative ease, but

nothing more. The smell wafting up from the darkness is nauseating, triggering a **CON** roll; even though there are no pisachas present, failing the roll brings on vomiting for 1D4 rounds, while success merely results in violent gagging. On one wall of the squared-off shaft, a metal ladder descends into the darkness.

PATALA

The investigators need lamps or torches if they intend to make their way into the catacombs via this second, hidden entrance (F). The priestesses can certainly supply them if the investigators don't have their own, or they can be purchased from a nearby bazaar, if the party would rather not involve Kumari Ma and her sisters. If the head priestess does become aware of the investigators' plan to enter the pisachas' underground domain, she insists on going with them, unless they can convince her otherwise with a **Hard** social skill roll.

The ladder in the shaft is remarkably well-maintained and does not require a **Climb** roll—at least, not on the way down; however, if the investigators attempt to use the ladder in a hurry as a means of escape from the catacombs—if they are being chased by a horde of angry Sisirama-worshipping pisachas—they will need to make a successful **Climb** roll to scale the ladder without slipping. A fumble or failed pushed roll under these circumstances causes a rung to break underfoot, leading to a drop and 1D6 damage for every 10 feet (3 m) fallen (for a maximum of 4D6 damage, as the ladder descends for 40 feet (12 m) to reach the base of the shaft). Anyone falling also risks knocking down those on the ladder below them, unless the victim(s) can succeed with a **STR** roll to hang on—remember, the shaft is sufficiently small that there is no room to get out of the way.

At the bottom of the shaft, a tunnel leads off into the darkness; its walls are dressed stone, although faint traces of painted plaster can be seen in the lamplight. The air is hot and dusty, and the stench of pisachas claws its way into the investigators' nostrils with each breath. Those succeeding with a **Listen** roll hear distant, intermittent sounds of screams and fighting echoing faintly through the passageway.

Following the tunnel leads the investigators deeper into the underground complex (refer to the map, page 291). Initially, any rooms the investigators find along the tunnel are empty, but as they move further in, they start to see signs of a battle: blood, tissue, and mauled corpses, which are likely to incite a **Sanity** roll (0/1D6 loss). If the investigators examine the corpses, they find that some are either wearing a pendant of twisted metal wire in the rough shape of a whirlwind or have been freshly branded with a mark of the same design. A successful **First Aid**, **Medicine**, or **Science (Forensics)** roll suggests that the brands have been inflicted within the

last 24 hours. Any investigators who encountered pisachas in Peshawar may recognize the symbol, if they were lucky enough to spot it during their time there. If they have not already previously identified it as such, a successful **Cthulhu Mythos** roll (or **Occult** for non-Mythos campaigns) reveals that the symbol is associated with Sisirama/Mordiggian.

Provided the investigators move quickly and quietly through the catacombs, there is no need to ask for **Stealth** rolls, particularly as, the deeper the investigators go, the louder the sounds of fighting and screaming become, until they drown out all but the most thunderous of noises. If the investigators insist on lingering or making a racket (or using an unshielded light source; see **Clear as Day**, nearby), they will draw the attention of a roving pack of pisachas—unless they can succeed with a group **Stealth** roll. The number of pisachas in the encounter is determined by the number of investigators: one for every two investigators present, rounding up, with a minimum of two. If the investigators fail the group **Stealth** roll, a group **Luck** roll determines whether or not these creatures are a danger to the investigators. If the **Luck** roll is failed, the pack is loyal to Narayana Prasad of the Sisirama cult and is quick to attack outsiders. With a success, the group is loyal to Gulrukh Chaudhary and, instead of attacking, they ask the investigators why they are trespassing and advise them to leave now if they value their lives. Use the **Six Sample Pisachas** profiles from **Chapter 3**, page 148, for any ghoul packs encountered.

If the investigators come into contact with a group of friendly pisachas, they may be able to convince the creatures to take them directly to Chaudhary (using any appropriate social skill roll or revealing their mission for the Lords of Shambhala). Should this happen, see **Behind the Barricades** (page 292); otherwise, the investigators are left to wander the tunnels until they stumble into a room (8) containing a huge iron mortar and pestle, and a gigantic iron wheel on which has been strapped a pisacha. Inside the mortar are the pulped remains of something, although the creature's original form is impossible to determine, as so little recognizable is left of it. Examining the pestle's content may provoke a **Sanity** roll (1/1D4 loss).

The creature tied upside-down to the wheel does not possess a pendant or brand of Sisirama. A successful **History** or **Lore (Buddhism)** roll recalls that the wheel bearing this poor battered thing is usually referred to as Ashoka's Chakra (Wheel). Approaching the wheel causes the creature's eyes to flicker open, and it attempts to speak, although its words are so quiet the investigators must either get closer to it or succeed at a **Listen** roll to figure out what it is saying. If they do manage to understand it, the pisacha begs to be cut down, feebly promising anything they want if they will help it. A successful **Psychology** roll confirms the creature is telling them the truth.



CLEAR AS DAY

Don't forget that ghouls and their cousins, the pisachas, can see perfectly well in darkness, unlike the investigators. Any lamps borrowed from the priestesses are shuttered so that the amount of light they emit can be controlled. While this effect primarily serves to protect the pisachas' eyes when the priestesses visit the creatures in their underground lair, it has the added advantage of lessening the investigators' risk of detection as they make their way through the catacombs. An unshielded light source is very obvious in the subterranean gloom and marks the investigators out for inspection. Kind Keepers, however, may wish to ignore this complication so that the investigators aren't subject to repeated confrontations with the various groups of pisachas currently roaming the tunnels.



From here, assuming the investigators aid the badly injured pisacha, the scenario may follow one of two paths. The Keeper's decision should largely depend on the type of investigators their players have chosen.

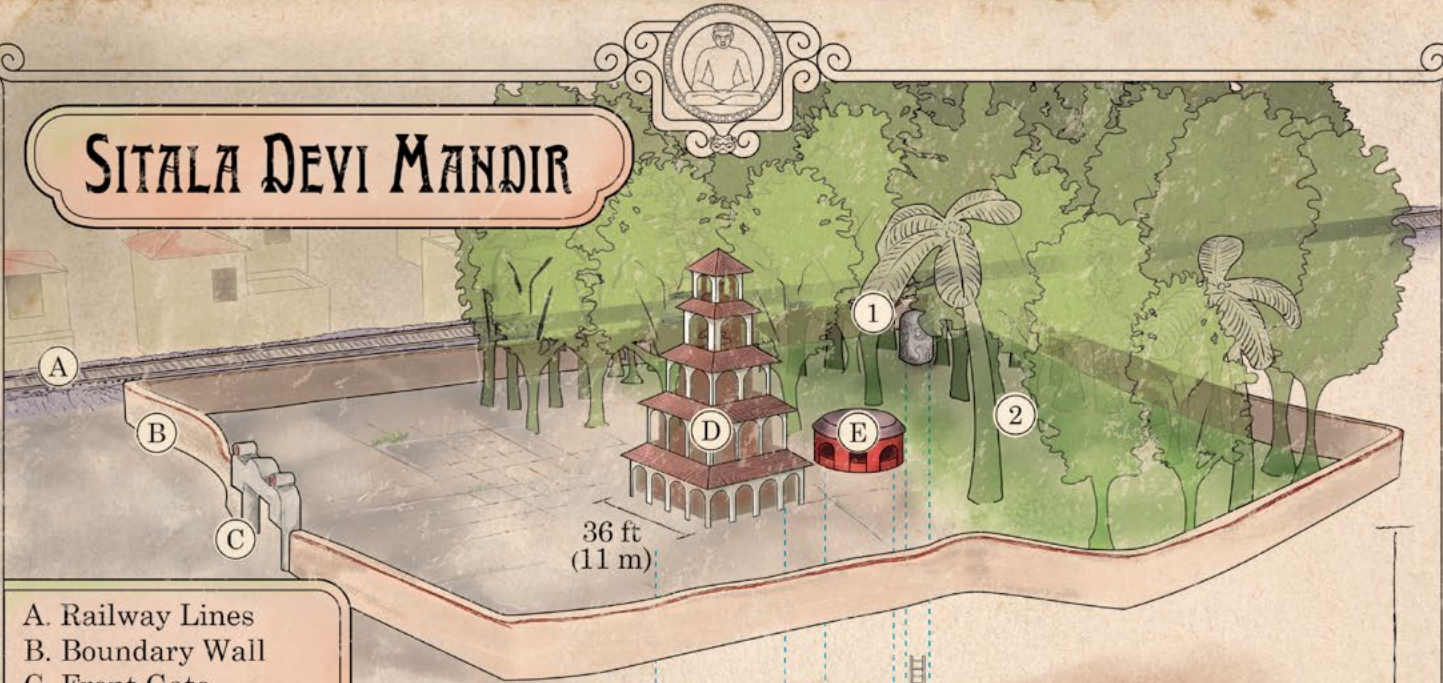
- For non-combat groups, follow **To the Heart of the Matter** (nearby).
- Combat-oriented or pulp groups, on the other hand, may prefer to engage in the events of **The Five-Fold Tether** (page 293).

Keeper note: if desired, more physical elements can be added for non-combat groups—see **Quid Pro Quo**, page 292. And, remember, the Keeper always has the option to deploy a group of friendly pisachas to assist the investigators if it looks as if they're getting into more trouble than they can handle, whether the investigators are combat-orientated or not.

TO THE HEART OF THE MATTER

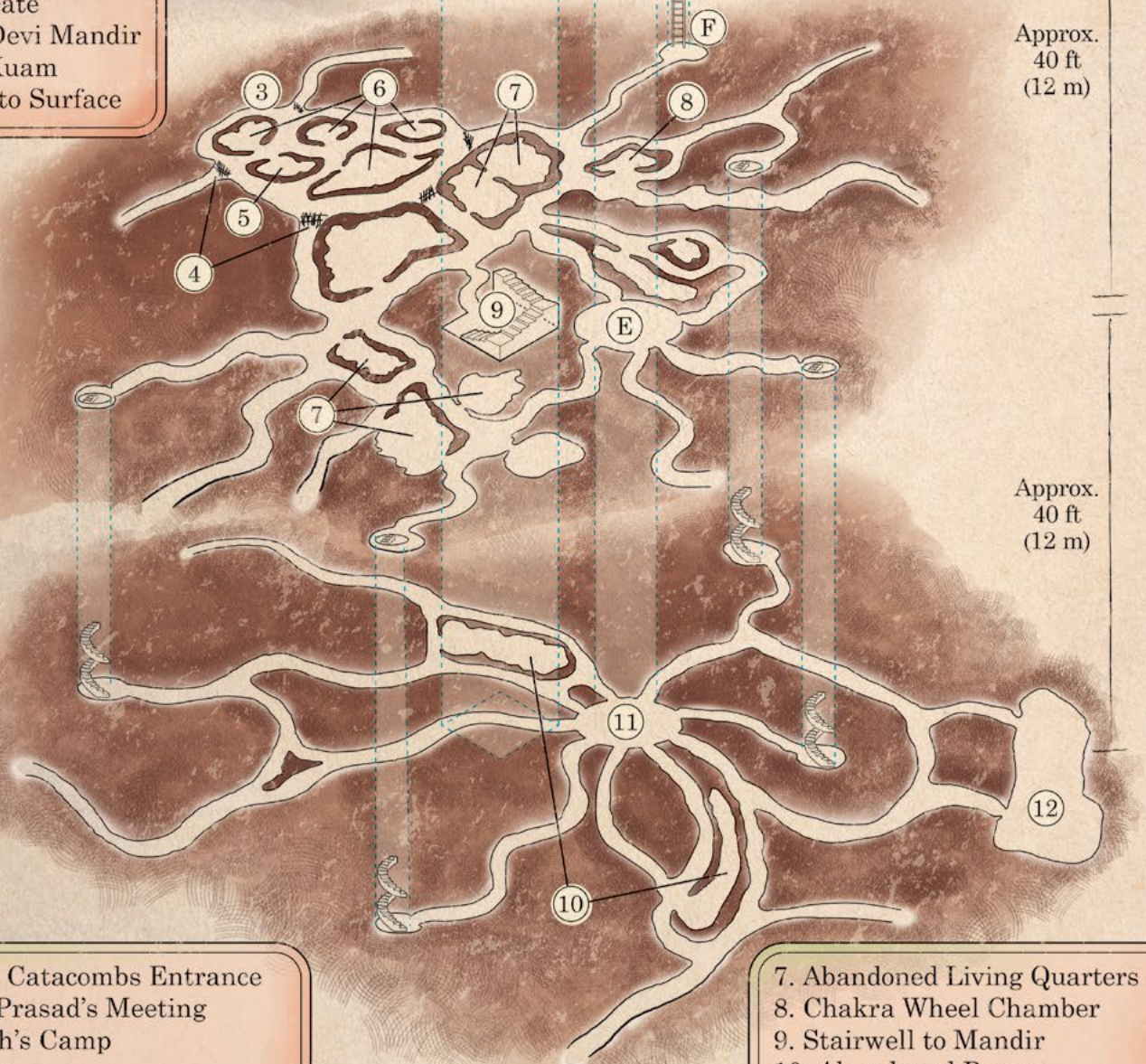
Although the pisacha is seriously wounded, it can, with help, lead the investigators to Gulrukh Chaudhary at their request. Suspicious (unless Hasina Moiz is present), the pisacha is smart enough to ask why the investigators wish to meet with its leader. It is up to the investigators to decide whether to tell it the truth or not, but lying now could impact their ability to convince Chaudhary to hand over the artifacts they're searching for further down the line.

SITALA DEVI MANDIR



- A. Railway Lines
- B. Boundary Wall
- C. Front Gate
- D. Sitala Devi Mandir
- E. Agam Kuam
- F. Ladder to Surface

Approx.
40 ft
(12 m)



Approx.
40 ft
(12 m)

- 1. Hidden Catacombs Entrance
- 2. Site of Prasad's Meeting
- 3. Gulrukh's Camp
- 4. Barriers
- 5. Council Chamber
- 6. Occupied Rooms

- 7. Abandoned Living Quarters
- 8. Chakra Wheel Chamber
- 9. Stairwell to Mandir
- 10. Abandoned Rooms
- 11. Ashoka's Treasure
- 12. Prasad's Camp



If the investigators agree to go with the pisacha, who introduces itself as Dinesh, they find themselves slowly weaving and dodging their way through yet more tunnels. Giving Dinesh treatment (a successful **First Aid** or **Medicine** roll) before or during their journey considerably cuts down the time needed to reach Chaudhary's headquarters. Use the **Pisachas** profile from **Chapter 3**, page 148, for Dinesh, although he currently only has 6 hit points, plus any acquired through the investigators' care. Finally, they reach a set of heavily guarded barricades (4). Dinesh barks something guttural at the pisachas manning them, who reluctantly open a way through after a few moments of heated discussion.

Behind the Barricades

Beyond the defensive perimeter is a series of dimly lit rooms. Numerous pisachas, many of them injured, are crowded into the various chambers (6)—all watch the investigators with a mixture of curiosity and wariness unless, as Dinesh did, they judge the investigators to include some of their own. In one of the rooms, which appears to be some sort of council chamber (5), a small group of pisachas are engaged in an earnest discussion, switching between what appear to the untrained ear to be animalistic grunts and howls (although any linguist present recognizes these as a distinct language) and snatches of Hindustani. As the investigators enter, a grizzled individual swathed in red rags growls a few indecipherable words at Dinesh, who bows his head and replies in a deeply reverential tone of voice.

The red-garbed pisacha then turns to the investigators and introduces herself as Gulrukh Chaudhary. *"Dinesh tells me you need to speak with me. Be quick; I don't have much time for idle chatter, today of all days."* A successful **Psychology** roll reveals that her intentions toward the investigators are not hostile, despite her brusque tone.

Showing Chaudhary the note penned by the Lords of Shambhala is the quickest way to relay the purpose of the investigators' visit. Adding that Kumari Ma is worried about the pisachas and that they've come to assess the situation on her behalf (assuming she isn't there with them) also helps win Chaudhary's trust as does, again, the presence of any fellow consumers of human flesh.

Chaudhary is intrigued by the note and asks to hear more about why the investigators need the artifacts her people have safeguarded for millennia. Honesty is the best policy here—as long as they tell the pisachas' leader the truth about their attempt to close the Gates of Agartha and so trap the King of Fear, Chaudhary is prepared to hand over the symbols of her office (the *vajra* and *ghanta*) for the greater good without expecting anything in return. She even confirms Kumari Ma's suspicions about Prasad's uprising—her rival seeks to claim the items and declare his rulership over all of

Patna's pisachas, forcibly converting everyone to the worship of Sisirama on pain of death.

Should the investigators lie to Dinesh about their reasons for coming and tell a different story, their former guide makes it clear to his leader that something is amiss. Chaudhary angrily demands to know what the investigators are playing at, and the investigators must succeed with a Hard social skill roll to convince her to turn over the *ghanta* and *vajra* despite their previous duplicity.

Should the investigators fail to talk Chaudhary into giving them the artifacts, they will have to come up with another way of securing the *ghanta* and *vajra*. This might involve volunteering for a mission to prove their worth (see **Quid Pro Quo**, following), or trying to steal the relics—if they can figure out where the pisacha leader has hidden them.

Quid Pro Quo

Even if the investigators tell the truth, Chaudhary may expect some service in return for the artifacts. This task could be as apparently straightforward as helping to defend the barricades through the coming night, during which time the investigators must help thwart an all-out assault. Alternatively, it could be a rescue mission for a valued member of the Sitala Devi pisacha community. Otherwise, Chaudhary explains that the artifacts are hidden in what is currently enemy territory (although thankfully Prasad is unaware of this fact—for now).

Chaudhary not only gives the investigators instructions on where the person (to be rescued) and/or the artifacts can be found, but also a company of six pisachas to escort them to their target. Use the profiles of the **Pisacha Escort**, page 301, for these tougher individuals. Should the investigators be hunting down the *ghanta* and *vajra*, Chaudhary explains that, a few days ago, she hid them in the safest place she could think of, as she was growing increasingly concerned by Prasad's behavior and knew it was only a matter of time before he attempted to snatch them and claim dominance over the pisachas.

In both cases, the target(s) of the investigators' mission can be found on a lower level of the catacombs in a chamber directly beneath the foundations of the Agam Kuan (11); the artifacts' casket is sewn into a large, watertight wineskin hidden at the bottom of the pisachas' own well. Retrieving the casket requires a successful **Swim** roll; a failed pushed roll—or a fumble—means that, while they managed to retrieve the artifacts, the heroic investigator begins to drown (*Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook*, page 124). For a description of the chamber, and the potential difficulties of getting into it, see **The Fifth Agony**, page 294. If the rescue mission is not being used, then the Sisirama cult is not holding a prisoner in this chamber, and it is unlikely to be guarded, as Prasad is unaware that the treasure lies within his own domain.

THE FIVE-FOLD TETHER

If the investigators prefer fisticuffs to negotiation, and are sufficiently well-armed to cope with such, then asking Dinesh to take them to Gulrukh Chaudhary causes the injured pisacha to howl softly with despair. *“Can’t—Prasad has taken her. Must get back to tell the others.”*

If the investigators ask what Prasad has planned for his rival, Dinesh winces and shakes his head. *“Don’t know.”* He makes a sweeping gesture around the blood-stained room with his clawed hand. *“Won’t be good.”*

Dinesh explains that, early this morning, he and a few others were on their way to perform their *pujas* (ritual worship) in the temple with Chaudhary when they were ambushed. His leader was dragged away, while he and his compatriots were offered up as sacrifices to Sisirama, their former friends slaughtering his companions in the most depraved manner possible. They seem to have grown bored by the time they got to him, and so didn’t finish the job, instead leaving him to die slowly on Ashoka’s Wheel. Although he doesn’t know Chaudhary’s exact location, Dinesh can hazard a good guess: beneath the holy well, around which most of Prasad’s pisachas seem to be mustering (11).

Hopefully, the investigators are moved to offer their assistance in helping to free Gulrukh Chaudhary, if for no other reason than that she is the only one who knows where the artifacts they seek are being kept; Dinesh certainly has no clue. Their most obvious choices here are to either offer to escort Dinesh back to the Sitala Devi faction’s headquarters (4, 5, 6) and attach themselves to any search party that forms there, or send him on his way to raise the alarm while they discover what has happened to Chaudhary.

Should the investigators first accompany Dinesh back to base, they are greeted at the defensive blockade (4) as described in **To the Heart of the Matter** (page 290) and shown promptly to the faction’s council chamber (5). The only difference is that Chaudhary is not there to meet them. As in **Quid Pro Quo** (page 292), offers of assistance are supported with an escort of six pisachas (**Pisacha Escort**, page 301).

If, on the other hand, the investigators decide to head off to find Chaudhary immediately, they do so without any backup, although Dinesh promises to try and send some help to them as soon as he gets back to safety. Dinesh is in no fit state to go with the investigators on a mission of any sort, and cannot be convinced to do so. Whether he succeeds in sending help to the investigators or not is left to the Keeper’s



discretion. Dinesh also provides the investigators with instructions on how to find the well chamber. The Keeper may wish to call for a successful **Navigate** roll to keep the investigators from becoming lost in the catacombs.

Keeper note: the Keeper should carefully weigh up whether or not they wish the investigators to go down this more action-oriented route. The pisacha colony beneath Patna is large—numbering more than 100 individuals before the fighting began—and it is unlikely the investigators could survive taking on all of Prasad's followers head-on. So, while some direct confrontation is inevitable, it needs to be carefully scaled to the investigators' abilities to avoid an accidental total party kill—which would be especially frustrating at this late stage of the game.

This route can also be taken if the investigators don't meet Dinesh, but instead managed to persuade a group of wandering pisachas to take them to the council chambers (5). Once there, they discover that Chaudhary has been snatched by her rival. Without her, their chances of finding the objects they need are slim indeed, and so they must rescue her if they are to have any hope of finding the treasure they seek.

THE FIFTH AGONY

There are nine ways into the chamber (11) beneath the Agam Kuan. If the Keeper wishes, at least one of them may be unknown to Prasad, meaning that it is currently unguarded; all known entrances are either barred, locked, or under surveillance. Prasad is not worried about his prisoner escaping—he has taken a leaf out of Chandagirika's book and turned to the *Balapandita Sutra* for inspiration when it comes to extracting the location of the Hell Chambers' treasure from his rival; however, he is concerned that Sitala Devi's adherents may attempt to rescue their leader, so most of the entrances are guarded.

The Keeper should encourage and reward bold, clever, and/or entertaining plans to gain entry and rescue Gulrukh Chaudhary. **Stealth** rolls should be called for, as appropriate. Use the **Six Sample Pisachas** profiles from **Chapter 3**, page 148, for any pisacha guards the investigators encounter along the way.

Provided the investigators manage to successfully get to the chamber, they are greeted by a horrific sight: there, beside the pool which acts as the colony's main well, lies a pisacha in tattered red robes. She is pinned to the ground by two iron spikes driven through the palms of her hands, provoking a **Sanity** roll (1/1D4+1 loss; 1/1D6+1 for Hasina Moiz, if present, as she sees firsthand what her fate might have been). The injured pisacha is alone and unconscious, but can be roused with a successful **First Aid** roll and/or some water from the well.

Once revived, Chaudhary seems surprised to see the investigators, particularly if they are without a pisacha escort. Nevertheless, she is relieved that they have come, and thanks the goddess in a weary, pained voice for answering her prayers. Freeing Chaudhary by removing the iron spikes requires a successful **Medicine** roll to avoid causing further tissue damage, or a successful **STR** roll if there are no medically-trained investigators present (see **Gulrukh Chaudhary's** profile, page 299—she currently has 7 hit points remaining, plus any gained or lost from the investigators' care and attention).

It is imperative that the investigators get Chaudhary to a place of safety before Prasad returns to continue torturing her with his version of the five-fold tether (see **Fire and Brimstone**, page 271). Should the Keeper wish it, the artifacts the investigators seek may be hidden at the bottom of the pool beside where they find Chaudhary, an irony that is not lost on the injured pisacha should she be aware of the investigators' reason for coming to find her—only a cruel Keeper would hold off on revealing this fact until after the investigators and their new companion have returned to the Sitala Devi faction's part of the catacombs; thus, even if the investigators haven't yet mentioned that they seek the *vajra* and *ghanta*, Chaudhary asks them to retrieve her “treasure” before they quit the chamber.

Otherwise, returning Gulrukh Chaudhary to her people garners the investigators much respect, as well as the loyalty of those pisachas who worship the shrine's goddess, not to mention great favor with the priestesses once they hear of the investigators' actions. In return, Chaudhary is happy to give the *vajra* and *ghanta* into their care, wishing them all the best in their endeavors and asking Sitala Devi to watch over them. If there is any danger of Chaudhary dying before the investigators can get her to safety, then, with her last breath, she relates where the artifacts are hidden.

Going Darker

If the Keeper wishes to make this scene even more gruesome, then Chaudhary is not alone in the chamber when the investigators gain access; Prasad is there, busily hammering another iron spike through his prisoner—this time through her foot. Her screams are audible from outside the chamber, alerting the investigators to the fact that some horror is occurring within and, potentially, helping to mask any noise they might be making. As he hammers, Prasad demands to know where the relics are hidden, but Chaudhary only curses him in the goddess' name.

Under these circumstances, the investigators now have the opportunity to deal with Prasad as well as free Chaudhary. They must do so quickly or Prasad will call for reinforcements (see **Narayana Prasad's** profile at the end of this chapter,

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page 300). If captured alive and subjected to a successful Hard social skill roll (Regular difficulty if **Intimidate** is used), Prasad reveals that the Children of Fear warned him the investigators were coming, and that everything they see here is *their* fault for interfering in the Tokabhaya's plans to return Sisirama to his rightful place as ruler of the Earth.

Keeper note: remember, the Tokabhaya have convinced the pisachas who worship Sisirama that their god is an avatar of the King of Fear, so when Prasad speaks of Sisirama's return, he really means that of Agartha's lord and master. Any **Psychology** rolls used against Prasad regarding this reveal he is telling the truth, which may well muddy the waters for the investigators somewhat.

ASHOKA'S TREASURE

Assuming that the investigators manage to secure the artifacts, they find them housed in a beautiful casket made of gold and silver, inlaid with cat's eye and crystal, and measuring approximately 10 inches (25.5 cm) across in all dimensions. Inside, the artifacts nestle next to one another, cushioned by faded green velvet. The *ghanta* measures 8 inches (20 cm) in length and $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches (9.5 cm) in diameter, and the *vajra* measures $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches (16.5 cm) in length.

The highly-decorated *ghanta* appears to be made of gilded bell metal, as is traditional. Among the many symbolic patterns on the *ghanta* are those conferring protection against earthquakes, fire, and flood—something that will come in handy when the investigators perform the final ritual (**Chapter 8: Step Four**, page 319). Under most circumstances, ringing the bell provides protection against fire-, water-, and earth-based spells in the form of one bonus die on any opposed POW rolls the spell requires as a defense (increased to two bonus dice if the *vajra* is also present). The bell's sound also repels creatures composed purely of earth, water, or fire, preventing them from directly attacking anyone within 50 feet (15 m) of the bell.

The *vajra* is made of meteoric iron (a successful **Science (Geology)** roll to identify). It is also unusual in that it only has three joined tines at each end (two curved tines attached to a central straight prong); the standard number is five. A successful **Lore (Buddhism)** or **Occult** roll reveals that a three-pronged *vajra* symbolizes a practitioner's overcoming of the three poisons, as well as their control over the three times (past, present, and future) and the three realms (the world below, the world above, and the earthly realm). Besides adding a bonus die to certain spell resistance rolls if wielded alongside the *ghanta* (see previous), thanks to its innate ability to cut through ignorance, the *vajra* also grants a bonus die to all INT rolls made by the wielder.

MOVING ON

With the artifacts safely in their possession, the investigators are now free to make their escape from the catacombs. If they received the *ghanta* and *vajra* directly from Chaudhary, she instructs them to use the emperor's gifts wisely before bidding them goodbye. She then sends them off to the catacombs' main entrance with an escort of six pisachas (to protect the artifacts rather than the investigators; use the **Pisacha Escort**, page 301).

Once there, the investigators discover why the priestesses above had no luck gaining entry to check on their charges—the trapdoor has been securely bolted and tied down to make sure no one could get in that way, and the stone steps up to the entrance are blocked by four pisachas, who are guarding the trapdoor as a final safety measure. The pisacha's make short work of opening the way, only to bolt it firmly shut once more as soon as the investigators have emerged back into the temple. The investigators' reappearance in the shrine causes something of a stir, and Kumari Ma is anxious to hear what news they have of conditions below ground (assuming she did not travel with them).

If, however, they retrieved the artifacts from the alternative hiding place (**Quid Pro Quo**, page 292), then the investigators are under no obligation to return to Chaudhary and are free to leave via the secret entrance (F), providing they can find their way with a successful **Navigate** roll. If they are being chased as they make their escape, the Keeper may wish to use the chase rules, also keeping in mind that attempting to climb the ladder while in a hurry comes with its own risks (see **Patala**, page 289).

WHERE TO NOW?

Once the investigators have both the ritual and the *vajra* and *ghanta* they need to use to close the Gates of Agartha, they need only figure out where to perform the ceremony. The note from the Lords of Shambhala mentions that the *ghanta* and *vajra* need to be wielded in the place that shares its name with the Great Guru's birthplace. If the investigators do not recall that the Great Guru is Padmasambhava, permit them an **INT** roll to remember or, alternatively, a **Lore (Buddhism)** roll. Hopefully they will then also recollect that they visited Padmasambhava's alleged birthplace with Tenzin Kalsang: Lake Danakosha (**Chapter 3: Reflections**, page 124).

If the investigators don't remember the name of the lake where they searched for the ritual bowls, then a visit to Patna Museum or the Kudabaksh Library, accompanied with a successful **Library Use** roll, soon brings them up to speed. They will then need to search either the Kudabaksh or university's libraries for a map showing them the location of

this unfamiliar second Danakosha Lake. Again, a successful **Library Use** roll discovers that both the lake and its associated *gompa* (monastery) are located in Upper Assam (now Arunachal Pradesh), around 40 miles (65 km) south of Metok, Pemakö, as the crow flies, and approximately 120 miles (190 km) north of the town of Pasighat (formerly in Assam, but now also in Arunachal Pradesh).

Keeper note: to differentiate between the two lakes, the one at Chakdara (**Chapter 3**) is referred to as Lake Danakosha, while the one in the hill country above Assam (**Chapter 8**) is referred to as Danakosha Lake.

The mention of a *gompa* should give the investigators some clue as to where they might be able to get hold of the remaining ritual components. After all, they know from previous experience that Tibetan Buddhist *gompas* usually hold all manner of strange and mystical items; hopefully the *katari*, nectars, and *chang* they need are all just waiting at Danakosha Lake for them to arrive. Now, all they have to do is get there!

Alternatively, the Keeper may wish to include one or more small side quests of their own devising along the way to Danakosha Lake to allow the investigators to acquire any other missing items (for one such suggestion, see **Chapter 8: Completing the Set**, page 317).



Statue of Matrikas, near Agam Kuan, 1895

REWARDS

Surviving investigators should be permitted a development phase once the characters have completed the challenges that face them at Nalanda and Patna, before they head off to perform the final ritual. In addition, apply the following awards to each surviving investigator.

- Retrieving the correct ritual scroll: +1D4 Sanity points.
- Killing any of the yakshini's snakes: -1 Sanity point.
- Acquiring the *ghanta* and *vajra*: +1D6 Sanity points.
- Helping Kumari Ma find out what is happening beneath the Sitala Devi Mandir: +1 Sanity point.
- Assisting in the defense of the Sitala Devi pisacha faction during a Sisirama cult attack: +1 Sanity point.
- Helping Gulrukh Chaudhary escape from Narayana Prasad: +1D4 Sanity points.
- Leaving Gulrukh Chaudhary to die: -1D6 Sanity points.
- Defeating a Mythos monster: pisacha +1D6 Sanity points; yakshini +1D3 Sanity points.

THE END OF THE ROAD: NALANDA AND PATNA

Even if the investigators survive their descent into Ashoka's Hell Chambers, it may be that discovering they will need to sacrifice a living person in order to close the Gates of Agartha is the final straw. Should one or more of the investigators decide to quit the campaign at this stage, finding a replacement character is tricky, but, once again, Dr. Paira Mall (**Chapter 3: Wellcome's Man in India**, page 142) may come to the rescue and provide a suitable contact who can become a replacement investigator. Alternatively, Kumari Ma may send one of her priestesses along to assist the investigators, allowing that priestess to take on the mantle of an investigator.

Additional—more unusual—options include convincing Daniel Mortimer to discard his budding archaeological career and join the investigators, or even prompting a grateful Dinesh to join the group (although the pisacha's unusual odor and hideous appearance may well cause real problems for the investigators in the immediate future).

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CHARACTERS AND MONSTERS

The NPCs and unique creatures mentioned in this chapter are described in the following section. Generic NPCs are described, instead, in **Appendix A**.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Daniel Mortimer,
age 22, linguist and archaeologist

STR 55 CON 60 SIZ 65 DEX 60 INT 80
APP 65 POW 80 EDU 75 SAN 80 HP 12
DB: 0 Build: 0 Move: 7 MP: 16 Luck: —

Combat

Brawl 25% (12/5), damage 1D3
Dodge 30% (15/6)

Skills

Appraise 45%, Archaeology 60%, History 60%, Library Use 70%, Science (Geology) 35%, Spot Hidden 65%.

Languages: English (Own) 75%, Hindustani 51%, Magadhi Prakrit 61%, Pali 51%, Sanskrit 71%.

Mrinmoy “Vidyapati” Mishra,
age 63, caretaker and night watchman

STR 60 CON 50 SIZ 65 DEX 55 INT 70
APP 45 POW 65 EDU 40 SAN 65 HP 11
DB: +1D4 Build: 1 Move: 4 MP: 13 Luck: —

Combat

Brawl 25% (12/5), damage 1D3+1D4
Dodge 30% (15/6)

Skills

Listen 60%, Lore (Local) 61%, Natural World 60%, Navigate 50%, Spot Hidden 75%.

Languages: English 41%, Hindustani 51%, Magadhi (Own) 61%.

Kumari Ma,
age 56, head priestess of the Sitala Devi Mandir

STR 70 CON 80 SIZ 60 DEX 40 INT 75
APP 70 POW 70 EDU 55 SAN 70 HP 14
DB: +1D4 Build: 1 Move: 6 MP: 14 Luck: —

Combat

Brawl 25% (12/5), damage 1D3+1D4
Dodge 20% (10/4)

Skills

First Aid 60%, Listen 50%, Lore (Hinduism) 71%, Medicine 61%, Occult 55%, Persuade 70%, Psychology 70%.

Languages: English 41%, Hindustani 41%, Magadhi (Own) 55%, Pisacha 31%.

Spells: Bless, Cause/Cure Blindness, Curse*, Evil Eye, Healing, Warding the Eye, Wrack.

*See *Appendix B*.



Art by Nicholas Roerich

CREATURES AND MONSTERS

The Yakshini, divine resident of the mango grove

STR 75 CON 80 SIZ 70 DEX 85 INT 75
 APP 85 POW 90 EDU — SAN — HP 15
 DB: +1D4 Build: 1 Move: 9 MP: 18 Luck: —

Combat

Attacks per round: 1 (standard humanoid attacks)

The yakshini has the usual range of unarmed attacks open to humanoids. She wields a *chauri* (fly-whisk).

Resistant to Harm: as spirits who only take on corporeal form to appear to humans, yakshinis are hard to permanently kill, although reducing them to zero hit points does drive them away temporarily. If dispatched in this manner, they cannot return to their chosen spot until the next sunrise. Spells that dismiss spirits can be used against them, although in most cases the dismissal is also only temporary, unless the treasure the yakshini guards is completely destroyed as well.

Fighting	65% (32/13), damage 1D3+1D4 or <i>chauri</i> 1D6+1D4
Dodge	50% (25/10)

Skills

Charm 75%, Listen 70%, Persuade 65%, Spot Hidden 75%, Stealth 65%.

Languages: any (as appropriate) 70%.

Armor: none.

Spells: Bind Snake*, *Charm Snake*, *Command Snake*, Curse*, Evil Eye, Warding the Eye*.

Sanity Loss: 0/1D3 Sanity points to see a yakshini.

*See *Appendix B*.



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The Yakshini's Snakes, *loyal little biters*

Bursting from their mango seeds, these little black snakes are no more than 1 foot (30 cm) in length. Like many small creatures, they are at their most dangerous in large numbers—in this case, when they act in concert to entangle their victims. The snakes' primary purpose is to protect the treasure buried beneath the mango tree, as well as their yakshini.

The profiles below detail four knots of snakes; assume twelve snakes per knot. A successful attack kills one or two snakes, causing the others to regroup in a defensive position around the object they are protecting. They will not attack again unless provoked.

	<i>Knot 1</i>	<i>Knot 2</i>	<i>Knot 3</i>	<i>Knot 4</i>
STR	40	35	45	45
CON	40	60	65	45
SIZ	50	40	25	50
DEX	80	70	60	75
POW	65	35	45	55
HP	9	10	9	9
DB	0	-1	-1	0
Build	0	-1	-1	0
Move	9	10	10	9

Combat

Attacks per round: 1 (bite)

These little snakes can only attack with their fangs.

Entangle (mnvr): as a knot, the snakes can attempt to entangle an individual, gaining a bonus die due to their numbers. A successful entangle inflicts a penalty die on all of their target's physical actions, as the snakes coil around their limbs, restricting movement. The snakes can be dislodged with a successful opposed STR or DEX roll.

Fighting	45% (22/9), damage 1D3 + DB
Entangle (mnvr)	45% (22/9), entangled (see above)
Dodge	45% (22/9)

Armor: none.

Gulrukh Chaudhary, *age unknown, leader of Patna's pisachas*

STR 100 **CON** 80 **SIZ** 65 **DEX** 80 **INT** 70
APP — **POW** 85 **EDU** — **SAN** 85 **HP** 14
DB: +1D6 **Build:** 2 **Move:** 9 **MP:** 17 **Luck:** —

Stench: Chaudhary's revolting odor automatically triggers a CON roll whenever she is encountered, with failure indicating the victim has succumbed to a bout of vomiting that causes them to act last in the current round.

Combat

Attacks per round: 3 (bite, claws)

Chaudhary has the usual range of unarmed attacks open to humanoids. Possesses filthy, razor-sharp claws that can slice through human flesh. Wounds inflicted by Chaudhary's claws become diseased if left untreated (a failed investigator CON roll), causing 1 damage per day (plus any other side effects as desired by the Keeper) until treated with a successful First Aid or Medicine roll.

Bite and hold (mnvr): if Chaudhary's bite strikes home, she hangs on instead of using her claw attacks, and worries the victim with her fangs, continuing to do 1D4 damage automatically per round. A successful opposed STR roll is required to dislodge her, thus breaking her hold and ending the bite damage.

Fighting	50% (25/10), damage 1D3+1D6
Bite and hold (mnvr)	50% (25/10), damage 1D3+1D6, then 1D4 per round
Dodge	40% (20/8)

Skills

Climb 65%, History (Hell Chambers) 60%, Jump 65%, Listen 70%, Lore (Hinduism) 60%, Persuade 60%, Psychology 65%, Spot Hidden 65%, Stealth 70%, Swim 60%.

Languages: English 41%, Hindustani 51%, Magadhi 51%, Pisacha (Own) 71%.

Armor: firearms and projectiles do half of rolled damage; round down any fractions.

Sanity Loss: 0/1D6 Sanity points to encounter Gulrukh Chaudhary.

CHAPTER 7

Narayana Prasad, age 36, Sisirama worshipper

STR 75 CON 65 SIZ 55 DEX 70 INT 65
APP — POW 70 EDU — SAN — HP 12
DB: +1D4 Build: 1 Move: 9 MP: 14 Luck: —

Stench: Prasad's revolting odor automatically triggers a CON roll whenever he is encountered, with failure indicating the victim has succumbed to a bout of vomiting that causes them to act last in the current round.

Combat

Attacks per round: 3 (bite, claws)

Possesses the usual range of unarmed attacks open to humanoids. Prasad has filthy, razor-sharp claws that can slice through human flesh. Wounds inflicted by the claws become diseased if left untreated (a failed investigator CON roll), causing 1 damage per day (plus any other side effects as desired by the Keeper) until treated with a successful First Aid or Medicine roll.

Bite and hold (mnvr): if Prasad's bite strikes home, he hangs on instead of using his claw attacks, and worries the victim with his fangs, continuing to do 1D4 damage automatically per round. A successful opposed STR roll is required to dislodge him, thus breaking his hold and ending the bite damage.

Fighting	60% (30/12), damage 1D3+1D4
Bite and hold (mnvr)	60% (30/12), damage 1D3+1D6, then 1D4 per round
Dodge	35% (17/7)

Skills

Climb 55%, Cthulhu Mythos 30%, Intimidate 50%, Jump 55%, Listen 50%, Lore (Hinduism) 40%, Occult 40%, Spot Hidden 55%, Stealth 50%.

Languages: English 45%, Hindustani (Own) 61%, Pisacha 41%.

Armor: firearms and projectiles do half of rolled damage; round down any fractions.

Sanity Loss: 0/1D6 Sanity points to encounter Prasad.



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PISACHA ESCORT

Six larger-than-average pisachas. These creatures usually act as the pisacha council's bodyguards and enforcers within the Hell Chambers.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
STR	110	95	90	100	95	105
CON	90	85	80	85	90	80
SIZ	90	80	75	80	85	70
DEX	70	85	75	90	80	70
INT	70	55	65	75	70	85
POW	75	65	75	80	70	85
HP	18	16	15	16	17	15
DB	+1D6	+1D6	+1D6	+1D6	+1D6	+1D6
Build	2	2	2	2	2	2
Move	8	9	8	9	8	8
MP	15	13	15	16	14	17

Stench: their revolting odor automatically triggers a CON roll whenever encountered, with failure indicating the victim has succumbed to a bout of vomiting that causes them to act last in the current round.

Combat

Attacks per round: 3

Possesses the usual range of unarmed attacks open to humanoids. All have filthy, razor-sharp claws that can slice through human flesh. Wounds inflicted by the claws become diseased if left untreated (a failed investigator CON roll), causing 1 damage per day (plus any other side effects as desired by the Keeper) until treated with a successful First Aid or Medicine roll.

Bite and hold (mnvr): if bite strikes home, the pisacha hangs on instead of using its claw attacks, and worries the victim with its fangs, continuing to do 1D4 damage automatically

per round. A successful opposed STR roll is required to dislodge the pisacha, thus breaking its hold and ending the bite damage.

Fighting	60% (30/12), damage 1D6+1D6
Bite and hold (mnvr)	60% (30/12), damage 1D6+1D6, then 1D4 per round
Dodge	60% (30/12)

Skills

Climb 85%, Jump 75%, Listen 70%, Spot Hidden 70%, Stealth 70%.

Languages: English 31%, Hindustani (Own) 51%, Pisacha 51%.

Armor: firearms and projectiles do half of rolled damage; round down any fractions.

Sanity Loss: 0/1D6 Sanity points to encounter a pisacha.





THE HEART OF THE WORLD

- ASSAM, INDIA -

Tucked away in the farthest corner of British India lie two of the country's richest treasures: Assam and the North East Frontier Tracts. Just like the Indigenous peoples and Western explorers before them, the investigators must now carve their way through the region's jungles to reach their ultimate destination: Danakosha Lake and its holy island, Citta—the so-called Heart of the World.

The investigators make a return trip to the wilderness of Pemakö to conduct their ritual, albeit this time on the Indian side of the McMahon Line (**A Disputed Border**, page 226). Despite lying within the regimented boundaries of the British Raj, the country here is no less wild or dangerous than it was in Tibet—blanketed in dense forests and teeming with wildlife and suspicious locals. And, then there's whatever effects the opening of the Gates of Agartha might have wrought upon the landscape in their absence.

Of course, the investigators may have decided that the cost of performing the real Closing of the Way ritual is too high for them to countenance and have already abandoned their quest. If this is the case, the consequences of their lack of action are discussed in **All's Not So Well** (page 321), as is the price of failure.

TO THE LAND OF THE DAWN-LIT MOUNTAINS

Often referred to as British India's forgotten frontier, Assam and the North East Frontier Tracts were, despite their nickname, very lucrative for the British Raj. Although its farthest reaches went largely ignored and unexplored until the Second World War (due to their geographical isolation, rugged terrain, the fearsome reputation of its Indigenous inhabitants, and the numerous diseases almost guaranteed to lay explorers low), by the early 20th century the lands in the

Assam Valley around the Brahmaputra River were home to thriving tea, coal, and oil industries.

Although the existence of an active civilization was supported by archeological evidence of stone age occupation and mentions in numerous historical epics, such as the *Mahabharata*, the first records of Assam's rulers don't appear until the 4th century CE, with the Kingdom of Kamarupa. Later, the area became a frontier kingdom of the Gupta Empire and was visited by the wandering monk, Hiuen-Tsiang, during his long travels across India in the 7th century CE. Later still, the Pala Dynasty (responsible for much of the later building work at Nalanda *Mahavihara*, **A Dangerous Gift?**, page 270) gained control of the region before the arrival of the Ahom Dynasty, formerly of Burma (Myanmar), in 1228.

The Ahoms ruled Assam for almost 600 years, even repelling the mighty Mughal Empire, until the Burmese invaded in 1817 and asserted their authority over the kingdom. Although Assam was initially judged too distant and remote to attract the covetous gaze of the British East India Company (BEIC), the arrival of the Burmese on the BEIC's doorstep in Bengal led to war in 1824. By 1825, "John Company"—as the BEIC was also occasionally known—had driven the Burmese out of Assam and forced them to cede most of the land, as codified in the 1826 Treaty of Yandabo. Despite briefly installing the Ahom Prince, Purandar Singha, as ruler of a British Protectorate in Upper Assam, the BEIC spent the next 20 years annexing Assamese territory until most of the region was under their complete control.

From 1826 until 1873, Assam was part of the Bengal Presidency, before being split off into the North-East Frontier Province of Assam under the control of a British agent. During the deeply unpopular and disastrous period of partition between 1906 and 1912, it was once again folded into Bengal, this time as the Province of East Bengal and Assam. In 1912, Assam was regranted full provincial status. Its capital was at Shillong (now the capital of Meghalaya)

Opposite: The final sacrifice

in the Khasi Hills—the so-called “Scotland of the East.” Not only were the Khasi Hills known by this affectionate epithet but, during colonial times, it was estimated that at least three-quarters of the British residents in Assam hailed from Scotland, particularly from the area around Aberdeen.

Assam was one of the eight major provinces of British India, but by the 1920s it had lost territory due to yet more political maneuvering from its foreign masters. The North East Frontier Tracts (consisting of the Balipara, Lakhimpur, and Sadiya Frontier Tracts) had been carved out of it with the separation of various tribal lands. Added to these were the areas ceded to the British under the terms of the 1914 Simla Convention, which gave those parts of Tibet lying south of the McMahon Line to India. The frontier tracts would later go on to form the state of Arunachal Pradesh after Indian independence was declared in 1947. However, at the time, most people still referred to the area as a whole by its former name: Assam.

Give the players **What Your Investigator Knows 8: Assam and the North East Frontier Tracts** (Appendix C, page 353), which summarizes this information for their investigators.

ASSAM'S WEATHER

As already mentioned, Assam's climate is, for the most part, warm and moist. It sees more rain than most areas in India, with an average annual rainfall of 82 inches (208 cm) in the Brahmaputra Valley—although Dibrugarh, the Tea City of India, receives an even higher annual average of around 112 inches (285 cm) of rain. Indeed, during the southwest monsoon season (June–September), parts of Assam can receive between 10 and 12 inches (25.5–30.5 cm) of rain a day!

There are definite seasons in the river valley, with summer temperatures reaching around 83 degrees F (28 degrees C) in July and winter temperatures descending to 60 degrees F (15.5 degrees C) in January. In other parts of Assam, however, summer temperatures can easily rise as high as 100 degrees F (38 degrees C), followed by winter lows of 43 degrees F (6 degrees C). Strong north-easterly winds from Siberia prevent the area around Pasighat (**The Red Tide**, page 313) from developing the seasonal fogs and mists found throughout the winter elsewhere in Assam. Fall occurs between September and October, and spring lasts from March to April in the river valley, extending into May further up in the Himalayas.

A NICE CUP OF CHA

One of the main reasons Assam drew attention from the BEIC in the first half of the 19th century was the discovery of wild tea trees (*Camellia sinensis*) in the region, although exactly which Westerner “discovered” the trees remains open to debate. The story goes that Captain Robert Bruce, a Scottish adventurer, had entered Burmese Assam in 1823 to conduct trade with a local Singpho chieftain, the Beesa Gaum. While wandering the hills around Sadiya, he stumbled across the tea trees (not to be mistaken for the unrelated Australian tree, *Melaleuca alternifolia*, from which tea tree oil is gathered). He also learned that the Singpho people thereabouts used the trees' leaves to make a drink called *falap*.

While it is more than likely that Bruce was directed to the Singpho and their tea trees by Maniram Dutta Baruah (**The Dewan of Tea**, page 305), it is usually he and his brother, Charles who are credited with identifying the presence of native tea plants in India, although the road to acquiring official recognition abroad was rather a long and tortuous one. The initial samples of tea seeds and plants sent to Charles Bruce by the Beesa Gaum in 1824 were likely misidentified by the Botanical Gardens in Calcutta the next year as nothing more than an ordinary member of the *Camellia* family rather than what they actually were: true tea plants. At the time, Chinese tea plants were categorized as *Thea sinensis*, and not as part of the wider *Camellia* family as they are now.

In 1831, Lt. Andrew Charlton, a member of the Assam Light Infantry, also heard that tea plants were growing wild in the hills around the Brahmaputra Valley. Like the Bruces before him, he too acquired samples and sent them to the Botanical Gardens in Calcutta, only for the specimens to suffer the same fate as their predecessors and be declared not genuine. Finally, in 1834, the new agent for Assam, Capt. Francis Jenkins, sent Charlton back out to gather fresh specimens in response to an inquiry from the newly formed Tea Committee regarding suitable locations in which to cultivate tea. This time, Dr. Wallich in Calcutta accurately and officially classified the plants as direct relatives of those found in China, which are now known as *Camellia sinensis* var. *assamica*.

Under the auspices of the BEIC's Tea Committee, land in the Brahmaputra Valley was seized through various Wasteland Acts, leased to interested partners, and cleared to cultivate not native Assamese tea plants, but imported Chinese ones. The Tea Committee considered the presence of wild tea merely an indicator of where the preferred Chinese plant could be grown, although they had to admit defeat on that front quite rapidly—in Assam at least—and return to the naturally-occurring *assamica* variety, which was much better suited to the local conditions.

THE HEART OF THE WORLD - ASSAM, INDIA -

The desire to cultivate tea in India was so urgent because the BEIC had lost its monopoly on the tea trade in China in 1833. Having made huge profits through the venture, the company was reluctant to let total control of tea's import into Britain and its colonies slip through its fingers. After much effort, Charles Bruce, as the region's first Superintendent of Tea Culture, managed to successfully deliver sufficient pure Assam tea to London for auction in January 1839.

The following year, the Assam Company (the world's first commercial tea company) took over the management and development of tea cultivation in the Brahmaputra Valley. Having received somewhere between 66–75% of the government's existing tea gardens in Upper Assam, the company controlled tea production in the region for the next two decades. The year they took control—1840—marked the beginning of the end for Chinese-grown tea in the British Empire.

After a few near-disasters due to mismanagement, the predations of the surrounding hostile Abor hilltribes, and a tea mania bubble caused by boom-and-bust land speculation, Assam grew to be the largest tea-growing area in the world,

in part thanks to its warm, moist climate, ideal for cultivating that most beloved of leafy commodities. The once sneered-at Assam *jats* (tea plants) also rose to become the most sought-after tea variety outside China and Japan, which still preferred their own, more delicate, variant.



TIME FOR TEA

Tea is the oldest of the world's three main non-intoxicating beverages (the others being cocoa and coffee), and there are many legends surrounding its creation, the oldest of which dates back to 2737 BCE and the mythical Chinese Emperor-cum-god, Shen Nung. The story goes that, while sitting beneath a tree one day, some leaves fell into a pot of water Shen Nung's servant was boiling for him to drink. Being an herbalist as well as the emperor, Shen Nung decided to try the unexpected infusion, and so discovered tea. Although we now have archaeological evidence from the tomb of Emperor Ching (Jing) in Chang'an to prove that tea was enjoyed as far back as the Han Dynasty (c.206 BCE–220 CE), in the 1920s, the first definitive records of tea drinking and cultivation around Szechwan were only believed to extend into the middle of the 4th century CE.

Part of the problem in dating back the drink's origins was that the Chinese had no specific word for tea until around 725 CE, even though it had become the national drink under the T'ang Dynasty sometime between the 7th and 10th centuries (**Chang'an**, page 51). Before that, several words with multiple meanings were used interchangeably, so that, even though historians believe the use of tea as both a medicinal and social drink is thousands of years old, the use of varying terminology prevented them from accurately pinning down a specific date.

The English word "tea" comes to us via the Dutch and Amoy (Xiamen) in Fukien (Fujian) Province, China. The Dutch East India Company were the first to introduce tea to Europe in the mid-17th century, and they took the name for it from the Amoy merchants they traded with: *t'è* (pronounced "tay"). In fact, right up until the middle of the 18th century, the word—although spelled "tea" in England—was pronounced this way. The Portuguese, Persians, Russians, and Indians, who dealt with Cantonese traders, all adopted variations on their pronunciation of the same Chinese character, Romanized in Canton as not *t'è* but *ch'a*. *Ch'a-ye*, from which we derive the word *chai*, means tea leaf.



THE DEWAN OF TEA

Also known as Maniram Dewan, Maniram Dutta Baruah was a member of the Kalita Kshatriya caste in Assam. His ancestors held high-ranking positions in the Ahom court, and Baruah and his immediate family sought refuge with the British during the Burmese invasion of his homelands. Believed to have been instrumental in the early stages of discovering tea in Assam, Baruah became *dewan* (a chief administrator) of the Assam Company at Nazira in 1839, before leaving a few years later to set up his own private tea garden at Cinnamara after disagreements with the company's directors. Cinnamara was the first such garden under Indian ownership.

An entrepreneur with interests in many areas besides tea, Baruah became increasingly disillusioned with the BEIC, to whom he had once been loyal, largely due to its hostile attitude toward Indians setting up and running their own tea gardens. When the Indian Mutiny broke out in 1857, Baruah saw his chance to restore the Ahom Dynasty as rulers of Assam and plotted accordingly. Unfortunately, he was caught, tried, and executed for daring to challenge British rule. The Assamese held him in such high regard that tea garden workers across the region went on strike to protest his death. As a final insult, his tea gardens were sold to a white Englishman.

SET UP: THE FINAL FLUSH

With their new, correct ritual and the pisachas' sacred *ghanta* and *vajra* in hand, the investigators must make their way from Patna to Assam as quickly as possible to prevent the King of Fear from finally entering the world. But, with huge distances still to cover and dark forces leaking through from the now-open Gates of Agartha, what will they find as they draw nearer to the site of the closing ritual? And, who is prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice to ensure that the end of the *Kali Yuga* does not come early?

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Below is the main NPC for this chapter. Profiles for the Triumvirate, particularly Andrei Osipovich Vitsin, can be found in **Chapter 6** (page 263), while generic NPCs are located in **Appendix A**.

Sonam Dhargey, age 82, abbot of Danakosha Gompa

Drawn to this sacred spot following the successful completion of his training as a Nyingmapa monk (**Religion in Tibet**, page 190), Sonam Dhargey has made his home in this isolated wilderness for over 60 years. He attributes his continued good health to the purity of the mountain air and the lake's waters, as well as his mastery of tantric Buddhist teachings.

He has been abbot at Danakosha for the last 30 years, having trained for decades to replace his predecessor and mentor. Aware that his own end is coming (although the exact speed depends on whether or not the Keeper has allowed a *dugma* into the *gompa*; see **Toxic Guests**, page 317), Sonam Dhargey has recently begun instructing his own replacement in the art of managing a monastery and the pilgrims such a holy place attracts. He fears for the future of his charges given the events of the last few weeks but is quietly confident that all will be well—one day.

- **Description:** remarkably spritely for his age, Sonam Dhargey has a kind, deeply wrinkled face and a gentle, heartfelt laugh. He wears the red and saffron robes of a Buddhist monk, along with a *mala* (prayer beads) of large amber beads.
- **Traits:** kind, generous, and wise. The abbot believes there is goodness all around, even in the darkest of places; in order to observe it, however, one must let go of all of one's preconceptions.

- **Roleplaying hooks:** the abbot's small monastery currently serves as a refuge for those fleeing the dark energies destroying the jungles around the holy lake. As home to the Nyingmapa sect, the *gompa* contains much that could be of use to the investigators.

GETTING TO DANAKOSHA LAKE

If the investigators had all the time in the world, they could travel to Assam the old-fashioned and genteel way: along the Ganges, Padma, and Brahmaputra rivers by paddle steamer or river barge. Unfortunately, they don't have the luxury of indulging in such a journey, as it could take well over a month to complete. Neither do they have time to travel along the Grand Trunk Road to Chittagong and pick up the Assam Bengal Railway to the heart of Assam's tea growing estates and beyond.

Their fastest—and only practical—option is to cross the River Ganges at Patna by ferry, catch a train at Sonpur Junction, and then pick their way eastward to Amingaon on the north bank of the Brahmaputra. Another ferry ride brings them to Gauhati (Gawahati) and the branch line there that joins with the Assam Bengal Railway to Tinsukia. The journey thus far should take around three days of boat and train hopping.



Sonam Dhargey

THE HEART OF THE WORLD

- ASSAM, INDIA -

From Tinsukia, the investigators once again have a choice: to catch the train to Dibrugarh and cross the river by ferry to pick up the road to Pasighat, where they can begin their journey toward the lake; or to catch the train in the opposite direction to Sadiya and use a combination of walking, riding, and sailing to reach the frontier town. Each takes another three to four days (unless the investigators can secure the use of a car from Dibrugarh to Pasighat, which cuts the journey time down to two days).

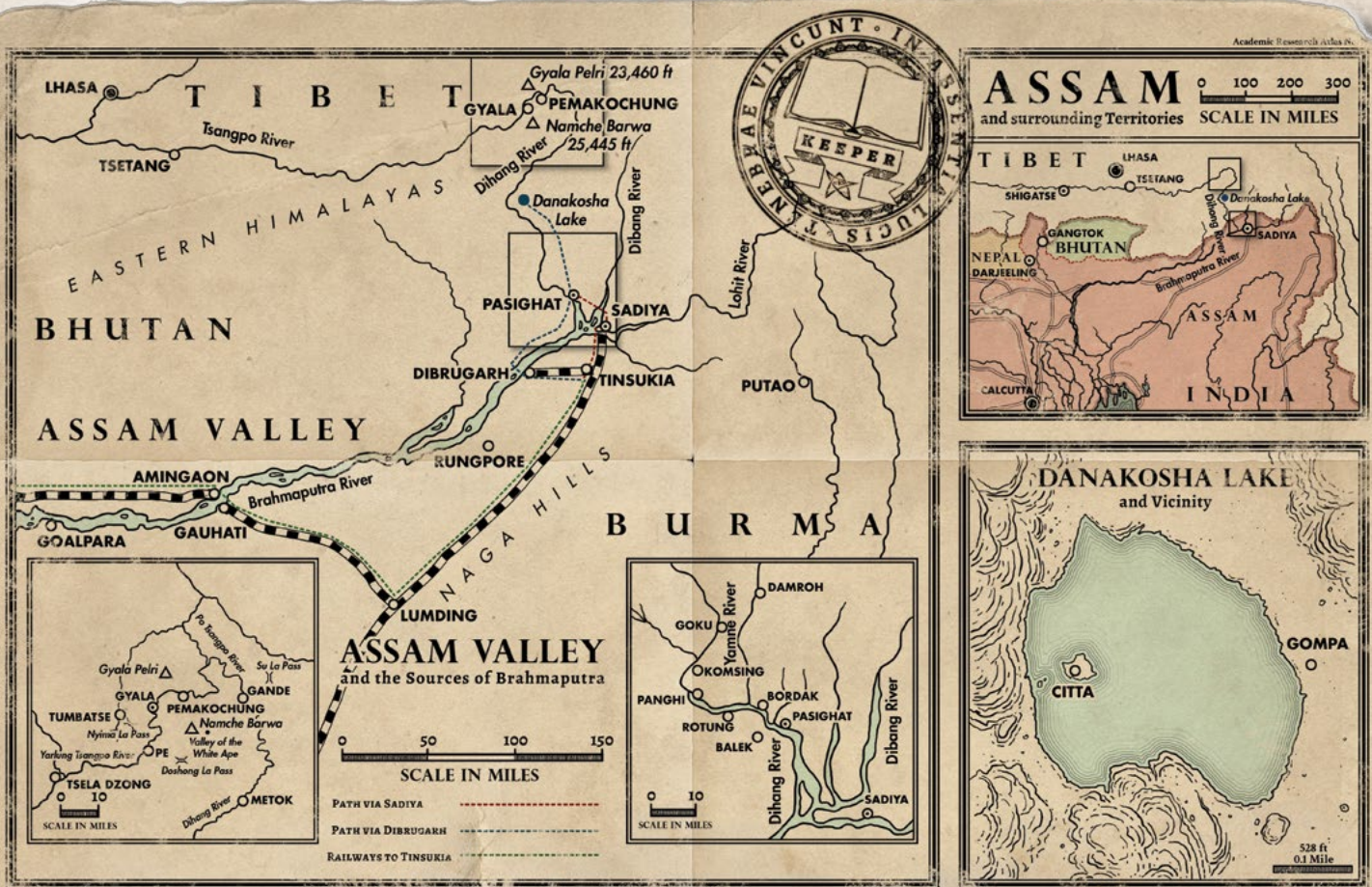
From Pasighat, it is a 120-mile (193-km) hike up the Yamne River Valley and through the mountains to reach Danakosha Lake. The route takes the investigators past Damroh, the Abor village where Kinthup was turned back as he attempted to walk home from Pemakö (**Kinthup: The Sikkimese Tailor**, page 227). This stretch of the journey can only be undertaken on foot due to the roughness of the terrain; boats cannot be used due to the presence of rapids and other obstructions along the river. The hike should take around a week to complete. (Under normal circumstances, it would take much longer, but as discussed in **Into the Jungle** on page 314, the situation in the hills above Pasighat is currently anything but usual.)

As ever, apart from the encounters described below, it is advised that the Keeper red line much of the journey. The only truly fast way for the investigators to reach the lake, and thus circumvent most of the following sections, is if the Keeper decided to implement the option suggested in **Chapter 2: Footsore and Travel Wary** (page 89) and have Tenzin Kalsang's *khatvanga* contain three Gate spells—of course, this option requires that the investigators still have the tantric staff, and that it contains at least one useable charge (if the staff is empty, they will need to recharge it).

Throughout this journey, the skies grow increasingly dark and threatening, resembling those the investigators last saw over the Valley of the White Ape (**The Most Secret Place**, page 242). The atmosphere is unbearably humid, no matter the time of year, leaving everyone sticky and slicked with sweat. Thanks to the occasional rumble of thunder and flash of turquoise-green lightning, it feels as if a massive storm is on the verge of breaking, but the rains never quite come.

One good thing about the time it takes the investigators to reach Danakosha Lake is that it provides the caster of the ritual spell ample opportunity to learn it. Everyone who so

Assam and surrounding territories map



desires should also have the chance to memorize the chant. As was the case for the ritual Tenzin Kalsang taught them on the way to the Valley of the White Ape (**Preparing the Way**, page 236), it takes 1D8 days (rolled for each participating investigator individually) to get the words down pat, although it only requires a successful INT roll to do so, assuming it has been translated into the learner's mother tongue. If not, then the difficulty is Hard to fully commit the words to memory, as they are once again learning the correct syllables by rote. Remember, whoever is wielding—i.e. carrying—the *vajra* gains a bonus die on this roll.

ANY OLD PORT

Depending on the investigators' chosen route, they either find themselves in Dibrugarh on the southern bank of the mighty Brahmaputra River or at Sadiya, sandwiched between the Dibang and Lohit rivers, two of the Brahmaputra's major tributaries (the third—and greatest—being the Dihang, as the Yarlung Tsangpo is known after it crosses into Indian territory).

Dibrugarh: The City of Tea

Chosen by the British in the mid-19th century to act as their administrative and commercial center after the creation of the tea industry on the surrounding plains, one of Dibrugarh's claims to fame is in having the first railway line in Assam, built in the early 1880s to run tea and coal

from gardens and mines in the east to the steamer *ghat* on the river for transport to merchants in Calcutta (Kolkata) and Chittagong.

Keeper note: a *ghat* is technically a flight of steps leading down to water but, in practice, is also where boats berth to pick up passengers and cargo.

Around 1,000 miles (1,600 km) from the sea by river and 830 miles (1,335 km) from Calcutta by rail, Dibrugarh sits a mere 340 feet (103 m) above sea level. Most notably, it is the heart of the most productive tea growing region in India—hence its nickname. Eighteen miles (29 km) or so to its east is the first successful tea garden in Assam: Chubwa, which the investigators may have seen through the train's windows on their way from Tinsukia. The town is also home to an office of the India Tea Association, formed in 1881 to protect the interests of tea planters across British India. The main languages spoken in Dibrugarh are Assamese, Bengali, English, and Hindustani.

Sadiya: Peshawar of the East

Sitting at a slightly higher altitude than Dibrugarh (440 feet/134 m) and positioned at the other end of the Dibru-Sadiya Railway line, this bustling town on the far bank of the Lohit River became the focal point of the North East

BRAHMA'S SON

Unlike most of India's rivers, the Brahmaputra has a male name: in this case, "son of Brahma." After dropping through steep ravines and many rapids in the highlands of Upper Assam (now Arunachal Pradesh), the river's main tributary (the Dihang) joins with the Dibang and Lohit rivers at the head of the Assam Valley (just below Sadiya) to become the Brahmaputra proper. A wide, multi-channeled, braided river for much of its length, the Brahmaputra brings both life and death to the Assam Valley with its annual flood. As it is navigable for most of its length, the river also provided one of the main means of movement through Assam's fertile jungles and forests until the coming of the railways (see also **Handout: Liberation 1**).

RICH PICKINGS

Regardless of whether they travel to Dibrugarh or Sadiya, the investigators pass close to several tea gardens along the way. Depending on the time of year when they arrive in Assam, they may see more than just the neatly-serried rows of tea bushes as they rattle by on the train. The main harvest time for Assam tea runs from April to November, covering the crop's four flushes. The first flush comes in the spring around April, followed by the second, and more prized, flush in May and June. July, August, and September see the summer flush, collected after the rains, and the final, autumn (fall) flush is harvested from October to November. During harvests, the gardens are full of native laborers picking tea and transporting it to the estate factories for processing. Outside of harvest season, the gardens are much quieter as they undergo routine maintenance and essential plant husbandry.

Frontier, thanks to its association with the tea trade—as well as British India’s numerous attempts to find a backdoor into Tibet throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Built on *chapolis* (banks of sand and debris left behind by the shifting courses of rivers), in the 1920s, Sadiya sits at the point between the Himalayan foothills and the Indian plains, both geographically and culturally. Alarming, the town’s name allegedly means “corpse-given,” after the death of a visiting king’s son while the ancient city that previously occupied the site was being built. Because the town suffers from frequent floods, many of its bungalows are constructed on pillars to raise them above potential floodwaters.

Under the British, the town was transformed into the eastern equivalent of Peshawar in the North West Frontier Provinces (**Houses of Wonder**, page 126). Although far less well known than its western counterpart, Sadiya nevertheless had bustling bazaars where the local hill people would come down from their territories to trade rubber, wax, and other jungle-based commodities for salt, metal goods, and textiles.

Thanks to the presence of numerous hill tribes, there are many languages spoken here besides the four found most commonly in Dibrugarh (see also **Hill Tribes of Assam**, nearby).

As the investigators approach Sadiya, permit a **Natural World** or **Science (Biology or Botany)** roll: if successful, they realize that the tea gardens look somewhat less well-ordered than usual—the tea bushes are far taller than the optimum picking height of 3 feet (91 cm) and seem very unkempt. There seems to be a vividness about their color that almost hurts the eyes. Could those plants be *glowing*?



JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS

No doubt experienced players will, at the mention of verdant, unnaturally colored vegetation, leap to the erroneous conclusion that there is a colour out of space lurking in the vicinity. There isn’t, as a successful **Cthulhu Mythos** roll confirms—the mutated plants are merely a product of the energies leaking from the rift opened to Agartha. The appearance of the plants here, along with sightings of a falling star and the bizarre changes to the jungles above Pasighat (**Into the Jungle**, page 314), may give the investigators pause, should they fail that dice roll—and may also encourage them to get a move on.



START: A FACE IN THE CROWD

Regardless of their chosen destination, the investigators find themselves alighting from their train into a bustling hubbub. Indian railway stations are always crowded and chaotic, but this one seems unusually so. A successful **Listen** roll allows the investigators to pick up fragments of conversation as they struggle to make their way out of the station. The main



HILL TRIBES OF ASSAM

There are many tribal peoples in the old provinces of Assam and the North East Frontier Tracts (now known as the Seven Sisters of India, or Seven Sister States: Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura). In the immediate area surrounding Sadiya, they are split into three main groups: the Singpho, whose tea trees were instrumental in the development of the tea industry in Assam; the Mishmis, who caused the Tibetan refugees of Mipi so much trouble (**The Lotus Displayed**, page 225); and the Abors, whose presence in the area in 1865 was reported to “threaten the cause of tea.”

The Abors, animists whose territories lie to the north and west of Sadiya around the Dihang and its tributaries, were a thorn in the side of the British from more or less the moment John Company arrived in the area. Their Assamese name, which translates variously as “unknown savages,” “one who does not submit,” or “unruly, disobedient,” became synonymous with violence, bloodletting, and (allegedly) cannibalism and animal sacrifice in the area; however, the many Abor clans and villages just as frequently slaughtered each other over the jungle’s scant resources as they did any white explorers foolish enough to enter their lands. Hostilities largely came to an end following one last military campaign in 1912 under the now-Major General Hamilton “Buddha” Bower (**From Khotan/Yarkand**, page 116). After the Abor chieftains waved copies of the *Calcutta Statesman* newspaper at British troops to signal their surrender, an alliance was finally reached between the two groups, much to the relief of the British Raj who, 60 years earlier, had been forced to pay the tribesmen an annual tribute to curtail their raids into British territory, a gesture which yielded minimal overall success.



topics include the falling star that seemed to come down over the jungles to the north a little while back, and the ever-increasing influx of tribespeople from the hills in the same region, not to mention the sudden growth spurt in the tea gardens upriver.

Keeper note: if the investigators are at Dibrugarh, this is the first they hear about strange vegetation.

Asking any of the passersby or station staff about the situation requires a successful social skill roll—the people here are obviously on edge, and there seems to be something of a run on the station's ticket office (a successful **Spot Hidden** roll to notice the long, irritated queue of lower-caste Indians and hill people attempting to buy tickets, some through barter). The investigators' informant replies that, for the last week or so, strange reports have been filtering in from Pasighat about the hill people putting aside their tribal rivalries to flee the area in droves. Some are claiming that evil fell from the sky, while others speak of the jungle turning against them. Many of the laborers in the tea gardens around Pasighat and Sadiya have downed their tools and disappeared. Coupled with the stories of rampant greenery in those same gardens, people are deeply concerned that this year's tea harvests will be badly affected, which could cause a lot of harm to the industry's reputation, both here and abroad.

As they are questioning people or attempting to finally leave the station, permit the investigators either a **POW** or **Spot Hidden** roll (those with a POW of 75+ do not need to roll). With success, the investigators' gaze is drawn to a particular face in the crowds surrounding them. The pale blue-gray eyes that stare back at them are cold and haughty, and shockingly familiar: they belong to the male member of the Triumvirate (Andrei Vitsin) who confronted them in the Valley of the White Ape!

Just as the investigators realize this, the man politely raises his Panama hat to them, and then turns and disappears into the crowd. No amount of pushing, shoving, or searching helps them catch up with him—he has, for all intents and purposes, vanished into thin air.

Keeper note: if, on the off chance, Vitsin was killed during their first meeting in the Valley of the White Ape (**Chapter 6: The Seventh Step**, page 251), then the investigators only think they see him in the crowd, causing a **Sanity** roll (1/1D6+1 loss). The investigators are now free to organize their passage onwards without any further meetings with Vitsin's doppelganger, and the following sections should be adjusted accordingly.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING

The investigators must now quickly arrange their passage to Pasighat if they are to reach Danakosha Lake in time. The easiest and fastest way to do this will be a chat with the station master or railway policeman before they quit the station. The investigators' intended route to Pasighat obviously affects the advice the station staff gives them. If they wish to catch a boat, they are directed to the *ghats* along the river (in Dibrugarh or Sadiya); if they want to hire a guide to lead them on foot over the region's—admittedly terrifying—rope bridges, they will be directed to the bazaar (in Sadiya).

Alternatively, they could skip making inquiries at the station and head straight for the nearest bazaar (there are several in both Dibrugarh and Sadiya) to ask around for guides or directions. As the station gossip intimated, there are a great number of hill folk in town, far more of them than one would expect to see under other circumstances. The other option is to head to the riverside and its *ghats*. There, the investigators should be able to identify the ferry service at Dibrugarh that can take them across the Brahmaputra, or the one that travels from Sadiya to the far bank of the Dibang.

Obtaining a guide, even just to take them as far as Pasighat, is a tricky endeavor. Attempting to recruit someone from one of the hill tribes would usually require a Hard **Persuade** roll due to their natural reticence in dealing with outsiders but, due to whatever has frightened them into leaving their homes, it now requires an Extreme success—and a lot of bribery (at least 15 rupees' (US \$5) worth of trade goods, more if the roll is pushed). Trying to hire an Assamese guide is easier, but still requires a Hard social skill roll and a generous rate of pay (3 rupees (US \$1) per day) to convince them to undertake the journey to Pasighat, never mind all the way through hill country to Danakosha Lake (use the **Tribal Member** and **Trail Guide** profiles in **Appendix A**, pages 339 and 330 respectively, as required).

Of course, if any British officials still owe the investigators a favor for their actions earlier in the campaign (for instance, **The Runner**, page 117), then popping into the local government offices for a chat may yield directions, contacts, or even material support (such as the use of a government boat to cross the water), depending on just how sizable that favor is. No matter what help he offers, the official strongly advises against heading into the hills. *“Things are more than a little sticky up there at the moment. The locals have behaved themselves for over a decade now, but when push comes to shove, you just never know. Are you sure this is the wisest course of action?”* If the investigators insist, the official does nothing to stop them, simply wishing them all the best. A successful **Psychology** roll indicates that he has little hope of ever seeing them again.

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Blast from the Past

As the investigators wander the *ghats* attempting to secure river passage for the first stage of their journey, they are approached by a smartly dressed figure in a gray suit, Mackintosh coat, and a Panama hat trimmed with a red, white, and blue ribbon—the man from Pemakö and, more recently, the train station!

Keeper note: alternatively, if the investigators do not seek a boat as an immediate form of transport—as might be the case in Sadiya—Vitsin introduces himself to them in the bazaar.

If the investigators move to attack Vitsin, the man raises his hands in supplication and says, in a heavy Russian accent: *“Please, this is neither the time nor the place. Allow me to introduce myself: I am Count Andrei Osipovich Vitsin, and, for now—here—I am not your enemy. I would be honored if you would join me for tea.”*

If the investigators insist on launching an assault, Vitsin casts Dominate on the person he deems to be the greatest threat, and beats a hasty retreat (see **Andrei Vitsin’s** profile, page 263, for further details.) Should the investigators decide to give chase, Vitsin uses his spells in an attempt to discourage

them or throw obstacles in their way. If all else fails, and the investigators corner him, he draws his scorpion-hilted blade from the depths of his coat and fights—provided, of course, that the town’s local policemen haven’t already intervened.

A Spot of Tea

Should the investigators decide to take Andrei Vitsin up on his offer of light refreshments, he guides them toward a café, where he orders tea and cake for all. Unless the investigators attempt to take control of the conversation, as they wait for their food and drinks, Vitsin makes polite, inconsequential, and rather uncomfortable small talk. Only after nibbling on a slice of Victoria sponge does he come to the point.

“The end of the Kali Yuga is foretold, so why do you persist in your attempts to contradict the natural order of things? Whatever you think you can achieve with those trinkets of yours will only delay the inevitable, so why bother?”

Vitsin listens politely to any arguments the investigators make in defense of their actions, although a successful **Psychology** roll reveals his amused disdain. If any of the investigators still have a negative karmic balance (**Checks and Balances**, page 64), Vitsin attempts to recruit them into the Tokabhaya, with promises of safety for them and their loved ones, as well as untold knowledge, power, or riches—



A spot of tea

whichever he judges to be the most appropriate inducement. He similarly targets any investigator who has regularly consumed human flesh over the course of their adventures, or who is a pisacha (**The End of the Road: Nalanda and Patna**, page 296).

The Russian also revels in answering questions about himself and the organization he works for. This is the perfect—and probably last—opportunity the investigators have to finally know more about the people who set them (and Tenzin Kalsang) up to do their dirty work. Refer to **The Tokabhaya** (page 14), **Visions in the Dark** (page 40), **An Unusual Invitation** (page 82), and **The Triumvirate** (page 230) as necessary.

Divination

If the interview lags or if the investigators are struggling to interrogate him, Vitsin decides to amuse himself with a little tasseomancy—tea leaf reading. He picks up the tea pot and, without using the strainer, pours a fresh cup for one of the investigators. The recipient of this cup will ideally be someone with a secret or a particularly interesting backstory element. He imperiously commands them to drink the tea as quickly as possible, leaving only a small amount of liquid in the bottom of the cup, along with the tea leaves. He then instructs the investigator to swirl the remaining tea three times, tip the cup upside down onto its saucer to get rid of the liquid, then hand him the cup without looking into it.

Vitsin carefully studies the inside of the cup before making a pronouncement either directly related to the investigator's backstory or, if the Keeper prefers, to their upcoming trek toward Danakosha Lake. The Keeper should endeavor to describe the shapes and positions of the leaves, and how Vitsin uses them to weave a divination, using some of the suggestions in the **Written in the Leaves** box (nearby). The Keeper should secretly make a **Luck** roll for the investigator concerned: with a success, Vitsin accurately relates something from the investigator's background or says something truthful about what they will find on the road ahead of them; if failed, his information is obviously complete bunkum—assuming he's discussing an investigator's past, of course—as for the future, who's to say at this point?

After his little performance—or once Vitsin grows tired of the investigators' questions and their attempts to justify their continued interference in the Tokabhaya's plans, or if it becomes clear that he will gain no new recruits today—he suddenly rises from the table, bids good day, and attempts to leave. *"I shall no doubt see you again soon. I am sure you will understand if I do not wish you schlastlivogo puti!"*

Keeper note: *"Schlastlivogo puti!"* is the Russian equivalent of the phrase *"Bon voyage!"*

WRITTEN IN THE LEAVES

Tasseomancy (or tasseography), the art of divination by reading tea leaves, was developed from a variety of medieval techniques, including one wherein the diviner dropped molten lead into water and revealed the future using the shape of the solidified scraps of cooled metal. The current technique derives its name from tasse—the French word for cup—and became a favorite of fortune-tellers after the Dutch introduced tea to Europe in the 17th century CE.

The position of the leaves after swirling and draining are supposed to provide insights into the drinker's fate. Those near the handle allegedly refer to home affairs, while those directly opposite concern work and business. Leaves at the rim speak to the past, and move through the present and beyond as they progress down to the bottom of the cup, where visions of the future lie. The shapes the leaves form are also important, although these are open to wider interpretation. Some say that a line of tea dust indicates a journey, whereas others insist that particular omen requires the presence of a mountainous shape created by the full leaves. Interestingly, this same configuration is also said to signify a hindrance.

Unless the investigators intervene in his departure, Vitsin once again vanishes into the crowds, leaving them with the bill for the refreshments. If they do attempt to accost him, his tactics are the same as they would have been had the investigators given chase immediately upon encountering him, as described previously. While it is more than likely that Vitsin makes a successful getaway, it is by no means guaranteed.

Should the investigators kill Vitsin here, the Triumvirate is seriously weakened, as there is no one present to immediately consume Vitsin's brain and thus gain his powers and memories. Unless, of course, one of the investigators has learned the secret of the Tokabhaya's leadership or consumed some of Tenzin Kalsang's brains during the ritual in Pemakö (**The Eighth Step**, page 253). Either of these conditions, along with an **INT** roll (if required), may give them a clue about how to make the most of the opportunity before them (see **Brain Food**, following). Of course, the investigators will have to deal with the consequences of apparently murdering a man in cold blood in broad daylight, especially as the Children of Fear won't be there this time to get them off the hook.

It is possible for the investigators to provoke Vitsin into attacking them; after all, he has a quick temper, and

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besmirching his personal honor, denigrating the memory of the Russian Imperial family, or warmly praising the behavior of the Bolsheviks in his presence causes him to lash out if he fails a Hard **POW** roll. Dispatching Vitsin under these circumstances still requires some delicate explanation if the investigators are caught by the authorities, although a competent barrister should be able to argue self-defense, especially as there are likely to be plenty of witnesses who saw Vitsin land the first blow.

Alternatively, Vitsin is sufficiently vain and old-fashioned enough to instead challenge the insulting party to a duel, should the Keeper wish to move the conflict to a secluded location at dawn the next day—provided, of course, that the investigators stick around to honor the challenge. Vitsin plays by the rules and refrains from using magic during the duel, although he might reconsider this position once it's over.

Should any of the investigators be offered membership into the Tokabhaya and accept, they are free to leave with Vitsin, unless their former colleagues act to stop them. Vitsin is as good as his word; should the remaining investigators fail in their bid to close the Gates of Agartha, the turncoat and their loved ones will indeed be protected from the subsequent cleansing of the Earth. They'll also rise to privileged positions in the King of Fear's soul-crushing bureaucracy, unlike any other survivors (**All's Not So Well**, page 321). Should the other investigators succeed in sealing away the kingdom, the turncoat's fate is left to the Keeper (and possibly the other investigators) to decide.

Brain Food

Should an investigator eat Andrei Vitsin's brain, call for a **Sanity** roll (2D10/1D100 loss) due to the potentially overwhelming flood of information they must process as they absorb several thousand lifetimes' worth of memories. Onlooking investigators may also need to make a **Sanity** roll (1D4/1D6 loss) if they are not used to seeing a colleague chow down on a person's brain.

If the eater manages to remain sane—either via a low **Sanity** loss roll or by failing their **INT** roll (in the case of temporary insanity)—they gain bonus skill points equal to Vitsin's remaining **POW** (80 minus any **POW** used to cast spells at any point in the campaign so far). These points may be spent only on the following skills: **Climb**, **Firearms (Rifle)**, **First Aid**, **History**, **Intimidate**, **Language (Other; any)**, **Language (Russian)**, **Occult**, **Ride**, **Stealth**, and **Survival**. The investigator also gains a permanent **POW** increase of +1D10 points. At the Keeper's discretion, the investigator may automatically learn the five spells listed in Vitsin's profile.

If the investigator goes temporarily or indefinitely insane as a result of the **Sanity** roll, then not only do they suffer from a hysterical outburst (sobbing, screaming, or laughing

manically) for 1D10 rounds, but they also gain one of the following manias: epistemomania (an obsession with acquiring knowledge), megalomania (delusions of personal importance and power), or notomania (a compulsion to record everything). Maddened by the nightmarish imagery swirling around in their brain, which whispers dark promises that appeal to their basest instincts, the investigator must now make a choice: either hold true to their quest or defect to the other side and join the Triumvirate in Vitsin's place.

Should the investigator lose all their **Sanity** points due to the **Sanity** roll, the investigator automatically succumbs to the call exerted on them by the King of Fear and, at the first opportune moment, flees to join Mariam Sandrine and Hine Roimata, wherever they might be. Unless, of course, their former companions sense this change upon their comrade and do something to stop them.

THE RED TIDE

Now that Andrei Vitsin has either been dealt with or made good his escape, the investigators are free to carry on toward Pasighat, which lies in the eastern foothills of the Himalayas at an altitude of 508 feet (155 m). Founded by the British on the banks of the Dihang River in 1911, the town operates as the Raj's gateway to the Abor Hills.

The nearer to Pasighat the investigators get, the heavier the flow of hill people traveling in the opposite direction becomes, as does the number of poor Assamese laborers traveling south. Asking the refugees about the conditions ahead brings only wailing and dark mutterings, along with warding gestures—recognized with a successful **Occult** roll as protections against great evil. Some even speak of a terrible disease afflicting anyone foolish enough to stay. A successful **Medicine** roll identifies that some of the refugees cough frequently, are lethargic, and appear to have the beginnings of a strange and unfamiliar skin rash.

Any Westerners the investigators speak to on their way to Pasighat are dismissive of such fears, although a successful **Psychology** roll while talking to British citizens and *Babus* (Anglophile Indian office workers) in the town itself reveals that they are not as confident in their denouncements as their more distant compatriots in Dibrugarh and Sadiya.

If the investigators are traveling up from Dibrugarh, they finally get to see the effects of the energy leaking from the Gates of Agartha on the surrounding tea gardens (**Jumping to Conclusions**, page 309). Even if they journeyed via Sadiya, the decreasing number of tea gardens between there and Pasighat are, if anything, even wilder than those previously witnessed.

Not only is the tide of humanity fleeing the area increasing while the tea gardens grow out of control, but there is also

one other clearly visible change: the river is no longer its usual sludgy blue color, and now contains bright red streaks and eddies, which become larger and more noticeable the nearer to Pasighat the investigators travel. Most people may assume that this is due to the presence of large quantities of iron in the water, but a successful **Science (Geology)** roll reveals that iron contamination is not a known problem in this area.

If the investigators have not secured a guide to lead them to the River Yamne and beyond, then the bazaars of Pasighat are their last chance to obtain one. As before, an Abor tribesperson can only be persuaded with a successful Extreme social skill roll, and an Assamese guide with a Hard success.

INTO THE JUNGLE

As the investigators make their way upriver from Pasighat toward the Yamne, the Dihang River grows redder and redder. Once the group breaks off into the Yamne's valley, the river flows over the rocks of its bed like blood from an unstaunched wound, which may incite a **Sanity** roll (0/1D2 loss) at the Keeper's discretion. The water doesn't taste of blood, though, and there is no corresponding metallic tang to the air. Instead, the water has an unpleasant musty flavor, and does little to quench anyone's thirst.

Even if the river was navigable under normal conditions, it wouldn't be so now. The higher the investigators climb, the more the river's course is choked by white filaments that look like anemic water weeds floating in the blood-red currents. A successful **Science (Biology or Botany)** or Hard **Natural World** roll identifies the strands as some sort of fungal mycelium that seems to be spewing into the water from the soil surrounding the river; a Hard success or better suggests that the fungus may be related to the species that causes red root disease in tea plants.

Careful study of the filaments (no roll required) shows that the water's red discoloration emanates from these "weeds," which are leaching a viscous red substance into the river. Tracing the mycelia back through the soil reveals that it is entangled throughout the roots of every plant they look at. The affected roots are also discolored blood-red, and the parent plant, like everything else in the jungle hereabouts (apart from the mycelium), falls to bitter-tasting dust at the investigators' touch.

The investigators may be expecting a difficult slog up to the lake, akin to their trials and tribulations in the jungles of Pemakö on the other side of the McMahan Line; however, now they are truly in the *mofussil* (away from civilization), while the plants apparently exhibit luxuriant growth and vibrant colors as previously mentioned, they snap and

crumble away with only the slightest of pressure, meaning that there is no need for the investigators to hack their way through the once almost impenetrable forest. Unless they take great care, the investigators—and all their possessions—quickly become covered in a thick layer of dust that clings to everything it touches and adds an acrid taste to any food or drink it contaminates.

The problem, of course, is not the dust itself, but the fungal spores the dust contains. Should an investigator insist on blundering through the crumbling vegetation without taking precautions to cover their mouth and nose, then they are constantly breathing in the mutated spores. After a week without protection, have them make a **CON** roll, with failure meaning that the spores have started to cause breathing difficulties—inflicting a penalty die on all physical skill rolls.

The greater threat comes from consuming fungally-contaminated water and foodstuffs. Breathing in the multi-hued powder not only induces bouts of severe coughing but makes the investigators extremely thirsty, and they may run out of safe drinking water before they reach the *gompa*—a failed **Luck** roll—forcing them to drink from the blood-red rivers or dust-covered pools. In addition, if they're not sufficiently cautious when preparing their food, then it, too, can become contaminated with spores.

The spores love nothing more than the nutrient-rich, acidic conditions of an animal's stomach. After consuming tainted water or heavily contaminated food on 1D4 separate occasions, unless a successful Hard **CON** roll is made, the spores begin to fruit, sending white mycelia snaking throughout the host's body and draining it of vitality. As well as experiencing abdominal pain and the eruption of fleshy buboes all over their skin, the victim loses 10 points of both STR and CON every day until death occurs at zero CON, leaving them nothing more than a withered husk that continues the cycle of spore release as it, too, crumbles into dust (see **A Safe Refuge**, page 316, for a possible cure).

Setting a campfire destroys any spores in the air around it, making the area safe for food preparation; however, the strange pillar of light produced above the flames as the spores burn may serve to convince the investigators further that they are dealing with a colour out of space.

If it weren't for the oppressive heat (regardless of the time of year), the absolute lack of bird or animal noises, and the choking dust, this could almost be considered a pleasant walk. Yet another distinctly unnerving occurrence is the apparent sight and sound of earth tremors close by but, thankfully, never in quite the same place as the investigators. If desired, the Keeper may permit **Listen** and **Spot Hidden** rolls to notice landslips and rock falls caused by the quakes and tremors across the river valley or in the direction they are traveling, although they may simply wish to describe the aftermath.

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A Merciful End

The scattered villages the investigators pass through on their way to Danakosha Lake are deserted, their *kebangs* (tribal meeting halls) empty and silent like the rest of the jungle. That is, until they reach Damroh, where they must peel away from the river valley and into the mountains. Perched on the trail high above the red-stained river, the village here has been totally swallowed by the surrounding trees.

As the investigators move through Damroh, call for a **Spot Hidden** roll: with success, it becomes obvious that the vegetation hasn't overrun just the buildings, but also the people who once lived here. Entwined in the brittle vegetation are the deformed and desiccated corpses of the Padam Abors, whose ancestors presented such a barrier to exploration and mapping in the area in the previous century. They, too, crumble away to dust with the slightest touch—**Sanity** roll (1/1D4+1 loss).

Not everyone here is dead—not yet, at least. A successful **Listen** roll identifies the sound of someone in pain close by. A thorough search of the village locates a group of four Abors hiding in the crawl space beneath one of their huts. While one is dead, the other three are alive, although horribly disfigured by the fungal growths erupting from their

flesh. A successful **First Aid** or **Medicine** roll suggests that they probably only have a day or two left until they join the rest of their village in death. Too weak to do it themselves, they beg the investigators to put them out of their misery. Whether the investigators choose to do so or not is up to them, but leaving the Abors to suffer a lingering and painful death should not only cause a negative karma mark, but also trigger a **Sanity** roll (1/1D6 loss); however, ending the Abors' lives, even as an act of mercy, still incurs a **Sanity** roll (1/1D4 loss), despite its positive effect on their karmic balance as an act of compassion.

Alternatively, the Keeper may wish to ambush the investigators with a jungle creature driven mad by fungal infection—as the group makes its way through the blasted wilderness, a mutating creature launches itself at them from the brittle undergrowth. Use the profile of a bear or a big cat (in this case, a Bengal tiger or leopard) found on pages 336 and 338 respectively of the *Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook*; use the minimum characteristics for the creature chosen and limit it to one attack per round due to its weakened state (particularly if the investigators are not a combat-oriented or pulp group).



Abors entangled in mutant vegetation

A SAFE REFUGE

Although the investigators are headed for an area that contains a reputed 118 holy bodies of water, there is only one lake suitable for their purposes: the lake containing a small, rocky island, known as Citta (or Tseta)—a Sanskrit word with several meanings that is invariably translated as “the Heart of the World” when used in reference to this particular location. According to local beliefs, a mere glimpse of the lake not only removes all obstructions to knowledge and understanding in the viewer, but also erases all of their negative karma to boot (well, up to one thousand eons’ worth, anyway). It is up to the Keeper to decide if there is any truth to this rumor!

Ringed by mountain peaks, Danakosha Lake lies in a small, secluded valley. There, within its waters, sit three islands, the largest of which is the ritual site the investigators seek. On a rise to the east of the lake sits a small *gompa* (monastery) built from whitewashed stone and wood. Among the first things the investigators notice about the valley is that the vegetation here is completely normal; not only is it not overgrown, but it is also a perfectly natural color and does not crumble when touched. In addition, the lake is untainted by white mycelial weeds, and so its waters remain dark blue. For whatever reason, the valley appears to be resistant to the mutagenic energies leaking from Agartha.

When the investigators enter the valley, they spy an old Buddhist monk, who pauses in drawing water from the lake and walks over to meet them. He introduces himself as Sonam Dhargey, the Abbot of Danakosha Gomba, and invites them to be his guests. Either in halting English or Hindustani, or through an interpreter, the old monk relays the following to the investigators: *“I can see that you have much to do here, but first, permit me to provide some small refreshment while there is still time.”*

Presuming the investigators take up the abbot’s offer, they find the *gompa* to be crowded. As well as the six monks who normally reside here, the main building is packed with at least 30 unfortunate religious pilgrims and refugees from villages both near and far who have sought sanctuary here rather than take their chances in the jungles. Some of the refugees are Abors, others are Monpas from closer to the Tibetan border, while the pilgrims among them hail from China, Tibet, and India. Sonam Dhargey comments that all are welcome, although the *gompa* is beginning to run dangerously short on food with all these extra mouths to feed.

If asked, the old abbot agrees to help the investigators in any way he can. This is the investigators’ last chance to acquire any missing equipment or materials they need for the ritual (see **Completing the Set**, following). Sonam Dhargey



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may even be convinced to sacrifice himself to save the world, but only if the investigators succeed with an Extreme social skill roll (not including Intimidate); the old monk would see it as a fitting end to a life of service. But, if he has been poisoned by a *dugma* (**Toxic Guests**, page 317), he refuses the offer outright, concerned that the gods would mistake his sacrifice for an attempt to avoid his assigned fate.

Keeper note: if any of the investigators have been infected by the spores, at the Keeper's option, there may be suitable magical herbs in the surrounding holy valleys to effect a cure. Such herbs can be identified with the help of the monks at the *gompa* or with a Hard **Science (Botany)** roll, while a successful **Science (Pharmacy)** or **Medicine** roll, or a Hard **Ocult** roll, is needed to prepare the medicine that can purge the fungus from the host's body. Once administered, the sufferer begins to regenerate lost characteristics at a rate of 10 points per day.

Completing the Set

While the investigators have likely learned the necessary chant on their way to Danakosha Lake, they may not have had time to acquire the other components needed to finish their appointed task, particularly the more esoteric items (such as the five nectars and the *katari*). Anything they are missing can be obtained from Abbot Dhargey as part of his pledge to aid them; however, the Keeper may wish to have the investigators undertake one final task before they perform the ritual. Some groups may be keen to track down a golden cow in order to extract the necessary components to make the nectar *rilbus* (rather than simply acquiring the nectars from the abbot). Should your investigators be equally keen, they find that the *gompa* keeps a small herd of such precious beasts in another valley protected by its own—much less significant—holy lake. Getting the cow between the valleys could prove to be an entertaining diversion, particularly if there happen to be fungally-infected wild animals roaming the forests and hillsides in between (see **A Merciful End**, page 315).

Besides specific ritual equipment (and, possibly, a cow), the abbot can also provide a boat to ferry the investigators to the island, along with prayers from the monks and refugees to speed them on their way and aid in their defense (and, later, any medical services they may require after completing their task).

TOXIC GUESTS (OPTIONAL)

Danakosha Lake is due south of Metok and certainly within fleeing distance of any number of *dugmas*—female members

of the Metok region's notorious poisoning cult (**A Poisoned Chalice**, page 241). If the Keeper hasn't used the cult earlier in the campaign and wishes to do so now, then at least one of these merit-stealing witches has installed herself in the *gompa* and is busily poisoning the monks (and anyone else she deems worthy) so that her soul will be in good shape when the end of the world comes, as it surely will soon, given all the obvious signs and portents.

Naturally, being powerful—and most likely foreign—individuals, the investigators immediately attract the *dugma's* attention. She attempts to either feed them poisoned food or drink, or “accidentally” scratch them with her poisoned thumbnail (as described in **A Poisoned Chalice**). Exactly how many investigators she targets depends on how long they tarry at the *gompa*—the longer they stay, the more the *dugma* strikes at one or more of them. The Keeper could randomly determine who the *dugma* sets her sights on, which may, somewhat ironically, mean that the person chosen to act as the sacrifice in the upcoming ritual is also the one poisoned—it's really not their lucky day, is it?

If the Keeper does decide to place a *dugma* in residence, the investigators should have an opportunity to uncover what is going on before the attempt on their lives, as several of the monks, including Sonam Dhargey, are already showing symptoms of the poisoning (a successful **First Aid, Medicine, or Science (Pharmacy)** roll to identify), and at least one high-ranking refugee has died since their arrival. The monks can describe the victim's symptoms to the investigators, which should help to confirm poison as the cause of death. The victim's body was taken to the next valley and given over to nature, and so is not immediately available for examination. The investigators could go find it if they wish, but it crumbles to dust the instant they touch it, as it, too, has been affected by Agarth's corrupting influence.

Otherwise, the investigators' chances of evading the *dugma's* potentially lethal attentions are as described in **A Poisoned Chalice** (page 241), as is the possibility of them finding an antidote to the toxin for those who are already sick. They are, after all, surrounded by a number of holy valleys in which the requisite herbs may grow. Of course, if an investigator is poisoned and fails to notice at the time, it may be days or weeks before they realize their fate.


As before, use the profiles in **Appendix A** for the various people the investigators may meet in the *gompa*: the **Tribal Member** (page 339) for the *dugma(s)* as well as any regular Abor or Monpa refugees, the **Religious Pilgrim** (page 334) for those Buddhist devotees trapped in the valley, and the **Novice Monk** (page 332) for the other members of Sonam Dhargey's priesthood.



NO GOOD DEED

In one playtest, the investigators not only identified the *dugma* but convinced her (with a successful Hard Persuade roll) that she could accrue far more merit by volunteering to be the sacrifice than by poisoning those around her, especially as she would have to wait for her victims to die to collect, and there was a very good chance the world would end before that time.

If the investigators manage to convince someone else to act as the sacrifice rather than a volunteer from one of their own number, then that's all well and good, as long as they didn't use Intimidate to bully that person into agreeing. If they did, that's coercion, and completely negates the sacrifice—meaning that the ritual will fail (**All's Not So Well**, page 321).



THE END IS NIGH

Once the investigators have rested and prepared themselves for what they must do, it is time to head to the Heart of the World and commence their attempt to close the Gates of Agartha. Once again, the investigators find themselves on a lakeshore beneath necrotic purple skies roiling with sickly green lightning. But, before they can begin the ritual, they must row out to the island. If no one possesses the Pilot (Boat) skill, then one of the junior monks is assigned the task of getting them safely to the Heart of the World. Because they have the *ghanta*, the waters remain calm, and no roll is required.


It is also possible for an investigator to swim to the island if they so desire but, in addition to keeping any ritual components or artifacts they are carrying dry, they must also make a successful **Swim** roll to avoid succumbing to the bone-numbing cold of the mountain waters. If the person swimming has the *ghanta*, a successful **Pilot (Boat)** roll is required for anyone else using the boat, as the waters become increasingly choppy and hard to navigate as the boat nears the island.

Citta itself is a dome-shaped, rocky little island, dotted with fir and juniper trees, meaning that the investigators can harvest the branches they need to build their ritual fires on-site. If asked, Sonam Dhargey informs them that there is no need to take fire-making materials with them, besides tinder and flint.



HERE WE GO AGAIN

As discussed in **Chapter 6: Many Hands** (page 246), in order to keep the players invested in this final ritual, it is important that each of their investigators has a role to fulfil. While one person must assume the role of the goddess' avatar (possibly even the same investigator who took on the part previously), someone else can be responsible for drawing the *kyilkhor*, and yet another for painting the holy symbols on the victim prior to their sacrifice. And, as before, someone must take on the job of playing the ritual instrument—this time the *ghanta*—while everyone chants the spell.



At the highest point of the island is a flat area ideal for preparing the ritual space. Sensible investigators check which direction east is (a successful **Navigate, Survival, or Natural World** roll), so that they know which direction to orient the triangle and the sacrificial victim to when the time comes. Once the investigators have swept the area clean with fir and juniper branches, it is time to inscribe the ground with the outer ritual triangle and set the fires as detailed in step one of their instructions (**Handout: Spirits 2**). As the smoke purifies and cleanses the area, the *rilbus* should be dissolved in the *chang* the abbot provided (he also provides the bowls for this part of the ritual—undecorated clay tea bowls of no religious significance whatsoever).

RUNNING THE FINAL RITUAL

It is finally time for the ritual to commence. The investigators can take up their positions around the triangle now, as they did in Pemakö, or they can wait until step three to assemble (as described in the ritual; **Handout: Spirits 2**). As with the false ritual in the Valley of the White Ape, each step is broken down for the Keeper in the following sections, detailing what the investigators see and hear, as well as any rolls the Keeper may decide are necessary. Failed rolls this time around do have negative consequences in the form of penalty dice to certain critical rolls, meaning that the Keeper may wish to avoid any non-essential skill checks for the sake of reaching a satisfying conclusion.

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Step Two

Now that the smoke has purified the ritual space and the sacred nectar has been prepared, the investigator charged with drawing the *kyilkhor* must enter the ritual triangle and use Ashoka's *vajra* to inscribe the design found on the Nalanda scrolls. As before, the Keeper may wish to call for a relevant **Art/Craft** or **DEX** roll for a successful inscription, granting a bonus die if they take the drawing into the triangle with them. Rechecking the diagram is sufficient grounds for a pushed roll.

This time, if the investigator initially fumbles or fails the pushed roll, they believe they've got it right until the critical moment in the ceremony when the caster rolls to see if they have performed the chant correctly, at which point the Keeper applies a penalty die to the casting roll. The artist then realizes their error, and must make a **Sanity** roll (0/1 loss) as the potential implications of their mistake sink in.

Step Three

Once the *kyilkhor* is drawn, it is time for everyone to take their positions around the triangle and drink the five nectars of the sacred cow. Unlike the previous ritual, there are no narcotics in this brew, so the accompanying **CON** roll is merely to see whether they can gag the liquid down despite their knowledge of its contents. As long as the majority of the investigators manage to consume the *rilbus*, then all is well. If the majority fails, then apply a penalty die to the Hard POW roll in **Step Four**.

Step Four

The investigator charged with using the *ghanta* must do so now. It doesn't matter how quickly or slowly they ring the bell, as long as they keep ringing it for the length of the entire ritual. The bell's tone is oddly hushed yet penetrating, bolstered by resonances from its lip that lie just beyond the range of human hearing. The chant should then be initiated by the person chosen to cast the actual spell; this investigator should also be in possession of the *katari*, as it is they who must wield the blade in the later stages of the ritual.

From here on in, as the ritual progresses, even the holy valley begins to suffer from Agartha's malign influence. Earth tremors unleash huge rockfalls which tumble down the surrounding mountainsides, crashing boulders into the lake and sending massive waves to break against the Heart of the World. A rain of fiery hail starts to fall, setting fire to the vegetation around the lake and, eventually, on the island itself. Alarmingly, the lake's surface level begins to rise

as well, as more boulders are thrown down into its seething waters, threatening to inundate the island at any moment.

Terrifying though this may be, as long as the investigator in charge of the *ghanta* keeps ringing it, the immediate area around the ritual triangle is safe from the King of Fear's various attempts to disrupt the ceremony. The Keeper may wish to ask the bell-ringer for a **POW** roll to maintain their concentration in the face of the geological mayhem occurring all around them. If they fail, and the bell stops ringing, then the investigators are vulnerable to the spells and creatures listed in **Ashoka's Treasures** (page 295).

Keeper note: remember, as long as it's ringing, the ritual bell provides a bonus die to any opposed POW rolls required to defend against earth-, water-, or fire-based spells (plus a second bonus die if the *vajra* is also in their possession), as well as preventing any creatures composed purely of earth, water, or fire from attacking anyone within 50 feet (15 m) of the *ghanta*.

Because they need to keep the bell ringing, this investigator can chant in support of the caster but cannot take any other role in the ritual that would require them to stop ringing the bell. If they do stop ringing it before the end of the ritual, for any reason, ask for a group **Luck** roll to see if the party manages to complete the ceremony before the island (along with the rest of the valley) is destroyed by fire, earth, and flood.


Once the invocation is complete (which takes at least an hour of repeating the same phrase over and over again), then the caster makes a Hard **POW** roll to see if they have performed the chant correctly. They gain a bonus die on the roll for the *ghanta*, as long as it is still being played when the chant ends; the roll may or may not also be subject to a penalty die depending on what happened in **Steps Two** and **Three**. Of course, if the caster has performed a Close Gate spell before, there is no need to roll, given that this is a variation of that spell, albeit a very specific and powerful one.

Provided they succeed, the caster will have the opportunity to gain control of the Gate at the end of the ritual. If they fail this current step, they may attempt a pushed roll if they can come up with a sufficiently good justification for doing so, such as beginning the entire ritual again, along with everything that entails (including going back to the *gompa* for more *rilbus*, and so on). Otherwise, they may simply push on with the rest of the ceremony and hope that all will be well.



AN OLD FAMILIAR FACE

If the Keeper prefers, the firestorm can instead be caused by fire vampires, summoned by **Hine Roimata** (**Chapter 6**, page 231), the Triumvirate's leader, who stands on the lakeshore hurling abuse at the investigators as the *ghanta* prevents her minions from doing her bidding. She may also turn the fire vampires on the *gompa* in hopes of distracting those performing the ritual.



Step Five

The caster must now lead the victim to the center of the *kyilkhor* and lay them down ready to be anointed with the five seed syllables; as already discussed, this does not need to be done by the caster. Again, the Keeper may wish to call for a relevant **Art/Craft** or **DEX** roll, but, as before, an initial fumble or a failed pushed roll incurs a penalty die, this time to the opposed POW roll at the ritual's end.

Step Six

The moment of sacrifice has come. The caster must now use the *katari* to slice open the victim's belly, release their entrails, and bind them with their own slippery, steaming guts. If the victim does not resist, then no roll is required; otherwise, the caster must make a successful skill roll—such as **Fighting (Brawl)** or **Medicine**—to strike cleanly in the right spot, unless the other investigators hold the victim down so they cannot avoid the blow; **Sanity** roll (1/1D2 loss) for each investigator involved in the restraint.

There is no need for the victim to be conscious at this point; the caster may elect to deliver a knock-out blow to the back of the victim's head (ideally with the *vajra*) before attempting to disembowel them. Under these circumstances, no roll is required to cut open the victim, although both situations require a **Sanity** roll on the caster's part (1/1D4 loss).


Steps Seven and Eight

With the sacrificial victim facing a slow and painful death if the ritual is not completed quickly, it now falls to the caster to deliver the final blow and sever the head of their compatriot to release their indestructible drop and, thus, the power needed to seal the Gates of Agartha. Again, the



BAD PENNIES

It was during step six of the previous ritual that the Triumvirate made their appearance, disguised as the Guardians of the Gate (**Chapter Six: The Sixth Step**, page 251). If the Keeper wishes, and if Hine Roimata hasn't already made her presence felt, the trio—assuming Andrei Vitsin is still alive—can do so again in an attempt to disrupt the ceremony and prevent the investigators from achieving their aim. While this may be a good option for large, combat-oriented/pulp groups or ones with significant spell capabilities, the reappearance of the Tokabhaya's leadership could seriously unbalance the finale against a smaller or more academic group, leading to a failure that could have otherwise been avoided.



victim may need to be held in position if conscious, should the caster wish to make a clean cut. Removing the target's head prompts a **Sanity** roll, costing 1D4/1D10 Sanity points, reduced to 1/1D6 Sanity points for those witnessing the decapitation.

Once the head has been cut from the body and flung down into the *kyilkhor*, all those assembled see a tiny red and white sphere—smaller and dimmer than Tenzin Kalsang's, but undeniably the victim's indestructible drop—rise up from the bloody neck wound and hang in the air. Provided the caster makes no move toward the drop, a flock of vultures appears out of nowhere and descends on the ritual triangle, tearing the victim's body to pieces and gulping down great chunks of flesh and bone until there is nothing left. If the investigators attempt to stop the birds' feast, then the drop explodes in a shower of green flames and the ritual fails.

Provided the vultures are permitted to finish their meal in peace, the caster can now approach the drop. Taking hold of it triggers an opposed **POW** roll versus the Gate's **POW** 50; if successful, they gain control of its arcane energies and can close it whenever they wish—although sooner would definitely be better than later, given the ever-worsening conditions around them (see **Appendix B: The Closing of the Way**, page 342, for further details). If there are any investigators present now who were also at the ritual in the Valley of the White Ape (including the victim), the caster gains a bonus die on the **POW** roll, although this may be cancelled out if there was a fumble or failed pushed roll when anointing the sacrifice with the holy symbols (**Step Five**).

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SUMMARY OF THE FINAL RITUAL

Preparation (Groundwork)

- Determine the direction of east (**Navigate**, **Survival**, or **Natural World** roll).
- Sweep the ritual area.
- Inscribe the outer triangle.
- Set three fires.
- Dissolve the *rilbus* in the *chang*.

Step Two

- An investigator steps into the ritual triangle, using the *vajra* to inscribe the *kyilkhor* design from the Nalanda scrolls (**Art/Craft** or **DEX** roll, if desired; bonus die if directly copying from the drawing).

Step Three

- Everyone takes their positions around the triangle and then consume the five nectars of the sacred cow (**CON** roll).

Step Four

- The investigator with the *ghanta* begins to ring the bell (possibly, **POW** roll to maintain concentration).
- The chant is initiated by the investigator who will cast the spell, and who is holding the *katari*.
- Chant continues for at least an hour, then caster makes **Hard POW** roll; bonus die for the *ghanta*; other penalties

may apply). No roll required if caster previous successfully performed a Close Gate spell.

Step Five

- Caster leads sacrifice to the center of the *kyilkhor*, lays them down facing east and anoints them with the five seed syllables (**Art/Craft** or **DEX** roll, if desired).

Step Six

- Caster uses the *katari* to slice open the victim's belly to release their intestines, which they then use to bind them; if sacrifice resists, a **Fighting (Brawl)** or **Medicine** roll may be needed. **Sanity** roll for caster (1/1D4 loss) and those restraining a conscious sacrifice (1/1D2 loss).

Steps Seven & Eight

- Caster severs the victim's head; **Sanity** roll (1D4/1D10 loss; 1/1D6 for those watching).
- Head is flung into the *kyilkhor* and the indestructible drop rises from the corpse.
- Vultures swoop down to rend and destroy the sacrifice's body.
- Caster may now approach the indestructible drop, take hold of it, and make an opposed **POW** roll versus the Gate's **POW** of 50 (bonus die if investigator(s) performed the ritual in the Valley of the White Ape). With success, the Gate can be closed.

ALL'S NOT SO WELL

Despite their best efforts, it may be that the investigators fail in their attempts to bar the King of Fear's entry into this world. This situation may also arise if they decided not to journey to Danakosha Lake to perform the necessary sacrifice. Under these circumstances, Agartha's destructive energies soon spread beyond Tibet and northern India, causing earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and tsunamis across the globe. Lost continents rise from the depths, and chthonic horrors claw free of their subterranean fastnesses to stalk the surface world once more.

The King of Fear's soldiers—6 (1.8 m) feet tall, impossibly strong, elastic-boned creatures with a tongue split from root to tip to enable them to spread terror in any and all languages—flood out from Pemakö, putting survivors to the

sword, sparing only those deemed sufficiently strong and resilient enough to become the King of Fear's slaves. Those fortunate (or unfortunate) enough to be chosen are set to work in the fiery pits beneath the earth alongside the King's other drudges: deformed humanoids made of rock. Together, they toil to extract the materials the King needs to build his new, scorched empire on the shattered remains of the world above.

While it may be that the investigators perish in the firestorm that descends when the ritual fails—the protective capabilities of the *ghanta* shattered by the ferocity of the backlash as the investigators lose control of the Gate—it may be that the Triumvirate instead appears to sweep them away to a far worse fate: powerless observers to the destruction of all they love and hold dear, forced to slave their remaining pitiable days away in the King's palace in Agartha, a place

so horrific in its barbarity and brutality that the resulting insanity suffered by the investigators will likely come as a blessed relief.

ALL IS WELL...

As long as the ritual went to plan and was not interrupted by the Tokabhaya—or by the investigators making a hash of things—as soon as the caster closes the Gate, everyone on the island hears an ear-piercing scream of rage that cuts off abruptly. Overhead, the diseased clouds rapidly roll back on themselves, toward the direction of the Valley of the White Ape. A heavy silence descends for a moment before a clap of thunder heralds the arrival of a perfectly natural downpour of heavy rain, which quickly washes away all traces of the ritual triangle and the sacrifice's blood.

The rain stops as quickly as it began, and the sun emerges from behind the clouds. While it may take a moment or two for the investigators to realize it, their job is done. They have prevented the King of Fear from entering the world and, in doing so, rescheduled the end of the *Kali Yuga* for its rightful appointed time.

A delicate, peachy light surrounds them where they stand, and the investigators find that, once again, they stand before the Lords of Shambhala, who have taken their beautiful, androgynous forms regardless of the investigators' previous karmic balance. As before, the trip through the Lords' Gate to Shambhala costs 1 Sanity point and 5 magic points. The Lords thank the investigators for their service and offer each of them a place in beautiful Shambhala, either permanently or until any accumulated wounds—mental and physical—have healed (see **New Horizons**, page 262). When an investigator is ready, they are returned home, once again incurring the aforementioned travel cost.

This may or may not be the end of the adventure for the investigators. If the Triumvirate is still at large, the investigators may wish to hunt down its members to prevent any further attempts to interfere in the world's fate; alternatively, they may be subject to a revenge campaign on the Tokabhaya's part, as described in **Chapter 6: The Final Curtain?** (page 262). If an investigator consumed Vitsin's brain and did not join the Triumvirate, then any of its remaining members will undoubtedly hunt down the responsible party in order to reclaim their stolen knowledge.



She Who Leads by Nicholas Roerich



NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

This appendix contains a selection of non-player characters (NPCs) for you, the Keeper, to use throughout your *The Children of Fear* campaign. As additional characters for the investigators to interact with, they may serve as helpful allies, independent bystanders, or antagonistic rivals, depending on the needs of your campaign and the situations in which the investigators find themselves.

The NPCs are presented in alphabetical order (rather than being organized by region or country), although each entry suggests where they are most likely to be found and how the investigators might come across them. Optionally, the Keeper may roll **Luck** for the NPCs (3D6 multiplied by 5), as well as select the relevant own and other languages, whenever applicable. Movement (MOV) ratings may need adjusting, depending on the chosen age of the individuals in question.

Archaeologist, age 25–50

The professional archaeologist, as opposed to the **Treasure Hunter** (page 338), is formally trained to search for relics of the ancient past. While their training may not hold up to modern standards, most professional archaeologists of the era do at least attempt to excavate their sites in a methodical manner, recording their finds as they go, in order to give their discoveries a modicum of historical context and legitimacy.

Still, given the general attitude of most Western and Japanese archaeologists, along with their tendency for wholesale plundering of sites to secure impressive displays for their employers (be they museums or private collectors), there really is very little separating them from their local amateur rivals. Certain countries, like China, have started objecting to archaeologists' antics by the mid-1920s, making it harder to extract the best pieces—but, it doesn't stop archaeologists and common plunderers from trying.

Potential Nationalities: American, British, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Russian, Scandinavian.

Historical Examples: Albert von le Coq, Sir Marc Aurel Stein, Giuseppe Tucci.

Location: Chinese Turkistan (Central Asia), India.

STR 65	CON 60	SIZ 55	DEX 65	INT 80
APP 60	POW 50	EDU 90	SAN 50	HP 11
DB: 0	Build: 0	Move: 9	MP: 10	

Combat

Brawl	35% (17/7), damage 1D3
.32 revolver	40% (20/8), damage 1D8
Dodge	32% (16/6)

Skills

Appraise 50%, Archaeology 66%, Art/Craft (Photography) 40%, History 60%, Library Use 60%, Mechanical Repair 30%, Navigate 40%, Persuade 60%, Spot Hidden 65%.

Languages: Other (as appropriate) 51%, Own (as appropriate) 90%.

- **Traits:** frequently arrogant and dismissive of their rivals and anyone not from their own culture. The archaeologist firmly believes that they are saving the artifacts they uncover for the benefit of future generations, ensuring this by moving everything they find as far away from where it was discovered as possible, to a nice, safe museum or gallery where it can be studied properly.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** academic authorities on specific historical periods; rivals in the hunt for certain artifacts or in the employ of rival institutions.

Bandit, age 15–45

There are many reasons people take to banditry, but the most common are poverty, greed, and the abundance of easy pickings. As long as there have been trade and pilgrim routes, there have been bandits ready to relieve hapless travelers of their food, valuables, and even clothing.

Some, like the Tibetans, are remarkably polite about the whole thing. The people robbing you today may well have been your hosts the night before. There's really nothing personal in it; you just happen to have what they want or need to make their harsh lives that little bit easier. As long as you don't do anything silly—like start a fight—they'll take your gear and send you on your way with a warm smile, ready to welcome you back into their homes another day. Or rob you. Again.

Others, though, are less accommodating. The wealth of trade caravans makes them prized targets for those who seek to line their own pockets. Some folk see this as a far easier—and more profitable—line of work than being a herder or a farmer, despite the dangers of taking on any guards the caravans might have. And, after all, not all pilgrims are poor mendicants. These bandits come in firing, and woe betide anyone who gets in their way.

Potential Nationalities: Chinese, Mongolian, Indian (Pathan), Tibetan.

Location: the Kansu Corridor, the Tarim Basin (particularly along the edge of the Kun Lun Mountains and around Dihua), the Karakorum passes between China and India, Tibet.

STR 75 CON 60 SIZ 50 DEX 70 INT 45
APP 55 POW 45 EDU 40 SAN 45 HP 11
DB: +1D4 Build: 1 Move: 9 MP: 9

Combat

Brawl 55% (27/11), damage 1D3+1D4
Knife 55% (27/11), damage 1D8+1D4
Matchlock rifle 55% (27/11), damage 1D10+4
Dodge 55% (27/11)

Skills

Fast Talk 55%, Intimidate 55%, Psychology 45%, Ride 45%, Stealth 50%, Spot Hidden 50%.

Languages: Other (as appropriate) 31%, Own (as appropriate) 40%.

- **Description:** often poor and disheveled, although bandits from wealthier gangs may be dressed in finer clothing than the locals they hide among.
- **Traits:** may be smiling and friendly or bloodthirsty and violent, depending on where they are encountered.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** can be used to underline the fact that the investigators are traveling far beyond the reach of the law.

Explorer, age 20–55

In Central Asia, the roles of the archaeologist and the explorer often overlap, particularly during the early years of the 20th century. Rather than artifacts, the explorer traditionally hunted places or things (such as plants), which no one had ever seen before. Or, more accurately, places or things no white man had ever seen before.

Even in the 1920s, some parts of the map might as well be marked with “Here Be Dragons,” particularly in countries like Tibet, where outsiders have been shunned for centuries, and where the terrain and climate make travel all but impossible at certain times of year. Throw in hostile tribesmen who've never seen a foreigner, or who have been badly treated by the ones they have had the misfortune to meet, and being an explorer can be a dangerous and short-lived career choice.

Like archaeologists, explorers need backers: the people who bankroll their trips into the unknown. These might be academic institutions, private companies, or governments, depending on what exactly it is that the explorer is looking for. Sometimes, though, as with Ferdynand Ossendowski, exploration is a byproduct of the need to flee—in his case, from the new Soviet regime.

Possible Nationalities: American, British, Indian, French, Polish, Russian, Scandinavian.

Historical Examples: Sven Hedin, Frank Kingdon-Ward (*The Plant Hunter*, page 229), Ferdynand Ossendowski (page 327), Joseph Rock.

Location: Chinese Turkistan, Tibet.

STR 65 CON 70 SIZ 60 DEX 50 INT 75
APP 50 POW 65 EDU 70 SAN 65 HP 13
DB: +1D4 Build: 1 Move: 8 MP: 13

Combat

Brawl 25% (12/5), damage 1D3+1D4
.32 revolver 50% (25/12), damage 1D8
.30 Lever-action carbine 40% (20/8), damage 2D6
Dodge 25% (12/5)

Skills

Climb 50%, History 50%, Jump 50%, Natural World 50%, Navigate 60%, Ride 45%, Survival 60%.

Languages: Other (as appropriate) 51%*, Other (as appropriate) 31%, Own (as appropriate) 70%.

**Specialists, like plant hunters Joseph Rock and Frank Kingdon-Ward, can substitute their specialty—for example, (Science (Botany)—for their highest Other Language skill. Anyone following in the footsteps of the Pundits (Chapter 5, page 189) would be wise to substitute in Disguise and/or Sleight of Hand in place of the Ride skill.*

FERDYNAND ANTONI OSSENDOWSKI

A Polish engineer, geologist, and accidental explorer, Ossendowski first fled Russia after taking part in student riots in Saint Petersburg in 1899. He returned to the country two years later after studying at the Sorbonne in Paris, but was soon sentenced to death for his political activities. Fortunately for him, this was commuted to hard labor instead.

After his release in 1907, Ossendowski could not refrain from dabbling in politics again. A fervent anti-Communist, he was forced to flee once more in 1920, documenting the series of adventures that led him to Mongolia in his book *Beasts, Men and Gods* (1922). While mostly a travelogue of his experiences and meetings with **Baron von Ungern-Sternberg** (page 334), the book also contains some very odd musings on Agartha (*Agartha*, page 13).

Having left the baron's "court," Ossendowski traveled first to Japan and then to New York, where he remained until 1922. After returning home to Poland, he became a writer, lecturer, and political expert on the Soviets. He died in 1945 before Stalin's dreaded law enforcers, the NKVD, could catch up with him.

- **Description:** often ragged and somewhat the worse for wear (depending on how long they've been exploring), the type of clothing the explorer wears depends very much on whether they're trying to blend in or not.
- **Traits:** determined, stubborn, and fearless, often with a bit of a death wish. It doesn't matter how hard it is to find, it's out there somewhere, and they're going to be the one to plant their flag on it/map it/collect it.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** helpful guides in wild areas; experts on places to be visited; professional rivals or working for rival organizations.

Government Bureaucrat, age 30–50

The sort of person who is determined to make sure that everything is done by the book, with every "i" perfectly dotted and every "t" neatly crossed. Maybe they have a demanding superior who expects the work to be done a certain way, or maybe the price of deviation from the norm (and of failure) is high. But, often as not, it's because this is their petty little kingdom and they're determined that you should know it and pay them the respect they feel they deserve, whether they're any good at their job or not.

Occasionally, you may come across an efficient but sympathetic bureaucrat. Be careful to stay on their good side—they could make a powerful ally if you ever need to navigate the murky corridors of power or send a helpful word to the right ear. Once offended, however, they make for a terrible foe, as they can bury you beneath more paperwork than you ever knew existed.

Possible Nationalities: British, Chinese, Indian, Tibetan.

Location: China (Peking and Sian in particular, although every decent-sized town has an *amban*), India (the British love a good bureaucracy), and Tibet (although any bureaucracy here that isn't British is part of the incumbent theocracy as well, meaning the investigators will be dealing with monks as well as lay officials).

STR 60	CON 60	SIZ 55	DEX 40	INT 75
APP 45	POW 60	EDU 75	SAN 60	HP 11
DB: 0	Build: 0	Move: 8	MP: 12	

Combat

Brawl	25% (12/5), damage 1D3
Dodge	20% (10/4)

Skills

Accounting 45%, Fast Talk 65%, History 35%, Law 65%, Library Use 60%, Listen 60%, Persuade 60%, Psychology 50%, Science (Cryptography) 31%.

Languages: Other (as appropriate) 51%, Own (as appropriate) 75%.

- **Description:** smartly attired in accordance with the standard dress code of the bureaucracy in question.
- **Traits:** frequently full of their own self-importance and far too busy to be dealing with the likes of you.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** contacts and intermediaries who can explain the ins and outs of the regime they work for; processing necessary paperwork, such as travel permits; thorns in the investigators' sides.

Government Runner, age 15–30

Despite the general availability of the telegraph system in the 1920s, there are still some places where the necessary wires just can't be laid, such as over mountain ranges. Therefore, getting truly important messages from one place to another calls for a tried and tested approach, and an unusual and risky occupation: that of the government runner.

It is the runner's job to courier missives between officials as quickly as possible, usually through hostile terrain and often from one country to another. Traveling alone and

APPENDIX A

with minimal equipment, such men and boys are highly trusted individuals, as the information they carry is often of a sensitive nature.

In Tibet, the runner is often a rider, expected to make the 800-mile (1,300 km) trip from Lhasa (the capital) to Gartok (a major trading center in the west of the country) in 20 days, stopping only to eat and change horses at staging posts along the Tasam Highway (page 201). The messages they carried were sealed into their *chubas* (traditional long-sleeved sheepskin coats, tied at the waist with a sash and usually worn off one shoulder) with a wax seal, which only the receiving official had permission to break.

Possible Nationalities: Chinese, Indian, Tibetan.

Location: China, Chinese Turkistan, India, Tibet.

STR 65 **CON** 80 **SIZ** 60 **DEX** 60 **INT** 70
APP 65 **POW** 75 **EDU** 60 **SAN** 75 **HP** 14
DB: 0 **Build:** 0 **Move:** 8 **MP:** 15

Combat

Brawl 55% (27/11), damage 1D3
Dodge 60% (30/12)

Skills

Climb 50%*, Jump 50%, Fast Talk 55%, Natural World 45%, Navigate 60%, Sleight of Hand 45%, Survival 60%.

Languages: Other (as appropriate) 51%, Own (as appropriate) 60%.

*For Tibetan Riders, substitute Ride for Climb.

- **Description:** known for their stamina and fleet-footedness, runners are usually wiry individuals who don't merit a second glance. If they weren't so good at blending in, more of them would be waylaid by spies and bandits, making their courier service much less useful.
- **Traits:** quiet, unobtrusive, brave, and dedicated.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** quickly getting messages through to the right people; diversions and optional encounters.

Holy Person/Mystic, age 14+

Whether they are a *sadhu*, an Aghori, a *Danyal*, a seer, or another form of folk magic practitioner, the holy person/mystic often draws considerable power from their local community, even as it fears them. Although most of the smaller towns and villages have been converted to more mainstream faiths (such as Catholicism, Islam, or Hinduism), the old ways are hard to forget. The superstitious, the poor,

and the desperate still appeal to the holy person/mystic for healing, advice, and protection (or, in some cases, to curse their rivals and enemies).

Whether the holy person/mystic has gained any genuine supernatural powers from their study of occult and shamanistic practices is up to the Keeper; at their discretion, the holy person/mystic may have any number of folk magic spells, as described in the *Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook* and the *Grand Grimoire of Cthulhu Mythos Magic*.

Possible Nationalities: mystics and seers may be of any conceivable nationality, even Westerners who have attempted to insert themselves into the local culture. The holy person/mystic's status is likely to be higher in isolated communities and sites of religious pilgrimage than in larger towns and cities, although white Westerners are always viewed with a degree of suspicion and bemusement.

Location: China, Chinese Turkistan, India, Tibet.

STR 60 **CON** 75 **SIZ** 70 **DEX** 80 **INT** 80
APP 40 **POW** 75 **EDU** 60 **SAN** 75 **HP** 14
DB: +1D4 **Build:** 1 **Move:** 8 **MP:** 15

Combat

Brawl 35% (17/7), damage 1D3+1D4
Dodge 40% (20/8)

Skills

History 45%, Fast Talk/Persuade 50%, Listen 50%, Lore (as appropriate to their beliefs) 60%, Natural World 40%, Occult 55%, Psychology 50%, Spot Hidden 65%, Survival (as appropriate) 45%.

Languages: Other (as appropriate) 45%, Other (as appropriate) 31%, Own (as appropriate) 60%.

Spells: at the Keeper's discretion, the holy person/mystic may know any number of folk magic spells.

- **Description:** either trained from childhood or chosen by the spirits during puberty or young adulthood to take on the mantle, the holy person/mystic has been tutored by their predecessor in the ways of their craft. They may dress almost identically to the people they live among (e.g. the *Danyals* of Gilgit) or cultivate a greater air of mystique by transgressing codes of dress and behavior (e.g. the Aghori of Benares).
- **Traits:** otherworldly, knowing, and sometimes may seem somewhat crazed.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** experts in their fields, sources of dire prophecies and omens.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Hotel Staff, age 15+

Wherever you go in the world, if you are a visitor, you will need a place to stay. If you don't have colleagues or friends that you can impose on, you may find yourself checking in to a hotel, boarding house, or hostel. The characteristics of the staff at these establishments very much reflects their workplace.

Some examples of the various staff that might be found in a decent hotel are included below. For those in more dubious establishments, adapt the **Thief** description (page 337) as required, and add Slight of Hand 50% to the staff member's skill list. For a religious hostel, substitute the statistics for the **Monk/Nun** (page 332).

Possible Nationalities: as appropriate for the country, although in certain places, like India and China, large hotels in cities frequented by Western tourists usually have white staff in higher, customer-facing positions, with the locals confined to the cleaning and catering staff or acting as porters.

Location: China, Chinese Turkistan, India.

- **Traits:** a good hotel will have demure, professional staff for whom the guest's comfort is paramount; a run-down hostel is likely to be manned by people who couldn't give two figs about the concept of customer service. And, if they don't care about their guests, they're unlikely to care about what happens to their guests' belongings.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** sources of information, gophers, message runners.

Concierge, age 30-55

STR 45 CON 60 SIZ 75 DEX 65 INT 65
 APP 60 POW 50 EDU 65 SAN 50 HP 13
 DB: 0 Build: 0 Move: 7 MP: 10

Combat

Brawl 25% (12/5), damage 1D3
 Dodge 40% (20/8)

Skills

Art/Craft (Acting) 65%, Charm 65%, Listen 60%, Persuade 60%, Psychology 70%, Spot Hidden 65%.

Languages: Other (as appropriate) 65%, Own (as appropriate) 85%.

Maid, age 15+

STR 65 CON 55 SIZ 50 DEX 70 INT 55
 APP 55 POW 60 EDU 40 SAN 60 HP 11
 DB: 0 Build: 0 Move: 9 MP: 12

Combat

Brawl 25% (12/5), damage 1D3
 Dodge 35% (17/7)

Skills

Art/Craft (Cleaning and Tidying) 75%, Listen 70%, Persuade 40%, Psychology 65%, Spot Hidden 75%.

Languages: Other (as appropriate) 31%, Own (as appropriate) 40%.

Porter, age 15-50

STR 70 CON 75 SIZ 75 DEX 55 INT 60
 APP 65 POW 50 EDU 45 SAN 50 HP 10
 DB: +1D4 Build: 1 Move: 7 MP: 10

Combat

Brawl 65% (32/13), damage 1D3+1D4
 Dodge 65% (32/13)

Skills

Intimidate 55%, Listen 50%, Locksmith 40%, Persuade 50%, Psychology 50%, Spot Hidden 50%.

Languages: Other (as appropriate) 41%, Own (as appropriate) 45%.



Indian porter

Librarian/Academic Department Member, age 22+

Wherever they end up in the world, the investigators are likely to find themselves in need of assistance when it comes to tracking down documents of one sort or another, at least the ones stored in libraries and academic institutions. This is when they'll need to turn to the librarian, or in a university department, one of its academic department members.

Possible Nationalities: any, depending on the staff composition at that specific library or academic institution.

Location: China, India.

STR 55 **CON** 55 **SIZ** 60 **DEX** 65 **INT** 85
APP 60 **POW** 70 **EDU** 70 **SAN** 70 **HP** 11
DB: 0 **Build:** 0 **Move:** 7 **MP:** 14

Combat

Brawl 25% (12/5), damage 1D3
Dodge 35% (17/7)

Skills

Art/Craft (Filing) 75%, Intimidate 65%, Library Use 80%, Listen 70%, Spot Hidden 75%, plus two subject specializations at 60% each. Depending on their place of employment, the Librarian/Academic Department Member may also have some occult knowledge; if so, give them Occult 45% as well.

Languages: Other (as appropriate) 51%, Own (as appropriate) 75%.

- **Description:** they may be elderly spinsters who have devoted their lives to the Dewey Decimal System, or eager young researchers attempting to establish their credentials in a given field—or anything in between.
- **Traits:** regardless of their appearance, the librarian's knowledge of their institution's catalog and ability to track down even the most obscure piece of minutiae may be all that stands between the investigators and total confusion. Whether or not the librarian believes in shushing people is entirely up to the Keeper, but one of a librarian's most fearsome powers is invariably their withering stare.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** source of information.

Local Guide, age 10–25

It doesn't matter how accomplished the investigators are, there's always something they don't know, whether that's the local language, the local customs, or the way to get from A to B without getting hopelessly lost.

This is where the local guide comes in handy. Not only do they know the lay of the land (quite literally, in some cases), but they know where to get supplies without getting gouged, how to avoid offending the people you need on your side, and who to trust. They also speak the local language, so there's no need to annoy people by speaking slowly and loudly in hopes of being understood.

The skills for two types of guides are listed: the Town/City Guide, based in urban areas, and the Trail Guide, who specializes in crossing the often-trackless wilderness.

Possible Nationalities: Chinese, Indian (particularly Pathan), Tibetan, Turki (Uighur).

Location: China, Chinese Turkistan, India, Tibet.

- **Description:** a city guide dresses in the prevailing clothing style of the town or city in which they are based; their standard of dress very much depends on their financial status. A trail guide dresses sensibly for travel—again, to a standard in keeping with their income.
- **Traits:** friendly, helpful, and knowledgeable.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** interpreter, guide, broker, cover identity for a spy (for **Spy**, see page 336).

STR 55 **CON** 60 **SIZ** 50 **DEX** 60 **INT** 75
APP 45 **POW** 85 **EDU** 45 **SAN** 85 **HP** 11
DB: 0 **Build:** 0 **Move:** 9 **MP:** 17

City Guide

Brawl 45% (22/9), damage 1D3
Dodge 60% (30/12)

Skills

Appraise 55%, Climb 40%, Listen 50%, Persuade 60%, Psychology 60%, Stealth 40%.

Languages: Other (as appropriate) 41%, Own (as appropriate) 45%.

Trail Guide

Brawl 50% (25/10), damage 1D3
Dodge 45% (22/9)

Skills

First Aid 60%, Listen 60%, Natural World 60%, Navigate 60%, Psychology 50%, Spot Hidden 65%, Survival 60%.

Languages: Other (as appropriate) 41%, Own (as appropriate) 45%.

Missionary, age 20–70

As long as there have been religions, there have been people prepared to spread the word to the far reaches of humanity, laying down their lives in the process, if necessary. In the 1920s, proselytizing falls mostly to the various Christian sects: Catholic, Protestant, and Methodist in particular.

Protestant missionary work in China is supported by the China Inland Mission, although many of the missionaries in the heart of the former Chinese Empire, particularly those in Peking, are academics or priests rather than wandering preachers. While the academic cohort tends to be mostly male, women are commonly found on the road sharing their faith, particularly spirited single ladies.

If China was viewed as a challenge by Christian missionaries—although one that is well in hand by the 1920s—then Tibet was, if you'll pardon the expression, the holy grail: a land of unbelievers who not only worshipped what the church considered demons, but who had yet to hear the word of God. As such, there is a constant stream of missionaries into the still largely closed-off country during the era, usually from China. Their success is... limited.

The profile presented is for roving missionaries, rather than their academic brethren. Missionaries often travel in the company of their peers, or with faithful local guides.

Possible Nationalities: American, Belgian, British, Canadian, Chinese, Dutch, French.

Historical Examples: Mildred Cable (nearby), George W. Hunter, Dr. Susie Rijnhart, Annie Taylor.

Location: China, Chinese Turkistan, India, Tibet.

STR 50	CON 55	SIZ 60	DEX 45	INT 65
APP 75	POW 70	EDU 65	SAN 70	HP 12
DB: 0	Build: 0	Move: 7	MP: 14	

Combat

Brawl	25% (12/5), damage 1D3
Dodge	22% (11/4)

Skills

Art/Craft (e.g. Singing or Writing) 45%, First Aid 50%, Lore (appropriate faith) 35%, Medicine 41%, Natural World 50%, Navigate 50%, Persuade 60%, Ride 45%, Survival 40%.

Languages: Other (as appropriate) 51%, Own (as appropriate) 65%.




MILDRED CABLE

Brought up in a strict family, Cable decided at an early age to dedicate her life to God—against her family's wishes. Trained as a pharmacist by the China Inland Mission and jilted by her fiancé after the Boxer Rebellion, the headstrong Cable finally set off for China in 1901. She arrived before it was safe for foreigners to disembark, but she put her involuntary confinement to good use and taught herself rudimentary Chinese while she waited.

At first, Cable toured Chinese villages with her friend and mentor, Eva French, before setting up a school to teach Chinese girls to read and write, with the goal of molding them into native missionaries. Cable and French were later joined by Eva French's sister, Francesca, and slowly but surely expanded their school. They were so successful that, in 1923, the Governor of Shan-hsi (Shanxi) poached all the school's Chinese staff and students for his own girls' schools.

Taking it as a sign, the three women set off for areas that, in their opinion, needed converting. Their destination: Kansu (Gansu) and Chinese Turkistan (Sinkiang). After many adventures in the area, the Trio, as they came to be known during their campaign, eventually left China for London in 1926. They returned to Chinese Turkistan two years later, at the height of China's civil war. After many more misadventures, including tending to a sick warlord and being badly injured by a kick from a donkey, Cable was forced to leave China once and for all when all foreigners were ordered out of the area. She retired to Dorset with her companions and later died in London in 1952 at the age of 74.

- **Description:** missionaries come from all walks of life and from all over the world. Some may be dressed in the prevailing local fashion, whereas others stick as closely as possible to Western clothing.
 - **Traits:** idealistic and stubborn, with a tendency to treat non-Westerners like ignorant children. The most successful missionaries realize this is a mistake, though, and have the sense to look for common ground. Still, they see their God as the Supreme Being, and feel it is only right and proper that they share the Word with others so that they, too, may be saved from eternal damnation.
 - **Roleplaying hooks:** consultants on matters of faith, folklore, and local customs; agitators and troublemakers in sensitive areas.
- 



Monk/Nun, 12+

The monk or nun has devoted their life to the service of their faith, whatever that may be. They may have been given to a temple at a young age by their family (either as an offering or because their family could not support them), or they may have joined at a later age by personal choice. A monk or nun may or may not be fully ordained (a process which takes many years), and they may have taken on a new name when they joined the order (or took their holy vows) to signify their new life. If they are a Buddhist *trapa* (monk) or *ani* (nun), they are part of the *sangha* (the monastic community, one of the three precious jewels of the Buddhist faith—the other two being Buddha and *dharmā*).

Depending on the size of the monastery and the length of their residency, they may have one or many roles to fulfill. In Tibet, that may include fighting—in the 1930s, around 15 percent of all the monks in the country were the feared *dob-dobs* (fighting monks), used to maintain and mete out discipline within the monastery and beyond. Alternatively, they may have taken to the life of a hermit, far away from their home monastery, or near enough to maintain occasional contact.

The two profiles below represent a novice monk or nun early on in their stay at the monastery, and a *dob-dob*.



Nepalese monks

Possible Nationalities: American, Chinese, European, Indian, Tibetan.

Historical Examples: Wang Yuanlu (**Chapter 2: Dramatis Personae (Part Two)**, page 74).

Location: China, Chinese Turkistan, India, Tibet.

- **Traits:** either quietly devout (perhaps even a little unsure of their faith) or stern and implacable. Their faith is their life and they are determined to serve it to the best of their abilities.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** hosts, sources of information, consultants, adversaries (particularly the *dob-dobs*, if the investigators overstep the mark).

Novice Monk/Nun, age 12–18

STR 60	CON 65	SIZ 60	DEX 55	INT 75
APP 45	POW 75	EDU 55	SAN 75	HP 12
DB: 0	Build: 0	Move: 8	MP: 15	

Combat

Brawl	40% (20/8), damage 1D3
Dodge	40% (20/8)

Skills

History 55%, Library Use 40%, Listen 40%, Lore (appropriate religion) 41%, Persuade 50%, Psychology 40%, Stealth 40%.

Languages: Other (as appropriate, e.g. Sanskrit) 41%, Own (as appropriate) 55%.

- **Description:** dressed in the appropriate robes for their faith, they are the lowliest members of the order.

Dob-dob, age 25–45

STR 75	CON 80	SIZ 75	DEX 70	INT 55
APP 40	POW 70	EDU 55	SAN 70	HP 15
DB: +1D4	Build: 1	Move: 8	MP: 14	

Combat

Brawl	65% (32/13), damage 1D3+1D4
Rhino-hide whip	70% (35/14), damage 1D3+1D2
Dodge	65% (32/13)

Skills

Jump 60%, Intimidate 65%, Listen 30%, Lore (Buddhism) 31%, Psychology 50%, Spot Hidden 65%, Stealth 50%.
Languages: Tibetan 55%.

- **Description:** invariably filthy and coated with grease (almost as a badge of office), with an athletic build and an occasionally brutal attitude. *Dob-dobs* are chosen for their role precisely because of their size, temperament, and difficulties with academia.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Railway Policeman, age 20–60

The railway policeman eats, sleeps, and breathes the Indian railways. The railway company provides their job, their position in society, and their home in the railway colony next to the station; everything the Railway Policeman has, they owe to their employer, just as their father did. Brighter than most, they have managed to get themselves appointed as a railway policeman—a step up—even if it largely consists of shooing beggars off the platforms and chasing away gangs of pesky street urchins.

Their father was of mixed parentage, a so-called Anglo-Indian, so that's what they're classed as, too. It's not an easy thing to be. They can't quite pass as white, which closes off avenues of opportunity and advancement that their more Western-looking compatriots have access to. They don't fit into the traditional Indian caste system, but they're certainly the lowest "caste" among the British. They do retain some privileges over "pure" Indians, though: a specific number of protected positions of a respectable status are kept aside in the railways, police force, customs, and telegraph services for the offspring of the *sabibs* and their *bibis* (local women). Their life could be better, but it could also certainly be worse.

They don't want their family tied to the railways forever; they want their sons to be well-educated and make their mark on the world, not spend their lives hanging around in dusty train stations or grimy engine sheds. You never know, one day they might actually be able to leverage their solid, faithful service to the company into an actual, proper police position. Until then, they have a job to do and a reputation to maintain. Better make sure those beggars aren't annoying the passengers again this morning, or there'll be hell to pay.

Location: the Indian rail network.

STR 65 **CON** 60 **SIZ** 65 **DEX** 50 **INT** 75
APP 50 **POW** 55 **EDU** 60 **SAN** 55 **HP** 11
DB: +1D4 **Build:** 1 **Move:** 8 **MP:** 11

Combat

Brawl 55% (27/11), damage 1D3+1D4
.38 Webley automatic revolver 45% (22/9), damage 1D10
Dodge 25% (12/5)

Skills

First Aid 55%, Intimidate 55%, Law 60%, Listen 60%,
Persuade 60%, Psychology 60%, Spot Hidden 65%.

Languages: Other (as appropriate; usually English) 51%,
Own (as appropriate) 60%.

- **Description:** smartly attired in the company's police uniform, neatly groomed, and boots polished to a high sheen.
- **Traits:** proud of the uniform, but often bored by the routine of keeping an eye on the same people day in and day out. The world is unfair, but that isn't going to stop them from doing their job to the best of their ability. Hopefully, one day things will change.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** a helping hand, a source of advice, an officer of the law, an adversary.

Refugee, all ages

In every war, there are those who want no part of the fighting, those whose lands are taken from them, and those who are no longer safe under the new regime. In order to survive, they run as far as they can before their resources, strength, or luck run out.

The main wave of refugees in Chinese Turkistan and down into China in the 1920s consists of "White" Russians, fleeing as a result of the civil war (**Chapter 2: An Uncivil War**, page 72). But they weren't the only ones displaced as a result of war; many Mongolians were also driven from their homes during the brief and bloody reign of Baron von Ungern-Sternberg in 1921.

The Tibetan government has only relatively recently regained control of some of its lands from the Chinese, and the ongoing and rising rebellions in these and other regions lead to decades of migration.

Two variant skillsets are provided: one for a disgraced military officer and one for a politically active student. Other potential refugee templates include the Farmer, Laborer, and Professor from the *Investigator Handbook*.

Possible Nationalities: Chinese, Mongolian, Polish, Russian, Tibetan.

Location: China, Tibet; on the road or trying to build a home in their adopted community.

- **Description:** worn down by the terrors of their escape, the refugee has a haunted look in their eyes even when surrounded by friends and family. Some are little better than paupers, while others are starting to make a good life for themselves in their new homes.
- **Traits:** often nervous and wary, but full of grim determination.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** interpreters, sources of information about regions to be traveled through, spies, military advisers.

STR 50 **CON** 50 **SIZ** 60 **DEX** 55 **INT** 75
APP 50 **POW** 55 **EDU** 60 **SAN** 55 **HP** 11
DB: 0 **Build:** 0 **Move:** 7 **MP:** 11

APPENDIX A

Disgraced Military Officer

Brawl	50% (25/10), damage 1D3
Cavalry saber	55% (27/11), damage 1D8+1
Nagant M1895	50% (25/10), damage 1D8
7.62mm revolver	
Dodge	27% (13/5)

Skills

First Aid 40%, Intimidate 65%, Navigate 40%, Persuade 60%, Psychology 60%, Ride 65%.

Languages: Other (as appropriate) 41%, Own (as appropriate) 60%.

Politically Active Student

Brawl	35% (17/7), damage 1D3
Dodge	27% (13/5)

Skills

Art/Craft (Writing) 45%, Library Use 45%, Listen 50%, Navigate 40%, Science (Engineering) 51%, Science (Geology) 51%, Science (Physics) 51%, Sleight of Hand 40%.

Languages: Other (as appropriate) 51%, Other (as appropriate) 31%, Own (as appropriate) 60%.

Religious Pilgrim, age 20–50

Chinese Turkistan, Tibet, and India are home to many holy places and, as such, are the destination for hundreds, if not thousands, of pilgrims every year.

India, as the birthplace of Buddhism and Hinduism, has some of the most sacred sites for both religions, such as Bodhi Ghaya (where Sakyamuni Buddha gained enlightenment) and Benares (Varanasi; one of the seven sacred cities of the Jain and Hindu faiths, and close to Sarnath, where Sakyamuni Buddha gave his first sermon). There are also numerous shrines to Muslim Sufi saints scattered across the country.

Pilgrims from the four faiths of Bönpo, Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism all travel to sacred areas of Tibet to complete their devotions. These often take the form of walking the *koras* (pilgrim paths) around holy sites, such as Mount Kailash and the Jokhang Temple in Lhasa, provided they can get there.

Many explorers disguised themselves as religious pilgrims in a bid to gain access to Tibet and other forbidden regions, often unsuccessfully. Others were both explorers and true pilgrims, such as the Frenchwoman Alexandra David-Néel.

The major difference between the pilgrim and the missionary is that the pilgrim has no desire to convert anyone; they journey for their own spiritual benefit, not anyone else's.

Possible Nationalities: Chinese, Indian, Tibetan; in disguise, pretty much any nationality, but in particular, the British, French, and Japanese.

Historical Examples: Alexandra David-Néel, Ekai Kawaguchi (page 335).

Location: China, Chinese Turkistan, India, Tibet.

STR 45	CON 60	SIZ 65	DEX 55	INT 70
APP 50	POW 65	EDU 65	SAN 65	HP 12
DB: 0	Build: 0	Move: 7	MP: 13	

BARON ROMAN VON UNGERN-STERBERG

Descended from a line of aristocratic warriors dating back as far as the 13th century CE, the tall, thin, and blue-eyed Ungern-Sternberg carved out a reputation as a brutal, sadistic, anti-Semitic soldier turned warlord during World War I. His legacy grew further during the Russian Civil War and his liberation of Mongolia from the Chinese in 1921.

Referred to alternately as “the Bloody Baron” and “the Mad Baron” by his friends and enemies alike, Ungern-Sternberg professed to be both a Buddhist and a reincarnation of Genghis Khan, and was utterly determined to restore the Mongolian Empire to its former glory. He attempted to do so with a short and bloody campaign, and successfully freed the Living Buddha, the Bogd Khan, from Chinese house-arrest before crowning him emperor. His army went on to perpetrate widespread looting, rape, and murder, all sanctioned and even encouraged by the baron as a reward for their victory.

The new Mongol Empire was not to last. A mere seven months after taking the Mongolian capital, Urga, the baron was captured by the Red Army and its Mongol sympathizers. After a brief show trial, the baron was executed, and the Bogd Khan was restored to the throne. The empire fell to the Mongolian People's Party, a movement supported by the Soviets, and was later renamed the Mongolian People's Republic after the Bogd Khan's death in 1924.



EKAI KAWAGUCHI

A famed traveler in his native country, Kawaguchi made history in the early 20th century by becoming the first Japanese citizen to enter Tibet and reach Lhasa. Despite being an actual Buddhist monk, Kawaguchi still had to disguise himself as both a Tibetan *lama* and a Chinese doctor to get as far as he did.

Before entering Tibet, Kawaguchi lived with Sarat Chandra Das (a civil engineer, scholar, and British spy) in Darjeeling, learning the Tibetan language and perfecting his disguises. There is evidence to suggest he acted, inadvertently or otherwise, as spy for the British in Lhasa at a time when they were deeply concerned about Russian influence in the Tibetan capital.

Kawaguchi toured Tibet's holiest sites during his journey, including Mount Kailash, and finally arrived in Lhasa after four years on the road. Thanks to his skill as a doctor, Kawaguchi was invited to an audience with the 13th Dalai Lama during his 14-month stay. Sadly, this skill also led to his unmasking at the hands of jealous rivals, forcing the monk to flee back to Darjeeling and his friend Das. Once back in Japan, Kawaguchi undertook a successful series of public talks, which were later published in book form. The English version, *Three Years in Tibet*, was released in 1909.

After many more pilgrimages to India, Nepal, and a final visit—still in disguise—to Tibet between 1913 and 1915, Kawaguchi died in Japan in 1945.

Combat

Brawl 25% (12/5), damage 1D3
Dodge 27% (13/5)

Skills

Charm 60%, First Aid 40%, History 55%, Lore (appropriate faith) 40%, Natural World 40%, Navigate 50%, Spot Hidden 55%, Survival 60%.

Languages: Other (as appropriate) 31%, Own (as appropriate) 65%.

- **Description:** depending on their religion and nationality (and whether or not they are in disguise), the pilgrim may be wearing the clothes of their native country, or dressed as a holy man (or woman) of some sort, such as a monk (*trapa*) or nun (*ani*) of the Buddhist faith. Many pilgrims are poor and carry little with them; others are rich and travel in comfort and style, often carried in a palanquin by servants or riding beautiful horses.
- **Traits:** pious and determined. The act of pilgrimage is a show of devotion to their faith. The destination may provide the absolution of all worldly sins or the guarantee of a good reincarnation, making all the hardships along the way worthwhile.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** consultants on matters of faith, folklore, and local customs; sources of information on the hazards of regions to be traveled through; undercover spies (for **Spy**, see page 336).

Ruffian, age 20–40

The original “thugs” (or Thuggees) were professional bands of murderers and robbers who terrorized India for more than five centuries until the British decided to put an end to their bloodshed in the 19th century—unless, of course, you believe such sensationalist works as *Sons of Death* by the American author Jackson Elias. Whether thug or ruffian, these are bullies who extort money or goods from their victim with threats—or actual acts—of violence.

While the ruffian may be a loner, they usually prefer the company of likeminded thugs. And, unlike their roving counterparts of days past who relied on insinuating themselves into unsuspecting caravans before throttling their marks at the first convenient moment, the ruffians of the 1920s tend to be based in one location and quite brazen in their activities—at least in front of their own. Like all bullies, they tend to pick on

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

- **Traits:** watchful, sneaky, and dangerous. Perhaps the spy is doing this because they firmly believe in the ideology of their superiors; perhaps they're doing it because they're fundamentally opposed to their enemies' ideology. Or, maybe their family's safety relies on their success.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** unexpected allies, informants, troublemakers, and hidden adversaries.

Street Child, age 5–15

Every nation has them: the orphans and runaways with no home but the alleyways, ditches, abandoned buildings, and shop doorways that others overlook. Surviving through a mixture of cunning, skill, and sheer determination, street children get everywhere and see everything, partly due to their size, but also because it suits others not to see them.

Some street children form organized gangs. These might be controlled by a ruthless adult who exploits the children for their own personal gain, or they may be run by the children themselves, working together for their own mutual protection and survival.

The lives of street children are often short and brutal; after all, there's usually no one to miss them or mourn them once they're gone. Most adults within "civilized" society are unlikely to take any notice of a filthy ragamuffin, much less the absence of one; however, some children are luckier and may find a home of sorts with the various religious missions who feed, clothe, and train them to become "useful" members of their communities.

Location: any large town or city the investigators visit.

STR 40 CON 55 SIZ 25 DEX 70 INT 75
APP 45 POW 75 EDU 20 SAN 75 HP 8
DB: -1 Build: -1 Move: 9 MP: 15

Combat

Brawl 45% (22/9), damage 1D3-1
Dodge 55% (27/11)

Skills

Climb 50%, Fast Talk 65%, Jump 50%, Sleight of Hand 60%, Spot Hidden 65%, Stealth 60%, Throw 40%.

Languages: Other (as appropriate) 30%, Own (as appropriate) 30%.

- **Description:** dirty, ragged, and—unless they are very good at begging or stealing (or know a kind soul who helps feed them)—underweight and undersized for their age.
- **Traits:** cheeky and observant, often with a false bravado to hide their fear.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** informants, thieves, spies, burglars, messengers.

Thief, age 16–56

Some thieves, such as pickpockets, are opportunistic, snatching what they can when circumstances allow. Others, like burglars, usually plan their pilfering carefully, watching a mark and figuring out the best time to strike to ensure success.

And, just as there are a myriad of ways to steal things, there are as many reasons prompting such thefts. Some thieves are motivated by greed—why should that person have such beautiful things when I do not? Others are driven by desperation and necessity—a need to put food on the table, acquire medicine for a sick relative or friend, or to pay off debts.

Unlike the **Bandit** (page 326), the thief is unlikely to resort to violence unless they're cornered. They prefer to use their lightning-quick reflexes and ability to blend into their surroundings to make a clean getaway. If the thief is young and an orphan, use the **Street Child** profile. If they are an adult, use the profile provided below.

Location: anywhere there are large groups of unsuspecting people or unprotected commodities.

STR 50 CON 55 SIZ 60 DEX 80 INT 85
APP 45 POW 50 EDU 50 SAN 50 HP 11
DB: 0 Build: 0 Move: 8 MP: 10

Combat

Brawl 45% (22/9), damage 1D3
Dodge 60% (30/12)

Skills

Appraise 60%, Climb 40%, Fast Talk 65%, Jump 40%, Locksmith 46%, Psychology 60%, Sleight of Hand 70%, Spot Hidden 65%, Stealth 65%.

Languages: Own (as appropriate) 50%.

- **Description:** easily missed in a crowd, the thief does their absolute best to blend in and avoid arousing anyone's suspicion.
- **Traits:** quick, cunning, and occasionally desperate, depending on their motivations. "*What's mine is mine, and I rather think that what's yours is mine, too.*"
- **Roleplaying hooks:** use as a minor distraction, or to relieve the investigators of something important, either sentimentally or essential to the plot. Just how far are they willing to go to retrieve the missing object, whatever it might be?

Treasure Hunter, age 15–70

Lacking formal training—unlike their rival, the archaeologist—the treasure hunter seeks out the world's ancient artifacts not to preserve them for future generations, but to sell them for profit and/or use them to enhance their personal reputation.

The bearing of a treasure hunter depends largely on their background and motivation. Many are poor locals, often farmers, who stumble across hidden caches of artifacts that they then sell to outsiders (who are more than happy to part with good money for them). In fact, during the winter, some farmers turn to treasure hunting as a way to supplement their income. Some, aware that not every foreigner is an expert, have even been known to resort to forgery.

Others are thrill-seekers and adventurers, roaming distant lands in hope of unearthing a discovery big enough to secure their place in the history books. Not too different from some archaeologists, perhaps, but the treasure hunter isn't interested in the historical or social context of their treasure, only the relic itself.

Or, perhaps, they are a treasure hunter (revealer) in the purest form: a *terton* (destined to find treasure) in search of precious hidden relics, whose job it is to reveal such *terma* for the spiritual benefit of mankind. Guided by dreams and visions, the *terton* is usually a Buddhist, but that doesn't have to be the case; inspiration can strike anyone, if they're in the right place at the right time (although they wouldn't be referred to as a *terton* under these circumstances).

Possible Nationalities: pretty much any nationality can be a treasure hunter, depending on the circumstances.

Location: China, Chinese Turkistan, India, Tibet.

- For Western adventurers, use the **Explorer** profile (page 326), but replace Jump with Archaeology and Natural World with Appraise.
- For *tertons*, use the **Religious Pilgrim** profile (page 334).

The following profile represents a farmer turned treasure hunter and is suitable to use in the **Painted Ruins** optional encounter in **Chapter 3** (page 102).

STR 55	CON 75	SIZ 60	DEX 50	INT 70
APP 50	POW 35	EDU 45	SAN 35	HP 13
DB: 0	Build: 0	Move: 7	MP: 7	

Combat

Brawl	25% (12/5), damage 1D3 or knife 1D4+2
Dodge	25% (12/5)

Skills

Appraise 45%, Art/Craft (Farming) 65%, Art/Craft (Forgery) 35%, History 35%, Natural World 60%, Navigate 40%, Persuade 50%, Spot Hidden 55%.

Languages: Other (as appropriate) 31%, Own (as appropriate) 45%.

- **Description:** be they Chinese, Turki, Indian, or Tibetan, the farmer or laborer turned treasure hunter dresses as their compatriots do. Their clothes might be slightly finer than those of their neighbors if they've found a lucrative cache of relics, but they're never going to make their fortune this way (unlike Western treasure hunters).
- **Traits:** inquisitive and occasionally fearful (if there are any odd local legends attached to the site they're raiding), with an unerring sense of where to find hidden things.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** sources of local information; guides to treasure sites; rivals in the hunt for artifacts.



Jatson Nyingpo, treasure hunter

Tribal Member, age 15–35

Some wilder areas of the globe are still home to isolated pockets of humanity who have had little to do with outsiders, either as a matter of geography or by choice. Although many of those in and around India have been reached by outsiders at one time or another, there are still tribes who do all they can to maintain a safe distance from the world at large.

A few, such as the Monpas and the Mishmi (**The Lotus Displayed**, page 225), trade with their Tibetan and Indian neighbors for essentials and have even adopted some of their customs, such as clothing styles and religions, albeit modified with their own cultural twist. Others, such as the Abors (**Hill Tribes of Assam**, page 309), prefer to use their fearsome reputation to keep visitors at bay; even in the 1930s they were renowned for attacking Tibetan traders and pilgrims passing through their territories. A few, such as the Naga and Thadou, who live in the hills around the Burma (Myanmar)/India border, are still feared as headhunters well into the mid-20th century.

Location: southern Tibet, northern Assam.

STR 60 **CON** 55 **SIZ** 45 **DEX** 65 **INT** 70
APP 50 **POW** 55 **EDU** 30 **SAN** 55 **HP** 10
DB: 0 **Build:** 0 **Move:** 9 **MP:** 11

Combat

Brawl	65% (32/13), damage 1D3 or knife 1D8
Dao (heavy sword; Abor only)	55% (27/11), damage 1D8+1
Crossbow	50% (25/5), damage 1D6; if poisoned, treat as Strong
Matchlock rifle	45% (22/9), damage 1D10+4
Dodge	32% (16/6)

Skills

Intimidate 60%, Jump 40%, Listen 60%, Natural World 50%,
 Navigate 50%, Occult 35%, Psychology 50%, Spot Hidden 65%,
 Stealth 60%, Survival (Jungle) 60%, Throw 50%, Track 60%.

Languages: Other (as appropriate) 30%, Own (as appropriate) 50%.

- **Description:** depending on the level of contact their tribe has had with outsiders, where they are located, and whether they still engage in headhunting or not, tribal members may be completely naked, swaddled in skins and furs, or wearing a mish-mash of traditional clothing and articles taken from their previous victims.

POISONED ARROWS

The Mishmis and Abors use aconite and deadly nightshade to tip their poisoned arrows. While one of the active ingredients in deadly nightshade (atropine) can be used to treat aconite poisoning, the combination of poisons on the arrows has no antidote that can be easily accessed in either Tibet or India in the 1920s. Symptoms of poisoning include vomiting, numbness, hallucinations, irregular heartbeat, and convulsions.

- **Traits:** proud, brave, wily, and resourceful. Outsiders cannot be trusted. Too many have wanted to kill tribespeople in the past, so they could steal their food and their lands, and destroy their world. But, they can only do that if the tribes let them. So, they fight, they hide, or they deal with them only when they have need—not the other way around.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** potentially lethal stalkers and harassers; useful guides and allies, if the investigators can win their trust.



Mishmi people

SPELLS

This appendix contains the new and variant spells described in *The Children of Fear*, as well as some existing spells from the *Grand Grimoire of Cthulhu Mythos Magic* that will be important to the campaign. Any additional *Grimoire* spells listed in an NPC's profile are suggestions the Keeper may wish to use at their discretion; these are highlighted in italics. If the Keeper doesn't possess the *Grimoire*, they can substitute in any other spell from the *Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook*.

Alter Weather

- **Cost:** 10+ magic points; 1 Sanity point
- **Casting time:** 3+ minutes

Moderates or exacerbates weather conditions. Large groups may cast the spell to achieve greater meteorological effects. The Keeper establishes the base conditions. Every 10 magic points sacrificed effects one level of change (see **Weather Components** table, page 341). The caster may expend as many magic points as they are able, as can any participant who knows the spell. Those ignorant of the spell may contribute a maximum of 1 magic point only.

Casting the spell costs each participant 1 Sanity point and requires a song-like chant to be uttered for three minutes per level of weather change. The effective radius of the base spell is two miles; this area can be widened at a cost of +10 magic points for each additional mile. The change in the weather lasts 30 minutes for every 10 magic points of the total contributed, but more violent weather, such as a tornado, lasts a much shorter time.

Five weather components can be changed, to varying levels of effect. One level costs 10 magic points to change, thus to change the two levels from "partly cloudy" to "heavy clouds" takes 20 magic points. For snow to fall, the temperature must be 30 degrees F (-1 degrees C) or lower, otherwise the precipitation is rain, not snow.

Bind Animal (Rat, Snake, etc.)

- **Cost:** 2 magic points; 1 Sanity point
- **Casting time:** 1 round

Directs a specific animal type to perform an action or limited series of actions. Each specific animal type comes with its own variant spell (e.g. Bind Driver Ant Column works on an entire ant swarm). The commanded creature(s) must be able to comprehend and perform the command. To instruct it to "*fly to Mexico*" has no meaning, and the instruction "*kill Jonathan Kingsley*" only baffles tarantulas. On the other hand, a command such as "*bite all nearby humans*" could be attempted by most creatures.

Cause Disease

- **Cost:** 8+ magic points; 1D4 Sanity points
- **Casting time:** 5 rounds

Afflicts the target with a feverish illness resembling cholera, malaria, pneumonia, etc. For the spell to take effect, an opposed POW roll must be made between the caster and target. If the target wins, there is no effect. If the caster wins, symptoms such as high fever, nausea, vomiting, dehydration, and loss of concentration follow. The target loses 1D6 points of STR, CON, and DEX (roll separately for each) per day for a number of days equal to the number of magic points the caster has invested in the spell. If the target survives, they regain these points naturally over time. If any of the characteristics reach zero, the target dies.

To cast the spell, the attacker obtains some personal item of the target, specifically something that has touched the mouth. The object is buried in a deep hole with shreds of poisonous plants. The hole is filled in and a specially carved stone placed on top. A short chant follows, and the spell is cast.

WEATHER COMPONENTS

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8
Cloud Cover	Clear	Foggy	Partly Cloudy	Cloudy	Heavy Clouds	—	—	—
Wind Direction	North	North-east	East	South-east	South	South-west	West	North-west
Wind Speed	Calm	Breezy	Gusty	Strong	Steady Gale	Hurricane	Tornado	—
Temperature	One level raises or lowers the temperature in the area of effect by 3 degrees C (5 degrees F).							
Precipitation	Dry	Drizzle or Mist	Rain [Snow]	Hail [Snow]	Heavy Rain [Heavy Snow]	Thunderstorm [Blizzard]	—	—

Bed rest may seem to maintain the victim's clarity of mind, but only curative magic truly helps. Retrieving the buried object and burning it and the poisonous plants breaks the spell. Otherwise, the spell will run its course.

Close Gate

- **Cost:** variable magic points; 5 hit points
- **Casting time:** 1 hour

The Close Gate spell enables the caster to close an existing Gate previously opened either by themselves or by someone else. As with the lesser Move Gate spell (*The Greater Grimoire of Cthulhu Mythos Magic*, page 143), it is essential that the caster knows the original Gate's destination or the spell automatically fails. And, although the caster does not have to be physically present at the Gate to close it, they must know its exact location or have visited it themselves at least once.

Under normal circumstances, all the caster must do is spill their own blood and spend a set number of magic points in order to attune to the Gate before they can attempt to close it. The number of magic points required depends on the amount of POW sacrificed to open the Gate in the first place, and whether or not the caster had a hand in its creation.

If the Gate belongs to someone else (i.e. the caster was not involved in making it), the spell costs a number of magic points equal to the POW used to establish the Gate. For example, a Gate that cost 10 POW to open requires the person attempting to close it to spend 10 magic points and 5 hit points to attune themselves to it. If the caster was involved in the Gate's creation, they need only spend half the number of magic points as they are already familiar with its arcane complexities. So, for example, only 5 magic points would be needed to attune to a Gate that took 10 POW to open. The hit point cost remains unchanged.

Multiple participants can take part in casting the spell, each contributing magic and hit points as required. Only one person actually needs to know the spell, and those donating the necessary magic and hit points do not have to be willing donors (although they should be suitably restrained to prevent a mid-spell escape).

Once the caster has attuned to the Gate, they can attempt an opposed POW roll to close it. (The Gate's POW equals that used to create it.) Failure inflicts 5 hit points of damage on the caster as well as costing them 1D4 Sanity, representing a backlash against their interference. Success means that they have full control of the Gate and can close it immediately.

Alternative names: *Barring the Way, Denial of Passage, The Shutting of the Door.*

The Closing of the Way

- **Cost:** at least 50 POW; variable Sanity points (see below)
- **Casting time:** 2 hours

As the Gates of Agarthā are far from an “ordinary” Gate, the ritual to close it is far more demanding in terms of both cost and the time necessary to effect it. As a life was freely given in the Gate’s opening, so another life must be freely given to close it, and in this case, the sacrifice is well aware that their death is not a symbolic one.

As long as the victim has at least 50 POW at the time of their death, the spell’s caster can attune to the Gate without any cost to themselves, besides Sanity (see below); however, any shortfall in POW is extracted from the caster and anyone else taking part in the ceremony as required. For example, if the victim has POW 45, then 5 points of POW must be permanently sacrificed by the caster in order for the attunement to take place. Any excess POW released by the sacrifice’s death has no effect on the spell and is effectively wasted.

Once the caster has attuned to the Gate’s arcane energies, they can attempt to close it with an opposed roll against the

Gate’s POW 50. If they, or anyone else taking part, were present during the Gate’s creation, the caster gains a bonus die on the roll. As described above, succeeding with the roll means that the caster can close the Gate immediately.

Whoever kills the sacrificial victim must make a Sanity roll (1D4/1D10 loss); this does not have to be the caster. Everyone else witnessing the sacrifice must also roll, for 1/1D6 Sanity points loss. See **Chapter 8: The End is Nigh**, page 318, for further details.

Curse (Folk)

- **Cost:** 1D3 magic points; 1D6 Sanity points
- **Casting time:** 1 round

The caster mutters a curse (which must be heard by the target) causing physical or mental harm. The caster must overcome the target’s POW in an opposed roll. If successful, the target loses 10 characteristic points (chosen by the caster from STR, DEX, CON, APP, INT, or POW) for one day (until the following dawn). The characteristic may not go below 1 point.



Deeper magic: variations of this spell may target specific senses, like hearing, eyesight, and smell (causing the inability to use certain skills, increased difficulty levels, or penalty dice).

Enchant Sacred Instruments

- **Cost:** variable POW; variable Sanity points
- **Casting time:** 6+ hours

Designed to imbue sacred instruments made from human bones with a variety of benefits, depending on the nature of the bones used (and, therefore, the type of instrument produced). The caster is not necessarily responsible for the sacrifices of POW needed to imbue the instrument; that honor falls to the person who crafts and plays the instrument as the spell is being cast. This cannot be the same person as the caster if the object in question is a wind instrument, as they would be unable to speak the necessary incantations and play at the same time. For instruments such as drums or those with strings, the caster and donor can be one and the same.

The amount of POW required and the number of Sanity points involved depend on the instrument being enchanted and its intended purpose. For example, creating a *kangling* that adds a bonus die to spellcasting rolls costs up to 4 POW and 1D4 Sanity points from the instrument's player. Creating a *damaru* costs the instrument's player up to 8 POW and 1D6 Sanity points (for the intrinsic POW of the bones used in the ritual, see **Chapter 5: All in the Bones**, page 168). Even if the caster is not responsible for playing the instruments, they still lose 1D4 Sanity points for performing the accompanying chant (if they are doing both, they apply the highest possible penalty roll).

A lesser version of the spell, Enchant Sacred Bowl, costs variable magic points and 1D4 Sanity points to cast. It is described in further detail in **Chapter 4: Kapalas**, page 181.

Fleetness of Foot (Quicken)

- **Cost:** 6 magic points; 1 Sanity point
- **Casting time:** instantaneous

This spell temporarily increases the caster's movement rate by 2 and increases their DEX by 10 points for 4 rounds. The procedure involves three rapid hand gestures and mental visualization.

While repeated use of this spell is possible, continuous use has its drawbacks. If the spell is cast successively twice in a row, the caster must make a CON roll. If failed, the

caster immediately falls unconscious and permanently loses 5 CON points. Should the spell be successively cast a further two times, a second CON roll (this time Hard) is required; failure leads to the caster falling unconscious and permanently losing 10 CON points. Further successive uses double such characteristic losses.

Healing (Folk)

- **Cost:** 12 magic points; optional POW; 1 Sanity point
- **Casting time:** 2D6 rounds

This spell provides healing to physical injuries. The caster must touch the injured person while repeating a short phrase. In some variations of the spell, preparations of certain ingredients (healing herbs, oils, etc.) must also be applied.

Once the spell has been invoked, the healing process is accelerated: after 2D6 rounds the injured person is healed for 2D6 hit points (up to normal maximum hit points). The spell does not actually regenerate flesh, but rather knits wounds together, leaving awful scars that may reduce APP (and possibly causing other lasting physical ailments at the Keeper's discretion). The healing is only permanent if the caster also spends 1 POW per hit point healed; otherwise, the wounds reopen after a day.

Note that this spell cannot bring back the dead to life.

Mask of Reason

- **Cost:** variable magic points; 5 Sanity points
- **Casting time:** 1 minute per magic point invested

Fools the unwary and weak-minded into seeing what the caster wishes them to see. The caster must invest magic points equal to number of magic points the target possesses. If there are multiple targets present, the caster need only invest magic points equal to highest number of magic points possessed by an individual in that group. The spell must be cast on an inanimate object—it does not work on living organisms.

For one day, the target sees the object in its new guise. The illusion can be maintained for another day by sacrificing the same number of magic points (this, in theory, could be repeated daily). After the first 24 hours, and each day thereafter, the target may attempt a Hard POW roll in order to come to their senses and realize the object is not what it appears to be. In addition, some form of intense violence or significant shock can force the target to see through the illusion. For each week under this spell, the target should make a Sanity roll (1/1D4 loss).

Observation from Afar

- **Cost:** variable magic points; 1D4 Sanity points
- **Casting time:** 5 minutes

Known by all agents of the Tokabhaya, this variation of the Wandering Soul spell allows the caster to send forth their consciousness to view a particular location or persons of interest while they meditate. The Tokabhaya use it to keep tabs on their victims, or to ensure that an area is secure before approaching it physically.

The dream-like vision conjured by the spell reveals information readily observable. The caster's projection cannot interact with the physical world in any way—they cannot open boxes or books, and so on. The caster must know the location they intend to view, or at least must know the approximate area. Or, if they are attempting to view a person, they must—at the very least—know what the target looks like or, preferably, know them or have something belonging to them. The caster “returns” to their body 2D6 hours later with a sense of exhaustion, having spent all but 1 magic point.

An entity possessing POW 100 or more can see and identify the scrying mind while the spell is in effect (the consciousness carries the appearance of the caster and

cannot be disguised), while those with POW 75 or above have the uneasy feeling of being watched. Those who succeed at a POW roll are also aware of the observation.

Open the Gates of Agarth

- **Cost:** 50 POW; 15 magic points; 3D3 Sanity points (see below)
- **Casting time:** 6 hours

A very specific form of the Gate spell that opens a portal to the realm of the King of Fear. Not only must a permanent sacrifice of 50 POW be made, but it must be freely given by a willing innocent who is unaware of the true purpose of their sacrifice.

The spell is based upon various Tibetan liberation rites, where the caster symbolically sacrifices themselves to be free of ego and attachment and thus enhance their understanding of, and power over, the workings of reality. Unfortunately, the sacrifice in this instance is far from symbolic, as the caster's death is required to liberate the necessary energy in its purest form.

As a result, the Tokabhaya have woven a variation of the Mental Suggestion spell (*Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook*, page 260) into the Gate spell, which compels those who fail



an opposed POW roll against the spell's caster (including the caster themselves) to ensure the victim's sacrifice is real rather than imaginary.

The caster, because of the nature of this additional component of the spell (which incites its victims to commit murder), must pay 15 magic points and lose 3D3 Sanity points if they cast the spell successfully. See **Chapter 6: The Liturgy of Death** (page 242) for further details.

Possession

- **Cost:** 15 magic points; 1D8 Sanity points
- **Casting time:** 4 rounds

Enables the possession of living human beings. By jumping from one body to the next, the caster can potentially ensure a very long lifespan. The high cost, however, means that it is used sparingly, with sorcerers preferring to stay in one body as long as possible.

The caster must be able to see their intended target with their naked eye. Words of possession are then spoken aloud to instigate the possession; the caster must win an opposed POW roll with the target to successfully transfer their consciousness. The possessor is unable to access any of their victim's memories while inhabiting their body. When the possessor leaves a body, the former victim has no recollection of the time when they were possessed—just a dark void in their memory.

Hine Roimata (page 264) can use a variation of this spell to ensure the casting of the Open the Gates of Agartha spell if all else fails. She possesses the caster just long enough to complete the ritual and then returns to her own body.

Send Vision

- **Cost:** variable magic points; 1D4 Sanity points
- **Casting time:** 10 minutes

A far-reaching version of Send Dream, Send Vision permits the caster to impose a specific vision upon a target, whether they are awake or sleeping. The format and detail of the dream depend on the number of magic points spent. Five magic points create a short vision or dream consisting of a single scene, image, or emotion, such as foreboding or horror. For every magic point above that (up to a maximum of ten), the caster can either increase the length of the vision/dream, the intensity, or the level of detail.

A special etched, copper bowl is required when casting the spell. It must be filled with herbs and blood from the caster and set alight, producing a greenish smoke. The target must be within 20 miles of the caster, and the caster must win an opposed POW roll with the target for the sending to be successful; this roll can be avoided if the caster burns one of the target's possessions along with the herbs and blood.

Summon/Bind Khandroma (Dakini)

- **Cost:** variable magic points; 1D4 Sanity points
- **Casting time:** 5 minutes per magic point spent, binding takes 1 round

As per the rules on page 263 of the *Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook*, each magic point spent increases the chance of success by 10 percent and adds an additional five minutes to the required casting time. The caster must specify whether they are attempting to summon a dakini in its beautiful human guise or monstrous demon form. To summon the dakini, the caster must perform an erotic dance, accompanied by drums and pipes (preferably *damaru* and *kangling*), while singing the necessary incantations. Any Sanity costs for seeing a dakini depends on the form in which it is summoned and must be paid as usual.

Summon/Bind Scorpion Demon

- **Cost:** variable magic points; 1D4 Sanity points
- **Casting time:** 5 minutes per magic point spent, binding takes 1 round

As per the rules on page 263 of the *Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook*, each magic point spent increases the chance of success by 10% and adds an additional five minutes to the required casting time. As the scorpion demon is a *dharmapala* (wrathful spirit guardian), once summoned, the caster must make a successful opposed POW roll to bind the creature or it makes one attack against its summoner with its stinger before leaving.

In order to summon the scorpion demon, the caster must eat a scorpion, stinger and all, immediately prior to casting the spell. There is no need for the scorpion to still be alive, although received wisdom is that a more powerful spirit is summoned if it is. Any Sanity costs for seeing a scorpion demon must be paid as usual.

Sword Siddhi

- **Cost:** variable magic points; 2 Sanity points
- **Casting time:** 1 round

This variant of the Spectral Razor spell creates an invisible blade that can be used as an offensive weapon either in close combat or at range (its reach being a number of yards/meters equal to half of the caster's POW, and the target must be visible to the wielder). The spell costs 2 magic points per round to maintain the effect. The immaterial knife is used with the caster's Fighting (Brawl) skill, as if they were holding a real blade (i.e. the caster makes cutting and stabbing motions with the hand in which they are "holding" the immaterial knife). The magical blade inflicts 1D6 damage during successful attacks, can impale (but receives no damage bonus), and can damage creatures vulnerable only to magic. The spectral weapon cannot become stuck in the victim.

Should the caster go insane while wielding the spectral razor, the weapon takes on a life of its own, spinning out of the caster's hand and proceeding to fly about the area, randomly attacking those nearby. Attempts to dodge the blade are made with one penalty die; if the dodge is unsuccessful the blade automatically hits the target. The weapon carries on in this fashion for 1D4+1 rounds before vanishing.

Telepathy

- **Cost:** 2 magic points; 1 Sanity point
- **Casting time:** instantaneous

Allows the caster to non-verbally communicate directly with another person's mind. The caster may target up to three others if all are within visual range. The communication is one-way, from caster to receiver. Further people can be affected with this spell with the additional cost of 1 Sanity point and 1 magic point per three extra people. The spell lasts for 2 rounds (which may be extended by expending another 2 magic points).

An unfortunate side effect of this spell: should the caster lose Sanity points while the spell is in effect, the same Sanity loss is communicated directly to anyone in mental contact with the caster (automatic Sanity loss).

Warding the Eye

- **Cost:** 2 magic points
- **Casting time:** 1 round

This spell protects one person from the **Evil Eye** spell (*Call of Cthulhu: Keeper Rulebook*, page 259). The casting involves a number of complicated hand gestures, which may be made in advance or once the Evil Eye has been cast. Like the Evil Eye, this spell expires at midnight.

Warmth of Mind

- **Cost:** 2+ magic points; 1 Sanity point
- **Casting time:** 1 round

Increases the body temperature of the caster, providing protection from the cold. The spell takes the form of a repeating mental chant, which slowly increases internal temperature and negates the effects of hypothermia, freezing, and other cold-based dangers. For every 2 magic points spent, the caster may maintain their temperature at a normal level for one hour.

Allegedly, the Tibetan meditative practice known as "*Thumo*" (wherein practitioners generate body heat through meditation) is a derivation of this spell.



WHAT YOUR INVESTIGATOR KNOWS

This section contains handouts detailing the general knowledge someone in 1923–1924 might be expected to know about a given location's history and culture if not native to the region. The Keeper should provide the players with a copy of the relevant handout for each chapter as noted in the text.

1

What Your Investigator Knows: China and Peking

China has been wracked with conflict throughout the 20th century. First, there was the Boxer Rebellion in Peking in 1900, when a peasant militia besieged the city's Foreign Legation Quarter. Then, in 1912, the Ch'ing Dynasty collapsed, and the country became a Republic. Currently, the Beiyang Government nominally rules China, but it is the warlords who hold the real power. Though those in the North officially "support" the Beiyang Government, the warlords there are seemingly a law unto themselves. Those in the South support the Kuomintang—formerly an outlawed political secret society.

Peking, the former Imperial capital and new home to the Beiyang regime, has been open to the Western powers since 1860. Unlike the treaty ports of Shanghai, Canton, Ningpo, Fuchou, and Amoy, foreign trade is tightly restricted within the city. Most non-Chinese residents live within the heavily fortified Legation Quarter. Traveling outside the major cities into the countryside can be dangerous, thanks to the political situation, and banditry is common. The culprits are frequently soldiers of a regional militia, meaning there is often little redress for victims.

What Your Investigator Knows:
Sian and the Kansu Corridor

Sian was once the beginning of the Silk Roads of old. An ancient city and formerly a thriving metropolis, it was also known as the "Rome of Asia." The Silk Roads wound their way from Sian up through the Kansu Corridor—a long, narrow passage that leads from Central China to the West via Central Asia.

Of note along the Kansu corridor are the town of Suchou, where rhubarb was first cultivated, and the twin gates that allow passage through the Great Wall of China in the Excellent Valley Pass. As this is not an area frequently visited by foreigners, there is little outside knowledge of it beyond that, although it is known that many Russian refugees fled this way after the Russian Civil War erupted in 1917. It is also infamous for the banditry carried out by soldiers loyal to the various local warlords.

What Your Investigator Knows:
The Tarim Basin

A truly fearsome place with a terrible reputation, the Tarim Basin is one of the most inhospitable places on Earth. More commonly known as Chinese Turkistan, it is home to the Taklamakan Desert, described by Swedish explorer Sven Hedin as "the worst and most dangerous desert in the world." The basin also contains the Lop Desert and is flanked on its eastern edge by the trackless wastes of the Gobi Desert. Truly, this is not a place for the faint-hearted.

Despite all its dangers, the Tarim Basin was once part of the ancient Silk Roads, which passed along its northern and southern edges, supported by the presence of conveniently-spaced oases. Although largely forgotten during the past several hundred years, the Silk Roads have recently come back to prominence, particularly after the discoveries made by noted explorers Sir Marc Aurel Stein, Sven Hedin, and Paul Pelliot, to name but a few.

What Your Investigator Knows:
The Northwest Frontier

A fractious, mountainous buffer zone between the tribes of Afghanistan and the rest of British India, the Northwest Frontier region is a hodge-podge of princely states, British agencies, and provinces that have been fought over repeatedly through the millennia. The Grand Trunk Road, immortalized by Rudyard Kipling in his novel *Kim*, passes through the region and over the Khyber Pass, also once part of the famous Silk Roads of old.

Known in ancient times as Gandhara and centered around Peshawar (the capital of the North West Frontier Province), the area is extremely archaeologically rich after having played host to so many invading cultures and the empires they established. The Frontier was also on Alexander the Great's route as he marched to the River Beas, where his army mutinied, halting the Macedonian's conquest of India.

What Your Investigator Knows:
India, Bihar and Orissa

While Central Asian invasions were a common occurrence throughout Indian history, it wasn't until the 15th century that Europe turned its sights on the sub-continent. The first official Westerner to arrive by sea was the Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama, who landed in Goa. The Portuguese were then followed by the Dutch, the British, and the French. In the end, it was the British that came to dominate Indian affairs, first under their East India Company and then the Raj. The country is currently ruled by the British from their winter capital in New Delhi. During the summer, the country is instead administered from the hill station at Simla.

The province of Bihar and Orissa lies in the upper east of the country, bordering Nepal (which, like its neighbor Tibet, is officially closed to foreigners during this period). As the birthplace of the Buddhist faith, it contains many important religious sites, including Bodhi Gaya, where Prince Siddhartha Gautama achieved enlightenment beneath a pipal tree, so becoming the Sakyamuni Buddha.

What Your Investigator Knows:

Tibet

Tucked up on the roof of the world, Tibet was—and still is—largely a mystery to the countries beyond its disputed borders. Hard to reach and closed off to outsiders for much of the last century, it hides its secrets behind the walls of the Himalayas in the south and the Kun Lun Mountains in the north. Ruled by a reincarnated priest-king, the Dalai Lama, from the holy city of Lhasa, the country has its own version of the Buddhist faith and an obsession with tea to rival that of the British.

Many nations, particularly China, Russia, and Britain, have tried to gain a foothold in the country: the Chinese through historical precedent, with eyes on its natural resources (including, allegedly, its gold mines); the Russians to expand their territories in Central Asia; and the British to use it as a buffer against the Russians (now Soviets), who they fear have designs on the jewel that is India.

What Your Investigator Knows:

PEMAKÖ

Apart from the famed journey of Captains Bailey and Morshead through the region in 1913 in search of the Falls of the Tsangpo Gorge, and the fact that the region straddles the McMahon Line (the disputed border between India, China, and Tibet), you know precious little about PemaKö. Rumors abound that its jungles are full of fierce tribesmen and dangerous wild animals, but you might as well write "Here Be Dragons!" on your map when it comes to what the outside world really knows about the area.

What Your Investigator Knows:

Assam and the North East Frontier Tracts

Ruled by the Ahom Dynasty for almost 600 years, Assam was initially judged too distant and remote to attract the covetous gaze of the British East India Company (BEIC). But, when the Burmese invasion of the region reached the BEIC's doorstep in Bengal, things changed, resulting in the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824-1825). By 1825, the BEIC had driven the Burmese out of Assam and forced them to cede most of the land to them. Despite briefly installing the Ahom Prince, Purandar Singha, as ruler of a British Protectorate in Upper Assam, the BEIC went on to spend the next 20 years annexing Assamese territory until most of the region was under their complete control.

After being shifted in and out of various other provinces, including the Bengal Presidency, Assam was finally regranted full provincial status in 1912. One of the eight major provinces of British India, by the 1920s, parts of Assam had been reassigned to the North East Frontier Tracts. This region consisted of various tribal lands, along with the areas ceded to the British under the terms of the 1914 Simla Convention, which gave those areas of Tibet lying to the south of the McMahon Line to India (although the Republic of China heavily disputes this claim).

Often referred to as British India's "forgotten frontier," Assam and the North East Frontier Tracts were, nevertheless, very lucrative for the British Raj, and the lands of the Assam Valley around the Brahmaputra River were home to a thriving tea, coal, and oil industry by the early 20th century. However, horror stories of the goings-on out in the wilds of Upper Assam still exert a powerful hold on visitors' imaginations, and rumors of cannibalism and ritual slaughter in these areas still abound.

TRAVEL

Travel is a major feature of *The Children of Fear*, whether the investigators red line their way across China, India, and Tibet or play through each step in greater detail. This appendix covers some of the logistics involved in mounting expeditions during the time period, as well as summarizing how long each leg of the journey is likely to take.

EXPEDITION COSTS

Mounting an expedition isn't cheap, which is why most explorers of the age relied on their own personal wealth to bankroll their travels (e.g. Lord Cawdor; **The Plant Hunter**, page 229) or sponsorship by either their employers (e.g. Sven Hedin and Lufthansa, **Rising Tensions**, page 41)



A camel carriage

or by learned institutions and societies, such as the Royal Geographical Society. Sometimes, the learned institution was also their employer (e.g. Langdon Warner and Harvard University's Fogg Museum, **Hidden Treasures**, page 73). An enterprising journalist investigator might even be able to negotiate a considerable sum from their newspaper in return for an exclusive series of reports on their journey—don't forget, Lord Carnarvon sold exclusive access to the excavation of Tutankhamun's tomb to *The Times* in 1922 for £5,000!

Sponsors were often keen to back such expeditions because of the rewards they might reap on the expedition's return, e.g. commodities they could sell (artifacts, knowledge, goods, etc.). As in *The Times* example already mentioned, getting the scoop on your rivals could mean big business through enhanced newspaper sales. The rewards needn't be financial, although they usually were in some form or another—some sponsors simply wanted to fund expeditions in hopes of getting something named after themselves, such as a new species or a notable geographical feature. Other sponsors, such as an official government body, might disguise their true intentions (e.g. gathering intelligence) behind an apparently innocent façade (e.g. the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India and the pundits, **Chapter 5: Pundits**, page 189).



A caravan in Central Asia

Joining an existing caravan may also reduce costs slightly, although investigators would still need to provide their own food, animals, and equipment. Depending on an investigator's skill set, they may be able to get themselves hired as part of someone else's caravan, at which point their travel expenses will be taken care of as long as they fulfill their duties. Investigators don't have to hire a caravan if they don't want to, but they'll still need to pay for all the food and equipment they'll need on their journey, which may turn out to be more expensive in the long run.

HIRING A CARAVAN

Assume the baseline cost to hire a fully outfitted caravan in-game is US\$100 per month. For this money, the investigators acquire porters and guides, food, and all the necessary animals and equipment they will need for their journey. Smaller caravans will cost less, as will caravans missing one or other of the components listed (equipment, animals, etc.), at the Keeper's discretion.

To keep things simple, during negotiations, a successful social skill roll (such as **Charm**, **Fast Talk**, or **Persuade**) means the investigators manage to hire a fully outfitted caravan for the baseline cost of US\$100. A successful Hard social skill roll reduces the price to US\$75, while an Extreme success knocks it down to the bargain price of US\$50 and considerable grumbling from the caravan master, along with a grudging degree of respect for the investigator's bargaining skills. A normal failure adds US\$25 to the baseline cost. However, fumbling the roll during negotiations—or failing a pushed roll—adds US\$50, for a total of US\$150.

Keeper note: remember that in certain areas (particularly Tibet, including Pemakö), cash is not an acceptable form of payment when hiring guides and porters. Instead, the investigators will need to provide trade goods or animals of an equivalent value to cover their expenses.

If the Keeper wishes to use a more complex bargaining model, refer to **Getting a Good Deal** (**Chapter 2**, page 65) for some alternative options. Remember, the meeting with Mi Han is as much a roleplaying opportunity as it is a business one; other negotiations can be classed as more of a necessary evil—they may need taking care of, but there's no need to dwell on them. Unless, of course, there's some roleplaying to be had or useful information to be acquired.

The Keeper should also feel free to ignore these costs if they feel they will take away from their players' enjoyment of the game.

TRAVEL TIMES

The number of miles covered in *The Children of Fear* is vast. The following tables, organized by chapter and destination, gather together the various travel times mentioned throughout the book for ease of reference.

CHAPTERS 1, 2, & 3

Travel Times to Tun-huang

Location	Time (Walking)	Time (Riding)	Time (Other)	Total Time for Journey Leg
Peking to Sian	—	—	2-3 days (automobile)	2-3 days
Sian to Tun-huang	—	34 days	34 days (cart)	34 days

CHAPTER 4

Travel Times to Chakdara and Peshawar

Location	Time (Walking)	Time (Riding)	Time (Other)	Total Time for Journey Leg
Northern Silk Road				
Tun-huang to Kashgar	3 months	2 months	—	
Kashgar to Gilgit	—	—	1 month (walking and riding)	
Gilgit to Chakdara	—	—	1 month (walking and riding)	
				4-5 months
Southern Silk Road (Khotan)				
Tun-huang to Khotan	2.5 months	1.5 months	—	
Khotan to Leh	—	—	1 month (walking and riding)	
Leh to Srinagar	—	—	3 weeks (walking and riding)	
Srinagar to Rawalpindi	2 weeks	1 week	—	
Rawalpindi to Chakdara	—	—	1 week (train and walking)	
				4-5 months

TRAVEL

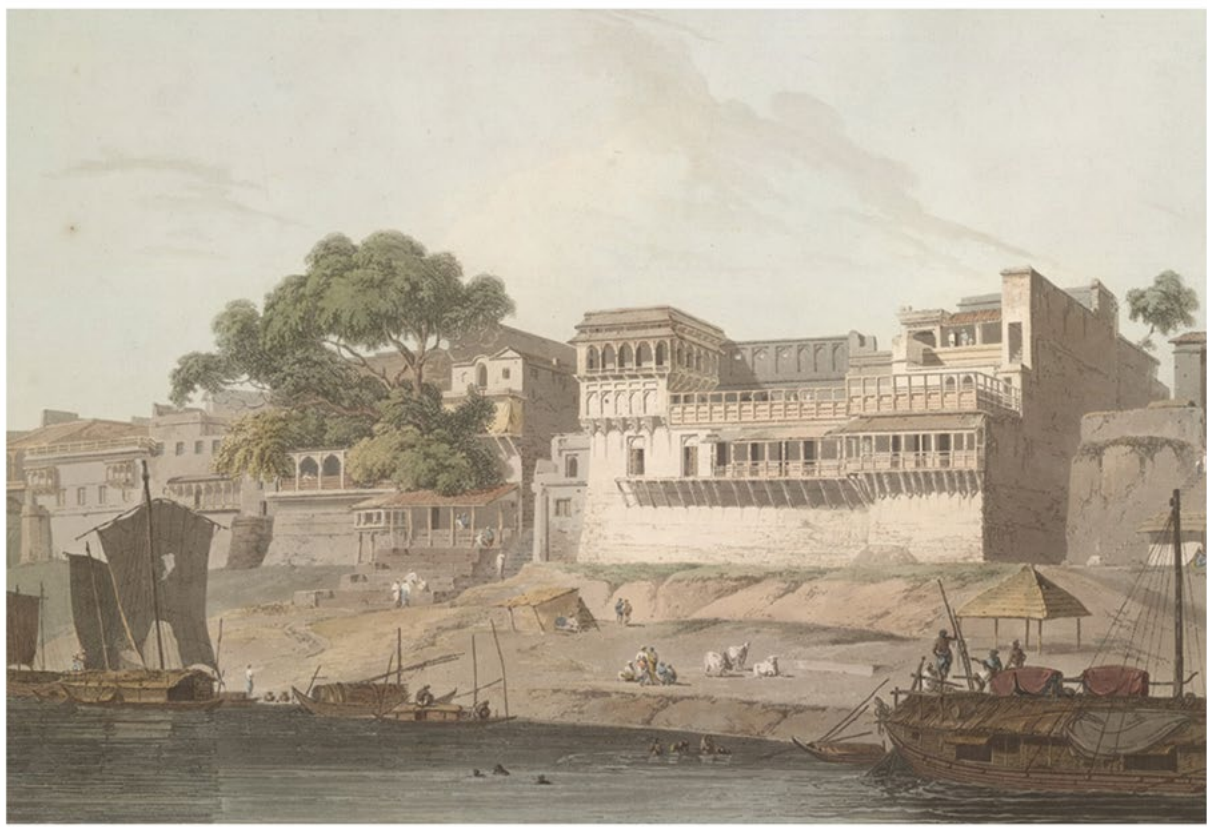
Travel Times to Chakdara and Peshawar (Continued)

Location	Time (Walking)	Time (Riding)	Time (Other)	Total Time for Journey Leg
Southern Silk Road (Yarkand)				
Tun-huang to Yarkand	2.75 months	1.5 months	—	
Yarkand to Srinagar	—	—	2 months (walking and riding)	
Srinagar to Rawalpindi	2 weeks	1 week	—	
Rawalpindi to Chakdara	—	—	1 week (train and walking)	
				4–5.5 months
Chakdara to Peshawar	1 week	—	—	1 week
Rajgir to Peshawar (via Patna)	—	—	2.5 days	
Peshawar to Chakdara	1 week	—	—	
				1.5 weeks
Rajgir to Peshawar (Grand Trunk Road)	—	2 months	1 month (car)	
Peshawar to Chakdara	1 week	—	—	
				1.25–2.25 months
Derge to Gangtok	3.5 months	2 months	—	
Peshawar to Gangtok (via Patna)	—	—	7–9 days (train and riding)	
				2.25–4 months

CHAPTER 5

Travel Times to Rajgir

Location	Time (Walking)	Time (Riding)	Time (Other)	Total Time for Journey Leg
Peshawar to Patna	—	—	2 days (train)	
Patna to Rajgir	—	—	2–3 hours (train)	2.5 days
Peshawar to Rajgir (Grand Trunk Road)	—	2 months	1 month (car)	1–2 months
Derge to Rajgir	3 months (with train)	2 months (with train)	—	2–3 months
Tun-huang to Rajgir	8 months (with train)	4 months (with train)	—	4–8 months



Patna on the Ganges

CHAPTER 6

Travel Times to Derge

Location	Time (Walking)	Time (Riding)	Time (Other)	Total Time for Journey Leg
Rajgir to Gangtok	—	—	5-7 days (train and riding)	
Gangtok to Derge	3.5 months	2 months	—	2.25-3.75 months
Peshawar to Derge (via Leh)	7 months	3.5 months	—	3.5-7 months
Peshawar to Simla	—	—	1-2 days (train)	
Simla to Derge	5.5 months	3 months	—	3-5.5 months
Peshawar to New Delhi	—	—	1 day (train)	
New Delhi to Derge	6 months	3 months	—	3-6 months
Tun-huang to Derge	4.5 months	2 months	—	2-4.5 months
Tun-huang to Derge (Chang Tang route)	6 months	3 months	—	3-6 months
Derge Parkhang to Dzogchen Monastery	—	—	3-4 days (walking/ riding)	3-4 days

CHAPTER 7

Travel Times to the Valley of the White Ape

Location	Time (Walking)	Time (Riding)	Time(Other)	Total Time for Journey Leg
Derge to Powo Dzong	1 month	2 weeks	—	0.75–1.25 months
Powo Dzong to Valley of the White Ape	5 days	—	—	
Derge to Gangtok	3.5 months	2 months	—	3.25–6 months
Gangtok to Pe (via Tsetang)	2 months	1 month	—	
Pe to Valley of the White Ape	5–7 days	—	—	
Derge to Gangtok	3.5 months	2 months	—	4–6.5 months
Gangtok to the Valley of the White Ape (via Gyala)	—	—	7–10 days longer than the Pe route	
Peshawar to Gangtok (via Patna)	—	—	7–9 days (train and riding)	1.75–2.75 months
Gangtok to Pe (via Tsetang)	2 months	1 month	—	
Pe to the Valley of the White Ape	5–7 days	—	—	
Peshawar to Gangtok (via Patna)	—	—	7–9 days (train and riding)	2–3.25 months
Gangtok to the Valley of the White Ape (via Gyala)	—	—	7–10 days longer than the Pe route	

TRAVEL

Travel Times to the Valley of the White Ape (Continued)

Location	Time (Walking)	Time (Riding)	Time (Other)	Total Time for Journey Leg
Rajgir to Patna	—	—	2–3 hours (train)	
Patna to Gangtok	—	—	5–7 days (train and riding)	
Gangtok to Pe (via Tsetang)	2 months	1 month	—	
Pe to the Valley of the White Ape	5–7 days	—	—	
				1.5–2.5 months
Rajgir to Patna	—	—	2–3 hours (train)	
Patna to Gangtok	—	—	5–7 days (train and riding)	
Gangtok to the Valley of the White Ape (via Gyala)	—	—	7–10 days longer than the Pe route	
				1.75–3.75 months

CHAPTER 8

Travel Times to Patna and Danakosha Lake

Location	Time (Walking)	Time (Riding)	Time (Other)	Total Time for Journey Leg
Nalanda to Patna	—	—	2.5 hours (train)	2.5 hours
Patna to Tinsukia	—	—	3 days (boat and train)	
Tinsukia to Pasighat	—	—	3–4 days (combination*)	
Pasighat to Danakosha Lake	1 week	—	—	
				2–2.5 weeks

*See Chapter 8: Getting to Danakosha Lake, page 306.

RESOURCES

A list of resources of possible interest when running The Children of Fear, including books, websites, films, and television series. Some contain useful historical information, while others can help to set the tone.

BOOKS

- Allen, Charles. *A Mountain in Tibet* (1982).
 Allen, Charles. *Ashoka: The Search for India's Lost Emperor* (2012).
 Allen, Charles (ed.). *Plain Tales from the Raj* (1975).
 Allen, Charles. *The Search for Shangri-La* (1999).
 Baker, Ian. *The Heart of the World* (2004).
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 Boyd, Julia. *A Dance with the Dragon: the Vanished World of Peking's Foreign Colony* (2012).
 Dalrymple, William. *Nine Lives: In Search of the Sacred in Modern India* (2013).
 Dalton, Jacob. *The Taming of the Demons* (2011).
 David-Néel, Alexandra. *My Journey to Lhasa* (1927).
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 Frankopan, Peter. *The Silk Roads: a New History of the World* (2015).
 Godden, Rumer. *Black Narcissus* (1939).
 Hilton, James. *Lost Horizon* (1933).
 Hopkirk, Peter. *Foreign Devils on the Silk Road: the Search for the Lost Treasures of Central Asia* (1980).
 Hopkirk, Peter. *Trespassers on the Roof of the World: the Race for Lhasa* (1982).
 Hopkirk, Peter. *The Great Game: on Secret Service in High Asia* (1990).
 Hopkirk, Peter. *Quest for Kim: in Search of Kipling's Great Game* (1996).
 Hopkirk, Peter. *Setting the East Ablaze* (1984).
 Kapstein, Matthew T. *Tibetan Buddhism: a Very Short Introduction* (2014).
 Kipling, Rudyard. *Kim* (1901).
 McRae, Michael. *In Search of Shangri-La: the Extraordinary True Story of the Quest for the Lost Horizon* (2002).
 Ossendowski, Ferdynand Antoni. *Beasts, Men and Gods* (1922).
 Ryavec, Karl E. *A Historical Atlas of Tibet* (2015).
 Saint-Yves d'Alveydre, Alexandre. *The Kingdom of Agarttha* (1886).
 Ukers, William H. *All About Tea Vols. I and II* (1935).

FILMS AND TELEVISION

- Black Narcissus* (Powell and Pressburger, 1947).
In Search of Myths and Heroes: The Search for Shangri-La (Smith and Doran, 1985).
Kim (Saville, 1950).
Lost Horizon (Capra, 1937).
Secret History: China—Treasures of the Jade Empire (Max, 2015).
Soul on a String (Yang, 2016).
The Last Emperor (Bertolucci, 1988).
The Silk Road (Niel and Downes, 2016).
The Story of China (Dobbs, 2016).
The Story of India (Jeffs, 2007).

WEBSITES

All of the following websites were available at the time of writing:

- The International Dunhuang Project: idp.bl.uk/idp.a4d
 On Bulwer Lytton: foundationwebsite.org/OnBulwerLytton.htm
 An American in China: willysthomas.net/FrankDornMap/FrankDorn.htm
 The Tibet Album—British Photography in Central Tibet 1920–1950: web.prm.ox.ac.uk/tibet/index.php.html

MUSIC

Some Keepers like to use music to evoke a sense of atmosphere while gaming. Traditional Chinese music, Indian sitar or flute music, Tibetan singing bowls and meditational chants, and even Mongolian throat-singing and folk music are all suitable accompaniments to *The Children of Fear*. Certain video game soundtracks, such as *Uncharted 2* (Naughty Dog/Sony), may be appropriate if you are playing in a more “pulpy” version of the campaign.

PLAYER HANDOUTS AND MAPS

This appendix contains the various handouts and player-version maps found throughout The Children of Fear (these maps do not contain "Keeper only" notes).

HANDOUTS

Handout: Decaying Splendor 1

**THE CHINA
LECTURE
ASSOCIATION**

Cordially invites you to~

**A Long Road to Travel:
From Srinagar to Sian in the
Footsteps of My Forebears**

A presentation by
Mr. Sofian Bazaz-Wain,
Photojournalist

Thursday, 20th September, 1923,
Examination Hall 5
7:30 p.m. for 8:00 p.m.

Formal dress is not required, although there will be a cocktail
reception in the foyer both before and after the presentation

RSVP

My Dear Friend,

I would be honored if you would join me for what should prove to be a most enlightening evening.

Yours in eternal gratitude,

Wang Enlai, Prof.

Director, American School of Archaeology,
Yenching University, Peking

DATE
RECEIVED
at Central
Telegraph Office
Wednesday
19 September
1923

POST  OFFICE
TELEGRAM

No. _____
OFFICE STAMP



Prefix. Time handed in. Office of Origin and Service Instructions. Words.
4:00 p.m. Souchou, Kansu Province

From _____
To Wang Enlai, Yenching University

Wang need urgent help ...STOP...

Send people immediately ...STOP...

Don't care who . . . STOP . . .

Just get them to Tun-huang ...STOP...

Emergency ...STOP...

Warner

No inquiry respecting this message can be attended to without the production of this paper. Repetitions of doubtful words should be obtained through the Company's offices, and not by DIRECT application to the sender.

Despite its singular name, there has always been more than one Silk Road. The ancient trade networks, given their modern title in 1877 by Baron Ferdinand von Richthofen (uncle of the Great War flying ace, the Red Baron), followed several different paths and connected China with Persia, Byzantium, and Europe for over a millennium. First established by the Han Dynasty around the 2nd century BC, the Silk Road's closure in the mid-15th century AD brought about the Age of Discovery in the West, as European powers were forced to find new maritime routes to acquire the luxury items they had become so fond of.

Although much of the trade carried out along the routes was linked to silk (the production of which was, for many centuries, one of the world's greatest and most closely guarded industrial secrets), many other items were bought and sold in the desert oases that permitted the road to exist in the first place. Alongside money and goods, culture and language flowed from East to West, and vice versa.

Starting in the ancient Chinese capital of Chang'an (now Sian), the Silk Road traveled up the Kansu corridor to the oasis town of Tun-huang, where it split into three main routes. The most northerly path avoided the dread Taklamakan Desert altogether by heading north beyond the T'ien Shan Mountains. The other two, often referred to as the Northern and Southern Silk Roads, skirted the edges of the Tarim Basin and relied heavily on the oasis towns scattered along the rim.

The Northern route passed through the Jade Gate, to Turfan and beyond, before finally reaching Kashgar at the farthest end of the Taklamakan (although a shortcut across the Lop Nor Desert from Tun-huang via Lou-lan also existed). A spur up through Dihua led into Mongolia, a route many Russian refugees subsequently used to escape the Soviets after the Revolution.

The Southern route left China through the Yang-kuan, the Sun Gate, and headed along the edge of the Kun Lun Mountains, via Khotan and Yarkand, before rejoining the Northern route at Kashgar. An important trade branch split from the main road at Yarkand to head over the Karakoram Mountains into India.

West of Kashgar, the road forked once again. Its offshoots spread out towards the trading cities of Balkh, Samarkand, and Bokhara before they rejoined at Merv. After passing through Hamadan (ancient Ecbatana) and Palmyra, the road headed to Antioch and Tyre on the Mediterranean Sea, and from there to Venice and beyond . . .

Now, to return to Tun-huang and the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas. When Sir Marc Aurel Stein visited them in 1907, he collected an enormous cache of books and art treasures — some 40,000 manuscripts, including the Diamond Sutra, and five large cases of statues and paintings — which he paid the caves' custodian for before transporting them to the British Museum in London. Despite the size of this initial haul, there were still plenty of priceless historical artifacts left behind for other archaeologists to recover. The Frenchman Paul Pelliot and the Russian Sergei Oldenburg were among the ranks of those who continued to excavate the caves. And I believe that Prof. Warner is currently there to examine the caves' magnificent Buddhist murals . . .

Hiuen-Tsiang, also known as Hsuan-tsang or Xuanzang, was born in Henan Province in 602 CE. Following his ordination as a Buddhist monk, he made his way to Chang'an, before sneaking out of the city in 629 CE without official permission. (Unsanctioned foreign travel was banned at that time by the T'ang Emperors.) After taking the Northern Silk Road to India, he spent the next 15 years traveling the subcontinent extensively, collecting Buddhist scriptures to improve the academic quality of the Chinese interpretation of his faith.

His journeys inspired the epic tale *Journey to the West*, first published in the 16th century CE and widely regarded as one of the four great works of classical Chinese literature. It tells the partly allegorical, partly fantastical adventure story of the Monkey King and his rebellion against heaven, after which he is recruited as one of Hiuen-Tsiang's disciples to help him retrieve sacred manuscripts from India. The actual story of Hiuen-Tsiang's trip is contained within the monk's own writings, *Great Tang Records on the Western Regions*.

Despite having long been assumed dead during his wanderings, the well-traveled holy man actually died in 664 CE. His ashes are interred in a brick pagoda in the Hsing-Chiao (Xingjiao) Temple, 12 miles (19 km) to the southeast of central Sian.

BETWEEN THE RED GOD IN HIS DARK HEAVEN
AND THE FAT MERCHANT'S CAMEL
THE DOOR TO PARADISE

- Shambhala is a peaceful place, a Pure Land, a lost paradise hidden far from the world behind a ring of snowy mountains.
- Its Lords are ancient and wise. They oversee the golden city at the heart of the kingdom, ruling as regents until the Kulika King rises to defend the world from evil.
- The King of Fear is the ancient enemy of the Kulika King and the Lords of Shambhala. He seeks to condemn humanity to slavery and barbarity while his Agarthan armies lay waste to the world.
- The world has been destroyed and reborn before, and it will be so again; it is the natural cycle of all things until they reach true enlightenment. But if the King of Fear—the enemy of Shambhala and humanity—gains control, the new world will be one of nothing but pain and misery.
- The world's descent into violence, bloodshed, and chaos foretells the end of the Kali Yuga.
- Although the Lords of Shambhala cannot directly interfere in world affairs until the way to the Land of Living Fire is opened at the appointed time, they can communicate with their chosen advocates on Earth through dreams and visions.
- The same is true for the King of Fear, although something is amiss in this cycle; the Lords of Shambhala would never have been so bold as to set a humble lama in place to wait for the investigators if this was not the case.
- The problem is that the Gates to Agartha are opening before they should, meaning that the King of Fear will emerge into the world before the Kulika King is ready to face him, dooming mankind to a bleak Age of Catastrophe, rather than the golden Krita Yuga the Lords promise.
- While Shambhala would be able to take in some refugees from the ensuing annihilation, existing as it does both within and beyond the physical realities of the world, the majority of the human race would be eradicated.
- Those unlucky enough to survive beyond Shambhala's walls would be forced to serve the King of Fear until the next Kali Yuga gave the Kulika King a chance to reform the world in Shambhala's image.

Padmasambhava, known to the Tibetans as Guru Rinpoche (the Precious Master or Teacher), was a prominent historical figure, although little is truly known about him. It is known only that he was an Indian tantric master who helped build Tibet's first Buddhist monastery at Samye, and that he later left Tibet amid court intrigue. To fill in the gaps in this knowledge, there have arisen many legends about Padmasambhava, his powers, and his treasures.

Supposedly born as an 8-year-old child in the center of a rainbow-colored lotus floating on the waters of Lake Danakosha, the miraculous boy's special qualities were first noticed by the childless King Indrabhuti of Oddiyana, who made him his heir. After being banished from the kingdom, Padmasambhava traveled the charnel grounds of India, including Sitavana, gathering tantric knowledge and bending their resident spirits to his will.

After an incident in which the King of Rewalsar tried (and failed) to immolate him for secretly teaching tantric practices to his daughter, Mandarava, Padmasambhava flew to Tibet. There, he subdued the country's rebellious demons and gods in a battle at the sacred hill Hepo Ri, converting them to Buddhism and thereby paving the way for the Samye monastery to be built.

The Guru, by this time already over 1,000 years old, then traveled across Tibet and the Himalayas with another of his consorts, Yeshe Tsogyal, who the Tibetans view as the mother of their faith and a reincarnation of Sakyamuni Buddha's own mother. Yeshe Tsogyal hid various of Padmasambhava's teachings and precious objects (terma) around the country, ready for future treasure revealers (tertons) to uncover when they were needed. The Bardo Thodol (Tibetan Book of the Dead) is one such terma.

An emanation of Amitabha, the Buddha of Infinite Light, Guru Rinpoche is regarded by the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism, whose teachings derive from his works, as their patron deity and founder. They hold that he left Tibet not because of distrust within the Tibetan King's court as history would have us believe, but to fight a horde of cannibal demons who threatened to overrun India and Tibet. Now he dwells forever in his Pure Land, Zangdok Pelri, the Copper-colored Mountain, where he will teach the tantras to the demons he conquered until the end of the age arrives.

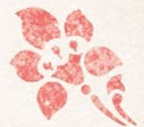


West to where the sun sets on an empire — the latest of many — or east to greet the dawn of new understanding? That is the choice before you — to look back upon the old, or forward towards the new. Neither choice is more valid than the other, for we come to both eventually.

Handout: Song 1

The most feared sandstorms in the Taklamakan Desert are the "kara-buran"—the "black hurricanes"—where the sky turns black as midnight and the desert's sand and stones are lifted into the air, spun up to dangerous speeds, then hurled back down again to the detriment of any who happen to be in their way. According to Albert von Le Coq, in 1905, one kara-buran overturned an entire caravan of carts carrying heavy silver ingots.

The strange clashing and wailing noises that accompany such storms are alleged to drive people mad. Some believe the sounds are the ghostly cries of those who lost their lives to the tempests in ages past. Others claim they are the cries of flesh-eating monsters—pisachas—who roam the storms looking for fresh meat; these creatures may even be the source of Marco Polo's reference to the region as "ghoul-infested."



Shri Badat was allegedly the last Buddhist king of Gilgit in the 8th century. He was said to be a powerful magician (who may or may not have also been part demon) who developed a taste for human flesh after eating a lamb fed on human milk—one which made him practically immortal. He demanded that each household in his kingdom take it in turn to give him human meat to sate his perverse appetites. Angered by his demands and his increasing barbarity, his people turned to his daughter, Miyokhay, for help. Miyokhay and the king's wazir convinced Shri Badat to tell them what his weakness was: he could only be killed by fire, which would melt his heart, as it was made of butter rather than flesh. Miyokhay and her lover, a half-faery Persian prince named Azu Jamsher, built a trap for Shri Badat and burned him alive—although some versions of the story include Shri Badat escaping to hide under a nearby glacier until the time is right for him to regain his kingdom. Miyokhay went on to marry her prince, accept Islam, and change her name to Nur Bakht. Together with her prince, she founded a royal dynasty that, according to the locals, still exists in the valleys around Gilgit to this day.

However, Shri Badat may not have been the only cannibal in his family. According to one story, his sister Yathini was also addicted to human flesh. She was trapped and neutralized by the machinations of a local Danyal called Soglio, who entranced Yathini with song before pinning her to a cliff face with iron nails and turning her to stone. Yathini had the last laugh, though, as the Danyal then insisted that, after his death, he must be buried nearby to prevent her from ever breaking free. Afraid that their savior might die far away and so leave them prey to the cannibal princess' hunger once again, the villagers murdered Soglio and interred him next to his victim to ensure their safety for all eternity.



The Kingdom of Gandhara is believed to have lasted for over 2,000 years. Originally an independent state, it was then ruled by the Persian Empire and the Greeks before being traded to Chandragupta, leader of the Mauryan Empire, for 500 elephants. The last great Mauryan to rule Gandhara was Chandragupta's grandson, Ashoka, who introduced Buddhism to the area. After Ashoka's death, the Mauryan Empire crumbled, but Gandhara continued. Its unusual art style—a fusion of those of its many conquerors, including the Bactrian Greeks, Scythians, Persians, and Kushans—attracted attention from across the known world. Trade also flourished, and the Kushan Empire went on to extend the Silk Road through the Indus Valley to the Indian Ocean and the Roman Empire beyond.

The kingdom fragmented after the arrival of the White Huns in the 5th century; from the 11th century onwards, it witnessed the arrival of Islam, the Mughals, the Afghans, the Sikhs, and finally, in the mid-19th century, the British. Gandhara, or what remained of it, became part of the North West Frontier Provinces in 1901 when they were separated from the Punjab.



ALMS BOWLS

COPPER/TIN ALLOY WITH METEORIC IRON.
GANDHARAN ERA CIRCA 3RD CENTURY BC

ANDAN DHERI, CHAKDARA

ON LOAN FROM MR. ROBERT F. MOORCROFT, ICS

Apart from what he wrote of himself in his travelogues, little is known about the Chinese Buddhist monk Fa Hsien (Faxian). He and four of his colleagues left Shan-hsi (Shanxi) Province, China, in 399 CE on pilgrimage, taking the Southern Silk Road down into Gandhara, where they arrived three years later. After they'd visited what he described as a "Buddhist Paradise," Fa Hsien's colleagues returned home, leaving him to carry on alone. He wandered across northern India, touring the four holiest sites in Buddhism (Lumbini, Bodh Gaya, Sarnath, and Kusinagara), collecting Buddhist scriptures as he went. In 407, he finally began his homeward journey, spending two years in the kingdom of Singhala (Sri Lanka). Despite several shipwrecks along the way, he finally reached China almost 15 years after first leaving home.

Although not the first Chinese pilgrim to seek Buddhist wisdom in the land of its birth, Fa Hsien was the first whose travelogue was widely read, and its contents were highly influential on those who came after him, such as Hsien-Tsiang. His book, *A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms*, was translated into English in 1869.



Dear Colleagues,

I must warn you that you may be in danger. Robbers ransacked my home last night searching for the items you were also seeking. If you have them, exercise great caution.

Yours,

Robert Maerckx

Legends tell of the fierce and dangerous demon Rudra, the reincarnation of a Buddhist practitioner who perverted the teachings of the tantra to his own ends. Eventually, after many terrible battles, the demon was slain and his body cut up into eight pieces, which were carefully placed across India. His head, heart, navel, and genitals were positioned at the cardinal points, while his limbs were laid at the primary intercardinal sites. From each part of his corpse sprang a great tree of a different species, and around these trees grew the eight great charnel grounds of ancient India, the Astamahashana. Although the locations of most of the fabled eight great charnel grounds have been lost to time, Hiuen-Tsiang claims that Rajgriha was home to one of them: Sitavana.

The wandering Chinese monk relates a strange tale of how the inhabitants of a nearby city were plagued by "non-human" creatures who kept burning down their houses. The king insisted that, if anyone lost their home in this way, they should build it again but on the site of the Cool Grove, Sitavana. When the royal residence, too, was burned to the ground, the king built the first of many new palaces on Sitavana's sacred ground, hence the town's original name: Rajagriha, the House of the King. Over time, Rajagriha was abbreviated first to Rajgriha, and then to simply Rajgir.



Charnel grounds, often located next to rivers, are where Buddhist, Hindu, Jain, and Sikh bodies are cremated, if appropriate. According to religious lore, certain corpses cannot be cremated, such as those belonging to holy men and children under the age of puberty, while others, such as those of the poor and unclaimed, simply cannot afford the wood for a funeral pyre. In areas lacking sufficient wood for cremation, bodies are either buried or left out for wild animals to pick clean; "sky burials" such as this are also part of the Tibetan Buddhist and Parsi traditions, for both practical and spiritual reasons. If the charnel ground is next to a river, not only are the ashes of the dead disposed of in the water, but so are some of the corpses not fit for burning (usually those of the poor and unwanted).

Apart from using them for their essential function, people generally avoid visiting charnel grounds as they are reputed to be the home of fierce gods, ghosts, and evil spirits. Shiva, in his guise as the Lord of Ghosts, Bhutesvara, frequents charnel grounds with his consort, Kali. Tantric adepts of both the Buddhist and Hindu faiths also seek out charnel grounds, in order to gain occult power and knowledge.



Quality	Damaru	Kangling
Superb (best possible)	15-16-year-old Brahmin girl and boy	Left femur of a 16-year-old Brahmin girl
Good (almost perfect)	16-year-old boy and 12-year-old girl, any caste or creed; the skull from a lama and/or ani (or other holy persons of the required sex)	Right femur of a 16-year-old Brahmin boy; bone from a lama, or other holy person
Reasonable (just about suitable)		Femur from a murder victim, an accidental/weapon-related death, or from someone who died of a contagious disease
Poor (totally unsuitable)	Those people who died of old age or of natural causes after puberty	

Aghori (those who follow the path of Aghora) are ascetic holy men who revere Shiva in his incarnation of Bhairava, the demon slayer. Aghori live and meditate in charnel grounds. They do not cut their hair or beards and wear nothing but cremation ash, which they believe protects them from disease. If they do wear clothes, it is only ever a shroud taken from a corpse. Respected yet feared by the public, their name, which can be translated as "the absence of fear," comes from their refusal to accept that there is a difference between the pure and impure, or between what is acceptable and what is taboo.

To an Aghori, existence is non-dualistic—there are no such things as true opposites, and actively embracing taboo practices speeds up their attainment of moksha, the Hindu equivalent of the Buddhist nirvana. They are widely believed to be powerful magicians and healers, and they use corpses as both altars and components in their most powerful rituals. They also engage in acts of cannibalism and coprophagy (eating excrement).



First: clear the chosen ground with the branches of the juniper tree, which is favored by the gods. The space prepared should be shaped like a circle and large enough for all celebrants to carry out their allotted tasks within its bounds.

Second: set fires and burn juniper around the circle's edges to sanctify and purify the ground within. Without this consecration, the circle remains impure and the ritual unlikely to succeed.

Third: let the guardians take up their positions, backs to their comrades within. Those who stand ready at the edge of the light must be unwavering in the face of the watchers. Hold fast, and all will be well.

Fourth: let the chosen one fix the world navel with his holy staff, then circle it as the liturgy is recited.

Fifth: those within not without must wash the bones with the three white substances, then adorn them with the holy mantras as instructed, that they may receive their due when the time is right. Let those who are without duty join their voices with the one who circles the holy mountain, their hymn in support of his.

Sixth: when all is prepared, let the song of the soul pour forth from the one chosen to play the bone horn, giving it the breath of life.

Seventh: when the breath of life has been bestowed and approved, let the beat of the heart pound through the holy drum so that it, too, knows life and approbation.

If all goes well, and the gods are gracious, then a great gift is now yours for the using in rituals great and small.

Above all, do not forget to show respect to those who guard the sacred ground. For, in the end, all must one day join their dance, unless they find the way to free themselves from samsara.

Handout: Feast 3

As well as a name used for experienced and enlightened female tantric practitioners (such as Padmasambhava's treasure-hiding consort, Yeshe Tsogyal), dakini (khandromas in Tibetan) is used in legend to indicate mystical creatures with wild, playful natures. They are the messengers of the gods, teachers, guides, tertons, and even tricksters when the need arises. They also frequently take on the role of dharmapalas, wrathful protector spirits who are as comfortable creating obstacles as they are removing them. There are two types of dakini: wisdom dakinis, who have achieved enlightenment, and worldly dakinis, who are still caught within the endless cycle of samsara. These dakinis move between the human and celestial realms in order to carry out their duties. Tibetans hold that their Pure Land is Khechari, while their earthly kingdom is in Oddiyana, which also happens to be the home of Lake Danakosha, Padmasambhava's birthplace.



There are many so-called "liberation" rites in tantric Tibetan Buddhism. One of the most famous (or infamous) is Chöd, the "cutting practice," a type of mystery play performed in a charnel ground or other suitably gruesome or terrifying spot, such as a haunted crossroads. Here, the lone practitioner visualizes themselves being beheaded by a wrathful goddess, then devoured by the demons they have summoned with a kangling and a specific type of damaru used only in liberation rites. Also known as "the red meal," the practitioner offers up his body as a feast in return for spiritual power or to fulfill karmic debts. Those not sufficiently mentally prepared have been known to drive themselves insane while trying to complete the ritual; it should not be carried out lightly.

Another form of liberation rite potentially involves human sacrifice, although whether or not such sacrifices were true historical occurrences is a hotly debated topic among scholars. The victim, predominantly male, is usually guilty of one of the five major crimes against Buddhism (including murder or fomenting trouble within the faith). The ritual is intended to ensure that the victim is reborn in a good incarnation (in one example, found in the documents Aurel Stein brought back from Tun-huang, the rebirth is in the realm of the gods) rather than being condemned to numerous journeys through the Narakas (hells) to pay off their karmic misdeeds.



Rising from a glacier in the Kailash range in the west of the country, the Yarlung Tsangpo, Tibet's longest river, is reported to be a little over 1,750 miles (2,800 km) long. After meandering across the Tibetan Plateau through wide, flat valleys, it falls sharply into gorge country in the east as it passes between the twin mountains of Namche Barwa and Gyala Pelri. The river then forms what is known as the "Great Bend" where it meets its tributary, the Po Tsangpo, before doubling back on itself for around 60 miles (96 km). It eventually drops into Assam, where it becomes the Brahmaputra River. As the Brahmaputra, the Tsangpo finally winds its way down to the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean beyond.

The British first began to clandestinely survey the Yarlung Tsangpo in 1874 because they were convinced that the Yarlung Tsangpo was connected to the Brahmaputra but were unsure which of the river's major tributaries it became. Thanks to the pundits (the British Empire's secret team of native surveyors—in particular Nain Singh Rawat, Keshan Singh, and a Sikkimesse tailor named Kinthup), it was confirmed that it fed into the Dihang in Assam, but much of the gorge it passed through on its way there remained a mystery due to the rugged terrain and the tribespeople who guarded it.

In 1913, Capt. Frederick Marsham "Eric" Bailey and Capt. Henry Morshead made an unofficial visit to the region after carrying out survey work in Chulikata Mishmi territory around Mipi, east of the Dibang River in Assam. Despite the weather and the local officials' best attempts to stop them, the pair managed to describe the river's Great Bend and reduce the unexplored gap within the gorge to around 40 miles (64 km). However, they still failed to put to bed the rumor that a gigantic waterfall lay somewhere along the river's length, one that could account for its massive drop in altitude between the Tibetan Plateau and where it emerged on the plains of India as the Brahmaputra.



To close the Gate:

First: the ground must be cleansed and purified with smoke and fire to remove all obstruction, both material and spiritual; it should be remembered that the scent of fir and juniper is most pleasing to the gods. And as the goddess has three attendants, let there be three fires, arranged as a triangle.

Second: once the land is ready, the kyilkhor must be inscribed within the consecrated space by the holy staff.

Third: those who are to partake in the ritual must then arrange themselves outside the shi-sa and drink deep of the five nectars and eat of the five meats, so that their senses are truly free to call upon the goddess and her consorts.

Fourth: those who are blessed to summon the spirits must play their instruments while the one chosen to lead the sacrifice proclaims the mantra that will draw down the goddess and her attendants. With eyes half-closed, the supplicants build the image of what is to come in their minds, willing it into being with each breath and thought.

Fifth: when the mantra ends, and the instruments have fallen silent, the one chosen by the goddess to be her avatar must envisage leading the sacrifice to the center of the kyilkhor and laying him on his back with his head towards the east. The sacrifice must be willing; his gift will be of no use if he does not gladly offer himself up. The chosen one must imagine drawing the five sacred seed syllables (Om, Hrih, Hum, Drang, and A) onto the offering's crown, his tongue, his heart, his secret place, and the soles of his feet with mustard paste so that his spirit will reincarnate in the realm of the gods in recognition of the purity of his selfless act.

Sixth: taking the blade of the dakinis, the avatar must then picture themselves slashing open the sacrifice's belly and pulling out his entrails, which they and their companions should use to bind him in a kneeling position, face towards the east. After the offering is bound, the petitioners will call into being the goddess' attendants: three spirits, each hungry and watchful.



Seventh: now, the avatar must assume the goddess' form and, seizing the victim by his hair, imagine slicing off his head with one clean stroke. All should now see the indestructible drop—no more than the size of a mustard seed, red below, white above, the sacrifice's most precious gift—rise from his severed throat and float towards the three guardians. They cannot make use of its power yet, though, for first these guests must feast.

Eighth: the goddess incarnate and her supporters must now visualize tossing the victim's head to one side (but still within the bounds of the kyilkhor, or else the ritual will fail), then separating his body into blood, bone, flesh, and organs, placed in the seven sacred bowls that sing without voice. These bowls, overflowing with the five poisons of desire, anger, ignorance, pride, and jealousy, are now ready to present to the spirits for their sustenance. The avatar and her supporters must picture the spirits descending on the bowls like vultures at a sky burial, gorging themselves until sated on this, the sacrifice's last gift, so that they, and he, may be purified.

Sanctified, the guardians may now be seen to approach the indestructible drop, whose power is the key to close the Gate.

Where the holy ones who brought the divine knowledge to the Land of Snows first honed their understanding, seek out the jars that hold the key to locking what should never have been unlocked by mortal hands.

From there, travel to the Emperor's Gateway to the Narakas, built before he found enlightenment. Within are the implements to aid you in your quest: that which, when held in the right hand, represents skillful means, along with that which, when held in the left hand, represents wisdom.

Together, the sound of emptiness, the lord of stones' indestructible drop, and the words of the Precious Master form a powerful tool against the King of Fear. Wield them in the place that shares its name with where the Great Guru was born but not born, a mirror reflecting that which is lost and that which can no longer be approached, wherein lies the heart of the world, and hope that it is not too late to seal the Gates of Agartha.

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Known officially as the Beautiful Gaol, the palace of torture created by King Ashoka to punish his enemies was better known as his Hell Chambers. No one who entered the palace grounds was permitted to leave alive, an edict which the king's executioner, Chandagirika, took great delight in enforcing. One day, a monk stumbled into the gardens and, realizing where he was, attempted to flee. Unfortunately, Chandagirika caught him and sentenced him to death. However, so pious was the newly enlightened monk that he survived the noxious death prescribed for him (to be boiled alive in a cauldron full of human blood, bone marrow, and feces); his prayers not only prevented Chandagirika from successfully boiling the foul liquid, but also provided a lotus leaf for the monk to sit on, thus keeping him away from the unclean substances.

Word quickly got around, and the king himself came to see the miraculous monk, who pointed out a few difficult truths to Ashoka, including how Ashoka, through his wicked behavior, was denying his role in a prophecy recounted by Sakyamuni Buddha himself. Stirred by the monk's words, Ashoka renounced his evil ways and embraced the Buddha's teachings, vowing to be the greatest ruler the Mauryan Empire had ever seen. But when he tried to leave, Chandagirika attempted to arrest him, as per the king's own instructions. The executioner was seized by Ashoka's guards and burned alive in his own torture chambers for his audacity, and the Beautiful Gaol was torn down. All that is believed to be left of it today is the Agam Kuan well in Patna.



To Close the Gate

First: the ground must be cleansed and purified with smoke and fire to remove all obstruction, both material and spiritual; it should be remembered that the scent of fir and juniper is most pleasing to the gods. As this is a wrathful work to dismiss powerful dark magics, let there be three fires, arranged as a triangle.

Second: once the land is ready, the kyilkhor must be inscribed within the consecrated space with the immutable thunderbolt, ensuring the enlightenment of those who step within its bounds.

Third: those who are to partake in the ritual must then arrange themselves outside the shi-sa and drink deep of the five nectars of the sacred cow, so that their senses and minds are purified, ready to receive the goddess.

Fourth: let the sacred bell be rung to liberate the sound of emptiness, while the one chosen to lead the sacrifice proclaims the mantra that will draw down the goddess. Let those who are supporting also send their voices to the void. With eyes half-closed, the supplicants should build the image of what is to come in their mind, willing it into being with each breath and thought.

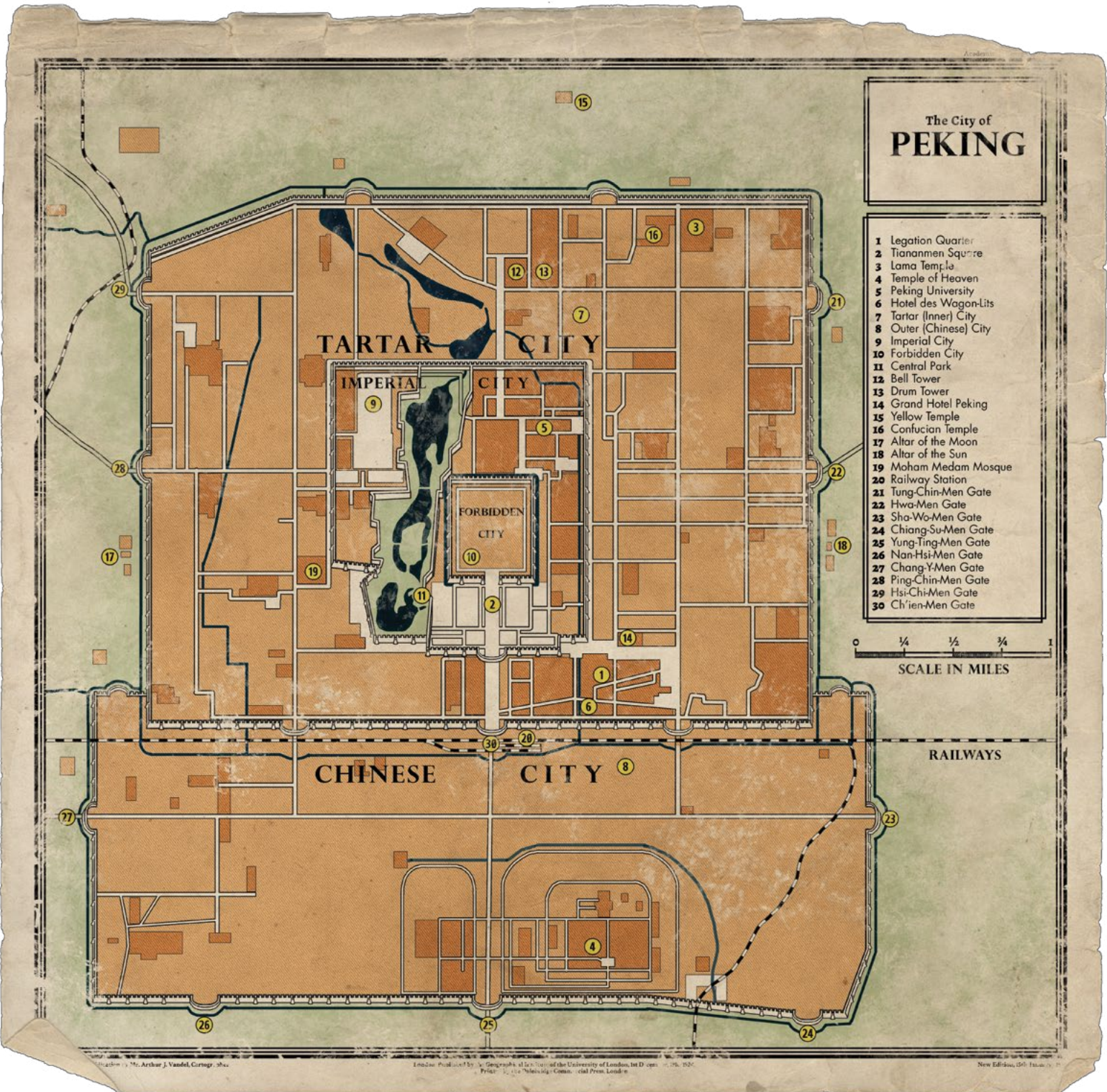
Fifth: when the mantra ends, let the ghanta's voice ring on until the business is done, once and for all. The one chosen by the goddess to be her avatar must lead the sacrifice to the center of the kyilkhor and lay him on his back with his head towards the east. The sacrifice must be willing; his gift will be of no use if he does not gladly offer himself up in the full knowledge that his death is assured. The chosen one must draw the five sacred seed syllables (Om, Hrih, Hum, Drang, and A) onto the offering's crown, his tongue, his heart, his secret place, and the soles of his feet with mustard paste so that his spirit will reincarnate in the realm of the gods in recognition of the purity of his selfless act.

Sixth: taking the blade of the dakinis, the avatar must then slash open the sacrifice's belly and pull out his entrails, which they and their companions should use to bind him in a kneeling position, face towards the east. After the offering is bound, the petitioners must call the goddess into being, that she might deliver the death blow and be assuaged.

Seventh: now, the avatar must assume the mantle of the goddess and, seizing the victim by his hair, slice off his head with one clean stroke. All should now see the indestructible drop—no more than the size of a mustard seed, red below, white above, the sacrifice's most precious gift—rise from his severed throat and float free. The goddess' avatar cannot make use of its power yet, though, for first there must be a feast.

Eighth: the goddess incarnate must now toss the victim's head to one side (but still within the bounds of the kyilkhor, or else the ritual will fail), leaving the body where it lies for the animals, demons, and hungry spirits to feast upon like vultures at a sky burial, so that, by his final gift, the five poisons of desire, anger, ignorance, pride, and jealousy, held within his blood, bone, flesh, and organs, may be purified.

Sanctified, the goddess in her avatar may now approach the indestructible drop, whose power is the key to close the Gate and seal the breach.



CENTRAL ASIA

the Tibetan Plateau, and Northern India

1923



GO

Tun-Huang

TAKLA MAKAN

TIBETAN PLATEAU

Jyeku

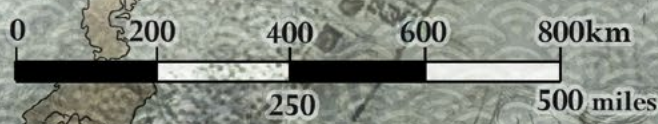
Pemako

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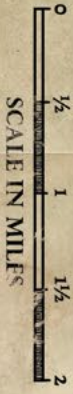
Dibrugarh

Calcutta

QINGHAI DESERT



- 1 The City of Sian
- 2 Ch'ung-tsuang North Gate
- 3 Ming-tse gate South Gate
- 4 Yen-hsing West Gate
- 5 Ch'un ming East Gate
- 6 Small Goose Pagoda
- 7 Big Goose Pagoda
- 8 The Bell Tower
- 9 The Drum Tower
- 10 The Great Mosque



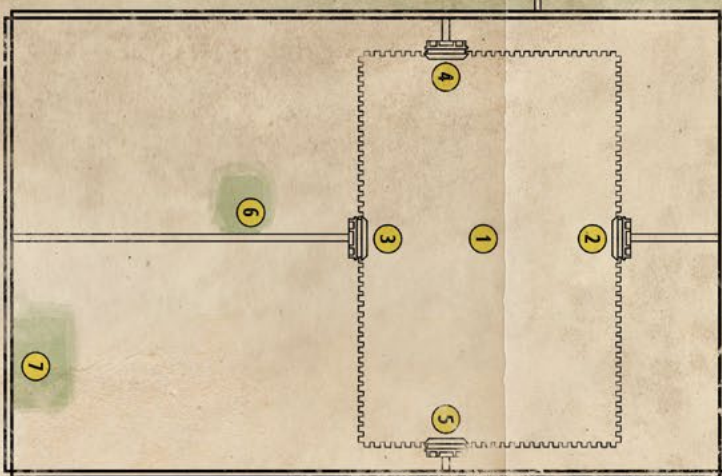
Sheet prepared for publication by Mr. Arthur J. Van der Vliet, cartographer.

London: Published by the Geographical Institute of the University of London, in the name of the Royal Geographical Society, 1925.

New Edition, 1948, January.



The City of
SIAN



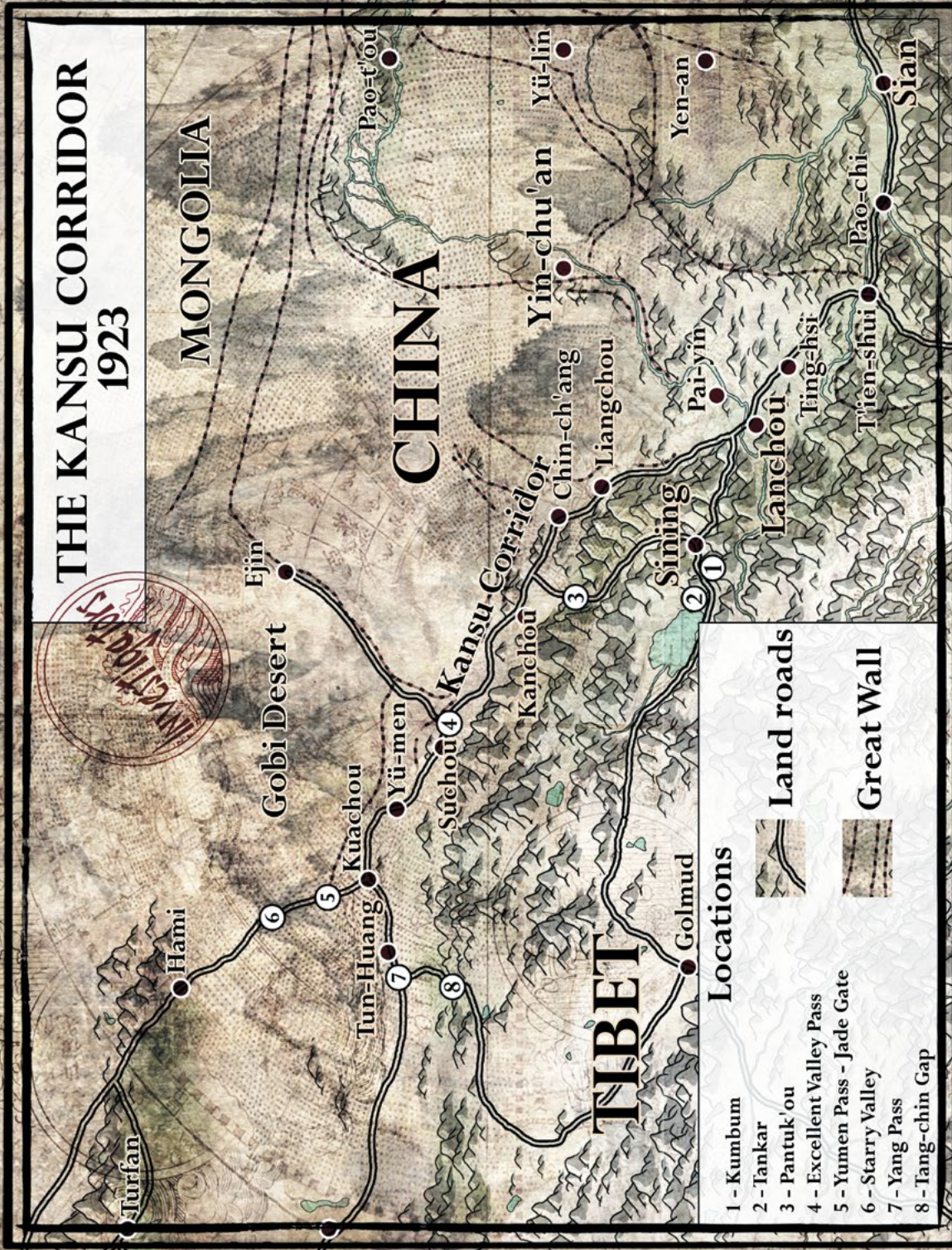
Academic Research Atlas No. 79

THE KANSU CORRIDOR 1923

MONGOLIA

CHINA

TIBET



Locations

- 1 - Kumbum
- 2 - Tankar
- 3 - Pantuk'ou
- 4 - Excellent Valley Pass
- 5 - Yumen Pass - Jade Gate
- 6 - Starry Valley
- 7 - Yang Pass
- 8 - Tang-chin Gap

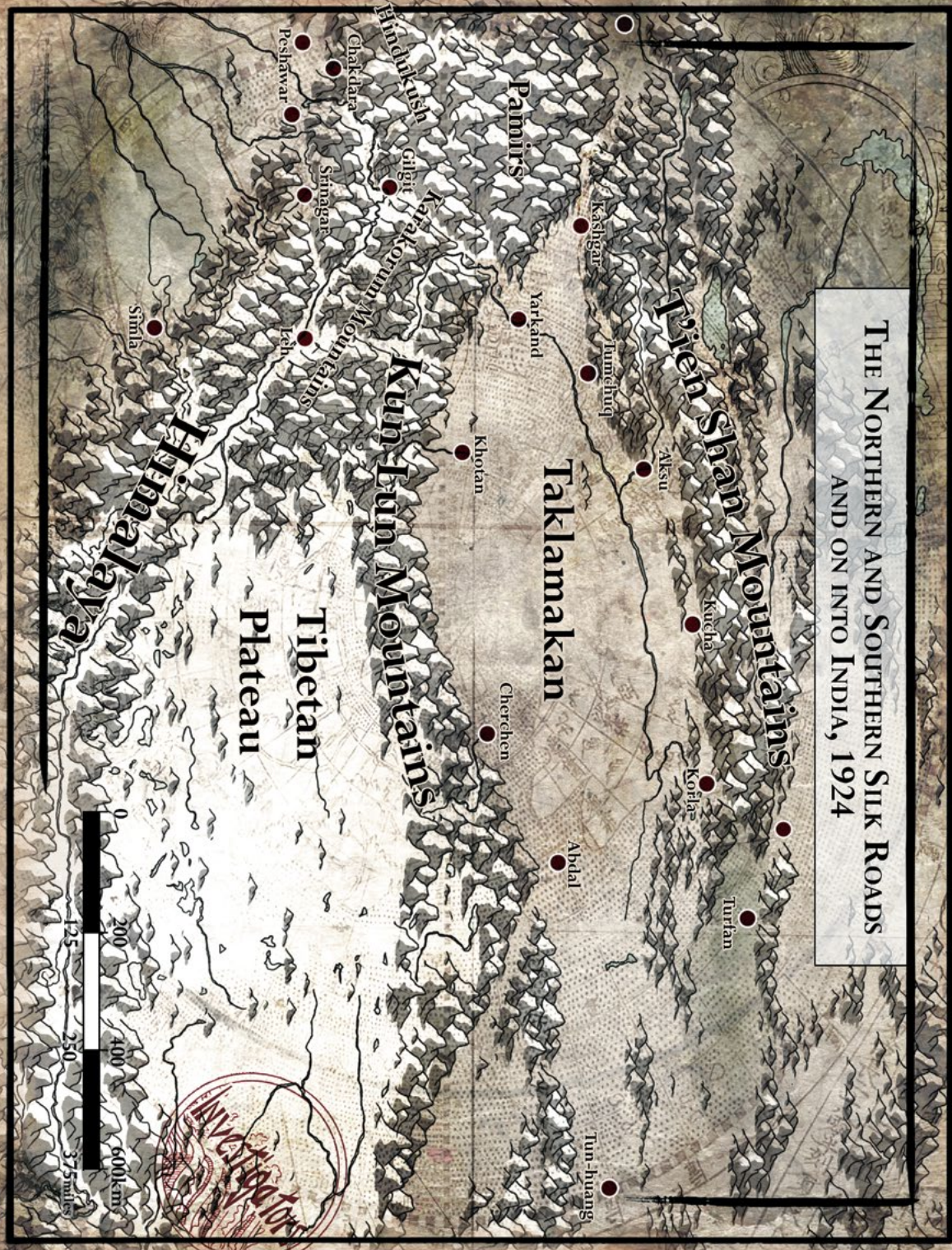
Land roads



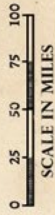
Great Wall



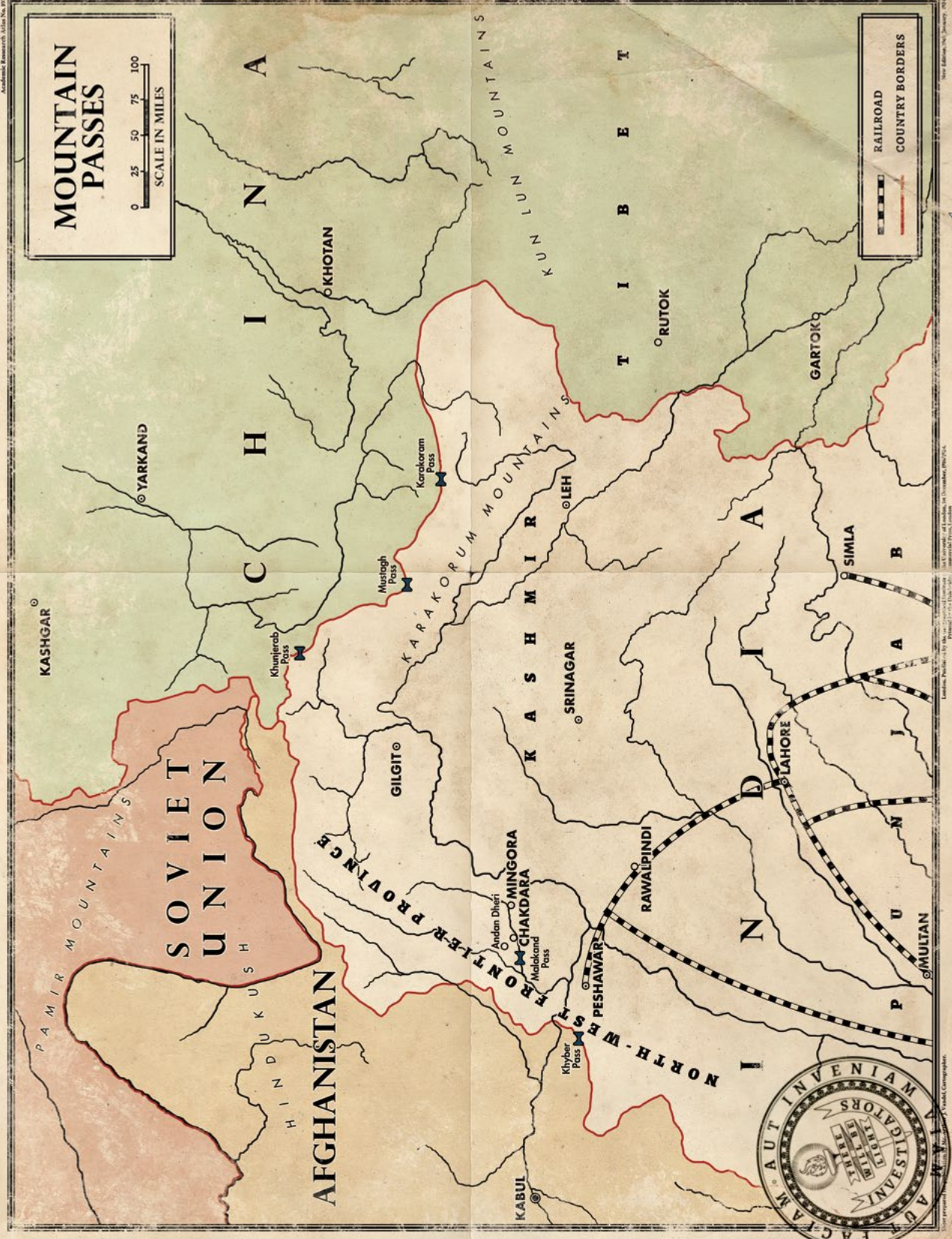
THE NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN SILK ROADS
AND ON INTO INDIA, 1924



MOUNTAIN PASSES



RAILROAD
COUNTRY BORDERS



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PESHAWAR

The City of



- KEY**
- 1 Governor House
 - 2 Central Jail
 - 3 Museum
 - 4 Railway Station
 - 5 Mission Hospital
 - 6 General Hospital
 - 7 Sunehri Masjid Mosque
 - 8 Bala Hisar Fort
 - 9 Lady Reading Hospital
 - 10 High Court
 - 11 Hastings Memorial
 - 12 Mahabat Khan Mosque
 - 13 Cunningham Clock Tower
 - 14 Tehsil Park
 - 15 Edwardes College
 - 16 Garrison Park
 - 17 Kabul River Canal
 - 18 Old City

Sheet prepared for publication by Mr. Arthur J. Vaseki, Cartographer.

London, Published by the Geographical Institute of the University of London, 1st December, 1964/924.
Printed by the Edinburgh Commercial Press, London.

New Edition, 15th January, 1924

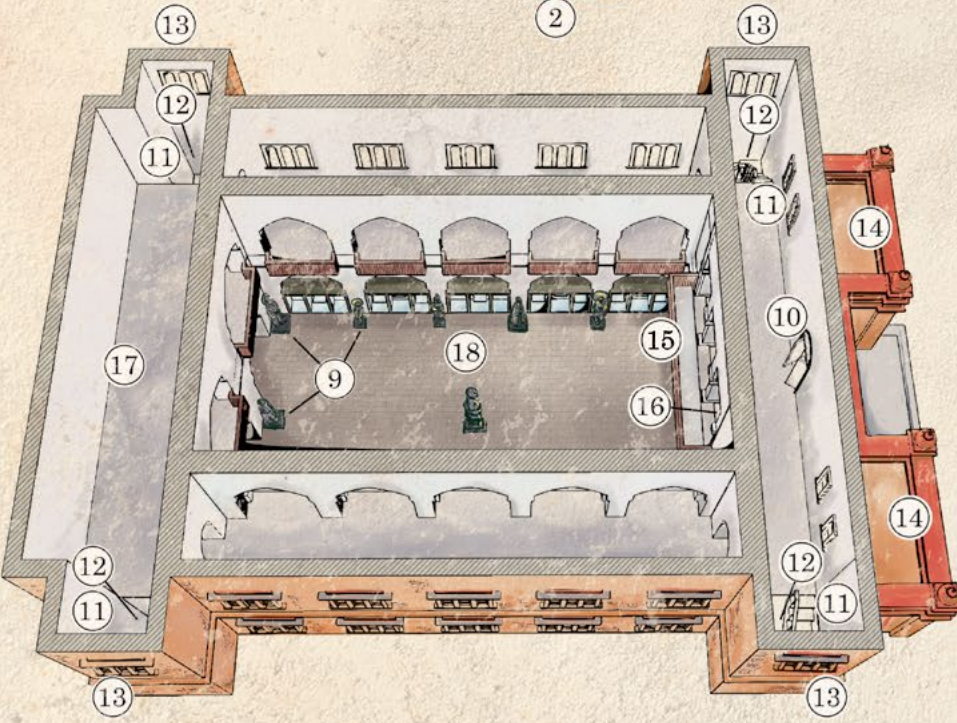
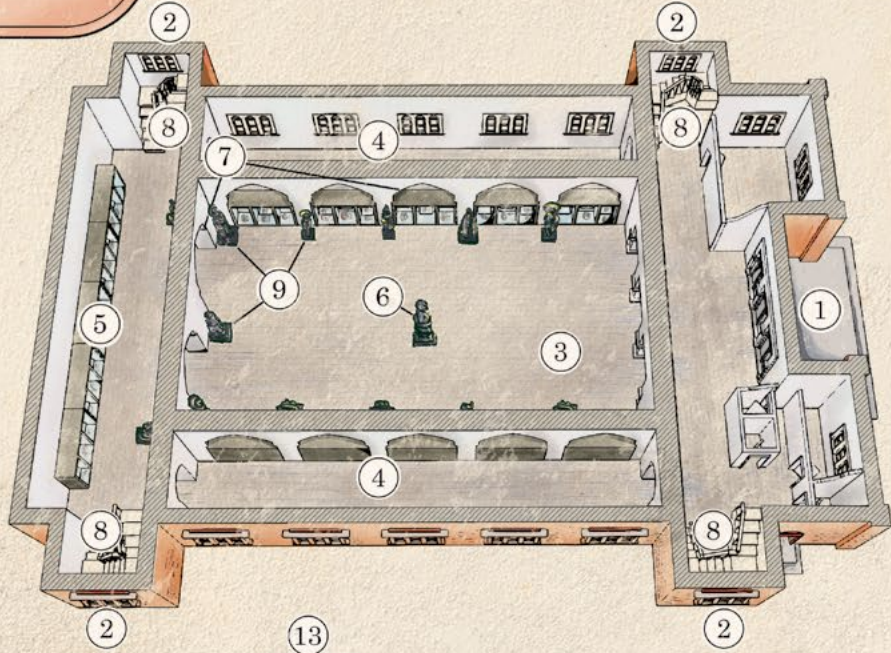
Academic Research Atlas No. 62



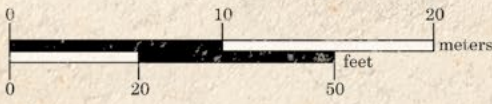
PESHAWAR MUSEUM

c. 1924

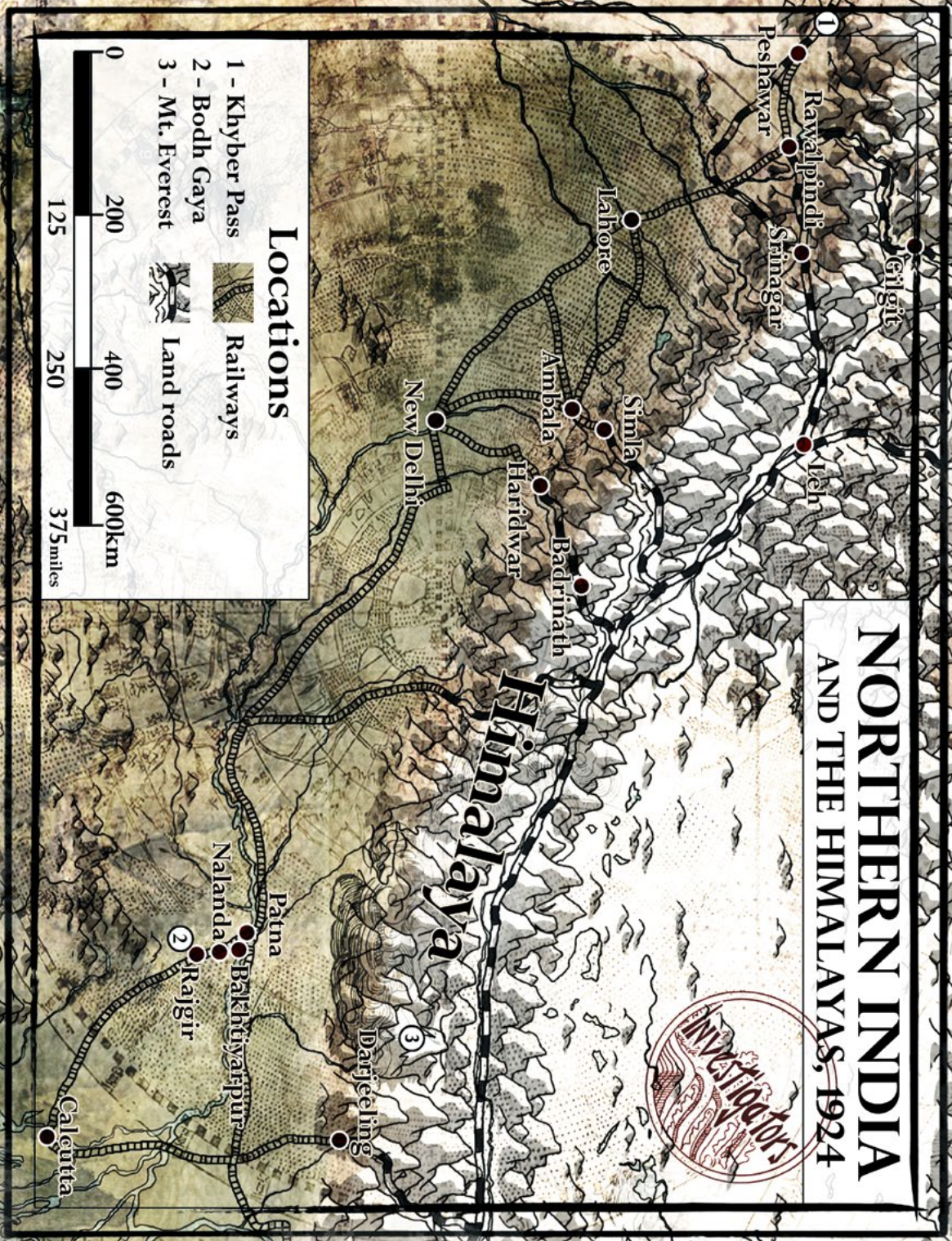
- First Floor**
1. Entrance
 2. Towers
 3. Main Hall
 4. Side Galleries
 5. Rear Gallery
 6. Central Statue
 7. Arches
 8. Stairs
 9. Statues



- Second Floor**
10. Exterior Balcony Door
 11. Stairs
 12. Light Well
 13. Towers
 14. Exterior Balcony
 15. Interior Balcony
 16. Steps
 17. Upstairs Gallery
 18. Main Hall



NORTHERN INDIA AND THE HIMALAYAS, 1924



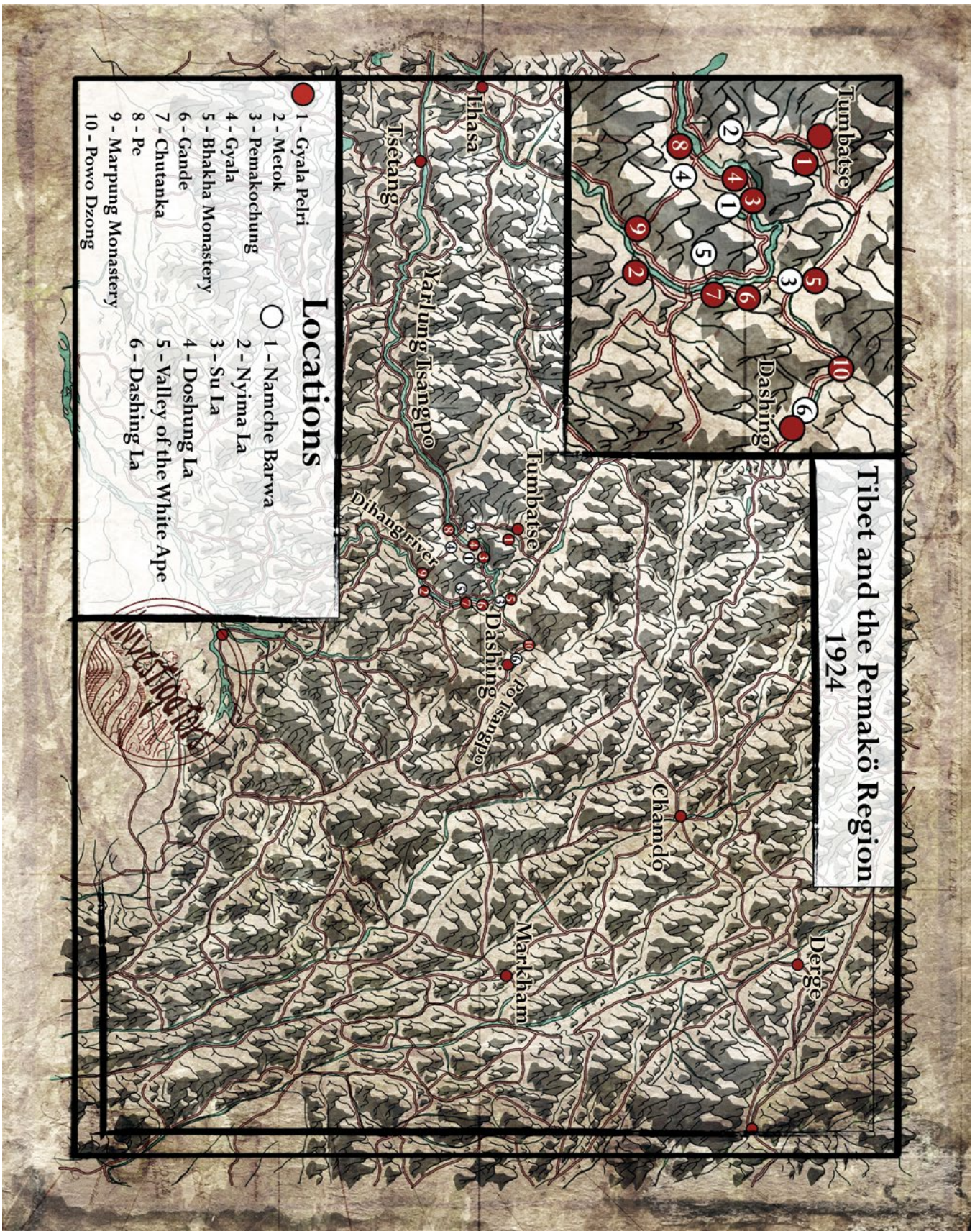
Locations

- 1 - Khyber Pass
- 2 - Bodhi Gaya
- 3 - Mt. Everest

 Railways

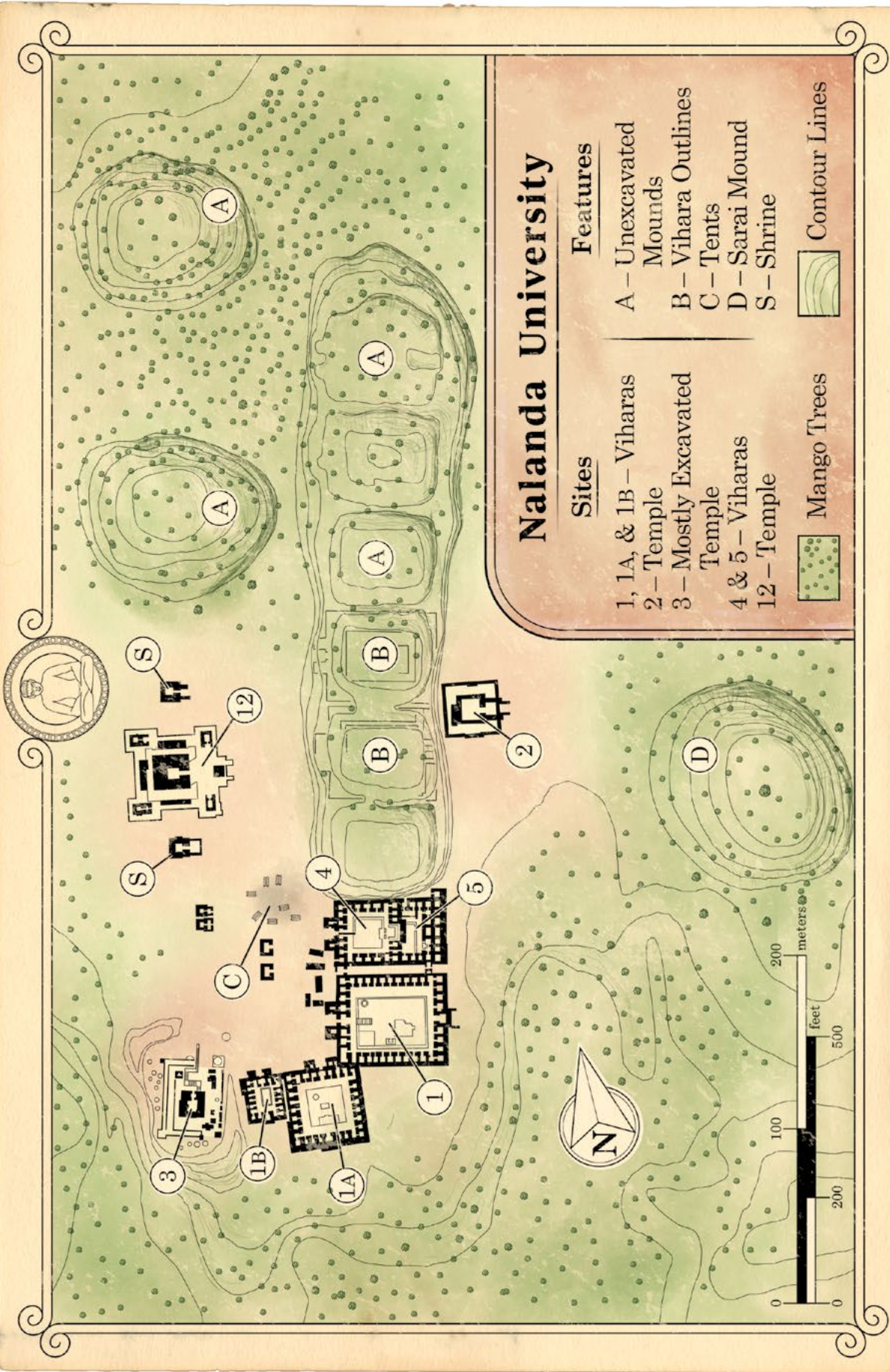
 Land roads

0 125 200 250 400 600km 375miles



**Tibet and the Pemakö Region
1924**

- Locations**
- 1 - Gyala Pelri
 - 2 - Metok
 - 3 - Penakochung
 - 4 - Gyala
 - 5 - Bhakha Monastery
 - 6 - Gande
 - 7 - Chutanka
 - 8 - Pe
 - 9 - Marpung Monastery
 - 10 - Powo Dzong
- 1 - Namche Barwa
 - 2 - Nyima La
 - 3 - Su La
 - 4 - Doshung La
 - 5 - Valley of the White Ape
 - 6 - Dashing La



Prepared for publication by Mr. Arthur J. Van der Grinten, Cartographer.

London: Published by the Geographical Institute of the University of London, E. Davenport, 1964/1924.
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The City of PATNA

RAILROAD



SCALE IN MILES

KEY

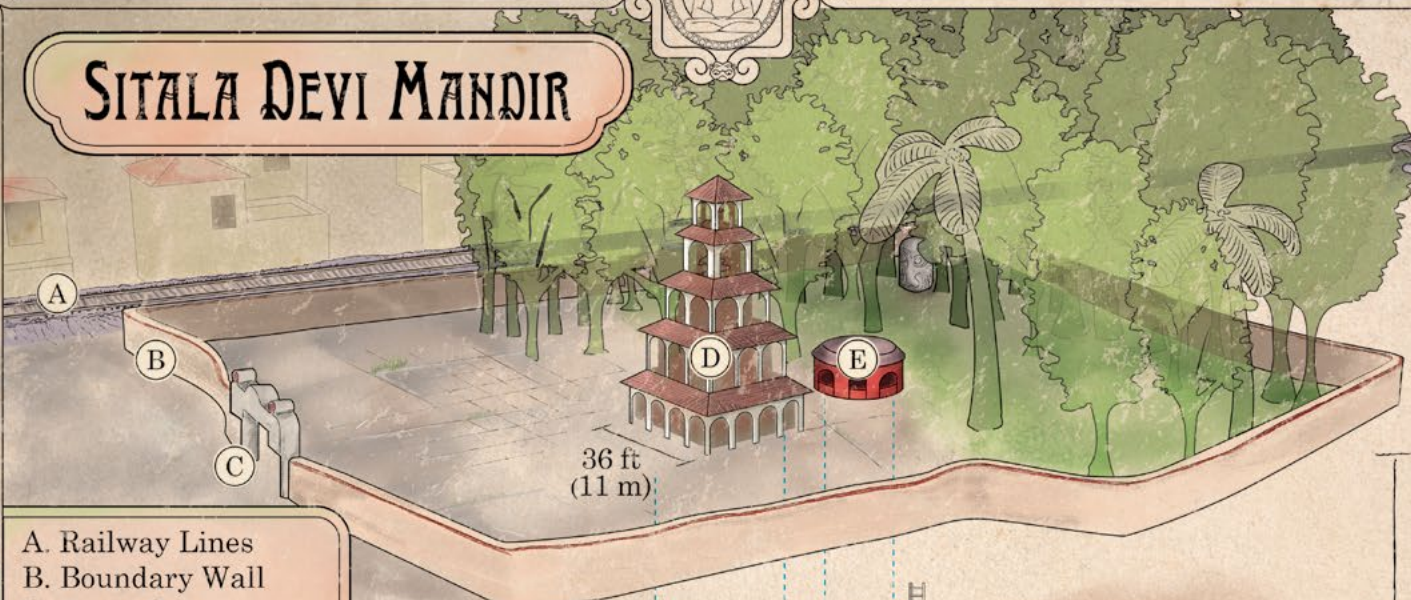
- 1 Gulzarbagh railway station
- 2 Patna Junction
- 3 Agam Kuan
- 4 High Court
- 5 Mahaveir Mandir Temple
- 6 Opium Warehouses
- 7 Patna Secretariat
- 8 Patna Devi Temple
- 9 Patna Museum
- 10 Oriental Public Library
- 11 Sultan Palace

Academic Research Atlas No.

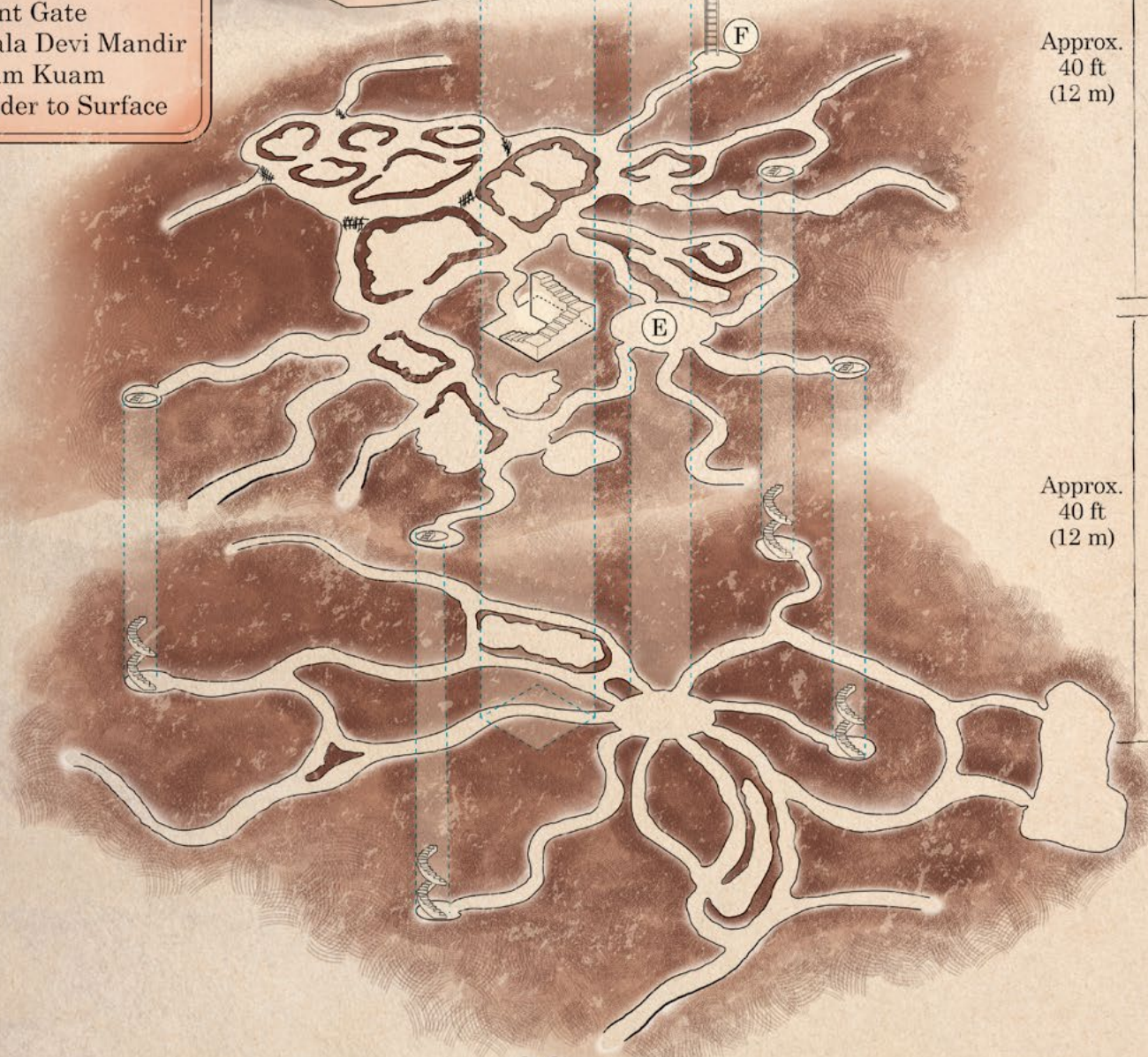
New Edition, 1924, January 1924.

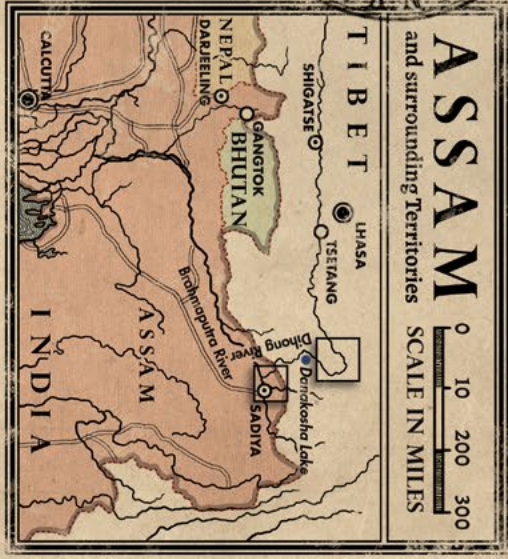
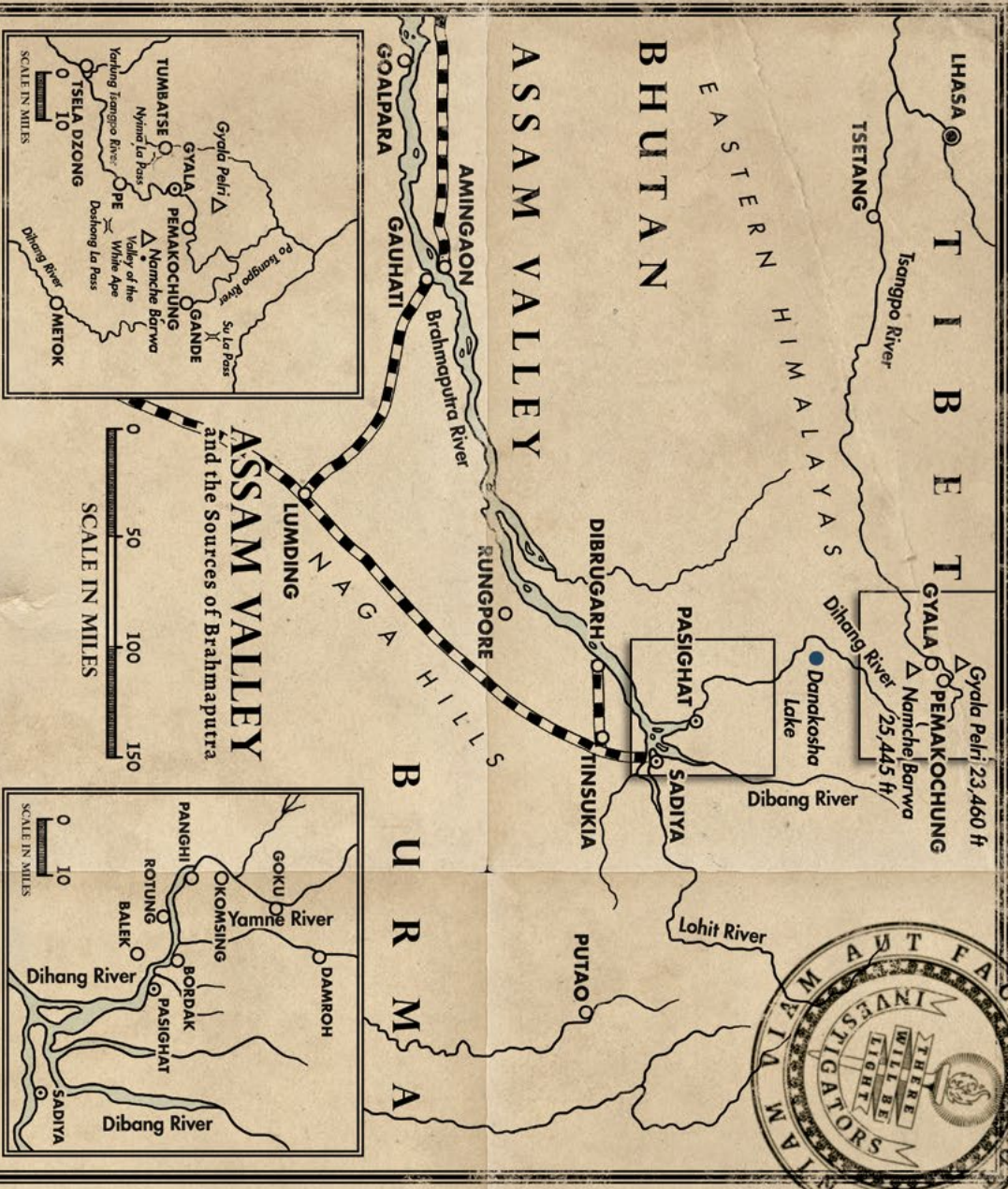


SITALA DEVI MANDIR



- A. Railway Lines
- B. Boundary Wall
- C. Front Gate
- D. Sitala Devi Mandir
- E. Agam Kuam
- F. Ladder to Surface





Map prepared for publication by Mr. Arthur J. Vardon, Cartographer.

London, Published by the Geographical Institute of the University of London, in December, 1924.
Printed by the Dabneridge Commercial Press, London.

New Edition, 1967, by ...

Academic Research Atlas No. ...

PRE-GENERATED INVESTIGATORS

This appendix contains six pre-generated investigators specifically tailored for this campaign. Two of the investigators, Timur Repin and Sofian Bazaz-Wain, have been given the additional War Experience Package, as detailed on page 61 of the *Investigator Handbook* to reflect their experiences during the Great War.

If the Keeper wishes, they may award 70 additional skill points to Chang Mei, Dr. and Mr. Lockhart, and Michael Li, to spend as their players see fit.



CHANG MEI

Age: 24 **Occupation:** Linguist, Yenching University

STR 40 **CON** 50 **SIZ** 50 **DEX** 85 **INT** 70
APP 60 **POW** 70 **EDU** 80 **SAN** 70 **HP** 10
DB: 0 **Build:** 0 **Move:** 8 **MP:** 14 **Luck:** *

***Luck:** roll 3D6 and multiply it by 5.

Skills

Art/Craft (Calligraphy)	35% (17/7)
Credit Rating	30% (15/6)
History	50% (32/13)
Language (Chinese)	80% (40/16)
Language (English)	50% (27/11)
Language (Sanskrit)	60% (30/12)
Language (Tibetan)	40% (20/8)
Library Use	70% (35/14)
Listen	40% (20/8)
Lore (Buddhism)	30% (15/6)
Persuade	50% (30/12)
Spot Hidden	75% (37/15)

Note: plus one other language of the player's choice at 35% (17/7).

Combat

Brawl	25% (12/5), damage 1D3
Dodge	55% (27/11)

Backstory

Miss Chang is one of the first women to graduate from Peking University after it opened its doors to female students in 1920. Her flair for languages, both ancient and modern, makes her a valuable addition to the American School of Archaeology at Yenching University, where she works closely with Dr. Eudora Lockhart to translate and catalogue manuscripts and finds from ancient sites across China.

Known as “Mei Mei” (“Little Sister”) to her friends, Mei is a conscientious and gifted scholar. She is well aware of the risk her family took in allowing her to pursue an academic career, particularly in these troubled times. As the eldest daughter of an old and respected Peking family, her marriage could have been used to seal business alliances or further her family's political ambitions, but her loving father indulged his clever child, and Mei works hard to repay that debt.

Mei has never left Peking, but is fascinated by the world beyond China's borders. She longs to visit the archaeological sites “her” manuscripts came from, as well as the sites Dr. Lockhart has visited across the globe. She is not sure how her absence would affect her father, though, so up until now she has been content to travel vicariously through her work. But, if the right opportunity presents itself, she knows she would be a fool to refuse.

- **Description:** slender and petite with a sparkling smile. Mei's long, black hair is usually worn in a neat bun at the nape of her neck. She wears smart, Western-style clothing, as dictated by the American School of Archaeology's dress code.
- **Ideology/Beliefs:** Mei follows her family's religious beliefs and is a quietly devout Buddhist.
- **Significant People:** her father, Chang Chou, who has always supported her in her quest to become a respected scholar. She is grateful to Dr. Lockhart for employing her as a research assistant, but she is also somewhat in awe of her feisty boss.
- **Meaningful Locations:** the Lama Temple in Peking; although it does not adhere to exactly the same form of Buddhism as the one followed by her family, Mei finds comfort in listening the monks' chants.
- **Treasured Possessions:** the beautiful antique calligraphy set her father gave to her as a graduation present.
- **Traits:** once a person has earned Mei's trust and respect, she will stand by them, no matter what.
- **Equipment:** notebook and pencils, rosewood Buddhist rosary (*mala*), calligraphy set.



PULP ADJUSTMENTS

Archetype: Scholar

Core Characteristic: change EDU to 90

Hit Points: 20

Add/Adjust Skills: History 70%, Language (English) 70%, Language (Sanskrit) 80%, Language (Tibetan) 60%, Library Use 90%.

Talents

- **Linguist:** able to determine what language is being spoken (or what is written); gains a bonus die to Language rolls.
- **Quick Study:** halve the time required for Initial and Full Reading of Mythos tomes, as well as other books.

DR. EUDORA LOCKHART

Age: 40 Occupation: Archaeologist, Yenching University

STR 60 CON 45 SIZ 60 DEX 45 INT 75
 APP 70 POW 65 EDU 90 SAN 65 HP 10
 DB: 0 Build: 0 Move: 7 MP: 13 Luck: *

*Luck: roll 3D6 and multiply it by 5.

Skills

Appraise	50% (25/10)
Archaeology	70% (35/14)
Credit Rating	40% (20/8)
History	65% (32/13)
Language (Chinese)	25% (12/5)
Language (English)	90% (45/18)
Language (Italian)	40% (20/8)
Library Use	65% (32/13)
Mechanical Repair	20% (10/4)
Navigate	40% (20/8)
Ride	40% (20/8)
Spot Hidden	60% (30/12)
Survival (Desert)	40% (20/8)

Combat

Brawl	25% (12/5), damage 1D3
Purdey shotgun (12-g, DB)	55% (27/11), damage 4D6/2D6/1D6
Dodge	45% (22/9)

Backstory

Dr. Lockhart is a formidable woman—she's worked her way from the ground up in a discipline dominated by men who don't believe a woman is tough enough to rough it in the field. But, having trained at University College, London, under the infamous Prof. William Flinders Petrie, Dr. Lockhart knows a thing or two about survival.

Born to wealthy old British industrialist Jeremiah Jessop and his second wife, Isabella, young Eudora was spared nothing in terms of indulgences or education. She traveled widely as a child, frequently visiting her Venetian mother's homeland, where she soaked up Italy's rich history and decided that, one day, she would make great discoveries of her own, like her idol, Marco Polo. Headstrong and bright, she excelled under her tutors at university, taking her lead from both Petrie and UCL's first female archaeology lecturer, Margaret Murray (*Investigator Handbook*, page 196). She was never as enthralled with Egypt as her fellow students, although it did prove a useful training ground for honing her professional skills.

During her round-the-world travels after graduating, Eudora found herself swept up in the heady social scene of Shanghai, where she met and fell in love with an agreeable young American diplomat, Charles Lockhart. They married soon afterward, much to everyone's surprise. After her husband's transfer to the American Legation in Peking, Eudora joined Peking's newly opened American School of

Archaeology, where she earned her doctorate and became their first female archaeology lecturer.

Originally drawn to China by the works of Marco Polo and the discoveries of Sir Marc Aurel Stein and his associates, Dr. Lockhart was immensely jealous when her former employer, Langdon Warner, announced his expedition to the site of the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas—she hopes to go to the site and dreams of making her own discoveries there.



- **Description:** her dark hair (which is starting to show the first few flecks of silver) and olive skin clearly denote her Italian ancestry. Although she respects the school's dress code when on site, she wears practical breeches in the field.
- **Ideology/Beliefs:** Eudora works hard to ensure open access to education and increased rights for Chinese women.
- **Significant People:** her husband, Charles, whom she is still very much in love with, even after all these years.
- **Meaningful Locations:** the American School of Archaeology, Peking, which gave her the chance to realize her dreams.
- **Treasured Possessions:** the copy of *The Travels of Marco Polo* given to her by her late mother.
- **Traits:** once Eudora sets her mind to something, it takes a great deal of time and effort to dissuade her from it.
- **Equipment:** archaeological tools, locket containing a portrait of her husband, Purdey 12-bore shotgun, a well-thumbed and heavily annotated copy of *The Travels of Marco Polo*.

PULP ADJUSTMENTS

Archetype: Explorer

Core Characteristic: change either DEX or POW to 90

Hit Points: 21

Add/Adjust Skills: Archaeology 90%, Language (Chinese) 65%, Navigate 60%, Survival (Desert) 60%.

Talents

- **Fast Load:** ignores the penalty die for reloading and firing in the same round when using a shotgun.
- **Strong Willed:** gains a bonus die when making POW rolls.

CHARLES LOCKHART

Age: 41 Occupation: Diplomat

STR 65 CON 55 SIZ 75 DEX 60 INT 75
 APP 70 POW 70 EDU 70 SAN 70 HP 13
 DB: +1D4 Build: 1 Move: 6 MP: 14 Luck: **Luck:
 roll 3D6 and multiply it by 5.

Skills

Charm	55% (27/11)
Credit Rating	40% (20/8)
Fast Talk	65% (32/13)
History	60% (30/12)
Intimidate	50% (25/10)
Language (Chinese)	55% (32/11)
Language (English)	75% (37/15)
Listen	60% (30/12)
Persuade	65% (32/13)
Psychology	60% (30/12)

Combat

Brawl	35% (17/7), damage 1D3+1D4
Dodge	30% (15/6)

Backstory

A capable athlete, Charles preferred to spend his time at college on the playing fields—when not out socializing with his peers. The life and soul of the party, Charles was always a popular guest wherever he went, and had a way with people, no matter their background. He had a keen mind, but was uninterested in business and seemed content to drift through life until fate intervened.

Ever the dutiful son, Charles became engaged to the daughter of one of Boston's oldest families, largely because it was what his parents wanted. The young lady wasn't thrilled by the arrangement, either, and subsequently eloped with another man on her wedding day, much to their respective families' horror and shame. Seeing this as an opportunity to get away from the developing scandal and out from under his parents' thumb, Charles joined the US Diplomatic Corps with the help of his uncle.

Not long afterward, he found himself on the boat to Shanghai, China, as a junior clerk to the American Legation there. The city's nightlife suited him to a tee and, surprisingly, he found the work (and the country) fascinating. Not long after his arrival, he met and fell in love with the British adventuress Eudora Jessop. After a whirlwind romance, the two married and have lived and worked side-by-side ever since.

Lockhart's transfer to Peking marked the beginning of a brief rise within the ranks of the diplomatic service; however, his evenhandedness, affable nature, and insistence on treating everyone as equals infuriated some of his stuffier superiors in the Imperial City. He remains very good at his job, and is content to

stay at his current level, where he believes he can do more good for the people he serves.



- **Description:** tall, athletic, and handsome despite his gray hair. Some consider Lockhart to be a poster boy for the American diplomatic service abroad.
- **Ideology/Beliefs:** Charles believes that all people are created equal and, as a result, he cannot abide those who treat others as lesser beings.
- **Significant People:** his wife, Dr. Eudora Lockhart; although her stubborn nature sometimes drives him to distraction, he wouldn't be without her.
- **Meaningful Locations:** the restaurant at the Shanghai Race Club, where he proposed to Eudora.
- **Treasured Possessions:** a homerun baseball signed by members of the Boston Beaneaters, which Charles caught during a game he attended as a small child.
- **Traits:** Charles has a reputation of being honest and fair in all his dealings. It's probably why he hasn't advanced all that far through the diplomatic ranks.
- **Equipment:** hipflask, his lucky baseball, calling cards, silver cigarette case given to him by Eudora.

PULP ADJUSTMENTS

Archetype: Steadfast

Core Characteristic: change CON to 90

Hit Points: 33

Add/Adjust Skills: History 80%, Persuade 85%, Psychology 80%, Spot Hidden 65%.

Talents

- **Endurance:** gains a bonus die when making CON rolls (including to determine MOV rate for chases).
- **Fleet Footed:** may spend 10 Luck to avoid being "outnumbered" in melee combat for one combat encounter.

PRE-GENERATED INVESTIGATORS

MICHAEL LI

Age: 26 Occupation: Christian Missionary

STR 60 CON 60 SIZ 65 DEX 45 INT 65
APP 60 POW 65 EDU 65 SAN 65 HP 12
DB: +1D4 Build: 1 Move: 7 MP: 13 Luck: *

*Luck: roll 3D6 and multiply it by 5.

Skills

Anthropology	25% (12/5)
Credit Rating	10% (5/2)
First Aid	45% (22/9)
Language (Chinese)	55% (27/11)
Language (English)	65% (32/13)
Lore (Buddhism)	25% (12/5)
Lore (Christianity)	50% (25/10)
Lore (Other Faiths)	30% (15/6)
Medicine	30% (15/6)
Natural World	30% (15/6)
Persuade	50% (25/12)
Psychology	50% (25/12)
Spot Hidden	50% (25/12)
Survival (Desert)	30% (15/6)

Combat

Brawl	25% (12/5), damage 1D3+1D4
Dodge	45% (22/9)

Backstory

Born Li Jianyu to a poor family in Shantung (Shandong) Province, Jianyu lost his birth parents in the Boxer Rebellion, which targeted (among others) Christian converts and their families. Rescued by a fleeing Scottish Protestant missionary, Grace Strachan, little Jianyu found himself holed up in the Foreign Legation Quarter in Peking during its infamous siege, which he was lucky to survive.

Under the tutelage of his adopted mother, Michael (as he became known) quickly learned all about his parents' adopted faith. Once the political ramifications of the Boxer uprising had subsided, he traveled across Kokonor (Qinghai) and Sinkiang (Xinjiang) at Miss Strachan's side, aiding her in her missionary work for the China Inland Mission.

Despite his upbringing and his chosen profession, Michael has a keen interest in the religions of those around him and has taken the time to learn as much as he can about the Muslim, Buddhist, and Taoist faiths he has encountered during his travels. He finds the parallels between the doctrines fascinating and likes nothing better than to discuss intricate points of religious lore with the learned elders in the towns he visits. As a result, his proselytizing is not, perhaps, as enthusiastic as it should be, much to his mother's distress.

He is currently in Peking visiting old missionary friends, several of whom work for Yenching University. While in the city, he's taken the opportunity to tour the various religious sites, including the Lama

Temple and Peking's various Catholic cathedrals. He is secretly working on a manuscript about his travels across China and the interesting people he has met along the way.



- **Description:** in accordance with China Inland Missions' protocols, Michael dresses in traditional Chinese clothing, consisting of a long robe topped with a Chinese-style waistcoat. He wears his hair in a rather old-fashioned pigtail.
- **Ideology/Beliefs:** Michael believes in a god, he's just not entirely certain which one—they're all so fascinating.
- **Significant People:** his adopted mother, Grace Strachan, to whom he owes his life.
- **Meaningful Locations:** the British Legation, Peking; without their shelter, he and his mother would have perished during the Boxer Rebellion.
- **Treasured Possessions:** a songbird Michael raised from a chick after it fell from its nest and was injured. The bird lives in an ornate, antique cage.
- **Traits:** in keeping with the tenets of his Christian faith, Michael tries to be generous and kind, and shares whatever he has with those in need.
- **Equipment:** heavily worn Bible (King James Version), book notes.

PULP ADJUSTMENTS

Archetype: Sidekick

Core Characteristic: change either DEX or CON to 90

Hit Points: 25 (or 31)

Add/Adjust Skills: First Aid 65%, Listen 60%, Navigate 30%, Stealth 40%.

Talents

- **Resilient:** may spend Luck points to shrug off Sanity loss, on a one-for-one basis.
- **Resourceful:** always seems to have what they need to hand; may spend 10 Luck points (rather than make Luck roll) to find a certain useful piece of equipment (e.g. a flashlight, length of rope, a weapon, etc.) in their current location.

TIMUR STEPANOVICH REPIN

Age: 26 **Occupation:** White Army Russian refugee

STR 60 **CON** 60 **SIZ** 70 **DEX** 90 **INT** 70
APP 50 **POW** 70 **EDU** 60 **SAN** 58 **HP** 13
DB: +1D4 **Build:** 1 **Move:** 8 **MP:** 14 **Luck:** *

**Luck:* roll 3D6 and multiply it by 5.

Note: immune to Sanity loss from viewing a corpse or gross injury.

Skills

Art/Craft (Acting)	50% (25/10)
Credit Rating	20% (10/4)
Firearms (Rifle)	40% (20/8)
First Aid	50% (25/10)
History (Art)	45% (22/9)
Intimidate	65% (32/13)
Language (Chinese)	35% (17/7)
Language (English)	25% (12/5)
Language (Russian)	60% (30/12)
Listen	60% (30/12)
Navigate	30% (15/6)
Psychology	60% (30/12)
Spot Hidden	45% (22/9)
Stealth	50% (25/10)
Survival (Desert)	30% (15/6)
Throw	35% (17/7)

Combat

Brawl	55% (27/11), damage 1D3+1D4
Mauser C96 pistol	65% (32/13), damage 1D10+2
Dodge	55% (27/11)

Backstory

The young Russian had at one point hoped to join the Imperial Russian Ballet, but he was drafted at the outset of the Great War, and went on to serve with distinction on the Eastern Front. Realizing all was lost near the war's end, he finally fled across the Chinese border on the Trans-Siberian Express in 1920, eventually making his way to Peking and the Russian Spiritual Mission. After years of hard work, first as a janitor at Yenching University and then as an assistant and occasional art history expert with Dr. Eudora Lockhart, Repin has made a new life for himself in China. The imminent arrival of the first Soviet Ambassador to Peking fills him with dread, and he wonders if the time has come to head for even further shores—perhaps even the United States of America.

Or so he says... In reality, while tales of his life before the Revolution are true, Repin was sickened by the decadence and callousness he saw on display during his childhood. He secretly joined the Bolsheviks and is on the Soviet payroll. He isn't running from anyone—he was sent to Peking to spy on the White Russian

expatriate community and report back to his masters in Moscow, as well as to gather useful information on foreign activities in China.



- **Description:** strong, lithe, and athletic, Repin would have made a good dancer. Otherwise, he is fairly non-descript (something of an advantage given his line of work), although there is a haunted look in his eyes.
- **Ideology/Beliefs:** Repin is a Communist through and through, although he must keep his political opinions to himself if he doesn't want to blow his cover.
- **Significant People:** his young daughter, Manya. Repin wants to make the world a better place for his little girl. The girl's mother, Tamara Aleksandrovna Tyutcheva, is a genuine White Russian refugee, unlike her husband; as Repin views his marriage to Tamara as one of convenience to maintain his cover, she is not one of his Significant People.
- **Meaningful Locations:** the Hermitage, Petrograd (Saint Petersburg). Despite his loathing of the Tsarist regime, Repin has many happy memories of his childhood playground.
- **Treasured Possessions:** his Mauser pistol; the gun has saved his life on more than one occasion.
- **Traits:** Repin is quite prepared to die for his beliefs if his Soviet masters deem it necessary.
- **Phobias & Manias:** ligyrophobia—the fear of sudden loud noises.
- **Equipment:** Mauser C96 “Broomhandle” pistol.

PULP ADJUSTMENTS

Archetype: Cold Blooded

Core Characteristic: change INT to 90

Hit Points: 26

Add/Adjust Skills: Art/Craft (Acting) 70%, Firearms (Handgun) 85%, Intimidate 85%, Stealth 70%, Survival (Desert) 50%.

Talents

- **Hardened:** ignores Sanity point loss from attacking other humans, viewing horrific injuries, or the deceased.
- **Rapid Attack:** may spend 10 Luck points to gain one further melee attack in a single combat round.

SOFIAN BAZAZ-WAIN

Age: 49 Occupation: Photojournalist and Explorer

STR 60 CON 45 SIZ 70 DEX 60 INT 70
 APP 50 POW 50 EDU 87 SAN 44 HP 11
 DB: +1D4 Build: 1 Move: 6 MP: 10 Luck: *

*Luck: roll 3D6 and multiply it by 5.

Note: immune to Sanity loss from viewing a corpse or gross injury.

Skills

Art/Craft (Photography)	65% (32/13)
Art/Craft (Writing)	35% (17/7)
Charm	65% (32/13)
Climb	30% (15/6)
Credit Rating	30% (15/6)
First Aid	40% (20/8)
History (Exploration)	45% (22/9)
Language (English)	90% (45/18)
Language (French)	35% (17/7)
Language (Hindustani)	55% (27/11)
Natural World	40% (20/8)
Navigate	40% (20/8)
Psychology	60% (30/12)
Science (Chemistry)	40% (20/8)
Spot Hidden	60% (30/12)
Stealth	40% (20/8)
Survival (Desert)	30% (15/6)

Combat

Brawl	25% (12/5), damage 1D3+1D4
Webley .38 revolver	50% (25/10), damage 1D10
Dodge	30% (15/6)

Backstory

Fascinated by explorers and their adventures, Sofian and his little brother, Adem, used to plan their own expeditions from their home in Srinagar, in the Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir, across the Karakorums and on into the mysterious lands where their ancestors' wealth had originated. When they were older, the two actually made the journey across the Taklamakan Desert, as far as Sian—in fact, not long after Sir Marc Aurel Stein made his famous discovery at Tun-huang. Sofian's published article and accompanying photographs made the brothers famous and gave his career as a freelance journalist a much-needed boost.

Other trips around the world, either alone at the behest of organizations (such as the Asiatic Society) or as an expedition photographer and reporter, soon followed, although the Great War saw a change of occupation to war correspondent as Sofian was deemed too old to enlist. Adem's death on the Western Front in 1917 was a devastating blow to his family and Sofian in particular; for a brief moment he contemplated giving up his travels. But,

in the end, he felt driven to continue them in honor of his brother.



- **Description:** tall and well-built, Sofian's midriff is definitely beginning to expand now that his adventuring days are drawing to a close. Apart from a few wrinkles (laughter lines, he insists), he could easily pass for a man ten years younger. He tends to dress in Western-style suits, but adopts the relevant native garb when on expedition.
- **Ideology/Beliefs:** as a devotee of Islam, Sofian attempts to follow the five pillars of his faith as best he can.
- **Significant People:** Adem, his youngest brother, killed while serving in the Great War. Adem was a dreamer who wanted to see the world and everything it had to offer; Sofian travels to honor his memory.
- **Meaningful Locations:** although Sofian now lives in Delhi, visits home to Srinagar—its lakes, gardens, and boats—always fill him with a sense of great peace.
- **Treasured Possessions:** his faithful Thornton Pickard Royal Ruby field camera.
- **Traits:** Sofian has always been ambitious, even if his desire to explore and document the world's empty spaces is starting to diminish with age.
- **Phobias & Manias:** ecdemomania—a compulsion to travel or wander.
- **Equipment:** Thornton Pickard Royal Ruby field camera, camera equipment (flash, tripod, developing chemicals, etc.), photographic plates, travel journal and pencil.

PULP ADJUSTMENTS

Archetype: Explorer

Core Characteristic: change either DEX or POW to 90

Hit Points: 23

Add/Adjust Skills: Natural World 60%, Navigate 60%, Survival (Desert) 60%, Track 50%.

Talents

- **Hardened:** ignores Sanity point loss from attacking other humans, or from viewing horrific injuries or the deceased.
- **Stout Constitution:** may spend 10 Luck points to reduce poison or disease damage and effects by half.

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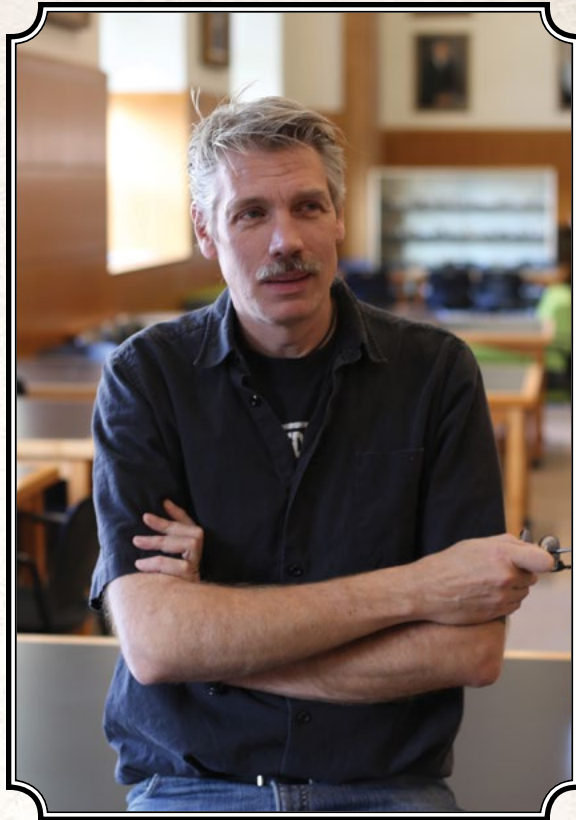
**LYNNE HARDY**

Originally trained as a biomedical scientist, Lynne discovered roleplaying games back in the mists of time—or the early 1990s, as they're more commonly known. The second game she ever played was *Call of Cthulhu* and, after writing and editing for companies such as Nightfall Games, Cubicle 7, and Pelgrane Press, she returned to the non-Euclidian fold to act as the lead writer, editor, and line developer on the multi-award winning *Achtung! Cthulhu* Kickstarter project for Modiphius Entertainment. She is now Associate Editor at Chaosium for *Call of Cthulhu* and Line Editor for the upcoming *Rivers of London RPG*. Lynne doesn't like horror films much as they're far too scary, but she is rather fond of tea and fountain pens. And a nice G&T, of course...



CALEB CLEVELAND

Caleb Cleveland has been an illustrator in the gaming and publishing industry for over 17 years. He's Art Director at Hunters Entertainment, where he co-created the ENnie Award-winning children's books *The ABCs of D&D* and *The 123s of D&D*. He's been an art instructor at LCAD since 2012. *The Children of Fear* marks his 20th project with Chaosium, and he looks forward to many more.



MATT RYAN

is one of those general-purpose creative types, who can do a little bit in several artistic fields. In his many adventures he has directed live television, shot and edited film shorts, acted on stage, produced and hosted audio podcasts, taught digital audio and video editing skills, and had a very brief stint playing in a punk rock band. His passion is role-playing games, and he remembers saving his lunch money to buy the first edition of the *Dungeon Masters Guide*, back in the late '70s, which still sits on his shelf. In the 2000s he wrote several RPG adventures and splat books for various games, and in the last few years has been lucky enough to add his cartography skills to numerous books for Chaosium. Matt lives in the Finger Lakes region of Central New York State with his wife, daughter, greyhound, 3 cats, and giant cichlid.



NICHOLAS NACARIO

is an award-winning graphic designer, art director, and part of the creative team behind the *Call of Cthulhu* roleplaying game. His short stories, essays, and *Call of Cthulhu* scenarios have appeared in various fiction and roleplay gaming publications such as *Corporate Cthulhu*, *Destroy All Robots*, *Down Darker Trails*, *Ill-Considered Expeditions*, and *Legends of New Orleans*. He is originally from the San Francisco Bay Area and now resides in Portland, OR.



MIKE MASON

is an award-winning game developer and creative director for the *Call of Cthulhu* roleplaying game. Mike is the co-writer of *Call of Cthulhu 7th edition*, *Pulp Cthulhu*, and also took the lead on the *Call of Cthulhu Starter Set* and the revised *Masks of Nyarlathotep*; in fact, traces of Mike's tentacles can be found on every book in the line. Around the millennium, Mike published *The Whisperer*, a zine devoted to *Call of Cthulhu*, and ran the Kult of Keepers, a group of *Call of Cthulhu* scenario writers organizing numerous convention games. Mike previously worked for Games Workshop as the Line Manager and co-writer of the ENnie Award winning *Warhammer 40,000 RPG Dark Heresy*. Mike lives in the Midlands of England, betwixt the rolling Derbyshire Peaks and the Satanic Mills of Nottinghamshire.



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CHILDREN OF FEAR

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Printed in Lithuania

