

THE MARTIAL DISCIPLE

MARTIAL ARTISTS FOR CONAN THE ROLEPLAYING GAME

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Yasmina, watching, did not see by what roguery of movement or illusion the man in the green turban avoided the terrible disembowelling thrust. But the keen blade whickered between side and lifted arm, and to Yasmina it seemed that Khemsa merely brushed his open palm lightly against Conan's bull-neck. But the Cimmerian went down like a slain ox.

Robert E. Howard, 'The People of the Black Circle'



From the Rakshas enslaved to the Black Circle to the unfathomable masters of far Khitai, a handful of Hyborian age warriors eschew armour and weapons in favour of esoteric disciplines. These strange arts, pre-Atlantean or perhaps pre-human, give them strength and speed beyond the limits of ordinary men. Some say they are more akin to sorcery than swordplay; certainly in their mysticism – and, often, their madness – these martial disciples share much with the dread scholars of the dark arts.

Adventures: Who can say what drives a man to dedicate his life to the mastery of body and soul, or what drives such a master to traverse the dark places of the world? Most martial disciples are shackled, either by their strange masters or by their own will, to a monastery or cult. When they wander the world it is generally on the business of their superiors. A few come into possession of ancient secrets by other means, either stumbling across the

same inventions that fired the first masters by strange chance or finding manuals from the pre-cataclysmic age. These martial disciples are far more likely to travel and adventure. Martial disciples are an alien breed to the Hyborian races, however, and when they join a band of adventurers it is generally for their own esoteric purposes, little understood by other folk.

Characteristics: Most martial disciples are immediately recognisable while travelling the Hyborian nations or their immediate neighbours, as by far the greatest number hail from the distant east. Martial disciples not enslaved to some dread order are generally self-sufficient and self-contained, speaking little and sagely. They are more likely to be mistaken for scholars than any other warrior class. The martial disciple's most formidable skills revolve around unarmed combat, and so most travel lightly armed, if armed at all.

Religion: Martial disciples often follow the strange gods of distant climes, often dedicating themselves to a particular idol or effigy that represents an aspect of their fighting style. Some literally worship the terrible masters of their order as some of those masters seem more akin to gods than mortals. Other martial disciples scorn the gods entirely; like corrupt and decadent sorcerers, they prize their own arts above all else, natural or supernatural. A few, often multiclass scholar-disciples, seek to further

their mental and martial prowess by trucking with black things from the outer dark. These last are often the deadliest martial disciples of all; they are certainly the most terrible.

Background: Depending on the method by which they acquired their arts, martial disciples may hail from almost any background. Khitans comprise the majority of martial disciples, for many temples in that land preserve some dim

memory of ancient styles. The black seers of Yimsha, in the Himelians, also trained their apprentices in strange martial arts. Elsewhere in the world, lost manuals of body and mind await only an intrepid or foolish adventurer to

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Level	Base Attack Bonus	Base Dodge Bonus	Base Parry Bonus	Magic Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0	+2	+2	Improved Unarmed Strike
2	+1	+1	+1	+1	+0	+3	+3	Martial Discipline
3	+2	+2	+2	+1	+1	+3	+3	Acrobatics +5, Disciplined Defence
4	+3	+3	+3	+2	+1	+4	+4	Uncanny Dodge
5	+3	+3	+3	+2	+1	+4	+4	Mobility
6	+4	+4	+4	+3	+2	+5	+5	–
7	+5	+5	+5	+3	+2	+5	+5	Improved Martial Discipline
8	+6/+1	+6	+6	+4	+2	+6	+6	Improved Uncanny Dodge
9	+6/+1	+6	+6	+4	+3	+6	+6	Acrobatics +10, Disciplined Blow
10	+7/+2	+7	+7	+5	+3	+7	+7	Improved Mobility, Damage Reduction 1/-
11	+8/+3	+8	+8	+5	+3	+7	+7	Speed of the Hare
12	+9/+4	+9	+9	+6	+4	+8	+8	–
13	+9/+4	+9	+9	+6	+4	+8	+8	Damage Reduction 2/-
14	+10/+5	+10	+10	+7	+4	+9	+9	Greater Martial Discipline
15	+11/+6/+1	+11	+11	+7	+5	+9	+9	Greater Mobility, Acrobatics +15
16	+12/+7/+2	+12	+12	+8	+5	+10	+10	Damage Reduction 3/-
17	+12/+7/+2	+12	+12	+8	+5	+10	+10	Speed of the Wind
18	+13/+8/+3	+13	+13	+9	+6	+11	+11	–
19	+14/+9/+4	+14	+14	+9	+6	+11	+11	Damage Reduction 4/-
20	+15/+10/+5	+15	+15	+10	+6	+12	+12	Master Martial Discipline

return their secrets to the world of the living in the form of new varieties of martial disciple. All martial disciples display a level of detachment and discipline rare outside of sorcerous circles, if, indeed, they are themselves outside those circles.

GAMERULEINFORMATION

Abilities: The martial disciple needs a high Wisdom to get best use from many of his class features, particularly if he pursues one of the more mystical martial disciplines. A high Dexterity helps him survive unarmoured in a world of mailed warriors, and also to finesse an unarmed strike through kinks in that mail. Strength increases the damage dealt by a martial disciple, Constitution his own ability to survive. Finally, many martial disciple class skills are based off of Intelligence.

Hit Dice: d8 (average)

CLASS SKILLS

The martial disciple's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Craft (alchemy) (Int), Craft (herbalism) (Int), Craft (any mundane) (Int), Decipher Script (Int), Escape Artist (Dex), Heal (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (arcane) (Int), Knowledge (history) (Int), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Spot (Wis), Swim (Str), Tumble (Dex) and Use Rope (Dex).

Skill Points at 1st Level: (4 + Int modifier) x4

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 4 + Int modifier

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the martial disciple.

Weapon and Armour Proficiency: A martial disciple is proficient with all simple weapons. Note that armour check penalties for wearing medium or heavy armour apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Sleight-of-Hand and Tumble. Also, Swim checks suffer a -1 penalty for every 5 pounds of armour and equipment carried.

Improved Unarmed Strike: At 1st level, the martial disciple gains Improved Unarmed Strike as a bonus feat.



Martial Disciple: Upon attaining his 2nd level in this class, the disciple chooses one (and only one) martial discipline to which he dedicates his training. He cannot later change his discipline, nor can he acquire another. Many characters, particularly those who do not begin their adventuring careers as disciples, have little choice in the discipline they practice – they must accept whatever teachings esoteric writings or venerable teachers deign to grant them.

At the games master's option, other martial disciplines may be available in addition to, or in place of, those listed below.

Fell Hand Discipline – Strike the Soul (Su): The disciple may add his magic attack bonus to his unarmed attacks in place of his base attack bonus. If he does so, his opponent must use his own magic attack bonus for defence, rather than his parry or dodge defence.

While using this technique with a full-attack action, the disciple may make as many iterative attacks as his base attack bonus would allow, at the usual penalties.

Flesh of Mountains Discipline – Surmount the Dagger (Ex): While unarmoured, the disciple gains damage reduction 2/-. This is identical to the damage reduction provided by armour, and stacks with that provided by this class or the barbarian class.

Iron-Banded Discipline – Snapping Mongoose Strike (Ex): The disciple can initiate a grapple attempt whenever he deals damage with an unarmed strike. If the disciple does not possess the Improved Grapple feat, he still provokes an attack of opportunity normally.

Mighty Blows Discipline – Dread Blow (Ex): The disciple may sacrifice any additional



attacks he may be entitled to in order to make a single, deadly unarmed strike, as a full-round action. Should it hit, this blow is automatically treated as a critical threat.

Thousand Blows Discipline – Second Hand

(Ex): The disciple gains Two-Weapon Combat Proficiency as a bonus feat, even if he does not meet the prerequisites.

While fighting unarmed, the disciple is treated as fighting with two weapons.

Acrobatics: By 3rd level, the martial disciple learns to push his body in ways ordinary men would consider impossible. He gains a +5 bonus to jump, tumble and balance checks. This is an extraordinary ability.

At 9th level, this bonus increases to +10.

At 15th level, this bonus increases to +15.

Disciplined Defence: At 3rd level, the disciple learns how to turn his preternatural awareness of self and surroundings into defence. While unarmoured or wearing light armour, he gains a bonus to Defence equal to his Wisdom modifier (if positive). This is an extraordinary ability.

Mobility: From 5th level onwards, the martial disciple gets a +4 bonus to Dodge Defence against attacks of opportunity caused when he moves out of or within a threatened area. If the disciple already has Mobility from some other source, such as being a 5th level nomad already, he instead gains Improved Mobility (see below). Note that Mobility does not apply if the disciple is mounted. This is an extraordinary ability.

Improved Martial Discipline: At 7th level, the disciple masters a more advanced technique associated with his martial discipline. He must select this technique from the same tree as his first martial discipline.

Fell Hand Discipline – Blows Undreamt (Su): The disciple adds his magic attack bonus to the armour piercing rating of his unarmed strikes.

Flesh of Mountains Discipline – Scorn the Blade

(Ex): While unarmoured, the disciple gains damage reduction 4/-, superseding that provided by the Surmount the Dagger discipline. This is identical to the damage reduction provided by armour, and stacks with that provided by this class or the barbarian class.

Iron-Banded Discipline – One Hundred Hands

(Ex): The disciple is treated as a Large creature for purposes of grappling. He gains a +4 bonus on grapple checks and may become immune to the improved grab ability of certain creatures.

Mighty Blows Discipline – Stunning Blow
(Ex): Any critical hit the disciple lands with an unarmed strike automatically stuns his target for 1d4-1 rounds. The target gets a Fortitude save (DC 10 + ½ the disciple's class level + the disciple's Wisdom modifier) to resist this effect.

Thousand Blows Discipline – Forest of Fists

(Ex): When multiple enemies attack the disciple, they do not gain the usual cumulative bonuses to their attacks. The disciple can still be flanked, however.

Disciplined Blow: At 9th level, the disciple learns how to better focus the energy of his body and mind. He adds his Wisdom modifier (if positive) to attack rolls in addition to either his Strength or Dexterity modifier.

Damage Reduction: Starting at 10th level, the martial disciple gains the extraordinary ability to shrug off some amount of injury from each blow or attack. Subtract 1 from the damage the disciple takes each time he is dealt damage. At 13th level, this damage reduction rises to 2. At 16th, it rises to 3. At 19th, it rises to 4. Damage reduction can reduce damage to 0 but not below 0.

Improved Mobility: From 10th level onwards, the disciple never provokes attacks of opportunity, whatever he does, so long as he moves at least 10 feet during the combat round. If the disciple somehow already has Improved Mobility, such as for already having had Mobility from another source before reaching 5th level and so gaining Improved Mobility at 5th level instead of Mobility, then he instead gains Greater Mobility (see below). Note that Improved Mobility does not apply if the disciple is mounted. This is an extraordinary ability.

Speed of the Hare: An 11th-level disciple moves at speed ordinary men struggle to match. His base speed increases by 30 feet. This is an extraordinary ability.

Greater Martial Discipline: At 14th level, the disciple nears full mastery of his esoteric art, and can execute a new technique derived from those he already learned. He must select this technique from the same tree as his first martial discipline.

Fell Hand Discipline - Clasp the Mind (Su): When the disciple damages an opponent with an unarmed strike, he also drains 1d6 power points from his target. If the victim has no further power points, or never had any to begin with, he instead suffers one point of temporary Wisdom damage.

Flesh of Mountains Discipline – Defy the Hammer (Ex): While unarmoured, the disciple gains damage reduction 6/-, superseding that provided by the Scorn the Blade discipline. This is identical to the damage reduction provided by armour, and stacks with that provided by this class or the barbarian class.

Iron-Banded Discipline – Cage of Limbs (Ex): The disciple is treated as a Huge creature for purposes of grappling. He gains a +8 bonus on grapple checks and may become immune to the improved grab ability of certain creatures.

Mighty Blows Discipline – Tree-Fell Strike (Su): The disciple strikes with such overwhelming force that his critical hits deal extra damage even to objects or creatures normally immune to such effects, such as plants.

Thousand Blows Discipline – One Thousand As One (Ex): The disciple adds together the damage

he dealt his target in that round. Damage reduction is applied to the total damage, rather than the individual blows.

Greater Mobility: From 15th level onwards, the disciple may move up to his speed as part of a full attack action, rather than merely taking a five-foot step. He may move and attack in any order, so he might for example move five feet, attack once, move another five feet, attack twice more and then move again for the remaining 50 feet of his movement. Note that greater mobility does not apply if the disciple is mounted or wearing heavy armour. This is an extraordinary ability.

Speed of the Wind: A 17th level disciple possesses remarkable quickness, and often seems to move faster than the eye can see. His base speed increases by an additional 30 feet. This stacks with the Speed Of The Hare class feature. This is an extraordinary ability.

Master Martial Discipline: Upon attaining 20th level, the martial disciple reaches the pinnacle of his achievement as he is inducted into the master technique of his chosen discipline, the most terrible secret of his art. Many of these strange and esoteric manoeuvres rely as much upon sorcery as sinew, for the disciple has now achieved a state almost akin to that of a mystical being. The disciple must select this technique from the same tree as his first martial discipline.

Fell Hand Discipline – Blind God's Eye (Su): The disciple can make unarmed strikes at a distance while using his Strike the Soul technique. He effectively adds 15 feet to his reach. He can make attacks of opportunity, grant or benefit from flanking bonuses, trip, disarm, sunder or even grapple any opponent within his expanded reach, just as if he were within a few

feet of his target. This is not a ranged attack and does not provoke attacks of opportunity from nearby enemies.

Flesh of Mountains Discipline – Dream the Mountain (Su): The disciple applies his damage reduction even to magical and energy attacks that would otherwise affect him normally.

Iron-Banded Discipline – Iron God's Grasp (Ex): The disciple is treated as a Gargantuan creature for purposes of grappling. He gains a +16 bonus on grapple checks and may become immune to the improved grab ability of certain creatures.

The disciple has the option to conduct a grapple normally or to hold the opponent one-handed. If he chooses to do the latter, he takes a –20 penalty on grapple checks, but is not considered grappled himself.

Mighty Blows Discipline – Dread God's Hammer (Ex): The disciple automatically confirms a critical threat, including one dealt by his Dread Blow class feature.

Furthermore, any creature that fails its save against his Stunning Blow technique is stunned for 1d4-1 minutes.

Thousand Blows Discipline – Storm of Wrath (Ex): The disciple gains Whirlwind Attack as a bonus feat, even if he does not meet the prerequisites.

The disciple may make a Whirlwind Attack as an attack, rather than a full-attack action, allowing him to use it as part of his normal attack routine. As such, he can make multiple Whirlwind Attacks in a round, take a move action and use a Whirlwind Attack, or combine a Whirlwind Attack with other attacks.

