

# DRAGON 龍拳 FIST

THE ROLEPLAYING GAME OF MARTIAL ARTS ACTION



**Chris Pramas**



CREDITS

# DRAGON 龍 MIGHTY FIRST™

THE ROLEPLAYING GAME OF MARTIAL ARTS ACTION

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## INTRODUCTION

Ji Dayi, Lord Shaman of Tianguo, approached Emperor Jianmin's private quarters. His eyes were creased with concern, and he hardly noticed the imperial guards lining the corridor. He had been summoned to attend the emperor, and he knew better than to refuse. Jianmin had been increasingly unstable of late; Dayi feared he knew the reason.

Passing through the gold-lacquered doors of the imperial bedrooms, the shaman tried to maintain a blank face. He knew he would find a gaggle of eunuchs inside, filling Jianmin's ears with nonsense. It angered Dayi that these half-men had managed to worm their way into the emperor's favor—yet another sign that Jianmin was not well.

As expected, the emperor was attended by his eunuch favorites. Ji Dayi tried to ignore them, dropping to his knees and intoning, "Ji Dayi of the White Lotus greets the Son of Heaven. I am humbled before your magnificence, my lord."

The emperor, eyes sharp even though his face was drawn, motioned him up. "We're alone, Dayi; no need for ceremony."

The shaman glanced meaningfully at the eunuchs and cleared his throat. Emperor Jianmin quickly ordered them out, and Ji relaxed. "Now we are alone, my lord. So tell me, what ails you?"

The emperor sat up on his divan. "I am hungry," he said simply.

Ji Dayi looked about the emperor's chambers. The suite was littered with trays of food, most of it uneaten. Delicacies from all nine provinces were scattered about, enough to feed a dozen families for a week. The shaman smiled. "Surely you have your choice of the empire's foodstuffs, my lord. What could you possibly crave that you cannot have?"

The emperor stood up and began to pace, "That's just it, Dayi—I don't know. I only know that I . . . hunger. I eat this food, and it tastes like ash. I cannot tell you what I want, only that I need it."

Ji walked up to the emperor and said, "Let me examine you." Jianmin nodded, and the shaman began. He called upon all the spirits under his command; he cast spell after spell; he invoked the Lord of Heaven and the Celestial Bureaucracy, and still he could not alleviate the emperor's condition. After several hours, he slumped before the divan, exhausted.

Jianmin looked at him intently. "Well?"

Ji sighed. "I have used all my magic, and it has told me nothing. Yet, I think, any fool could solve this puzzle."

"What do you mean, shaman? And don't forget who you are talking to!"

"I could never forget, my lord," Ji whispered. He had feared this moment, but he knew it had to be said. He jumped to his feet and looked into Jianmin's eyes. "One year ago you were approached by a peasant who offered you a lotus blossom and promised you immortality. You ate that flower and got your youth back—but there was a cost."

The emperor stared right back at Ji, and the shaman could see anger beginning to smolder in his eyes. "Go on," barked Jianmin.

"We all know that was no peasant. He said that his price was souls and that you'd have to pay. Did you think you could escape? This hunger of yours stems from that tainted lotus, and it is dark indeed. I tell you plainly, Jianmin, that peasant was a demon, and his gift was cursed. If you do not let me remove the curse from you, it will be a disaster for the empire!"

The emperor stood still for a moment, then moved with blinding speed. Before Ji Dayi could react, Jianmin jabbed him in the throat, the chest, the abdomen. As quickly as that, Ji was paralyzed. Focusing his chi to its utmost barely allowed him to speak. "You've . . . blocked . . . my . . . valves," he choked out.

The emperor laughed. "That's right, shaman. My martial arts are superior!"

Ji Dayi could say nothing in reply. The emperor looked him up and down, his face full of disgust. With a roar, Jianmin spun about and delivered a kick that sent the shaman flying across the room. He tore through drapery and smashed through a wall, landing in a heap amid a pile of masonry. Although he could feel every broken bone in his body, Ji still could not move.

Jianmin jumped through the wall, destroying more of it with his powerful fists. "I knew you were jealous of me, shaman. That lotus gave me immortality and ultimate fighting power! And you ask me to give it up?" The emperor picked up Ji with one hand and spun the rigid shaman over his head

before launching him back into the bedchamber.

“I am the Son of Heaven!” roared Emperor Jianmin. “You have betrayed me, and the price of betrayal is death!”

Ji Dayi could only watch as the emperor’s hand wrapped around his windpipe. Despite his focused chi, he could not resist such power. Cackling with glee, Jianmin tore the throat from his Lord Shaman. As the blood gushed over the priceless imperial robes, Jianmin felt a peculiar kind of satisfaction. In a flash, he understood how to feed his hunger—and he laughed again.

“Now I know the secret you tried to keep from me, Ji Dayi. Thanks to your meddling, I am truly invincible!”

Ji Dayi could not answer. His eyes were glassy in their deathly stare. But his soul was screaming its way to Hell, and the Earth echoed with his cries for vengeance.

## Welcome to Dragon Fist!

*Dragon Fist™* is a game inspired by Hong Kong martial arts movies, especially those of the wuxia genre. This is a game of high-flying kung fu fighters, cackling eunuch sorcerers, weird hopping vampires, and awful demons who are dead only when they blow up. Realistic? Hell no! This is pure cinema. If you want a precise simulation of martial arts, look elsewhere. If you want to have a blast playing an action hero, read on.

### Is This an AD&D Supplement?

While this may look like an **Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®** supplement, it is in fact a standalone roleplaying game. The rules are an **AD&D®** variant, though, so if you’ve played **AD&D** before, you’ll find much here that’s familiar. Read carefully, however, since some liberties have been taken with the rules to better simulate the genre.

If you’ve never played **AD&D** before, not to worry. This rulebook contains everything you need to enter the exciting world of Dragon Fist. You’ll learn about the Empire of Tianguo, how to make a character, and, most importantly, how to kick butt HK style.

### What the Hell is Wuxia?

Wuxia [woo-zha] is the Hong Kong name for martial arts films that combine kung fu with magic and other fantastic elements. It translates literally as “flying people” for the way that characters routinely defy gravity with mind-boggling leaps and magical flights. The director and producer Tsui Hark [choy-hok] is the man most associated with the popularity of this genre, and he is responsible for many of its classics: *A Chinese Ghost Story*, *Swordsman II*, *Zu: Warriors of the Magic Mountain*, and *New Dragon Inn*. Other good wuxia films include: *The Bride with White Hair*, *The East is Red*, *Deadful Melody*, *The New Legend of Shaolin*, and the excellent *Burning Paradise*. These films create a fantastical reality populated by heroic sword-fighters, seductive ghosts, foul demons, and gender-bending villains. Any of them offer one wild ride and are ripe with roleplaying possibilities.

If you’ve never seen a wuxia film, don’t despair. You’ve probably played one of the current crop of arcade fighting games; if so, you’ve got the right idea. Check out some of the movies mentioned above, if you can find Hong Kong films in your local video store. Otherwise, try John Carpenter’s *Big Trouble in Little China*. This was inspired by Tsui Hark’s film *Zu* and does a credible and fun job of translating HK action to the American screen.

### What You Need to Play

Apart from this book, you need very little beyond imagination and a willingness to get a little crazy. Some paper and a pencil are always handy for noting important information. And you’ll need dice. Not just the usual cubes (or six-siders); it’s best to get a full set of polyhedral dice, which includes four-, six-, eight-, ten-, twelve-, and twenty-sided shapes. A few extra six- and ten-siders are a good idea. Polyhedral dice should be available at most hobby gaming stores.

Throughout these rules, you’ll see cryptic notations about rolling the various dice. These

follow a simple convention: a number of dice (or individual rolls) followed by “d” (for “dice”), followed by a numeral indicating the type of dice. For example, an instruction to roll one six-sided die would be written “roll 1d6.” Five twelve-sided dice would be “5d12.”

When the rules say to roll “percentile dice” or “d100,” you need to generate a random number from 1 to 100. One way to do this is to roll two ten-sided dice of different colors. Before you roll, designate one die as the “tens” and the other as the “ones.” For example, if the blue die (representing tens) rolls an “8” and the red die (ones) comes up “5,” the result is 85. (A result of “0” on both dice is read as “100.”)

Like all roleplaying games, **Dragon Fist** is about telling a story, and requires one person to act as the referee. This person, known as the Dragon Master (or DM), manages the game for the rest of the players. He or she spins the story, adjudicates the rules, and makes sure everyone has a good time. The other players each create a character using the rules provided, then describe these characters’ actions as they participate in the story.

## The Story

Dragon Fist takes place in Tianguo [tyen-wo], a fictional land based on wuxia films and on Chinese folklore and legend. Jianmin [jyen-meen], the emperor of Tianguo, became obsessed with immortality and went on a mad quest to ensure that he lived forever. Despite all his schemes, he failed to find the secret of immortality. Then he was approached by a peasant who offered him a wilted lotus flower and a promise. The emperor ate this flower and instantly became young. Overjoyed, he asked the peasant what he wanted in return. “Souls,” said the peasant, “and you had best provide them if you want to retain your youth.”

In the twenty years since, the Empire has become an evil land, and its emperor, twisted by the tainted lotus, a brutal tyrant. Opposing him are nine secret societies, collectively known as the World of Martial Arts. These societies have recently banded together in a pact to overthrow Jianmin and put a new emperor on the throne. In **Dragon Fist**, you play a member of one of these outlawed societies, fighting for your land and the honor of the World of Martial Arts. Your kung fu may be strong, but is it strong enough to change the world?

## An Introduction to Tianguo

*Tianguo, the “Heavenly Kingdom,” is a complex land with a long history. As a player or DM, you’ll need to learn a bit about how its society works. Below is a brief look at the empire’s history, followed by a portrait of the new Tianguo. Chapter 1: The Heavenly Kingdom goes into more detail for the DM and those players who’d like to become more familiar with the empire.*

## The Way It Used To Be

At the apex of Tianguo is the emperor, the Son of Heaven, divinely chosen ruler of the land. He is served by seven ministries, which regulate life in the empire, and the army, which defends it. Anyone can take the civil service exams and rise through the ranks of officialdom. Similarly, anyone can enlist in the army and advance in rank if of proven ability.

The cities are full of merchants and tradespeople. They keep the economy thriving and move goods between town and country. They are aided in this by the empire’s extensive road system, busy sea lanes, and regular army patrols. The peasants in the countryside grow food, harvest the ocean’s bounty, and mine or otherwise gather the raw materials needed by artisans. Traveling judges provide imperial justice when it’s needed.

In both city and country are the gentry. These nobles trace their lineage back to the Three Kingdoms era (see below) and have used their family wealth to ensure a pride of place in Tianguo. Some have rural estates that are worked by countless peasants, while others choose careers in government or the military.

Throughout the empire, clans form an important feature of social organization. These



extended family units provide opportunity for their members and look out for the clan interests. Some villages belong entirely to one clan.

### *The Way It Is*

Since Emperor Jianmin ate the tainted lotus, things have changed in the Heavenly Kingdom. He rules unchallenged, but for those with eyes to see, it is clear that the emperor has lost the Mandate of Heaven. The governmental structure remains in place but has been subverted. The eunuchs, once mere palace servants, have become the emperor's right hand, with nearly limitless power to act in his name. The remaining officials are largely corrupt and are more interested in maintaining their position than serving the nation. Similarly, the army has become a refuge for thugs and hooligans, padded out by peasants who have been conscripted.

In the country, life is chaotic. Some regions are untouched, while others consist of nothing but burnt-out ruins of former villages. The imperial army has become a source of terror rather than protection for the peasants. Its appearance usually heralds confiscation of food, conscription into the army, or forcible recruitment for the emperor's building projects. Many people—sometimes entire clans—are whisked off to the capital and never seen again. Dark stories of the emperor's inhuman appetites have filtered back to the countryside and only confirm the peasants' worst fears.

In the cities, merchants try to maintain business as usual, but it's increasingly difficult when imperial troops simply confiscate goods. Peasants seeking refuge from the terrors of the countryside have swelled the cities, and many are hovering on the brink of starvation.

Meanwhile, the remaining gentry have their own problems. Holdovers from a bygone era (even if they don't realize it), they are confused and have no unity in purpose or action. More than one noble family has been dispersed and its monies taken for the imperial treasury. Some of the gentry have found a safe place in the army, while others continue their outdated ways, squeezing the peasants in a vain effort to appease the emperor. It is likely that the emperor will simply destroy them piecemeal.

This then is the empire under Jianmin. A man of monstrous evil sits on the throne and crimes are perpetrated in his name daily. Who will stand up for the people, and who will win the Mandate of Heaven to become the next emperor of Tianguo?

It is a time for heroes and a time for martyrs. Which will you be?

This chapter familiarizes you more completely with the land of Tianguo. Here you'll find its history, from the time of the legendary emperors to the present day. This is followed with a province-by-province breakdown, complete with details on the capitals of each and other places of note. If you are itching to start playing right away, skip to Chapter 2: Character Creation, but do come back! The more you understand the Heavenly Kingdom, the richer your games will be.

## The Empire Gone By

### The Three Legendary Emperors

When Heaven and Earth were formed and the Ten Thousand Things were brought into existence, the Jade Emperor descended to Earth. He decided that the Earth needed a mortal emperor, one who was wise and just. After searching all the lands under Heaven, he finally found Zu.

Zu [tzoo] was a woodcutter who lived alone on Huang Ren [tsong lyun] Mountain. Over the years, he had used his ax to shape the forest into a harmonious place. The Jade Emperor, impressed with Zu's instincts, made him ruler of the new empire of Tianguo ("heavenly kingdom"). Zu became known as the Builder, who established the first laws and founded the royal city of Zuyang [tzoo-yung]. He also instituted a calendar, which began with the first year of his reign. To this day dates are in the form Nian Zu [nyen tzoo] to commemorate the founding of the empire; for example, the current date is 1182 N.Z.

When Zu grew old and infirm, he scoured the land for a worthy successor, ignoring his own kin. He found a peasant known as Shao [soh], noting the strength of his chi [CHEE], or spiritual energy, and his humility. Despite the pleas of his family, Zu named Shao his heir. When Zu died, his family feared the wrath of his angry spirit, so they obeyed his commands and made Shao emperor.

Shao remained close to the land. He taught the people how to cultivate plants and for this reason is known as the Sower. He also invented written language and set up the first courts. Like his predecessor, he chose a common man of virtue to be his successor. This man, Xian [syen], was not as fortunate as Shao, and he had to survive a dozen assassination attempts before he could ascend to the throne.

Xian was the last of the Three Legendary Emperors. He is revered as the great flood controller, for it was he who had dikes and irrigation canals built along the Scarlet River. He divided the empire into the Nine Provinces and reorganized the army when the Yi barbarians attacked from the south. He promoted soldiers of ability from the ranks and made them his most prominent generals. Together Xian and his generals expelled the Yi from the empire. In the closing moments of the final battle, though, an arrow fired by a fleeing horseman mortally wounded Xian. He thus died before he could choose his successor.

Xian was surrounded by his generals when he died. No one really knows if he named a successor or not, but the truth soon became irrelevant. Within a year of Xian's death, seven different generals claimed the Mantle of Heaven. The mighty empire was divided into seven kingdoms, each ruled by a man claiming to be the true emperor of Tianguo. Thus was the age of the legendary emperors brought to an end, and that of the Seven Kingdoms begun.

### Shangwei and the New Spring

The seven kingdoms warred amongst themselves for countless generations, and it seemed that none would triumph. As the decades passed, the weaker kingdoms fell one by one. At last only three kingdoms—Mu, Ren [lyun], and Zhuo [jwah]—remained, and none could break the stalemate. When one was near to victory, the other two would unite in opposition. Marauding armies crisscrossed the lands of Tianguo, and all who could fled to the cities for protection.

In 889 N.Z. a man named Shangwei [song-woo] became the king of Ren, a kingdom that had been on a slow decline for the previous generation and seemed likely to be the first to fall. But Shangwei had spent many years in the field as a general and immediately prepared for a new war. The other kings thought these were the desperate measures of a doomed man, but Shangwei was soon to teach them otherwise.

Shangwei secretly opened negotiations with both enemy kings, persuading each that he would be that king's ally against the other. So the kings of Mu and Zhuo gathered huge armies and marched to war. Shangwei brought his much smaller army into the field as well, continuing to promise his aid to both. Finally, the armies of the enemy kings engaged in a mighty struggle. Each called to Shangwei for aid, but Shangwei and his forces did not move from their camp. He waited until the armies of Mu and Zhuo had nearly destroyed each other, then ordered his troops forward. The remaining enemy soldiers were exhausted, confused, and in disarray. Shangwei's army, well-trained and energized, tore into them with zeal. Before nightfall, the other two kings were slain and their armies all but destroyed.

Shangwei immediately declared himself the Son of Heaven and emperor of Tianguo. This decree didn't become reality for some time, though, for relatives of the dead kings also laid claim to the imperial throne and rebellions sprang up. Shangwei's armies of conquest marched from city to city and added land to his empire daily. Within ten years, the three kingdoms were no more. Shangwei ruled unchallenged over all Tianguo.

Once secure in power, Shangwei set about reorganizing the renewed empire. He knew that to survive his death, it must be bound together by law and custom. He decreed new laws, codified holidays and festivals, and made sure the new ways were spread to every part of the empire. He reconstituted the ancient Nine Provinces, and appointed a governor to each. Worried about the rise of a powerful warlord who would overturn his reforms, he suborned the army commanders to the governors. However, he retained an imperial army under his own direct command.

Shangwei looked to the ancient empire and the legendary emperors for precedent and constantly quoted the historical record to justify his actions. His revival of the ancient ways was so complete that his reign became known as the New Spring. The only way in which Shangwei chose to differ from his ancestors was on the issue of succession: He groomed his descendants to succeed him in a true dynasty.

## Summer Storms

Shangwei died at the age of one hundred. His reign had been so long that his own children had all died before him, so the throne passed to his grandson, Baoxin [bow-sheen]. Although only twenty years old when he became emperor, Baoxin proved as strong a ruler as his grandfather. He protected the borders and strengthened the empire with a series of ambitious building programs. Baoxin had been trained as a scholar and continued to think of himself as one. He commissioned an encyclopedia of all contemporary knowledge and employed a thousand scholars for twenty years in its preparation. This precious document was housed in the newly built Library of the Sages in Zuyang.

In the latter part of Baoxin's reign, the eastern coasts of Tianguo came under attack by strange barbarians. These attacks were followed up by a full-scale invasion. None in Tianguo had seen people such as these before. Baoxin's first son, Yiwang [yee-wong], led an imperial army to crush the barbarians, but his overconfidence proved his undoing, and both he and his army were destroyed.

### A Note on Names

Names in Tianguo are different from those used in the western world. The first word in the name identifies the person's family, while the second word is the given name. So Ji Dayi [zhee tie-ee], the Lord Shaman of the introduction, would be referred to as "Dayi" only by close acquaintances or those demonstrating their superiority, as the emperor did.

THE BARBARIAN FLEET BURNING



*Tianguo Timeline*

Year (N.Z.)	Event
1	Zu chosen as first Son of Heaven.
131	Death of Zu and ascension of Shao.
220	Death of Shao and ascension of Xian.
295	Xian slain by the Yi.
296	Seven Kingdoms era begins.
603	Only three kingdoms remain.
889	Shangwei becomes King of Ren.
900	Shangwei crowned Emperor of Tianguo.
969	Death of Shangwei and ascension of Baoxin.
1042	Death of Baoxin and ascension of Chaoshi.
1082	Death of Chaoshi and ascension of Jianmin.
1162	Jianmin eats the tainted lotus.
1182	Current year; one hundredth anniversary of Jianmin's ascension.

In this dark hour, a local militia captain named Diao Zu'en [dyoh tzoo-eun] rallied the remaining troops and launched a series of raids into the barbarian-occupied area. These attacks delayed the invaders until a second imperial army could make it to the scene. This army, along with the survivors of Diao's force, defeated the barbarians and drove them back to the sea, where many of their ships were set alight. The glare of their burning was said to be so bright that night turned into day. For this reason, the engagement became known as the Battle of Midnight Sun.

In the invasion's wake, Emperor Baoxin decided that Tianguo should never undergo such a trial again. He sent the war hero Diao Zu'en as an emissary to the Dragon Kings of the Four Oceans. After an arduous journey, Diao found the dragons and made a plea in the emperor's name that they protect Tianguo. They agreed, on condition that he perform one service for them. Diao assented, and the Dragon Kings whipped up a mighty storm in the middle of the sea. Known as the *bao feng* [bow fung], or "storm wind," this protects Tianguo from any seaborne threat; the churning wall of darkness prevents all foreigners from reaching the Heavenly Kingdom.

Diao Zu'en, who served the empire so faithfully, was never seen again by mortal eyes. He departed on a journey for the Dragon Kings and never returned. Although he is now worshipped as a god, Diao's ultimate fate and the nature of his mission remain unknown.

*Autumn of Discord*

With Baoxin's eldest son dead, the throne next went to Chaoshi [tso-seuh], the emperor's fourth child and second son. Baoxin had died quietly at the venerable age of ninety-three, and the transfer of power went smoothly.

Unlike his father, Chaoshi was not much of a scholar. Rather, he fancied himself a soldier. Soon after assuming power, he decided to prosecute a war in the north. The Neeg [nayNG] people, who lived in the mountains and were considered barbarians, were his target of choice. The Neeg had been driven out of the lowlands by the armies of Shangwei but continued to launch occasional raids into Tianguo. Chaoshi used these raids as a pretext to launch a full-scale invasion of the Tibneeg [teenayNG] Mountains, with the goal of incorporating this land into the empire.

Chaoshi's armies marched north into the mountains and the jungle. The Neeg, in their home territory and defending their way of life, fought back savagely. They rarely engaged Chaoshi's armies in set-piece battles but rather fought a guerilla war. The initial forays were total disasters, and much of the imperial army died of disease and starvation. Chaoshi was undeterred. He raised taxes, instituted conscription, and renewed his assaults. While these destroyed many Neeg villages, the difficult terrain continued to make pacification difficult. There always seemed to be more warriors to disrupt the lines of supply and more shamans to launch deadly spells.

Chaoshi responded by raising taxes again and personally leading his armies north. Members of his court objected to the tax increase and the continued war, but he paid them no heed and disappeared into the mountains with his troops, leaving his elder sister Wanli [wen-lee] in charge. When Chaoshi reported continuing difficulties, Wanli ordered forcible confiscation of food from the peasants and further conscription. The peasants, fed up with such abusive treatment, started a full-scale rebellion. The Red Eyebrow Rebellion, as it came to be called for the distinctive facepaint of the rebels, flared up all over the empire.

Wanli sent desperate messages to her brother, who finally ended his campaign and returned to Tianguo. It took a full three years to crush the rebellion, though eventually the imperial army prevailed. The price was high, however. The treasury was bankrupt, the army decimated, and the peasantry so depleted that a famine swept over Tianguo. As if this weren't misfortune enough, the Yi barbarians in the south poured into the border province of Tui and seized half of it before they could be stopped.

## The Winter Emperor

Chaoshi spent the last years of his reign trying to rebuild the empire he had brought to the brink of destruction. After all the war, rebellion, and invasion, however, he was never the same again. Chaoshi died at the age of 65, succeeded by his son Jianmin.

Jianmin continued the work of rebuilding that his father had begun. He reduced taxes, encouraged trade, and made sure the borders were well defended. For seventy years Jianmin's reign was a time of peace and prosperity. Those who had feared the winter sure to greet the fourth emperor were surprised to find that, if anything, spring had come again. This peace, however, had an ultimate price.

Jianmin was surrounded by courtiers who assured him he would be deified on his death and take his place in Heaven. Still, as Jianmin aged he grew to fear death. He began to gather all the information he could on the subject of immortality and soon became obsessed with it. If he really was the Son of Heaven, he reasoned, then he should not die as mere mortals do. He should ascend directly to Heaven and his rightful place, next to his revered ancestors. So convinced, he offered untold wealth to any who could make him immortal.

Scores of wizards and shamans came before the emperor with promises of immortality, and all of them failed. Jianmin ordered them all slain. But just as the emperor's despair reached its lowest depth, a simple peasant appeared in court holding a wilted lotus. He claimed that the emperor would realize his dream by eating the flower. Ji Dayi, the Lord Shaman, advised against it, but Jianmin ignored the advice and ate the lotus.

Power coursed through him as he swallowed the bitter flower. He felt the weight of years lift from his shoulders and the ache in his bones disappear. Overjoyed, Jianmin turned to the peasant and asked what the man wanted in return for this wondrous gift. "I want souls," the peasant said, "and you will give them to me or die." With that the man disappeared. The identity of the emperor's mysterious benefactor remained unknown for years.

Jianmin used his newfound energy to expand the empire, and he led all-conquering armies in every direction. The lost lands of Tui were fully recovered and the Yi barbarians pushed back beyond the Horse's Tail River. Neeg strongholds were destroyed in lightning raids, eliminating the northern threat. The emperor, however, grew increasingly hungry but found that no food could satisfy him. He called for his Lord Shaman to attend him and discover the cause of his hunger. The shaman told him that the lotus had cursed him, and that the curse would abate only when the emperor gave up his immortality. Enraged, Jianmin grabbed Ji Dayi and with his bare hands tore the shaman's throat out. As the blood of Ji gushed over him, the emperor felt a peculiar satisfaction and knew the answer. The essence of life was what he had craved, and taking that essence would keep him alive forever.

EUNUCHS CONTROLLING  
THE IMPERIAL COURT

## The Empire Today

*It has been twenty years since Jianmin ate the tainted lotus. In that time the empire has become a dark place indeed. Forced conscription has returned, and as the army continues to swell, thousands are brought in chains to the capital city of Zuyang to feed the emperor's evergrowing hunger. Demons walk the Earth, and spirits of the dead rise from the grave.*

*A new and fearsome force in the empire is Jianmin's eunuch council. The emperor's predecessors had used emasculation as punishment; those unfortunate enough to live through the procedure*



were condemned to perform menial tasks in the palace. Jianmen took this small group of eunuchs into his confidence and made them his eyes and ears. Soon he began to rely on them above all others—one word from a eunuch could bring swift death to anyone in the palace. Eventually, the emperor demanded that all his most faithful servants become eunuchs to prove their loyalty.

Now all the empire lives in fear of the eunuchs. Four eunuch lords are the principal agents of the emperor, each ruling a quarter of Tianguo. These lieutenants are known as the Lord of the North Wing, the Lord of the South Wing, the Lord of the East Wing, and the Lord of the West Wing. Each is a sorcerer of great power and all are fanatically loyal to Jianmen.

### *Rise of the Secret Societies*

There is a long tradition of secret societies in Tianguo. During the Seven Kingdoms era especially, such groups thrived. Some were interested in overthrowing one kingdom or another, while others had more esoteric goals. After the reunification of the empire, most of the societies declined (with the notable exception of the Ghost Eaters; see Chapter 2: Character Creation). But the emperor's turn to evil has caused a great resurgence in their activity. Ironically, many of these groups had been forced underground by Jianmin's preemptive strikes. The emperor felt particularly threatened by the societies forming the "World of Martial Arts," who had fighting traditions that stretched back for centuries.

Recently, the leaders of the nine major secret societies gathered in a secluded location. Previously, each group had worked alone and to its own ends, but after twenty years of Jianmen's evil, all were ready to join forces in defeating him. This doesn't mean that the societies entirely trust one another or that previous enmities have been forgotten, but all agree that the emperor must be ousted.

## *The Lands of Tianguo*

*Tianguo is a vast land with a variety of climates. Located in the world's southern hemisphere, its north is hot and tropical and the south, cool and windswept. The empire is divided into nine provinces, which are detailed below. Each entry includes a physical description, political information, and places of interest within its borders.*

### *Bei Ji*

**Description:** Bei Ji [bay jee] is one of the western provinces, nestled between the Dragon's Spine and Ling Mu Mountains. The entire province is highly elevated and heavily forested.

**Capital:** Anmei [EUN MAY], former capital of the Kingdom of Mu, is now Bei Ji's political center. This ancient city has seen a great deal of warfare and still acts as a rallying point during incursions by the Yi barbarians.

**Places of Note:** White Tiger Mountain, one of the Five Sacred Mountains, is in Bei Ji. Hidden in its mountain borders is the Jade Mountain Monastery, secret headquarters of the Righteous Fists.

### *Bi*

**Description:** Bi [BEE] is Tianguo's easternmost province and bore the brunt of the barbarian invasions during Baoxin's reign. Because of its long coastline, much of the province's populace is engaged in fishing.

**Capital:** Huajian [tswa-jyen] is the center of government, an excellent port on the eastern coast. The harbor is very deep, an advantage in trade but an unfortunate aid to the enemy during the invasion.

**Places of Note:** On the very eastern edge of the province is Green Dragon Mountain, another

of the Five Sacred Mountains of Tianguo.

## Hou

**Description:** Mostly lowlands, nearly the entire province is given over to rice production, although there is some mining in the hills. The northern provinces act a buffer between Hou [tsoh] and the Neeg barbarians, so it is considered a safe, if somewhat dull, place to live.

**Capital:** Hou's capital is Xing [sheen], a bustling port city in the delta of the Nine Maidens River. Rice and iron are shipped downriver from the interior to Xing, where they are traded for other goods.

**Places of Note:** The small islands in the delta of the Nine Maidens are home to many pirates who prey on the many trade ships bound to and from Xing. These pirates have only gained in strength as the emperor's depredations continue.

## Jing

**Description:** Jing [JEEN] is the northernmost province of Tianguo. It borders on the Tibneeg Mountains, which are under the firm control of the Neeg barbarians. The jungle dwellers are fierce warriors, and even Jianmin has been unwilling to launch a full invasion of the north. Instead, a series of border forts on the plains keep the Neeg at bay.

**Capital:** Peiding [pay-teen], a fortress city with access to the sea, serves as the seat of government.

**Places of Note:** According to the locals, a dragon lives in the mountains and guards a hoard of treasure dating from the Three Legendary Emperors. Such "hoard dragons" are unlike others of dragonkind, brutish and usually hostile to humans. Many treasure-hunters have sought the hoard, but none have ever found it.

## Qu Ti

**Description:** Qu Ti [shee tee] is the largest of Tianguo's provinces, encompassing all the land south of the Scarlet River. Much of the province is covered by the enormous An Ying [eun yeen] Forest, with the rest given over to wheat production. Since Qu Ti is directly south of the imperial capital, the emperor's control of the province is unchallenged. Many of the conscripts for the army come from Qu Ti, and the province is in serious danger of becoming depopulated.

**Capital:** Baixu [bie-shu], a port city in the south, is the provincial capital. Wheat and timber are shipped here for trade with other provinces.

**Places of Note:** Just south of An Ying Forest is Black Tortoise Mountain, one of the Five Sacred Mountains of Tianguo. Even in these dark days, many pilgrims come to the mountain to entreat the spirits.

## Shang Shen

**Description:** Shang Shen [song seun] is mostly given over to agriculture, especially rice production. It was the center of the Red Eyebrow Rebellion and is a stronghold of the Iron Monkeys, a peasant-based secret society. Most of its coastline is made up of steep cliffs, except for a few miles of beach near the Nine Maidens River.

**Capital:** Pangdong [teng doong], a fortress city in the Yishu [yee-soo] Hills, is an ancient city strategically located on a rise overlooking the lowlands.

**Places of Note:** The kings of Mu are buried in a hidden valley in the Yishu Hills. According to legend, the Mu descendants guard this place still and ensure no one disturbs the graves of their ancestors.

## *Tou*

**Description:** Tou [toh] is a small province in the northeast of Tianguo. Although it borders the lands of the Neeg, the terrain is so impassable that there is little contact between the two peoples. Like other northern provinces, Tou is a great producer of rice. Its long coast and myriad isles give the provincial economy a healthy maritime component.

**Capital:** The provincial capital is Beisen [bay-seun], a large port that has been a base of exploration for centuries.

**Places of Note:** The Dragon's Tooth, the new headquarters of the Dragon's Breath secret society, is located on an island off the coast of Tou. The province also contains Red Phoenix Mountain, the northernmost of the Five Sacred Mountains.

## *Tui*

**Description:** Tui [twee] is a border province to the south whose primary purpose is to stave off the Yi barbarians. Most of the province is made up of coastal plains, ideal ground for the Yi riders. Jianmin had to reconquer much of the province after the last invasion, and he maintains a large military presence here. A number of bastions in the Dragon's Spine Mountains serve as refuges in times of trouble.

**Capital:** Kai [kie], an impressive fortress on the coast, is Tui's capital. Since the Yi have shown little aptitude for sieges, Kai has never fallen. Even when surrounded by barbarians, the city has been able to resupply and reinforce using naval power.

**Places of Note:** The Horse's Tail River marks the southernmost boundary of the empire. Although attempts have been made to subjugate the Yi homeland on the steppes beyond, such forays have always ended in failure. Many battles have been fought on the shores of the Horse's Tail, which are thick with watchtowers and fortifications.

## *Xin*

**Description:** Xin [shin] is the central province of the empire and the home of the imperial capital. This land is directly under the control of the emperor and his eunuch lieutenants. The northern half of the An Ying Forest is in Xin, as is the delta of the Scarlet River. Before Emperor Xian, this area was prone to terrible floods; now such disasters occur but infrequently.

**Capital:** Zuyang, the provincial capital, is also the seat of the empire itself. The city is built on a large island in the middle of the Scarlet River. Six bridges connect Zuyang to the mainland, but its location makes it eminently defensible.

**Places of Note:** Huang Ren Mountain, the central of the Five Sacred Mountains and the focus of the imperial cult, is in Xin. A great temple on the summit honors past emperors and was formerly within the purview of the White Lotus, a shaman society. The nearby Ling Mu [leen moo] Mountains house the imperial tombs. These have recently fallen into disrepair.





## CHARACTER CREATION

Before you can enter the exciting world of **Dragon Fist**, you must first create a persona, known as your “player character” or PC. This is your alter ego in the world of Tianguo, and through him or her you’ll have adventures and explore the world, so be sure to come up with a character who appeals to you and who will be fun to play.

**Dragon Fist** uses a class- and level-based system. Each character belongs to a “class,” such as fighter or wizard, that defines his or her abilities and what he or she is good at. The character is then rated by “level,” a measure of experience. A character of level 1 is a neophyte, while one of level 10 is a master. Traditional AD&D games have characters start at 1st level, but in **Dragon Fist** you begin the game as a skilled and worthy martial artist of 3rd level.

You play a member of one of the secret societies that are fighting to overthrow the emperor. Collectively, these secret societies are known as the World of Martial Arts. Your character is already far more dangerous than the average citizen in Tianguo. The road ahead is a hard one, however, and you will need much more powerful kung fu before you can challenge the emperor himself.

## Dragon Fist Characters

Below is a step-by-step guide to character creation. Simply follow along, paying close attention to the examples, and you’ll be fighting the good fight before you know it. To save space, these rules often say “you” to describe a character’s actions—though of course, you aren’t the powerful martial artist!

### Step One: Concept

Give some thought to the kind of character you want to play. You needn’t come up with an entire character history at this point, just some broad strokes to get you started. Start with a basic concept, such as “kung fu killer” or “flashy wizard.” Once you have a general idea, the rest of the process will help you define your character.

*Example: I’ve decided to play in a game of Dragon Fist and sit down to make a character. After giving some thought to what kind of person I want to play, I decide on a hotheaded spellcaster, someone whose parents were killed by an evil eunuch and who was brought up by a mysterious old man in the woods.*

### Step Two: Roll Ability Scores

Each character has six basic ability scores: Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma. These are numbers that range from 3 to 18 and define your character’s strengths and weaknesses. A score of 3 is pathetically bad, 10 is human average, and 18 is incredibly good.

**Strength** is a measure of raw physical might.

**Dexterity** describes agility, quickness, and coordination.

**Constitution** is a measure of endurance and fortitude.

**Intelligence** represents learned knowledge, education, and general smarts.

**Wisdom** represents intuition and strength of will.

**Charisma** is a composite of appearance, force of personality, and ability to lead others.

To generate ability scores, roll four six-sided dice (4d6), drop the lowest number rolled, and add up the rest. Repeat five more times. Once you have these six totals, assign each of them to one of the abilities.

You should consider the different character classes first (see the “An Overview of Classes” sidebar), since ability scores have a big effect on what your character can do. The classes are described in more detail in the following section. Each character class has a different primary attribute, the most important ability for that class. Each also has two secondary attributes that are useful, but not of crucial importance, and three tertiary attributes that are occasionally

important. You usually want to have your highest score in the primary attribute, your next highest in the secondary attributes, and your lower scores in the tertiary attributes.

**Example:** I roll 4d6 six times, dropping the lowest die each time. I end up with the following totals: 17, 16, 14, 11, 11, 9. I've already decided I want to be a wizard, and after checking out the wizard class, I assign the numbers to ability scores as follows: Strength 11, Intelligence 17, Wisdom 9, Dexterity 14, Constitution 16, and Charisma 11.

### Step Three: Determine Ability Score Bonuses

Characters in Dragon Fist can take extraordinary actions, as befits martial arts heroes. These are discussed further in step eight. Each ability score is linked to a bonus number, which you need to determine now and record on your character sheet. The following table sets out the appropriate bonuses for given ability scores. Note that scores less than 11 provide no bonus.

**TABLE 2-1: ABILITY SCORE BONUSES**

Ability Score	Bonus
11–13	1d3–1*
14–15	1d3
16–17	1d4
18	1d6
19**	1d8
20**	1d10
21**	1d12

\* A “d3” is a 3-sided die roll, generally made by rolling 1d6, dividing the number by two, and rounding up. 1d3–1 means you subtract 1 from the total rolled on 1d3.  
 \*\* These scores are provided for reference only. Starting characters cannot have scores higher than 18, though opponents and dangerous monsters may well possess them.

**Example:** Consulting the table above, I determine my wizard character's ability score bonuses: 1d3–1 in Strength and Charisma, 1d3 in Dexterity, and 1d4 in Intelligence and Constitution. My character's Wisdom of 9 is too low to gain a bonus.

### Step Four: Select a Class

You must now select a class, which represents your character's occupation, pursuit, or role in society. You probably gave this some thought before assigning ability scores, but if not, now is the time to pick one of the four character classes: fighter, wizard, shaman, or thief.

### Step Five: Select a Kit

“Kits” are specialized roles within the classes that further define your character. In **Dragon Fist**, each kit outlines a member of a secret society in Tianguo trying to overthrow the emperor. There are nine secret societies to choose from, and each favors different types of characters: the Righteous Fists, Red Tigers, and Heavenly Gates all embrace fighters; the Dragon's Breath and Great Immortals are wizardly societies; the White Lotus and Black Lotus are shaman organizations; and thieves belong to the Iron Monkeys or Ghost Eaters.

Descriptions of each kit appear below in the “Kits” section and describe your character's secret society as well as what skills and abilities he or she starts the game with. These includes things like martial arts and weapon or spell use, which you should note on the character sheet. (These are explained more fully in Chapter 3: Martial Arts and Combat.)

**Example:** I look over the two kits for wizards, the *Dragon's Breath* and the *Great Immortals*. The *Dragon's Breath* are concerned with harmony, whereas the *Great Immortals* are primarily interested in power and immortality. The latter goals seem more in line with my character concept, so I opt for being a *Great Immortal*. I note my special abilities and record martial arts maneuvers: *Iron Palm*, *Might of the Tiger*, and *Wuxia*.

## An Overview of Classes

There are four basic character classes.

### Fighter

Fighters are experts in combat, especially the martial arts.

- Primary:** Strength
- Secondary:** Constitution, Dexterity
- Tertiary:** Intelligence, Wisdom, Charisma

### Wizard

Wizards are masters of magic with many spells at their command.

- Primary:** Intelligence
- Secondary:** Dexterity, Constitution
- Tertiary:** Strength, Wisdom, Charisma

### Shaman

A shaman is a religious figure who gains power from spirits or demons.

- Primary:** Wisdom
- Secondary:** Strength, Charisma
- Tertiary:** Intelligence, Dexterity, Constitution

### Thief

Thieves are expert at stealth, intrigue, and trickery.

- Primary:** Dexterity
- Secondary:** Strength and Charisma
- Tertiary:** Intelligence, Wisdom, and

### *Yin and Yang*

Yin and yang are two opposed yet complementary powers that are the fundamental principles of creation in Tianguo. Before Heaven and Earth, there were yin and yang; it was their interaction that created everything that is. Some hold the mistaken view that yin is darkness and evil while yang is light and good. Nothing could be further from the truth. While yin and yang are opposed, neither could exist without the other. The natural state is one of balance between the two forces, and even yin has a small amount of yang in it (and vice versa).

Yin is the female and reactive power, associated with Earth, cold, darkness, and the even numbers. Yang is the male and active power, associated with Heaven, fire, light, and the odd numbers. The agents of Yin and Yang are the Five Elements: earth, fire, water, wood, and metal. The elements are the building blocks of the universe, and thus everything is made up of both yin and yang. While some spurn the Path of Harmony, even they cannot deny the central importance of the yin/yang duality in the Heavenly Kingdom. It informs nearly every aspect of life in Tianguo and offers the key to understanding the universe itself.

### *Step Six: Select an Alignment*

The people of Tianguo tend to look at things through the prism of yin and yang and often break things down into opposing pairs. When talking about morality, they look at the dualities of law/chaos and good/evil. Balance between the forces, often associated with chi, is known as neutrality. Alignments represent cornerstones of your character's worldview, and there are nine possible choices: lawful good, neutral good, chaotic good, lawful neutral, true neutral, chaotic neutral, lawful evil, neutral evil, or chaotic evil.

A person's place on the moral compass is determined by a combination of attributes from both dualities (law and chaos, good and evil) and neutrality. Each alignment is unique, sometimes demonstrated in broad, obvious ways, and sometimes subtly.

**Lawful Good:** Characters of this alignment believe that an orderly, strong society with a well-organized government can work to make life better for the majority of the people. To ensure the highest quality of life, laws must be created and obeyed. When people respect the laws and try to help one another, society as a whole prospers. Therefore, lawful good characters strive for those things that will bring the greatest benefit to the most people and cause the least harm. An honest and hard-working peasant, a kindly and wise official, and a stern but fair judge are all examples of lawful good people.

**Lawful Neutral:** Law and organization are of paramount importance to characters of this alignment. They believe in a strong, well-ordered government, whether it be a brutal tyranny or benevolent democracy. The benefits of organization and regimentation outweigh any moral questions. An official determined to ferret out traitors at any cost or a soldier who never questions orders is a good example of a lawful neutral character.

**Lawful Evil:** These characters believe in using society and its laws to benefit themselves. To them, structure and organization elevate those who deserve to rule and provide a clearly defined hierarchy between master and servant. Thus lawful evil characters support systems that protect their own concerns; if someone else suffers because of that, too bad. Such people obey laws out of fear of punishment rather than any higher moral code. Because they may be forced to honor an unfavorable contract or oath, lawful evil characters are usually very careful about giving their word. Once it is given, though, they break their word only if they can find a way to do so legally. An iron-fisted tyrant and a devious, greedy merchant are examples of lawful evil people.

**Neutral Good:** These characters believe that a balance of forces is important, but that the concerns of law and chaos do not moderate the need for good. Since the universe is vast and contains many creatures striving for different goals, a determined pursuit of good will not upset the balance; it may even maintain it. Social structure itself has no innate value. If fostering good means supporting organized society, then that is what must be done. If good can come about only through overthrowing the existing social order, so be it. A soldier who defies a commander's orders, so as to destroy something he or she sees as evil, is an example of a neutral good character.

**True Neutral:** Such characters believe in the ultimate balance of forces, and they refuse to see actions as either good or evil. They do their best to avoid siding with the forces of either good or evil, law or chaos. It is their duty to see that all of these forces remain in balanced contention and thus may find themselves forced into peculiar alliances. They are compelled to support the underdog in any given situation, sometimes even changing sides to maintain the balance as the previous loser becomes ascendant. A true neutral character might join the local militia to put down a gang of bandits, only to drop out or join the former enemy's forces once they brought to the brink of destruction. Since the majority of people in the world make judgments, true neutral characters are extremely rare.

**Neutral Evil:** Neutral evil characters are primarily concerned with themselves and their own advancement. If there is a quick and easy way to gain a profit, whether it be legal, questionable, or obviously illegal, they take advantage of it. Those of a neutral evil alignment have no particular objection to working with others or, for that matter, going it alone. They typically base their allegiance on power and money, which makes them receptive to bribes. Although

they do not have the every-man-for-himself attitude of chaotic characters, they have no qualms about betraying their friends and companions for personal gain. An unscrupulous mercenary, a common thief, and a double-crossing informer who betrays people to the authorities are typical examples of neutral evil characters.

**Chaotic Good:** Chaotic good characters are strong individualists marked by a streak of kindness and benevolence. They believe in all the virtues of goodness and right, but they have little use for laws and regulations. They have no patience with people who “try to push folk around and tell them what to do.” Their actions are guided by their own moral compass, which although good, may not always be in agreement with the rest of society. A wandering monk who helps those in need is an example of a chaotic good character.

**Chaotic Neutral:** Chaotic neutral characters believe that there is no order to anything, including their own actions. With this as a “guiding principle,” they follow whatever whim strikes them at the moment: Good and evil are irrelevant when making a decision. Chaotic neutral characters are extremely difficult to deal with; the only reliable thing about them is that they cannot be relied upon! Such people might cheerfully and for no apparent purpose gamble away everything they have on the roll of a single die. This alignment is perhaps the most difficult to play. Lunatics and crackpots tend toward chaotic neutral behavior.

**Chaotic Evil:** These characters are the bane of all that is good and organized, motivated solely by the desire for personal gain and pleasure. Chaotic evil characters see absolutely nothing wrong with taking whatever they want by whatever means possible. To them, laws and governments are tools of weaklings unable to fend for themselves. The strong should take what they want; the weak are to be exploited. When chaotic evil characters band together, they are not motivated by a desire to cooperate, but rather to oppose powerful enemies who threaten their personal interests. Such a group can be held together only by a strong leader capable of bullying underlings into obedience. Leadership of this sort is based on raw power, so a leader is likely to be replaced at the first sign of weakness by anyone who can grab the position—whatever the method. Bloodthirsty bandits and brutish monsters of low Intelligence are fine examples of chaotic evil personalities.

**Nonaligned Creatures:** Some things, particularly wild animals and unintelligent creatures like killer plants, never bother with moral and ethical concerns. A dog, even a well-trained one, is neither good nor evil, lawful nor chaotic. It is just a dog. For such creatures, alignment is simply not applicable—they follow instinct. Thus they have a default alignment of neutral.

*Example: Having decided on class and kit, I choose the chaotic good alignment. This expresses my character's generally good nature and independence.*

### *Step Seven: Record Saving Throws, Armor Class, and Combat Bonuses*

Now it's time for a bit of bookkeeping. First come saving throws, which represent a character's ability to avoid harm from various game hazards. Your character's class determines his or her starting saving throws, which are set out in Table 3-1 in Chapter 3: Martial Arts and Combat. Armor Class (AC) measures the character's ability to dodge blows in combat and is based on martial arts skills; the higher the AC, the harder you are to hit. You can find this information in the kit descriptions below. Combat bonuses reflect fighting skills and are also based on class. Fighters get +2 to hit (score a successful attack on an opponent), while shamans and thieves get +1. There's a space on the character sheet to record these bonuses.

**Note:** If you're a seasoned AD&D player, be aware that in Dragon Fist Strength bonuses don't automatically add to your hit chance and damage, and Dexterity bonuses don't automatically add to AC. Instead, you achieve those effects by performing stunts. See Chapter 3: Martial Arts and Combat for more information on how stunts work.

*Example: I have a few things to look up. First, I find and record my saving throws from Table 3-1: 14, 11, 13, 15, and 12. Then I see if I any of the martial arts maneuvers from my*

kit give me a better Armor Class. Unfortunately, they do not, so my character's starting AC is 10. As a wizard, I also get no combat bonuses (since my strength is magic, not weaponry).

### Step Eight: Record Stunt Bonuses

In Dragon Fist, most actions you take revolve around stunts, which allow you to perform in especially dramatic ways. There are six kinds of stunts, each based on one ability score; your initial stunt bonuses are equal to the ability score bonuses you recorded in step three. (For example, your starting Acrobatics stunt bonus is equal to your Dexterity bonus.) Thus, the stunt bonus related to your primary attribute is of particular importance. The six types of stunts are set out below.

**TABLE 2-2: STUNTS**

Stunt Type	Ability
Might	Strength
Acrobatics	Dexterity
Fortitude	Constitution
Savvy	Intelligence
Insight	Wisdom
Charm	Charisma

Stunt bonuses increase by “die type” as the character increases in experience: 1d3 becomes 1d4, 1d4 becomes 1d6, and so on. Each time the character gains a level, one stunt bonus improves (Chapter 5: Experience and Magic Items describes this more fully). Since characters in Dragon Fist begin at 3rd level, you get to increase the stunt bonus for one of your character's primary attribute and one of the secondary ones.

**Example:** My wizard's basic stunt bonuses are identical to the character's ability score bonuses, so I have Might and Charm bonuses of 1d3–1, an Acrobatics bonus of 1d3, and Savvy and Fortitude bonuses of 1d4. I can increase two stunt bonuses by one die type each. My character's primary attribute is Intelligence, so I increase my Savvy stunt bonus from 1d4 to the next die type, 1d6. Since my secondary attributes are Dexterity and Constitution, and I'd like to be good at dodging incoming blows, I choose to raise the Acrobatics bonus from 1d3 to 1d4. My final stunt bonuses are: Might 1d3–1, Acrobatics 1d4, Fortitude 1d4, Savvy 1d6, and Charm 1d3–1.

### Step Nine: Roll Hit Points

Hit points represent how much damage your character can sustain before he or she dies. For each level your character has advanced, roll one Hit Die of the appropriate type, depending on his or her class. Since characters in Dragon Fist start at 3rd level, you roll three dice and add the results.

**TABLE 2-3: HIT DICE BY CLASS**

Character Class	Die Type
Fighter	1d12
Wizard	1d6
Shaman	1d10
Thief	1d8

In addition, a high Constitution score provides bonus hit points, representing the character's increased toughness. Make a Fortitude stunt once for each level to receive bonus hit points equal to the result. So if your Constitution were 15, you'd roll an additional 1d3 per level (your Fortitude stunt bonus) and add the results to your hit point total.

**Example:** Since my character is a 3rd-level wizard, I roll 3d6 to determine starting hit points. I roll 1, 2, and 1 for a total of 4—a really lousy result. I curse my fate, but then remember that I get bonus hit points each level by making Fortitude stunts. Luckily, my

Fortitude stunt bonus is 1d4, so I roll an additional 3d4 (one per level) and get 3, 4, and 3. I sigh with relief: That gives me 10 bonus hit points to add to the initial 4, so I end up with a total of 14. This still isn't great, but I'm counting on magic to keep out of harm's way.

### Step Ten: Record Equipment

Your character needs some basic supplies to make his or her way in Tianguo, such as clothing, weapons, and food. It is assumed that all characters have basic clothing and traveling gear (packs, food, and so forth). Each kit includes a starting package of additional equipment that the character gets for free, as well as an amount of funds (recorded in tael, the basic coinage of Tianguo) with which to purchase additional supplies if desired. See Table 2-21 for a list of standard equipment. Note, however, that in Dragon Fist player characters generally do not use armor (which interferes with martial arts).

## Character Classes

### Fighter

Hong Kong movies are full of fighters, especially martial arts heroes such as Wong Fei Hong and Fong Sai Yuk. A fighter focuses primarily on developing martial skills, though he or she may well be skilled in other areas (Wong Fei Hong, for instance, was a doctor and teacher). The primary attribute of the fighter is Strength, to wield weapons and deliver crushing damage. Secondary attributes are Dexterity and Constitution, which provide agility and staying power, respectively.

Other classes may fight, but none do it as well as the fighter. To represent this class's skill and training, a fighter receives a +2 bonus to hit an opponent in combat and can use any weapon. Additionally, fighters are allowed to specialize in one weapon with which they are particularly skilled. With that weapon only, they receive an additional +1 to hit and +2 damage, and can attack more frequently than normal. Alternatively, fighters may specialize in martial arts rather than a particular weapon, for which they receive the same benefits.

Fighters cannot cast magical spells, nor can they wear armor while using martial arts. They can, however, use many magic items, including potions, most rings, and enchanted weaponry. Fighters in Dragon Fist are particularly adept at the martial arts. Starting characters, being 3rd level, begin with five martial arts maneuvers. They gain additional and more effective maneuvers at each level, as summarized in Table 2-4 below.

TABLE 2-4: FIGHTER MARTIAL ARTS MANEUVERS

Fighter Level	Rank				
	1	2	3	4	5
1	1				
2	2	1			
3*	3	2			
4	4	2	1		
5	4	3	2		
6	5	3	2	1	
7	5	3	3	2	
8	5	4	3	2	1
9	6	4	3	2	2
10	7	5	4	3	3

\* Default starting level.

Fighters also gain the skill to make more than one melee attack per combat round (discussed further in Chapter 3: Martial Arts and Combat) as they rise in level, unlike other character classes. Table 2-5 shows the basic number of melee attacks allowed per level; fighters using their specialty weapon use Table 2-6 instead.

### A Note on Character Race

Veteran AD&D players will notice that there are no nonhuman races available to player characters. This is intentional. The elves and dwarves of fantasy literature are based on European mythology and folklore, while **Dragon Fist** takes its cues from China, which has no such tradition. To better reflect both Chinese culture and wuxia films, all PCs in **Dragon Fist** are human.

If you like the idea of kung fu elves, however, adding nonhuman races to **Dragon Fist** is easy. Simply use the rules for dwarves, elves, gnomes, and halflings in the **AD&D Player's Handbook**. All of their abilities are fully compatible with this system.

### Reading Character Progression Tables

The "Character Classes" section contains a number of tables setting out how the character improves with level. Characters earn experience points for successfully completing adventures and achieving goals, and as they do so they advance in level. These are set out in tables for each class. (For more on experience, see Chapter 5: Experience and Magic Items.)

All character classes have access to martial arts maneuvers, summarized in tables, and wizards and shamans use spell progression tables to determine their increasing magical ability. Both types tell you how many maneuvers or spells the character has access to at each level. Note that these are the total available, not the number of new ones at that level. For example, a 3rd-level thief has four martial arts maneuvers of rank 1 and one of rank 2. (Rank measures the difficulty of a maneuver, with 1 being the easiest and 5 being the most demanding.) On reaching 4th level, the character now has four maneuvers of rank 1 and two of rank 2; that is, he or she learns one new rank 2 maneuver, not six entirely new ones.

**TABLE 2-5: FIGHTER MELEE ATTACKS PER ROUND**

Fighter Level	Attacks/Round
1-6	1
7-11	3/2
12+	2

**TABLE 2-6: SPECIALIST ATTACKS PER ROUND**

Fighter Level	Melee Weapon	X-bow	Light X-bow	Heavy Dagger	Thrown Dart	Other Thrown (Nonbow) Missiles
1-6	3/2	1/1	1/2	3/1	4/1	3/2
7-11	2/1	3/2	1/1	4/1	5/1	2/1
12+	5/2	2/1	3/2	5/1	6/1	5/2

All fighters use Table 2-7 to determine their level advancement as they gain experience, adding 1d12 hit points per level up to 10th. At 10th level, a fighter becomes a Master of Martial Arts.



FIGHTER WIELDING A NINE-RING BROADSWORD

**TABLE 2-7: FIGHTER EXPERIENCE LEVELS**

Fighter Level	Experience Points	Hit Dice (d12)
1	0	1
2	2,000	2
3*	4,000	3
4	8,000	4
5	16,000	5
6	32,000	6
7	64,000	7
8	125,000	8
9	250,000	9
10	500,000	10

\* Default starting level.

## Wizard

Wizards are spellcasting masters of the arcane arts. Characters such as Lo Pan from *Big Trouble in Little China* and Swordsman Yen from *A Chinese Ghost Story* are good examples of Chinese-style wizards. While often cryptic and possessed of strange habits, wizards can attain power undreamed of by most mortals. A wizard's primary attribute is Intelligence, governing the character's ability to learn and cast spells. The secondary attributes are Constitution and Dexterity, which help the wizard survive various hazards and avoid being struck in combat.

A wizard can never wear armor, since it hinders both magic and martial arts. However, he or she can use more magical items than any other class. These include potions, rings, wands, rods, scrolls, some weapons, and most miscellaneous magic.

Wizards in *Dragon Fist* learn a simple martial arts style, best suited to self-defense. They normally begin play with three martial arts maneuvers and gain more slowly as they rise in level, as set out in Table 2-8 below. They are not skilled in hand-to-hand combat but can use the following simple weapons: light or repeating crossbow, dagger, staff, three-section staff, and war fan.



**TABLE 2-8: WIZARD MARTIAL ARTS MANEUVERS**

Wizard Level	Rank				
	1	2	3	4	5
1	1				
2	2				
3*	2	1			
4	2	2			
5	2	2	1		
6	3	2	1		
7	3	2	1	1	
8	3	2	2	1	
9	3	2	2	1	1
10	4	3	3	2	2

\* Default starting level.

The true strength of the wizard lies in magic. He or she gains magical spells with increasing level, as set out in Table 2-9. A typical starting character of 3rd level can cast three spells per day. For more information on spells and spellcasting, see Chapter 4: Magic.

**TABLE 2-9: WIZARD SPELL PROGRESSION**

Wizard Level	Spell Level				
	1	2	3	4	5
1	1				
2	2				
3*	2	1			
4	3	2			
5	4	2	1		
6	4	2	2		
7	4	3	2	1	
8	4	3	3	2	
9	4	3	3	2	1
10	4	4	3	2	2

\* Default starting level.

All wizards use Table 2-10 to determine their level advancement as they gain experience, adding 1d6 hit points per level up to 10th. At 10th level, a wizard becomes a Master of Magic.

**TABLE 2-10: WIZARD EXPERIENCE LEVELS**

Wizard Level	Experience Points	Hit Dice (d6)
1	0	1
2	2,500	2
3*	5,000	3
4	10,000	4
5	20,000	5
6	40,000	6
7	60,000	7
8	90,000	8
9	135,000	9
10	250,000	10

\* Default starting level.

*Shaman*

A shaman is a religious figure who acts as an intermediary between the mortal world and the spirit realm, communicating with ancestor spirits, gods, and sometimes even demons. In return for sacrifices and occasional service, the shaman gains the favor of patron spirits who usually bestow spells and other special abilities as a reward. The “One Eyebrow Priest” from *Mr. Vampire* is a good example of this kind of character. The primary attribute of the shaman is



Wisdom, with which he or she negotiates with spirits and contemplates the ways of magic. The secondary attributes are Strength and Charisma; Strength is important to combat, in which shamans often engage, and Charisma lends force of personality, always important in dealing with the supernatural.

Shamans in Tianguo must often fight to protect themselves, their families, and areas important to their patron spirits. They receive a +1 to hit in combat and can use the following weapons: bow, dagger, halberd, sickle, single-edged sword, spear, staff, tiger fork, and war fan.

Like other characters in **Dragon Fist**, shamans cannot wear armor while using martial arts. However, they can use a good selection of magic items, including scrolls, most potions and rings, some wands and rods, staves, and appropriate enchanted weaponry. Shamans normally begin play with four martial arts maneuvers and gain more as they rise in level, as set out in Table 2-11 below.

**TABLE 2-11: SHAMAN MARTIAL ARTS MANEUVERS**

Shaman Level	Rank				
	1	2	3	4	5
1	1				
2	2	1			
3*	2	2			
4	3	2	1		
5	3	3	1		
6	3	3	2	1	
7	4	3	2	1	
8	4	4	2	1	1
9	4	4	2	2	1
10	5	5	3	3	2

\* Default starting level.

A shaman begins the game with the patronage of an ancestor spirit, a ghostly predecessor who has remained in the mortal world to help his or her descendants. Unlike other spirits, the ancestor is predisposed to help the shaman and will usually do everything in his or her power to protect family members.

Beginning shamans usually start with three spells, plus any bonus spells for Wisdom (see below) and gain more as they advance in level, as detailed in Table 2-12. The ancestor spirit, however, can provide only spells of 1st and 2nd level. Higher-level spells must be gained by winning the patronage of more powerful entities. For more information, see the shaman kits below. A shaman gains bonus spells depending on his or her Wisdom. At the beginning of each day, the shaman makes an Insight stunt; the result of the die roll is the number of bonus spells gained that day. A shaman cannot select bonus spells of a given level above 1st unless he or she has chosen at least two spells from each lower level. For example, a 6th-level shaman with five bonus spells must take at least two spells each of 1st and 2nd level before choosing a 3rd-level spell.

TABLE 2-12: SHAMAN SPELL PROGRESSION

Shaman Level	Spell Level				
	1	2	3	4	5
1	1				
2	2				
3*	2	1			
4	3	2			
5	3	3	1		
6	3	3	2		
7	3	3	2	1	
8	3	3	3	2	
9	4	4	3	2	1
10	4	4	3	3	2

\* Default starting level

All shamans use Table 2-13 to determine their level advancement as they gain experience, adding 1d10 hit points per level up to 10th. At 10th level a shaman becomes a Master of Spirits.

TABLE 2-13: SHAMAN EXPERIENCE LEVELS

Shaman Level	Experience Points	Hit Dice (d10)
1	0	1
2	1,500	2
3*	3,000	3
4	6,000	4
5	13,000	5
6	27,500	6
7	55,000	7
8	110,000	8
9	225,000	9
10	450,000	10

\* Default starting level.

## Thief

Every culture has its rogues, and Tianguo is no exception. Thieves live by flouting the law and going their own way. Some adhere to a code of ethics (only stealing from the corrupt, for instance), while others do anything to enrich themselves. The characters of Jade from *Dragon Gate Inn* and the Notorious Mother and Daughter from *New Legend of Shaolin* are fine examples of thieves appropriate to Tianguo. The primary attribute of the thief is Dexterity, needed for fine manipulation, while the secondary attributes of Charisma and Strength are useful for trickery and such physical feats as climbing or escaping bonds.

Thieves can't wear armor because it interferes with their special skills and prevents the use of martial arts. They can use many magic items, including potions, most rings and miscellaneous items, and enchanted weaponry.

Although thieves prefer skullduggery, they are often forced to fight. A thief receives a +1 to hit in combat and can use the following weapons: butterfly sword, dagger, double-stick, horse bow, light or repeating crossbow, monk's stick, sickle, single- or double-edged sword, staff, throwing spikes, war fan, and whipping chain. A beginning thief character has five martial arts maneuvers and gains more as he or she rises in level, as set out in Table 2-14 below.

TABLE 2-14: THIEF MARTIAL ARTS MANEUVERS

Thief Level	Rank				
	1	2	3	4	5
1	2				
2	3				
3*	4	1			
4	4	2			
5	4	3	1		
6	4	3	2		
7	4	3	3	1	
8	4	3	3	2	
9	4	3	3	3	1
10	5	4	4	4	2

\* Default starting level.

A thief learns a variety of specialized skills, such as picking pockets and moving silently. These are summarized below, although not every ability is necessarily available; see the thief kits in the following section for details. Attempting to use a thieving skill requires a percentile dice roll. If the roll is equal to or less than the listed value, the attempt succeeds. The base score for each ability is listed in Table 2-15. These scores can be improved by adding discretionary skill points, which represent training and practice. The thief kits explain how many discretionary points you gain per level.

Thieves can also use stunts to increase their chance of success at a skill. By making an appropriate stunt die roll in the same round the ability is used, the thief gets a bonus equal to five times the result of the stunt die. The relevant stunts for each ability are listed in the table. For example, a thief with a 25% Bribe chance makes a Charm stunt and rolls a 3. The thief gets a bonus of 15% (5 × 3), increasing the chance of success to a respectable 40%.

TABLE 2-15: THIEVING SKILLS

Skill Name	Beginning Score (%)	Stunt Type
Bribe	15	Charm
Climb Walls	70	Acrobatics
Detect Noise	15	Savvy
Detect Undead	10	Insight
Disguise	20	Charm
Escape Bonds	15	Might or Acrobatics
Find and Remove Traps	5	Savvy (find), Acrobatics (remove)
Hide in Shadows	10	Acrobatics
Move Silently	20	Acrobatics
Open Locks	10	Acrobatics
Pick Pockets	20	Acrobatics
Tracking	25	Savvy

**Bribe:** A thief can bribe an official with gifts of money or merchandise. Only one attempt can be made per target. If it fails, the DM determines how the target reacts.

**Climb Walls:** All characters can climb to some degree, but nimble thieves are able to scale steep surfaces without tools, ropes, or gear of any sort. Even sheer cliffs or smooth walls can be climbed in this way, though the DM may assign negative modifiers for very difficult surfaces.

**Detect Noise:** Good thieves hear sounds others might miss. Using this skill requires that those around the thief keep silent for 1 round (about a minute).

**Detect Undead:** Thieves have an uncanny danger sense and can detect undead creatures up to 60 feet away by concentrating. Each use takes 1 round.

**Disguise:** A skilled disguise artist can impersonate anyone of about the same height, weight, and age, such as a peasant, merchant, or other harmless character. Attempts to pose as a member of the opposite sex are trickier and get half the normal chance of success. This skill can also be used to impersonate a particular individual, but this requires observing the target for a month; otherwise, the chance of success is halved.

**Escape Bonds:** This is the ability to break free from constraints such as ropes, leather thongs, chains, and manacles. The thief must make a separate roll to break each binding. This ability takes 5 rounds to use.

**Find and Remove Traps:** A dexterous thief can both detect and disable mechanical traps of all kinds. Separate rolls are normally required to first find and then remove a device, and each attempt takes 1d10 rounds. Searching for traps is an active process and can be attempted for a given item or area only once per level of experience. Failure causes the trap to be sprung (usually bad news for all concerned!).

**Hide in Shadows:** This skill allows the thief to blend in with the shadows or hide in other types of cover (trees, gullies, and so on). It often goes hand and hand with Move Silently (see below) to creep past guards and other sentinels. The DM, rather than the player, rolls the dice, since the thief always thinks he or she is hidden.

**Move Silently:** The thief can quietly sneak up on or past someone, though at one-third the normal movement rate. The DM, rather than the player, rolls the dice, since the thief always thinks he or she is silent.

**Open Locks:** Many thieves make a living with their skill at picking the locks on doors or chests. Only one attempt to pick a particular lock can be made per experience level. Each attempt takes 1d10 rounds.

**Pick Pockets:** Thieves also rely on being able to quietly take small objects from an unsuspecting victim. This ability can also be used to plant or palm items, and to perform simple sleight-of-hand.

**Tracking:** This is the ability to follow the trail of creatures and humans across most types of terrain. Further checks can be made to learn additional information, such as how old the tracks are and how many individuals are in the group. The base chance can be modified at the DM's discretion to reflect favorable conditions (such as mud or snow, which reveal prints) or unfavorable conditions (such as heavy rain or rocky terrain). In general, such modifiers should not be greater than 20%.

Thieves are also masters of surprise. Whenever they are able to strike from behind and undetected, the attack roll is made at +4. In addition, the damage of the attack is multiplied depending on the thief's level. Both bonuses apply only to a single attack. The damage multiplier of a successful backstab is listed in Table 2-16.

**TABLE 2-16: BACKSTAB DAMAGE MULTIPLIERS**

Thief Level	Damage Multiplier
1-4	× 2
5-8	× 3
9-10	× 4

All thieves use Table 2-17 to determine their level advancement as they gain experience, adding 1d8 hit points per level up to 10th. At 10th level, a thief becomes a Master of Trickery.

TABLE 2-17: THIEF EXPERIENCE LEVELS

Thief Level	Experience Points	Hit Dice (d8)
1	0	1
2	1,250	2
3*	2,500	3
4	5,000	4
5	10,000	5
6	20,000	6
7	40,000	7
8	70,000	8
9	110,000	9
10	160,000	10

\* Default starting level.

## Character Kits

All **Dragon Fist** characters must select a kit; they are not optional. Each represents a secret society in Tianguo to which the character belongs, and membership provides certain benefits and hindrances. There are nine kits that players can choose from. Each kit description has the following entries:

**Description:** This section relates the history and purpose of the secret society. Although every group has its iconoclasts, it's best if the aims of your character are in synch with those of the society.

**Organization:** This briefly outlines how the society is organized, with details such as who's in charge and how things are run.

**Benefits:** Each kit provides some unique benefits, reflecting the strengths and traditions of that society, summarized in this entry.

**Hindrances:** There's always bad with the good. Membership in a secret society carries a price, and the downsides of membership are listed here.

**Starting Equipment:** A starting character receives all listed equipment for free. This represents the character's own resources and those of the society.

## Fighter Kits

### The Righteous Fists

**Description:** The origins of the Righteous Fists stretch back to an order of monks known as the Jade Brotherhood, who flourished during the golden days of the Three Legendary Emperors. During that time of peace, the Brotherhood retreated from the world to contemplate nature. In this investigation of the natural world the monks studied the movement of animals, which in turn lead to the creation of animal styles of martial arts. The Jade Brotherhood became known for their mastery of unarmed fighting, and many students flocked to their monasteries.

During the Seven Kingdoms era, the monks became more involved with politics. Some lent their strength to fight their king's enemies, but by and large the order remained united despite having monasteries in each of the warring kingdoms. When Shangwei reunited Tianguo, the Jade Brotherhood backed him and helped add legitimacy to his reign; once the empire was secure, the monks again retreated to their monasteries.

When Emperor Jianmin began his reign of terror, the Brotherhood became increasingly involved in the affairs of the world. They spoke out when taxes stripped the villages of food and conscription filled the army with peasant levies. Before long Jianmin decided to rid himself

of the meddlesome monks; in a series of devastating surprise assaults, the emperor's army attacked and destroyed all known Jade Brotherhood monasteries. Many of the monks were killed, and priceless stores of knowledge were burned by marauding troops.

What even the emperor didn't know, however, was that the Jade Brotherhood had a hidden mountain monastery. Those of the Brotherhood who survived made their way there and held a great council. The survivors decided to reconstitute themselves as a secret society dedicated to the overthrow of the corrupt ruler. Only when Jianmin was killed and a righteous emperor placed on the throne would Heaven once again smile on the empire. Thus were the Righteous Fists born.

**Organization:** The Righteous Fists are led by Grandmaster Fei Gan [FEE GUN]. Fei and a select group of masters run the society from the safety of the Jade Mountain Monastery, the hidden center of the organization. The monastery and the surrounding countryside are heavily guarded to prevent discovery by the army. Couriers travel only by night, bringing the orders of Fei Gan to other masters dispersed around Tianguo.

**Requirements:** To become a Righteous Fist, a character must have a minimum Strength and Wisdom of 9. A good Dexterity is also a plus, since martial arts prowess is paramount to the society.

**Benefits:** The Righteous Fists are the unarmed fighters par excellence of Tianguo. They receive training in a variety of unarmed combat styles and learn to use a small number of weapons as well. Righteous Fists are automatically specialized in unarmed combat and receive the same benefits as from weapon specialization. In addition, they are particularly adept at acrobatic dodges. Whenever performing an Acrobatics stunt, a Righteous Fist adds double the result of the stunt die roll to his or her Armor Class.

Beginning at 4th level, Righteous Fists can make unarmed attacks as if they were using magic weapons. This allows them to strike creatures that cannot be harmed by normal weapons. At 4th level their attacks count as weapons of +1 enchantment; at 7th level, +2; and at 10th, +3. Their attacks do not gain actual bonuses to hit or to damage, however, only the ability to strike as if they did.

A Righteous Fist starts the game with the following martial arts maneuvers: Flying Dragon Fist, Mantis Stance, Speed of the Leopard, Way of the Snake, and Wuxia. Subsequent maneuvers are at the character's discretion.

**Hindrances:** Righteous Fists prefer unarmed combat, so they are trained in the use of only a few weapons. Allowable weapons are: butterfly sword, double-stick, monk's spade, monk's stick, spear, staff, and three-section staff.

The Righteous Fists follow a strict moral code and must be of good alignment. They are forbidden to eat meat or drink alcohol, and they must always strive to act "righteously."

**Starting Equipment:** Any two allowable weapons, 3d8 tael.

### *The Red Tigers*

**Description:** The Red Tigers are a society of martial artists who have dedicated themselves to perfecting the art of sword fighting. They eschew the philosophical ideals of the Righteous Fists and Heavenly Gates (see below) and concentrate instead on mastering martial techniques. They are purists by nature, considering any attempt to attach ideology to swordplay a grave mistake.

The legendary swordsman Wang Yu [WONG YOO] founded the society three hundred years ago. As a young man, Wang had joined the Jade Brotherhood, the monks who would later become the Righteous Fists. He learned the martial arts with zeal but constantly spoke out against the rigid morality of the order, until a group of five monks ambushed him and cut off his right arm to teach him a lesson. Convinced that he could no longer use martial arts, the Jade Brothers left him crippled but alive. But Wang did not give up. He found an ancient book on swordplay and taught himself how to fight left-handed. Then he hunted down the five monks who had crippled him and killed them one by one. Wang Yu became known as the Red Tiger.

When all of his foes were dead, Wang Yu took students of his own to pass on what he had learned. He would show up the Jade Brotherhood, he decided, by founding an even greater mar-

tial arts society. So the Red Tigers were born. With the passage of years, the rivalry between the Red Tigers and Righteous Fists has lessened—but neither group has forgotten the past.

Emperor Jianmin grew to fear the martial power of the Red Tigers. He first tried to corrupt them with courtly positions and money, but the society's leadership rebuffed his advances. Unused to being thwarted, the emperor ordered the eradication of the Red Tigers. Many members were killed in the ensuing battles, but the society has continued to thrive in the underground.

**Organization:** At their height the Red Tigers had nine main schools, one in each province. The masters of the nine schools met once a year to discuss matters of interest and pressing issues. Since Emperor Jianmin banned the Red Tigers, all nine of the schools have been destroyed. Now the leaders travel within their own provinces to monitor and direct all Red Tiger activity in each. The nine masters have also elected one of their number, Tong Zhuting [TOONG JOO-TEEN], to be the Master of War. Tong makes decisions affecting the society on a day-to-day basis, although he is ultimately responsible to the other eight masters.

**Requirements:** To become a Red Tiger, a character must have a minimum Strength of 12.  
**Benefits:** The Red Tigers are masters of the blade. They work to make their swords virtual extensions of their bodies and spend hours each day perfecting their technique. Their fighting style is elegant, graceful, and deadly. They are especially adept at defending themselves against other sword fighters and receive a +2 bonus to their Armor Class when fighting sword-armed opponents. Red Tigers must specialize with the war sword.

On reaching 4th level, a Red Tiger becomes immune to disarming attacks such as Claw of the Crab. No one can part such a swordmaster from his or her blade.

A Red Tiger starts the game with the following martial arts maneuvers: Claw of the Crab, Mantis Stance, Speed of the Leopard, Wind in the Reeds, and Wuxia. Subsequent maneuvers are at the character's discretion.

**Hindrances:** Red Tigers can wield no other weapon but the sword, although they can use unarmed maneuvers and attacks in conjunction with their blades.

**Starting Equipment:** War sword, 3d8 tael.

### *The Heavenly Gates*

**Description:** The Heavenly Gates are an unusual philosophical sect, founded by the revered holy man Song Wei [SOONG WAY] during the Seven Kingdoms period. Song Wei was an archer of great skill who was famous throughout the land. Yet despite his rich estates and powerful patrons, Song was deeply unhappy. He determined that the root of his unhappiness was a lack of understanding of both his own nature and the will of Heaven. He therefore left his lands behind and went into the wilds, carrying only his bow.

Legend relates that Song Wei sat in front of a waterfall for nine years without saying a word. One day he got up, strung his bow, and fired a single arrow through the waterfall. And in a flash he understood everything. At that moment, Song Wei had achieved spiritual enlightenment, breaking out of the cycle of existence. Though he could have ascended directly to Heaven, he chose instead to remain on earth and teach others to find the heavenly gates. His teachings formed the core of a philosophy that continued long after his death.

Members of the Heavenly Gates learn meditative techniques and ritual chants, trying to achieve the absence of thought and free their minds from external influences. Like Song Wei, they have found the art of archery to be particularly helpful. Each must find his or her own path; enlightenment cannot be described in words but is achieved only by direct intuition, outside of conscious thought.

The Heavenly Gates were drawn into the struggle against Emperor Jianmin by Su Ning [SOO NEEN], a master of legendary wisdom. He answered the emperor's call for immortality and endeavored to teach Jianmin the philosophy of Song Wei. The emperor, however, was not concerned with enlightenment, only immortality, and he could not understand the teachings. He decided that Su Ning had failed and ordered him put to death. Su simply smiled, saying, "The heavenly gates open when the lotus blooms," and ascended to Heaven in front of the



emperor's shocked court. The next day the Heavenly Gates were outlawed.

**Organization:** There are three ranks within the Heavenly Gates hierarchy. The lowest is that of the Seekers, new recruits looking for enlightenment. Each is apprenticed to an Initiate, a member of the next rank, who teaches the Seeker the group's philosophy and supervises the recruit's training. Initiates have mastered the teachings of Song Wei and make up the lion's share of the organization. Characters generally become Initiates at 3rd level.

Those who run the society are the Returned. They are former Initiates who became so enlightened that they approached the gates of Heaven but turned back to help others find the way. At the moment, there are only two of the Returned in all of Tianguo. They are Rui Yihua and Shu Anbang. There is no general requirement for becoming Returned. The path to total enlightenment is entirely individual and has little relation to a character's level.

**Requirements:** To join the Heavenly Gates, a character must have a minimum Strength of 9 and Wisdom of 12. Unlike other fighters, the Heavenly Gates use Wisdom as their primary attribute rather than Strength. Secondary attributes are Strength and Constitution, and tertiary are Dexterity, Intelligence, and Charisma.

**Benefits:** The Heavenly Gates are the premier archers of Tianguo. Although they can use any weapon, most restrict themselves to the bow and martial arts. They are specialized in bow (character's choice of foot or horse bow); in addition to the normal bonuses to attack and damage, specialization confers deadly precision in close combat. At point blank range (between 6 and 30 feet), Heavenly Gates receive an additional +1 to hit with their preferred weapon. The Heavenly Gates pursue archery to achieve the absence of thought and try to act by intuition alone. They therefore do not make Acrobatics stunts with the bow, as others do, but instead use Insight.

At 6th level, Heavenly Gates become especially skilled archers, able to pick out opponents engaged in close combat with friends and allies. Normally, firing arrows into a group engaged in combat is risky and carries heavy penalties, but the Heavenly Gate can do so with a penalty of only -2 to hit.

At 8th level, a Heavenly Gates warrior can focus chi energy three times per day, causing arrows to burst into flame in midflight. These blazing arrows count as magical attacks, inflict +2 damage, and set alight flammable creatures and material.

A Heavenly Gates character starts the game with the following martial arts maneuvers: Cobra Strike, Iron Palm, Mantis Stance, One Hundred Eyes, and Wuxia. Subsequent maneuvers are at the character's discretion.

**Hindrances:** The Heavenly Gates are not concerned with the trappings of wealth and status. They have little use for money and do not go out of their way to acquire it. Heavenly Gates start the game with only 10 tael. Furthermore, any wealth over 25 tael that they acquire must be given away. Similarly, they can never own more than three magic items at a time, though a character is free to alter the mix to best advantage.

**Starting Equipment:** Horse or foot bow, thirty arrows of any type plus quiver, any two other weapons, 10 tael.

## Wizard Kits

### The Dragon's Breath

**Description:** The Dragon's Breath are a society of wizards who are concerned with harmony above all. They leave communication with the gods and spirits to the shamans and instead focus on understanding how the universe works. Heaven and Earth, yin and yang—all must be balanced. While there are times when one power is ascendant, nature dictates that another power will take its place, thus continuing the cosmic cycle. By understanding this cycle, and especially the Five Elements, the Dragon's Breath hope to achieve complete harmony.

The Dragon's Breath began as a philosophical sect in Zuyang, the imperial capitol, during the reign of Baoxin. Its leaders were always wizards, for only they could investigate the nature

A DRAGON'S BREATH MAGE



of things on a deeper level. Although controlled by wizards, the sect was open to all and scholars flocked to its school.

Emperor Jianmin at first treated the sect with great respect. He even provided patronage for some of its more prestigious members. In return, wizards provided magical training to a small group of eunuchs in the emperor's service. They have regretted that decision ever since: The eunuchs were the first to support the corrupted emperor and have become powerful agents of his evil regime.

The eunuch sorcerers knew all too well the danger posed by the Dragon's Breath, and they assaulted the school with demons and magic. Their move had been anticipated, however, and they found the school buildings empty. Since then, the Dragon's Breath have operated in secret. Even the emperor fears their power. His reign has caused great chaos, and the Dragon's Breath know he must be deposed before Heaven and Earth will once again achieve harmony.

**Organization:** The Dragon's Breath is run by a triumvirate of wizards. The Master of Chi is the eldest and most experienced. Assisting the Master are the co-rulers, the Master of Yin and the Master of Yang. In general, the Masters of Yin and Yang make all decisions, but both must agree before taking any action. When they cannot come to an agreement, the Master of Chi is consulted to settle the dispute. In this way, the harmony of leadership is assured.

Since the Dragon's Breath abandoned their school, they have relocated to an island off the coast of the province of Tou. This island, now known as the Dragon's Tooth, is protected by strong magic, and so far the wizards have not been detected by minions of the emperor.

**Requirements:** To become a Dragon's Breath, a character must have a minimum Intelligence and Wisdom of 9.

**Benefits:** Dragon's Breath wizards continually try to purify their chi by meditation and ritual techniques. This purity of chi allows a Dragon's Breath to cast more spells per day than a wizard normally would. At the start of each day, the character makes an Insight (not a Savvy) stunt. The result of the stunt die is the number of bonus spell levels the wizard can cast that day. For instance, a Dragon's Breath who rolls a 2 on the stunt die could memorize an additional two 1st-level spells or one 2nd-level spell.

Dragon's Breath members can also use their chi to counteract the effects of injuries. When the wizard is hit by a weapon or martial arts attack, he or she can reduce the damage to its minimum, including bonuses. For example, a fighter specialized in longbow would inflict only 3 points of damage to the wizard (the minimum amount of 1, plus the fighter's specialization bonus of +2). This ability can be used a number of times a day equal to half the character's level, rounding down. Thus at 5th level, the wizard can reduce injury twice a day.

A Dragon's Breath starts the game with the following martial arts maneuvers: Dance of the Golden Lotus, Speed of the Leopard, and Wuxia. Subsequent maneuvers are at the character's discretion.

**Hindrances:** A Dragon's Breath must spend at least two consecutive hours per day meditating. These hours must always be at the same time of day. A wizard who fails to meditate at the usual time loses a die type when rolling for bonus spells the following day (dropping from 1d4 to 1d3, for example).

Since a Dragon's Breath is primarily concerned with harmony, the wizard must always try to balance yin and yang. If possible, he or she must choose an equal number of yin and yang spells each day (for more information, see Chapter 4: Magic). If the total number of spells available is odd, the wizard chooses whether yin or yang is ascendant and takes the odd spell from that list.

**Starting Equipment:** Spellbook, any two allowable weapons, ink and paper, assorted material components, 3d8 tael.

### *Great Immortals*

**Description:** As far as the Great Immortals are concerned, the path of harmony has failed. While they do not deny such cornerstones of thought as yin and yang and the Five Elements, the Great Immortals eschew the idea of balance. Their goal is to achieve immortality, and their

means to that end is the study of yang magic. Yang is associated with both Heaven and fire, and these wizards believe that immortality lies in the manipulation of this energy.

The Great Immortals are not the first wizards to pursue this path. In fact, they revere the legendary figure of Cao Sifen [CHOW ZEE-FUN], a yang wizard who became immortal in the distant past. However, they are the first yang wizards to band together in a secret society. The reason is unknown to the other societies, who think the group solely concerned with the quest for immortality.

The society was founded during the reign of Emperor Chaoshi. It was inspired by the prophecies of Cao Sifen, which stated that a new power would rise in the Age of the Lonely Phoenix. Yang is associated with the phoenix, and a male phoenix has long been the symbol of a just emperor. Since the days of Chaoshi, they have waited for the disappearance of the male phoenix; unsurprisingly, none has been seen since Emperor Jianmin ate the tainted lotus.

The Great Immortals see themselves as the harbingers of a new order. Their inevitable immortality will change the very nature of the empire, and their phoenix will rise to depose the emperor. Heaven has made it clear that now is the time to act.

**Organization:** The Great Immortals call their organization the Circle, because of the circle's association with yang. The hierarchy of the group is very simple. In the center is the Master of the Circle, currently a powerful wizard named Diao Xu [DYOH ZHOO]. Surrounding him are the rest of the members, and each is considered an equal. As Diao is fond of saying, "All parts of the circle are equally close to the center." Recruits are taken as apprentices and join the Circle when they attain 3rd level. (Thus beginning characters are members of the Circle.)

Leadership is given to individual members of the Circle for specific missions, but this authority is temporary. Once the mission is complete, the leader returns to being just another member of the Circle. This encourages members to treat one another well, since today's underling may be tomorrow's captain.

**Requirements:** To become a Great Immortal, a character must have a minimum Intelligence and Strength of 9.

**Benefits:** Great Immortals surround themselves with yang-heavy objects, such as gold and jade. They also spend time performing rituals in areas associated with yang magic. Thus a Great Immortal is able to use magic more effectively. At the beginning of each day, the wizard makes a Might (not a Savvy) stunt. The result of the die roll is the number of bonus yang spell levels he or she can memorize that day. For instance, a Great Immortal who rolled a 2 on the stunt die could memorize an additional two 1st-level yang spells or one 2nd-level yang spell.

Great Immortals have a deeper understanding of yang magic than other wizards do, and this gives them several benefits. Yang spells cast by Great Immortals last for an additional round (except those whose effect is instantaneous), and targets of such spells suffer a -1 to any saving throw to resist. Additionally, the Great Immortal gains a +1 bonus to saving throws against yang magic.

A Great Immortal starts the game with the following martial arts maneuvers: Iron Palm, Might of the Tiger, and Wuxia. Subsequent maneuvers are at the character's discretion.

**Hindrances:** Unsurprisingly, Great Immortals suffer from the overbearing imbalance of yang. The most obvious effect is that they are more susceptible to yin magic, suffering a -1 penalty to saving throws against yin spells. They downplay this affliction, though, calling it an obstacle to be overcome on the road to immortality.

Since yang energy is fiery and active, Great Immortals are in constant danger of literally burning themselves out. Yang wizards have found they can prevent this fate, however, by observing certain taboos. At 3rd level and each level thereafter, the wizard must choose one taboo. (Thus a beginning Great Immortal character starts play with one taboo in effect.) The list below provides some ideas; any taboo that is chosen must be at least as restrictive as one of these. As long as the taboo is observed, all is well. Whenever a taboo is broken, the wizard must make a saving throw vs. spell or suffer an amount of damage equal to his or her level; if the save is successful, only half damage results.

*Sample Taboos*

Cannot bathe.  
 Cannot cut one's hair.  
 Cannot eat meat.  
 Cannot touch a dead body.  
 Cannot drink alcohol.  
 Cannot have sex.  
 Cannot kill an animal.

**Starting Equipment:** Spellbook, any two allowable weapons, ink and paper, assorted material components, 1d4 pieces of jade jewelry, 2d6 tael.

*Shaman Kits**The White Lotus*

**Description:** The White Lotus are not used to operating in secret. For uncounted generations, they were the shamans who served both the court and the people. They healed the sick, dealt with spirits and gods, and ousted evil spirits and demons. The Lord Shaman was the right hand of the emperor and advised the throne on matters both political and spiritual. All that came to end when the emperor turned to evil.



Lord Shaman Ji Dayi tried to prevent Emperor Jianmin from eating the tainted lotus and from satisfying his inhuman hungers. He was killed for his trouble, the first victim of thousands, but this alone would not sate the emperor's thirst for vengeance. He declared all of the shamans to be traitors and sent the army to hunt them down like common criminals. Hundreds of shamans, especially those in the villages, were caught by surprise and murdered. Those that survived were forced into hiding.

Through friendly spirits, the survivors managed to find one another. They decided their only recourse was to form a secret society and work towards the overthrow of the emperor. Having no natural talent for duplicity, they welcomed an alliance with the other secret societies as a stepping stone towards their goal. For the sake of righting what's wrong, they have even agreed to work with the fearsome Black Lotus (see below). These are sure to be interesting times.

**Organization:** Traditionally, each major city had its own chief shaman, and from their numbers the emperor would choose the Lord Shaman of Tianguo. Since the death of Ji Dayi, the White Lotus have been forced to reinvent themselves. The surviving chiefs met in secret and asked the Jade Emperor to shine his light on the new Lord Shaman. Almost immediately Luo Hongbo [LWA TSOONG-PWA], a village shaman attending one of the chiefs, was surrounded by a pure white light. Despite his lowly origins, Luo was accepted—Heaven itself had clearly spoken. He has since proved a wise leader, and the chiefs do his bidding without question.

**Requirements:** To become a White Lotus, a character must have a minimum Wisdom and Charisma of 9.

**Benefits:** Through their connection with the spirit world, the White Lotus have the special ability to immobilize or even destroy undead creatures. This is an Insight stunt, and the result of the die roll is the maximum number of creatures affected. The White Lotus immobilize undead by slapping paper charms on the creature's foreheads, which keep them immobilized as long as the charms remain in place. In combat situations, these bits of paper have a unfortunate tendency to get knocked off; smart villains can also remove them to release their undead servants.

When a shaman tries to immobilize the undead, consult the following table. Each indicated value is the Target Number for the Insight feat, and the Insight stunt result adds to the die roll as normal. A result of I or D indicates that the creatures are automatically immobilized

or destroyed, respectively, and no die roll is necessary. A dash (—) means that the creature can't be affected by a shaman of that level.

(H4) TABLE 2-18: IMMOBILIZE UNDEAD

Hit Dice of Undead	Level of Shaman									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	10	7	4	1	1	D	D	D*	D*	D*
2	16	13	10	7	4	1	1	D	D	D*
3–4	19	16	13	10	7	4	1	1	D	D
5–6	—	—	20	19	16	13	10	7	4	1
7–8	—	—	—	—	20	19	16	13	10	7
9–10	—	—	—	—	—	—	20	19	16	13

\* Twice as many creatures are affected.

Dealing with the otherworld as they do, White Lotus members often must reckon with demons and their schemes. Over the years, they have learned special techniques: White Lotus members gain a +1 to hit and damage versus demons and a +1 bonus to their saving throws against demonic powers.

A White Lotus member who has achieved 5th level gains the attention of a powerful entity. This is usually a natural spirit (such as that of a particular mountain or lake), and it is from this patron that the shaman gains spells of 3rd and 4th level. Players can roleplay out the search if they like, or the DM can just assume it happens in “down time.” This patron spirit can be petitioned for other kinds of aid, but in return it may ask the shaman for favors—often at inopportune times.

To gain spells of 5th level, a White Lotus must earn the patronage of a god. The character can do this only on attaining 9th level by undergoing a special quest. The quest must be roleplayed out (ideally as an adventure in its own right)—gods do not give their patronage lightly, and the shaman will need to prove his or her worth.

Of necessity, White Lotus members school themselves in martial arts. They start the game with the following martial arts maneuvers: Blood of the Dragon, Mantis Stance, Mantis Strike, and Wuxia. Subsequent maneuvers are at the character's discretion.

Hindrances: While the emperor's minions hunt members of all the secret societies, White Lotus are sought in preference to all others. The emperor has not forgotten the “betrayal” of his lord shaman and offers a bounty for the head of each White Lotus brought to him.

Starting Equipment: Any three allowable weapons, incense, ink and paper, sacrificial items, a small gong (for calling spirits), 3d10 tael.

### *Black Lotus*

**Description:** The Black Lotus are the oldest secret society in the empire. The reason is simple: Trafficking with demons has always been proscribed.

Originally, the Black Lotus were much like other shamans, but they came to realize that there was more to gain from dealing with demons than driving them off. The evil spirits knew many secrets and controlled great power, and those with proper knowledge could benefit from both. Although such shamans tried to keep their activities secret, it was inevitable that some of them would be discovered. Those who survived the angry mobs and imperial soldiers fled into the wilderness, where many died in isolation.

Zhongwen [CHUNG-WEN], the King of Hell, had noticed these mortals and was pleased that they showed such respect to his court. He sent minions to gather up the wayward shamans. When all were assembled, the King of Hell himself arrived to address them. He made a simple offer: If the shamans would form a secret society and offer sacrifices and loyalty to Zhongwen and his court, he would gift them with spells and other powers. Those who did not die of shock at meeting the ruler of Hell agreed unanimously to the terms, and the Black Lotus came into being on that day. Binding oaths were sworn, and those who dared to break

them met horrible fates.

For centuries the Black Lotus benefited from this arrangement. With the rise of Emperor Jianmin, however, they began to pay the price. The tainted lotus gave great power to Musheng, the renegade demon lord who crafted it, who was able to oust the King of Hell. But the Black Lotus are bound by oaths to Zhongwen, the original king. This has put them at odds with both the emperor and Musheng, the new ruler of Hell. Hunted by both mortal and supernatural foes, the Black Lotus were forced into an alliance with the other secret societies. This is an unfamiliar situation, but they hope the common aim of overthrowing the emperor will prevent the other groups from betraying them.

**Organization:** While the Black Lotus is the oldest secret society in Tianguo, it is also the smallest. There are not all that many people willing to truck with demons, after all. The group is organized into a cell structure, with each cell having no more than five members. The leader of the Black Lotus, a fearsome shaman named Ai Mude [AYE MOO-DUH], lives in a secret cave complex in the Tibneeg Mountains (safely beyond the emperor's reach). These caves are rumored to lead directly to Hell and have been the home of the Black Lotus since the days of Emperor Xian.

**Requirements:** To become a Black Lotus, a character must have a minimum Wisdom and Strength of 9.

**Benefits:** Black Lotus members seek power in Hell. Like the demons they serve, they are especially adept at causing pain. To reflect this, whenever a Black Lotus casts a cause wounds spell of any level, he or she receives a +2 bonus to hit and damage. These shamans are also resistant to the wiles of others, receiving a +2 bonus to their saving throws against charm attempts.

Once per day, a member of the Black Lotus can summon the power of Hell to cause terror in enemies. This is an Insight stunt, and the result of the die roll is the maximum number of opponents the ability can affect. The Target Number of the feat is equal to the target's Wisdom (use Intelligence for those without a listed Wisdom, such as monsters), and the shaman must make a separate roll against each opponent. Targets must be able to see the Black Lotus and be within 50 feet; those affected run directly away at top speed for a number of rounds equal to the stunt die result.

The Black Lotus also study various forms of breath control. At 3rd level, they can breathe so shallowly that they appear to be dead. Such is their concentration that no stimulus will cause them to react (even attacks, which cause only half damage). A Black Lotus can remain in this state for 1 hour per level. The shaman remains completely aware during this process and can come out of it at any time. This ability can be used once per day.

A Black Lotus member who has achieved 5th level gains the attention of a powerful demon. This is often the spirit of long-dead Black Lotus who has returned from Hell as a demon, and it is from this "ancestor" that the shaman gains spells of 3rd and 4th level. Players can roleplay out the search if they like, or the DM can just assume it happens in "down time." This patron demon can be petitioned for other kinds of aid, but in return it may ask the shaman for favors—often at inopportune times.

To gain spells of 5th level, a Black Lotus member must gain the patronage of a demon lord. The character can do this only on attaining 9th level by undergoing a special quest. The quest must be roleplayed out (ideally as an adventure in its own right)—demon lords do not give their patronage lightly, and the shaman will need to prove his or her worth.

In addition to their shamanic activities, Black Lotus members also practice martial arts and begin the game with the following special maneuvers: Dance of the Golden Lotus, Iron Palm, Mantis Stance, Wuxia. Subsequent maneuvers are at the character's discretion.

**Hindrances:** Unlike most of the other secret societies, the Black Lotus have always been an outlaw sect. Trafficking with demons is a dangerous business and has been banned since the founding of the empire. Emperor Jianmin continues to hunt down the Black Lotus, whose members foolishly remain loyal to the original ruler of Hell, and most citizens of the empire will react with anger and fear if they discover the shamans' true allegiance.

Starting Equipment: Any three allowable weapons, incense, ink and paper, sacrificial items, a small drum (for calling demons), 3d6 tael.

## *Thief Kits*

### *The Iron Monkeys*

**Description:** There have always been peasant rebellions against the empire; when times get tough, it is usually the peasants who suffer first. The Iron Monkeys trace their lineage to one such uprising, known as the Red Eyebrow Rebellion. This revolt took place during the reign of Chaoshi and was organized by disgruntled peasants who painted their eyebrows red in protest.

The rebellion was successful for a time, but eventually the full weight of the army was brought down upon the rebels, and the Red Eyebrows were crushed. Those who survived went underground and changed their name to the Iron Monkeys. To escape fierce retribution by the army and the gentry, the group's leaders dispersed across the empire. Over the years they recruited peasants in the countryside and trained cadres of rebels and saboteurs.

When Emperor Jianmin ate the tainted lotus, the leadership of the Iron Monkeys were certain their day had come. The emperor had clearly become evil incarnate; surely the broad mass of the peasantry would rise up and support them. Uprisings did occur in a number of provinces, but fear had paralyzed most citizens. The expected recruits never materialized, and the premature rebellions were crushed.

Since then, the Iron Monkeys have been more careful. They believe that the land is due for a just emperor, but that the nobility is corrupt and useless. They are willing to ally with other secret societies in the hopes of overthrowing Jianmin. The emperor himself pays them scant notice—they are nothing but peasants, after all.

**Organization:** While the Iron Monkeys are active throughout the empire, they tend to be more locally based than the other secret societies. For every three villages or so, there is a small active group with an elected leader. In theory, these groups report to a higher leader who directs all activity in a province; in practice, the society's resources are so strapped that the provincial leadership can exert only minimal control.

The provincial leaders elect one of their own to head up the organization. The current leader is Suling [SOO-LEEN], a woman from Tui Province. She has tried to make the Iron Monkeys more effective by improving communication and ordering large-scale operations. Despite opposition from the other provincial leaders, she agreed to work with the other secret societies in the hopes of furthering the group's goals.

Requirements: To become an Iron Monkey, a character must have a minimum Dexterity and Charisma of 9.

**Benefits:** An Iron Monkey learns the following thief skills: Climb Walls, Detect Noise, Disguise, Escape Bonds, Find and Remove Traps, Hide In Shadows, Move Silently, and Tracking. At 1st level, an Iron Monkey receives 60 discretionary skill points to improve his or her thieving skills, and receives another 30 points for each additional level. Thus a starting Iron Monkey character of 3rd level has 120 discretionary points to spend.

Since they are usually outnumbered, Iron Monkeys make frequent use of ambush. Because of their training, they can make a backstab attack with missile weapons such as bows; as always, the target must be unaware of the attack. Being peasants, Iron Monkeys have learned to improvise weapons wherever they can, and are able to use small everyday objects as lethal missiles. In their hands, mundane objects such as coins and acorns have the same effect as throwing spikes.

Iron Monkeys are less concerned with killing than Ghost Eaters (see below) and so learn a special knockout blow. An Iron Monkey in position to backstab can instead attempt to knock out the foe, receiving the same +4 bonus to hit. If a hit is scored, the character has a base chance of 25%, plus 5% per level, to render the opponent unconscious. The target makes

a saving throw vs. paralyzation to resist, but suffers double damage even on a success.

At 5th level an Iron Monkey learns the Trackless Step. Three times a day the character can cross any type of terrain, including snow and mud, and leave neither footprints nor scent. Using this ability is an Acrobatics stunt; the result of the die roll is the duration in turns (periods of 10 minutes).

Due to their great agility, Iron Monkeys make excellent martial artists. They begin the game with the following martial arts maneuvers: Crane Stance, Grace of the Crane, Iron Palm, One Hundred Eyes, and Wuxia. Subsequent maneuvers are at the character's discretion.

Hindrances: The Iron Monkeys are a product of the countryside, and most of them come from a peasant background. Monkeys don't belong in the city, so they say. To reflect this, Iron Monkeys suffer a -10% penalty when using any thieving skills in an urban environment.

The Iron Monkeys have been a rebellious organization from the start, so members cannot be of lawful alignment.

**Starting Equipment:** Any three allowable weapons, two different disguises (for example, merchant and peasant), assorted picks and tools, 2d6 tael.

### *The Ghost Eaters*

Description: The origin of the Ghost Eaters is shrouded in mystery. They were founded during the era of Seven Kingdoms, when warring armies vied across the land and nothing was certain. People crowded into the cities for protection against marauding soldiers and bandits. City living, however, had its own problems. One unforeseen predicament was the rise of undead.

Overcrowded and unsanitary cities were breeding grounds for disease and murder, and those who did not receive a proper burial often came back as vengeful ghosts to cause further havoc. The kings had their hands full dealing with mortal concerns, and the shamans tended only to the needs of the nobility. The Ghost Eaters began as a local self-defense society whose mission was to protect the urban poor from the depredations of the hungry dead. They were quite successful at this and the society spread from city to city.

By the latter years of the Seven Kingdoms era, the Ghost Eaters had lost much of their original purpose and began expanding their protection to other areas of life. At some point protection became extortion, and by the time Shangwei reunited Tianguo, the Ghost Eaters were firmly in control of the criminal underworld. The new empire served them well, offering better communication between cities and ending the petty wars that had plagued the land for centuries. They expanded their operations to include such activities as spying and assassination and became "problem solvers" for those without legal recourse. Although their activities are largely criminal, the Ghost Eaters often provide rough justice for the urban poor.

Emperor Jianmin naturally grew to fear the Ghost Eaters. They were organized, secretive, and expert at assassination. It was only a matter of time, he reasoned, before someone hired one to kill him. He therefore tried to root out the Ghost Eaters and destroy their base of power, even leveling some cities entirely to neutralize the local chapter. But even the emperor's troops cannot be everywhere, and more than one imperial captain was found slain in bed.

The Ghost Eaters still rule the backstreets and basements of the cities, but now for the first time they have joined with other secret societies to fight the emperor. It is rumored that they retain some of their secret methods for combating evil spirits. If that is true, the Ghost Eaters' struggle against Jianmin may return them to their roots.

**Organization:** The Ghost Eaters have a strict hierarchy, which they deem necessary to protect their interests and secrets. The group is run by the Masters of the Five Directions. The Master of the North controls the provinces of Jing and Tou; the Master of the East, Bi and Qu Ti; the Master of the South, Tui and Bei Ji; the Master of the West, Hou and Shang Shen; and the Master of the Center, the province of Xin. Although the Master of the Center controls only one province directly, it is the heart of the empire; this Master is the head of the entire organization, to whom everyone answers. The current Master of the Center is an enigmatic man named Chang Chen [CHONG CHEN].

Below the Masters of the Five Directions are the Shadow Magistrates. Each of them con-



trols a city and is responsible for all operations within its confines.

**Requirements:** To become a Ghost Eater, a character must have a minimum Dexterity and Strength of 9.

**Benefits:** A Ghost Eater learns the following thief skills: Bribe, Detect Undead, Disguise, Hide In Shadows, Move Silently, Open Locks, and Pick Pockets. At 1st level, a Ghost Eater receives 50 discretionary skill points to improve his or her thieving skills, and receives another 25 points for each additional level. Thus a starting Ghost Eater character of 3rd level has 100 discretionary points to spend.

Ghost Eaters specialize in assassination and know just where to strike for maximum damage. When making a surprise attack, they can attempt a lethal strike. This is resolved as a normal backstab, but if the damage inflicted is over half of the victim's current hit points, he or she must make a saving throw vs. paralyzation or die outright.

Most Ghost Eaters have a favorite weapon for use on those delicate jobs. At 3rd level, a Ghost Eater can select any concealable weapon as a "weapon of choice," receiving a +1 bonus to hit and damage while using it.

At 5th level a Ghost Eater learns some of the ancient secrets of the society. By taking part in special rituals, the thief is able to strike undead creatures as though wielding a magic weapon, even when making martial arts attacks. At 7th level, Ghost Eaters receive +1 to hit and +2 damage versus undead creatures of all types.

The Ghost Eaters have always survived by maintaining a fearsome reputation. They back this up with skillful use of martial arts. A Ghost Eater begins the game with the following martial arts maneuvers: Claw of the Crab, Crane Stance, Iron Palm, Mantis Strike, and Wuxia. Subsequent maneuvers are at the character's discretion.

**Hindrances:** Ghost Eaters are most at home in the city. They have never quite understood the rural mindset, and all attempts to penetrate into the countryside have ended in failure. To reflect their unfamiliarity with the country, Ghost Eaters suffer a -10% penalty when using any thieving skills in a rural environment.

Ghost Eaters are loyal to the society first and themselves second. They do little to help others unless there is money to be made or influence to be garnered. Thus, a Ghost Eater cannot be of good alignment.

**Starting Equipment:** Any three allowable weapons, two different disguises (for example, tax collector and tradesman), assorted picks and tools, 3d8 tael.

## Arms and Equipment

### Money

Money in Tianguo was standardized long ago. Coins are issued each year, noting the year and the reign. Anyone found committing forgery or clipping is put to death immediately. Thus the type and weight of imperial coins has been nearly unchanging over the generations.

All coins have a hole in the middle. This allows them to be carried on cords, called cash strings. There are two basic kinds of coins, tael and fen. Tael are made of silver and are the base currency of the empire; fen are copper, and there are 100 of them per tael.

1 tael = 100 fen

Prices listed in these rules always refer to tael unless the number is followed by an "f," which denotes fen (for example, 10f). This system is also used when evaluating other valuable objects, like gold, gems, and jewelry (for example, "a gem worth 100 tael").

### Armor

Player characters normally do not wear armor in a Dragon Fist campaign because doing so prevents the use of martial arts. This is not to say, however, that armor is unknown in Tianguo

(far from it). Imperial soldiers, bandits, and other nonplayer characters (NPCs) usually wear armor, and there may be unusual circumstances where PCs use it as well. There are three basic types of armor used in Tianguo, and all are normally used with a helmet.

**Leather Lamellar:** This armor is made of leather strips cured in boiling oil to make them tough and resistant. Smaller pieces are sewn together to make a breastplate, while a full suit has suppler leather protecting the arms. Breastplates have an AC of 11 and full suits have AC 12.

**Hide:** The tough hides of certain creatures, especially that of the rhinoceros, are sometimes used to make armor. Hide breastplates have AC 12 and full suits, AC 14.

**Iron Lamellar:** This is similar to leather lamellar, but the strips are made of iron. Breastplates have AC 13 and full suits, AC 15.

**Shield:** Both infantry and cavalry often use shields. These are used to block incoming blows and add +1 to the user's Armor Class (for example, a soldier wearing iron lamellar armor and carrying a shield would have a total AC of 16).

### *Weapons*

A variety of weapons are available to Dragon Fist characters, ranging from the simple improvised tools of the peasantry to the finest swords. Table 2-19 lists typical weapons and their costs.

The size of a weapon is Small (S, under 2 feet long), Medium (M, 2 to 5 feet long), or Large (L, 6 feet or more in length). A weapon's speed is rated as Slow (Sl, +2 to initiative), Average (Av, +4 to initiative), or fast (Fa, +6 to initiative); initiative is explained fully in Chapter 3: Martial Arts and Combat. Weapons in bold type require two hands to use.

Weapons do different amounts of damage depending on the size of the target. The first damage listing in a row is how much the weapon deals to a target of small (S) or human-sized (M) opponents, while the second is the amount dealt to large (L) creatures.

A brief description of each weapon follows the table.

TABLE 2-19: WEAPONS

Weapon	Cost	Size	Speed	S–M Damage	L Damage
Battle-ax	5	M	Av(4)	1d8	1d8
Bow					
Horse	30	M	Av(4)	1d6	1d6
Foot	75	L	Av(4)	1d6	1d6
Crossbow*					
Light	35	M	Av(4)	1d8	1d8
Heavy	50	M	Sl(2)	1d10	1d10
Repeating	75	M	Fa(6)	1d4+1	1d4+1
Siege	100	L	Sl(2)	1d12	1d12
Dagger	2	S	Fa(6)	1d4	1d3
Double-stick	1	M	Fa(6)	1d6	1d6
Halberd	10	L	Sl(2)	1d10	1d10
Hand/throwing ax	1	M	Av(4)	1d6	1d4
Lance	10	L	Av(4)	1d6+1	2d6
Monk's spade	7	L	Sl(2)	2d4	2d6
Monk's stick	1	S	Fa(6)	1d6	1d4
Sickle	1	M	Av(4)	1d6	1d4
Spear	1	M	Av(4)	1d6	1d8
Staff	10f	M	Fa(6)	1d6	1d6
Sword					
Butterfly	10	S	Fa(6)	1d6	1d6+1
Double-edged	15	M	Av(4)	1d8	1d12
Nine-ring	15	M	Av(4)	1d6+1	1d8+1
Single-edged	10	S	Fa(6)	1d6	1d8
War	25	M			
One-handed			Av(4)	2d4	2d4
Two-handed			Sl(2)	1d8+1	2d6
Three-section staff	2	M	Av(4)	1d6	1d6
Throwing spike	20f	S	Fa(6)	1d4	1d3
Tiger fork (trident)	15	L	Av(4)		
One-handed				1d6+1	2d4
Two-handed				1d8+1	3d4
War fan	3	S	Fa(6)	1d4	1d4
Whipping chain	2	M	Av(4)	1d8	1d6

\* Crossbows (except the repeating crossbow) receive a bonus against armored opponents. They are +3 to hit at short range and +1 to hit at medium range. (See Table 2-20 below for missile weapon ranges.)

TABLE 2-20: MISSILE WEAPON RANGES AND RATES OF FIRE

Weapon	ROF	Range (yards)		
		S	M*	L**
Bow				
Horse	2/1	50	100	180
Foot	2/1	60	120	210
Crossbow				
Light	1/1	60	120	180
Heavy	1/2	80	160	240
Repeating	2/1	50	100	150
Siege	1/2	90	175	250
Dagger	2/1	10	20	30
Hand/throwing ax	1/1	10	20	30
Throwing spike	3/1	5	10	15

\* –2 to hit

\*\* –5 to hit

*Weapon Descriptions*

**Battle-ax:** The battle-ax features a single broad blade and is popular with common soldiers and certain martial arts schools.

**Bows:** All bows in the empire are of composite design. Horse bows are small and used primarily by mounted troops; the larger foot bows are favored by infantry. The Yi barbarians are particularly adept with the horse bow.

Arrows come in several types. Flight arrows are the standard, and most bows use these exclusively. The frog crotch arrow has a head in the shape of a V, the inner edge of which is sharpened. It's used to cut cords, ropes, and anything else caught between its fork (cutting tricks require a called shot; see Chapter 3 for details). The humming bulb arrow is fitted with a carved wooden head that whistles in flight. It can be heard up a mile away and is used for signaling.

**Crossbows:** Crossbows are popular weapons in the empire, since they are easy to use and are excellent at puncturing armor. Light crossbows are usually used by mounted soldiers and heavy crossbows, by infantry. Siege crossbows are so large they must be mounted on a wall or a wagon to be used effectively. Repeating crossbows, also known as chu-ko-nu, are clever devices that allow their users to reload with exceptional speed. A box on top of the crossbow holds ten bolts, and a lever drops a fresh bolt into firing position after the weapon is discharged.



DOUBLE STICK

**Double-stick:** The double-stick is a common martial arts weapon that is descended from the agricultural flail. It consists of two foot-long sticks connected by a short piece or chain or rope. They are often used in pairs.

**Halberd:** This is a catch-all term for a number of different polearms used in the empire. The most common are the ge [GUH], a spear with two crescent blades beneath its point, and the chai-dao [CHIE-DOH], which looks like a war sword blade mounted on a pole. Both weapons are used for thrusting and chopping attacks.

**Hand/throwing ax:** This weapon is smaller and lighter than the battle-ax. It can also be thrown.

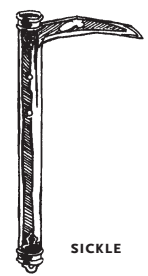
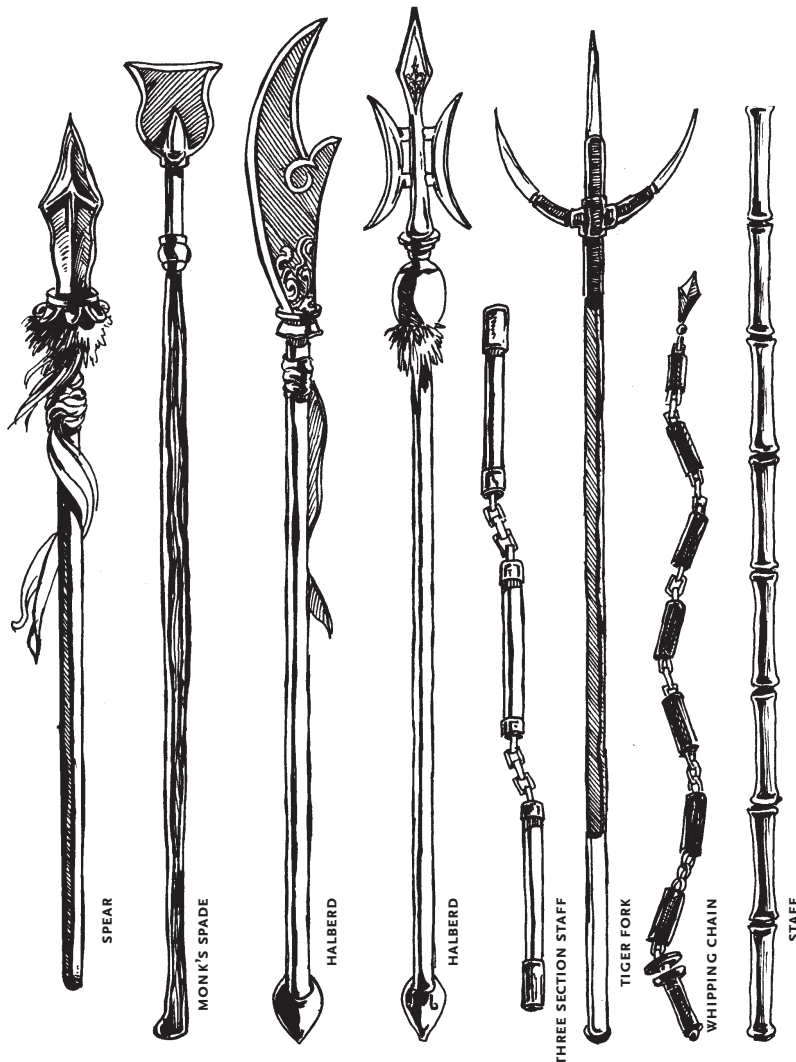
**Lance:** Lances are long spears that are used on horseback. Imperial cavalry usually wield them overhand. Some lances feature a secondary blade, perpendicular to the primary blade, that is used to pull opponents from their horses.

**Monk's Spade:** This is a martial arts weapon descended from the peasant's spade. It looks similar to the agricultural equivalent, but the shaft is much longer, and the head is sharpened.

**Monk's Stick:** This weapon was originally the arm of a millstone, consisting of a short staff with a small perpendicular handle. It is popular with martial artists because it is easy to conceal and has great versatility.

**Sickle:** A popular peasant weapon, the sickle or lian [LYEN] is yet another agricultural tool that is used in combat. Martial artists often use these in pairs.

**Spear:** The spear, known in the empire as the qiang



SICKLE

[CHUNG], is a common and popular weapon with both peasants and martial artists. There are many kinds of spears throughout the empire, but all share the same basic statistics. They frequently have tassels beneath their heads to prevent blood from flowing down the shaft during combat.

**Staff:** This simple weapon is a 5- to 6-foot-long piece of hardwood. Known as the gun [WOON], the staff is deadly weapon in the right hands. It also attracts little attention from imperial soldiers, since it appears to be nothing more than a walking stick.

**Swords:** There are a variety of swords commonly used throughout the empire. The basic weapon of the imperial armies is the single-edged sword, a simple weapon with a 2-foot blade. The double-edged sword is longer and more elegant, and is favored by martial artists. The war sword is a large, chopping weapon that can be used with either one or two hands. It is most associated with the Red Tigers, who are its acknowledged masters. The butterfly sword is a short, heavy weapon that is often used in pairs. The nine-ring sword is a smaller version of the war sword with nine rings attached to its back edge. Skilled swordfighters can use the rings to catch enemy weapons and disarm foes.

**Three-Section Staff:** This weapon is similar to the double-stick but has three shafts instead of two. A flexible weapon, the three-section staff can keep opponents at a distance or deal with them close up.

THROWING SPIKE



**Throwing Spike:** This is a sharply pointed metal spike, only a few inches long. These weapons are also known as “sleeve darts,” because they can be easily concealed.

**Tiger Fork:** Known as the hu cha [FOO CHAH], the tiger fork is a large trident with broadly-spread tines. While it can be used to keep animals at bay, as its name suggests, it is more often used to disarm opponents.

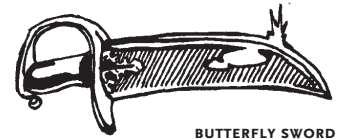
**War Fan:** This is a larger version of the personal fan,



WAR FAN

but made of iron or hardwood. The war fan, or san, can be used as a bludgeon or to block incoming blows. Some also have razor edges.

**Whipping Chain:** Known as the bian [BYEN], this weapon consists of three or nine short iron bars connected with links of chain and tipped with a slashing blade. Since it can wrap right around parrying weapons and shields, it is a difficult weapon to defend against.



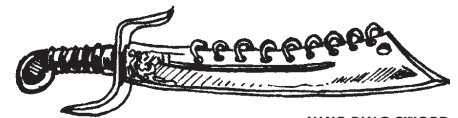
BUTTERFLY SWORD



WAR SWORD



SINGLE EDGE SWORD



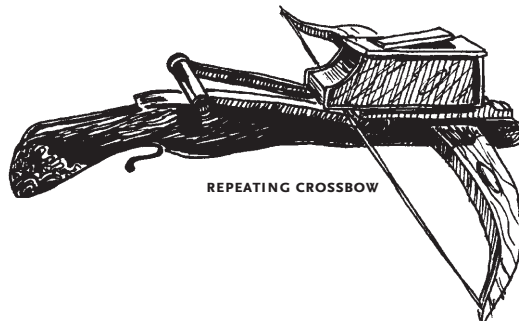
NINE-RING SWORD



DOUBLE EDGE SWORD



MONK'S STICK



REPEATING CROSSBOW

*Other Equipment*

As an active empire, Tianguo offers a wide variety of goods and services. Space does not permit a comprehensive list, but the following gives a rough idea of current prices in the Heavenly Kingdom.

**TABLE 2-21: EQUIPMENT COSTS**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Armor	
Leather lamellar (breastplate/full)	3/5
Hide (b/f)	4/8
Iron lamellar (b/f)	50/100
Shield	5
Transport	
Chariot (two-horse)	400
Horse	100
Sedan chair	100
Wagon	200
Miscellaneous	
Candle	1f
Clothing (basic)	1
Flint and steel	25f
Lantern	10
Rope (50 ft.)	1
Torch	1f
Wineskin	10f
Services	
Inn lodging (per day)	50f
Meals (per day)	10f



Let's face it—most action movies don't waste time on plot and characterization. Hong Kong flicks take this, like most other conventions, to the extreme. The emphasis in martial arts movies is action, action, action. This chapter gives you the tools to recreate that mayhem in the privacy of your own home, kicking off with the martial arts rules and following it up with a more general section on combat, stunts, and feats. By the time you're done reading this chapter, you'll be able to run a fight the HK movie way.

## Martial Arts

Martial arts are an important part of *Dragon Fist*. Nearly everyone in a Hong Kong action movie can use martial arts, and your characters reflect this. Even wizards, who traditionally avoid physical combat, can use martial arts in this setting. The previous chapter provided progression tables for martial arts special maneuvers; this section describes those maneuvers and tells you how to make the most of them.

### The Basics

Although there are a wide array of martial arts styles, they all share some basic fundamentals. Every school teaches footwork, punches, and kicks, as well as the use of some associated weapons. Weapons are an integral part of many styles. They can be used in conjunction with most special maneuvers, except for those that determine martial arts damage (such as Iron Palm and Invincible Eagle Claw).

Martial arts are as deadly as any weapon, and damage from such attacks is no different from that inflicted by swords and arrows. This damage represents the effects of all kinds of moves, from punches to kicks to the use of improvised weapons. Describing attacks adds excitement and color to the game; encourage players to go for it!

All characters start with a basic martial arts damage of 1d4 and a basic Armor Class of 10. As a character increases in level and learns more special maneuvers, he or she learns additional stances and strikes that can improve these numbers. Some higher-rank maneuvers have prerequisites; these are noted in the maneuver description.





## Chi

In its broadest sense chi means “energy,” in particular life energy. It is a fundamental component of the universe and a complement to the Five Elements. Chi pulses through living beings much as does blood, and regulating this flow is the goal of much martial arts training. Ideally, when yin and yang are balanced, so too is chi. Those who have mastered their chi flow can store, conserve, and focus it.

While the primary goal of regulating chi flow is better health, chi can also be released forcefully and with devastating effect. Martial arts masters also learn a series of vital points, allowing them to cause paralyzation and even death by blocking off the chi flow of their opponents.

## Martial Arts Maneuvers

Tianguo is home to hundreds of different martial arts. Students routinely leave their masters to found their own schools, and then their students do the same. Quantifying such a vast array of styles and moves would be tedious at best. What’s important for playing is the effects of these styles within the game. Dragon Fist martial arts are defined by a series of special maneuvers. How these are achieved is unimportant, though it’s more fun if players describe their moves in outlandish detail.

The mechanics of these maneuvers are described below, along with sample names. Players are encouraged to make up evocative names of their own to describe these powers.

### Rank 1 Maneuvers

**Cobra Strike:** The character can make a called shot (see the “Combat Considerations” section below) at –2 to hit instead of the usual –4.

**Crane Stance:** The character’s AC is increased to 12.

**Grace of the Crane:** The character suffers no damage from falls of up to 20 feet and only half damage for falls of over 20 feet.

**Iron Palm:** The character’s base martial arts damage is increased to 1d6.

**Mantis Strike:** The character can make a special stunning attack with a –2 penalty to hit. If the attack succeeds, his or her opponent must make a saving throw vs. paralyzation or be stunned for one round. Stunned characters can’t perform stunts, and attacks against them are +4 to hit.

**Speed of the Leopard:** By performing an Acrobatics stunt at the beginning of the round, the character can increase his or her Move for that round (normally 60 feet; see below) by a number of feet equal to 10 times the result of the stunt die roll.

**Spring of the Tiger:** By performing an Acrobatics stunt at the beginning of the round, the character can withdraw from combat at full speed without giving opponents a chance to take a free swing.

**Way of the Snake:** The character can fight effectively even when lying on the ground.

**Wind in the Reeds:** The character can stand up from a prone position without spending a round to do so. (Attacks against prone characters are normally +4 to hit, and they must spend the next round getting up.)

**Wuxia:** The character can jump 20 feet vertically, plus an additional 1 foot per level.

### Rank 2 Maneuvers

**Blood of the Dragon:** Once a day, the character can use chi energy to heal himself or herself for 2 hit points per level.

**Claw of the Crab:** The character makes an attack at –2 to hit. Success means the foe has been disarmed. The weapon flies 2d6 feet in a random direction. By making a successful second to hit roll at the same penalty, the character can send the flying weapon anywhere within range (for example, into the hands of a nearby companion).

## Martial Arts Maneuvers by Rank

### Rank 1

Cobra Strike  
Crane Stance  
Grace of the Crane  
Iron Palm  
Mantis Strike  
Speed of the Leopard  
Spring of the Tiger  
Way of the Snake  
Wind in the Reeds  
Wuxia

### Rank 2

Blood of the Dragon  
Claw of the Crab  
Dance of the Golden Lotus  
Flying Dragon Fist  
Mantis Stance  
Might of the Tiger  
One Hundred Eyes  
Pounce of the Tiger  
Rain of Heaven

### Rank 3

Cobra Stance  
Fists of Fury  
Nerve Strike  
Plum Blossom Fist  
Purity of Chi  
Ride the Wind  
Way of the Crab

### Rank 4

Invincible Eagle Claw  
Poisoning the Spirit  
Step of the Crane  
Torrent of Chi  
Whirlwind Strike

### Rank 5

Breath Stealer  
Five Elements Fist  
Miracle Palm  
Scorpion’s Sting  
Ultimate Stance  
Way of the Dragon

### What You Can Do in a Round

Sometimes it's hard to judge exactly what a character can do in a minute of game time. The following guidelines should give you a good idea of what's possible.

*No matter what else you do in the round, you can always:*

Move up to half your Move rate (usually 60 feet), or  
Use the Wuxia martial arts maneuver to jump around.

*In addition to moving around the battlefield, you can perform one major action each round. These include the following:*

Make an attack (or attacks if you can strike more than once a round). This includes both missile and melee attacks.

Cast a single spell (if the casting time is 1 round or less).

Perform a feat (see the "Feats" section below).

Bind a character's wounds.

Move the rest of your Move rate (usually 60 feet).

Use a magic item or drink a potion.

Use a thieving skill (note that some of these take more than 1 round to complete, however).

**Dance of the Golden Lotus:** The character's casting speed for spells is increased by 1. This is usable only by shamans and wizards.

**Flying Dragon Fist:** The character's base martial arts damage is increased to 1d8.

Prerequisite: Iron Palm.

**Mantis Stance:** The character's AC increases to 14, +1 for each additional Stance maneuver known. For example, a character who had previously learned the Crane Stance would have an AC of 15.

**Might of the Tiger:** By performing a Fortitude stunt at the beginning of the round, the character can smash through wooden walls and similar inanimate obstacles without taking any damage.

**One Hundred Eyes:** The character can detect opponents on all sides, providing they are not invisible.

**Pounce of the Tiger:** The character makes an attack at -2 to hit. Success indicates the opponent is knocked down and becomes prone. Attacks against prone characters are normally +4 to hit, and they must spend the next round getting up.

**Rain of Heaven:** The character can fight equally well with either hand. This allows an extra attack each round (using either a weapon or martial arts). Characters wielding two-handed weapons cannot use this maneuver.

### Rank 3 Maneuvers

**Cobra Stance:** The character's AC is increased to 16, +1 for each additional Stance maneuver known. For instance, a character who had previously learned the Crane and Mantis Stances would have an AC of 18.

**Fists of Fury:** By performing an Acrobatics stunt at the beginning of the round, the character can strike two adjacent opponents with a single attack. Roll to hit once against the higher AC of the two opponents; on a hit, both take damage.

**Nerve Strike:** The character attacks with a -4 penalty to hit. If the attack is successful, his or her opponent must make a saving throw vs. paralyzation or become immobile for 1 round. Immobilized characters are hit automatically.

**Plum Blossom Fist:** The character attacks with a -4 penalty to hit; if successful, he or she doubles the damage rolled (before modifiers). For example, a fighter specialized in martial arts strikes her opponent with Plum Blossom Fist. Because the character also knows Flying Dragon Fist, her normal damage is 1d8. The player rolls a 6, which is doubled to 12, then adds the specialization bonus of +2 for a total damage of 14.

**Purity of Chi:** The character gains Magic Resistance of 2% per level. By making a successful Magic Resistance check, he or she is untouched by a magical effect.

**Ride the Wind:** The character can "fly" by running through the air. The movement rate is 60 feet plus 10 feet per level.

**Way of the Crab:** The character suffers only half damage from one class of weapon. Choose from slashing, piercing, blunt, or missile. However, magical weapons of the selected type do normal damage.

### Rank 4 Maneuvers

**Invincible Eagle Claw:** The character's base martial arts damage is increased to 1d10.

Prerequisite: Flying Dragon Fist.

**Poison the Spirit:** The character gives up all attacks in this round in order to make one debilitating attack. If the attack is successful, the target must make a saving throw vs. poison at -2 or lose 1 point of Constitution. Each day thereafter, a new save (also at -2) must be made or another point of Constitution is lost. This continues until the character makes the save is made, receives a cure disease spell, or loses all Constitution, in which case he or she dies. Once the progression of the poisoning has stopped, the character recovers 1 point of Constitution per full day of rest.

**Step of the Crane:** The character's step is so light that he or she can walk, even run, on

water. This maneuver also allows grass glide: running on top of grass while never touching the earth underneath.

**Torrent of Chi:** The character can make a missile attack with a 60-foot range that does 1d12 damage if successful. This is an Average speed action (modifier +4).

**Whirlwind Strike:** The character can attack a number of opponents equal to his or her level once each in a single melee round. No opponent can have more than 2 Hit Dice.

### Rank 5 Maneuvers

**Breath Stealing:** Once per day the character can add the hit points just inflicted on an opponent to his or her own. This cannot take the character above his or her starting score.

**Five Elements Fist:** The character makes an attack at –6 to hit; if successful, the damage is tripled (before modifiers). For example, a fighter specialized in martial arts strikes his opponent with Five Elements Fist. Because the character also knows Invincible Eagle Claw, his normal damage is 1d10. The player rolls a 8, which is tripled to 24, then adds the specialization bonus of +2 for a total damage of 26. Ouch!

**Miracle Palm:** Once per week, the character can cure disease as per the shaman spell of the same name.

**Scorpion's Sting:** This is the same as the rank 3 maneuver Nerve Strike, but its effects last for 1d4+1 rounds instead of a single round.

**Ultimate Stance:** The character's AC is increased to 18, +1 for each additional Stance maneuver known. Thus, a character who has already learned Crane Stance, Mantis Stance, and Cobra Stance would have an AC of 21.

**Way of the Dragon:** The character takes no damage from one class of weapon. Choose from slashing, piercing, blunt, or missile. However, magical weapons of the selected type do normal damage.

## Combat

*Exciting fight scenes are the heart of Hong Kong action movies. The jaw-dropping physical prowess of Jet Li and Jackie Chan are what make their movies great, and a good game of Dragon Fist should recreate that kind of kinetic mayhem. Before leaping into cinematic combat, however, you'll need to know a few game terms and the way combat is simulated in play.*

### Anatomy of a Fight Scene

A covert group of secret society members are trying to slip through a cordon of imperial troops. They crest a rise—and walk right into an enemy patrol. What happens?

When a fight breaks out, narrative time ends and combat time begins. The fight scene is broken down into combat rounds, each of which represents 1 minute in the game. In each round, a character can perform one major action, such as making an attack or casting a spell. The fight continues, one combat round resolving at a time, until one side is victorious or the fight ends in some other manner.

### Surprise

The first thing to do is to determine if either side is surprised. This can happen in any situation in which one side is taken unawares. In some instances (such as the example above) both sides have a chance to be surprised.

To determine surprise, each side rolls 1d10. If the result is 1–3, that side is surprised. Their opponents get a free round of actions before the surprised side can react in any way (including stunts). If both sides are surprised, no one acts that round; everyone is too confused!

Attacking a surprised opponent gives a +1 bonus to hit. Surprised characters suffer a –1 penalty to their saving throws.

### Combat Terminology

**Armor Class:** A measure of how difficult a target is to hit, either because of armor worn or a martial arts stance. Armor Class (AC) starts at 10 and goes up; the higher the AC the better.

**Combat Round:** A unit of time equal to 1 minute, in which a character can do one major action.

**Damage:** Every character and creature has a hit point total, which represents vitality and life force. Successful attacks cause damage that reduces the hit point total. When a character's hit point total is reduced to 0, he or she is out of the fight and possibly dead. Damage can also be inflicted by spells, poison, fire, falling, and myriad other causes.

**Initiative:** This determines the order things happen during a combat round. Initiative is part luck, part skill, and part circumstance, as determined by the stunt die roll (if any) and the speed rating of the weapon, spell, or maneuver. The highest initiative score goes first, followed by other scores in descending order.

**Movement:** All characters and monsters in Dragon Fist have a Move score, which is the number of feet they can move in 1 round if no other actions are taken. For most characters, this is 120 feet, but monsters often move faster.

**Saving Throw:** A measure of a character's resistance to special attacks such as magic, poison, and monsters' breath weapons. These scores improve as characters rise in level.

**Speed:** Swinging a sword, shooting a bow, casting a spell, or just posing dramatically in a martial arts stance—all take a certain amount of time, measured by speed. The speed rating of an action is added to the stunt die roll (if any) to determine initiative. Slow (Sl) actions have a speed of 2; Average (Av), 4; and Fast (Fa), 6. The higher the speed number the better.

**Turn:** Ten combat rounds (10 minutes).

## Types of Stunts

There are six stunt types, each based on a different ability and listed below. Each has a summary of what bonuses it provides; no matter what else you do that round, you always get the relevant stunt bonus. Additionally, you can use your stunts to perform feats (see the “Feats” section below). Attempting a feat is your action for the round, so you cannot also attack that round. Each entry lists some sample feats to give you an idea of the sort of things you can do.

### Might (Strength)

**Bonus:** to hit in melee and to damage.

**Sample feats:** breaking down doors; snapping restraints.

### Acrobatic (Dexterity)

**Bonus:** to AC and to hit with missiles.

**Sample feats:** running across the heads of a crowd; juggling knives.

### Fortitude (Constitution)

**Bonus:** to save vs. poison and to hit points that round.

**Sample feats:** walking through fire; resisting pain.

### Savvy (Intelligence)

**Bonus:** to any one roll that round.

**Sample feats:** solving puzzles; deciphering codes.

### Insight (Wisdom)

**Bonus:** to initiative and saves vs. magic and fear.

**Sample feats:** resisting temptation; reading motivations.

### Charm (Charisma)

**Bonus:** to reaction rolls and save vs. charm.

**Sample feats:** fast talking; verbal trickery.

## Combat Resolution

After surprise is determined, the action starts. Each round resolves in the sequence described below.

1. Each player declares what type of stunt he or she wants to perform and rolls the appropriate stunt die. The DM secretly does the same for each opponent.
2. Each player adds the speed rating of the character's action (2, 4, or 6) to the stunt die result. The DM does the same for each opponent. (If a character has no stunt die, treat this as a result of 0.) The total is the character's initiative.
3. The character or monster with the highest initiative takes the first action, followed by the other combatants in descending initiative order.

When all the combatants have had a chance to act, the round is over. Start over from step 1 and repeat until the combat is over.

## Making an Attack

The most common action during a combat is the attack. Both missile and melee attacks are handled the same way.

1. When it's your turn to act in the round, announce who your character is attacking and with what (for instance, a bowshot or a martial arts maneuver).
2. Roll 1d20 and add all your bonuses to the result. You usually will get bonuses to hit from Might stunts (for melee attacks) or Acrobatics stunts (for missile attacks), plus any class bonus. Magic items and spells can modify this further, as can the fighter's weapon specialization.
3. Compare the total of the roll and bonuses to your opponent's Armor Class. If you've equaled or exceeded that number, you've scored a hit.
4. Once you've hit, roll for damage. The type of die rolled depends on the type of attack, either base martial arts damage or a weapon's damage. Add any bonuses (such as from Might stunts, specialization, or magic weapons) to the result. The total is deducted from the opponent's hit points.

**Example:** Liu Lam, a 3rd level Righteous Fist fighter, attacks a hopping vampire with a flying kick to its ugly face. Liu performs a Might stunt that round and gets a 3 on his die roll (1d4). His bonuses are +3 for the stunt, +1 for the Righteous Fists' specialization in martial arts, and +2 for being a fighter, for a total bonus to hit of +6. Liu's player rolls 1d20 and gets a 13. Adding the bonus of +6 gives a very respectable total of 19. The hopping vampire has an Armor Class of 16. Since Liu's total to hit was greater than the vampire's AC, he has succeeded in hitting the foul creature! Now for the damage. Liu has learned the Flying Dragon Fist martial arts maneuver, so his base martial arts damage is 1d8. He rolls an eight-sided die, getting a 7. Adding in +3 for his Might stunt and +2 for his specialization, he comes up with a total damage score of 12. His kick connects with deadly effect and sends the vampire sprawling backward.

## Stunts

Combat in **Dragon Fist** revolves around stunts. These represent the kind of wild moves you see in Hong Kong action movies. When Michelle Yeoh balances a tray of tofu while beating up a thug in Wing Chun, she's performing a stunt. Same goes for Jackie Chan when he fights on burning-hot coals in Drunken Master II.

**Dragon Fist** stunts are based on ability scores and increase as characters go up in level. Each round you choose a type of stunt to perform and describe exactly what your character is doing. This provides certain bonuses for that round only. The next round you pick a new stunt, and so on. Nothing prevents using the same type of stunt every round, but it's a lot more fun to vary your style.

Characters can make a stunt roll and perform a major action each round. What stunt you choose depends on the kind of bonus you'd like to have that round. If your top priority is killing a rampaging monster, you'd probably want to make a Might stunt, which adds to your rolls to hit and do damage. However, if your character is wounded, you might be more interested in defense. In that case, you'd perform an Acrobatics stunt to get a bonus to your Armor Class. Note that you can still make a melee attack if you perform an Acrobatics stunt—you simply gain no stunt bonuses to the hit and damage rolls that round. (This applies to other major actions as well.) You'll find a breakdown of the stunt types and the bonuses each gives you in the box above.

**Example:** *Returning to Liu Lam and his fight with the hopping vampire, we find that Liu is in bad shape. He's taken some hits and is in danger of losing the fight. On the next round, he considers a Might stunt, which will help him hit and do damage, but feels it's too risky. He decides instead on a Fortitude stunt. The result of his stunt die will add to his hit points for this round only, and any damage he takes will come off these bonus points first. His Fortitude die is 1d6; Liu rolls a 5. The vampire beats Liu's initiative this round and scores a hit, inflicting 7 points of damage. Because of his stunt, Liu only suffers 2 real points of damage (5 having been absorbed by his bonus hit points). This isn't enough to kill Liu, so on his turn he makes another martial arts attack. He doesn't get any stunt bonuses for the attack, but he still gets all his normal bonuses (specialization and his fighter class bonus).*

Two stunt bonuses require a bit of explaining. Fortitude stunts, as the example above illustrates, give you bonus hit points to offset any damage you take that round. However, these hit points are temporary! If you don't get hit that round, you don't get to keep the extra points. Savvy stunts, unlike the others, add to only one thing that round—but that can be any die roll the character chooses. The clever character has figured out a clever way to achieve a desired effect, such as adding to damage by spotting a monster's weak spot or getting a bonus on a saving throw by taking cover behind a tree. This stunt is very flexible, but you must choose which die roll to modify before making that roll.

## Feats

A feat is a special form of stunt for resolving actions not covered by the rest of the rules; this serves as a default skill system for the game. Performing a feat counts as your major action for that round, so you cannot also attack or cast a spell. You can try all kinds of wacky stuff with the feat system and really play up the improbable action of HK's best.

So, what you can do with feats? Just about anything. You can use Might to break down doors, Charm to fast-talk a guard, or Savvy to crack a puzzle. Get creative! The DM decides how likely a feat is to succeed and ought to give the players a fighting chance to pull off most. The game is meant to reflect a cinematic sensibility, rather than realistic simulation, so characters should succeed more than they fail.

Resolving a feat is easy. The player describes what the character is trying to do, and the DM assigns a Target Number (TN) depending on his or her estimate of the difficulty (see the "Target Numbers" sidebar). The player rolls 1d20 and adds the applicable stunt bonus, so he or she must perform an appropriate stunt that round. (In other words, if you want to use Dexterity to run across the heads of a crowd, don't make an Insight stunt that round!) If the total is equal to or greater than the TN, the feat succeeds.

Feats are usually Average speed actions. The DM can change the speed of the feat if it seems appropriate.

## Wounds and Dying

Every character and creature in the game has a certain number of hit points, representing vitality and general toughness. As characters rise in level, they gain additional hit points: The more experienced you are, the tougher you become. For example, a conscripted peasant sol-

### Target Numbers

An important part of the DM's job is determining Target Numbers for feats the PCs perform. These can vary widely depending on what is being attempted: Let the player describe the desired action, then decide on how difficult it is.

**Easy** feats have a TN of 10.

*Example:* knocking down a door (Might).

**Average** feats have a TN of 15.

*Example:* staring down an imperial officer (Charm).

**Difficult** feats have TN of 20.

*Example:* running up a wall (Acrobatics).

**Absurd** feats have a TN of 25.

*Example:* swimming underwater for half an hour (Fortitude).

You can also use ability scores to figure Target Numbers. This works especially well when NPCs attempt feats that affect the PCs (or vice versa). For example, a charlatan tries to fast-talk some money out of one the PCs. The DM decides this is a Charm feat and that the Target Number for success is the PC's Intelligence score. If the charlatan fails to roll that number, the PC has seen through the shallow play.

The danger of using ability scores as Target Numbers is that they do not improve as characters rise in level. A character's Strength at 9th level is probably the same as it was at 3rd. To reflect the fact that higher-level characters are better than those of less experience, add the character's level to the ability score. In the example above, if the PC had a 14 Intelligence and was 6th level, the charlatan would have to roll a Target Number of 20.

dier might have 4 hit points; a seasoned veteran, 10.

Whenever characters and monsters suffer damage, this is reflected in a loss of hit points. Damage can come from many sources: weapons, spells, poison, and so on. There is no real difference between types of damage (since hit points are an abstract concept to begin with), and being wounded has no real effect on what a character can do. Remember, this is like the movies! It's only when you drop below 1 hit point that you get into trouble.

A character whose hit point total falls below 1 is knocked unconscious. Unconscious characters are helpless and can be automatically slain by anyone willing to spend a round doing so. For each round the unconscious character's wounds remain unattended, he or she loses an additional hit point. A character who falls to  $-10$  hit points is dead. This loss of hit points can be stopped by any character who spends a round binding the wounds.

Those with an exceptionally strong will can sometimes fight on even after suffering terrible wounds. Any character who is about to drop below 1 hit point can make an Insight feat with a TN of 20 to remain conscious. While heroic, this is also dangerous: The character still loses 1 hit point a round until bandaged and will be killed by any strike that reduces his or her hit points to  $-10$ .

### *Healing*

Wounded characters can be healed by natural or magical means. Natural healing is slower, but is always available. Magical healing is very quick but requires the spells of shamans and certain magical devices. Healing can never restore more hit points to a character than his or her starting total.

Characters healing naturally always regain at least 1 point a day; by making a Fortitude stunt at the end of each day of rest they can get back hit points equal to the result of the stunt die. "Rest" is defined as low activity, but can include riding and light travel. Characters enjoying full bed rest double the result of their stunt die and always heal at least 3 points of damage even without Fortitude.

Magical healing usually is bestowed by shaman spells such as cure light wounds. (See Chapter 4: Magic.) These cures are instantaneous and require no special rest. They are especially handy in the midst of combat. Characters who have fallen below 1 hit point need to be stabilized before they can receive magical healing. If 1 round is spent binding the character's wounds, healing proceeds as if the character had 0 hit points.

Example: A Great Immortal is hit by a sword, and his hit point total drops to  $-4$ . The next round a White Lotus binds his wounds, preventing him from losing an additional point of damage. The following round the White Lotus casts cure light wounds and rolls a 5. This raises the Great Immortal's hit points to 5, so he can act the next round.

### *Saving Throws*

A saving throw is a die roll that gives a character a chance to avoid such hazards as poison, spells, and monsters' breath weapons. Saving throws represent instinct, training, and plain old luck. The exact action is not important; DMs and players are encouraged to think up lively and colorful explanations for why a saving throw succeeded or failed. Explanations tailored to the events of the moment enhance the excitement of the game.

### *Rolling Saving Throws*

To make a saving throw, a player rolls 1d20 and adds any appropriate stunt bonuses (Fortitude stunts, for instance, add to saves against poison). The result must be equal to or greater than a saving throw number based on the character's class and level; the range of numbers appears in Table 3-1 below. Monsters make their saving throws using the numbers for fighters, substituting hit dice for levels.

Saving throws are made in a variety of situations, which for simplicity's sake are divided into five categories: paralyzation, poison, or death magic; petrification or polymorph; rod, staff,

or wand; breath weapon; and spell. The type of saving throw is determined by the specific spell, monster, magical item, or situation. Circumstances that don't fall exactly into one of these categories are adjudicated by the DM, who decides what saving throw is most appropriate.

**TABLE 3-1: CHARACTER SAVING THROWS**

Character Class/ Experience Level	Attack to be Saved Against				
	Death Magic	Poison, or or Wand	Paralyzation, Rod, Staff, or Polymorph	Petrification Weapon*	Breath Spell**
<b>FIGHTER</b>					
0	16	18	17	20	19
1–2	14	16	15	17	17
3–4	13	15	14	16	16
5–6	11	13	12	13	14
7–8	10	12	11	12	13
9–10	8	10	9	9	11
<b>WIZARD</b>					
1–5	14	11	13	15	12
6–10	13	9	11	13	10
<b>SHAMAN</b>					
1–3	10	14	13	16	15
4–6	9	13	12	15	14
7–9	7	11	10	13	12
10	6	10	9	12	11
<b>THIEF</b>					
1–4	13	14	12	16	15
5–8	12	12	11	15	13
9–10	11	10	10	14	11

\* Excluding those that cause petrification or polymorph.

\*\* Excluding those for which another saving throw type is specified, such as death, petrification, or polymorph.

### *Saving Throw Priority*

Sometimes the type of saving throw required by a situation or item isn't clear, or more than one category may apply. For this reason, the saving throw categories in Table 3-1 are listed in descending order of importance, reading from left to right. If a character is forced to make a save and two types seem equally appropriate (for instance, a spell that causes paralyzation), use the save that is higher in priority.

**Paralyzation, Poison, and Death Magic:** This category is used whenever a character is affected by a paralyzing attack (regardless of source), poison of any strength, or certain spells and magical items that would otherwise kill the character outright. This saving throw can also apply to situations requiring exceptional force of will or physical fortitude.

**Rod, Staff, or Wand:** As its name implies, this category applies whenever a character is affected by the powers of a magical rod, staff, or wand, provided another save of higher priority isn't called for. This saving throw is sometimes appropriate for situations in which a character faces a magical attack from an unusual source.

**Petrification or Polymorph:** This category is used any time a character would be turned to stone (petrified) or changed into a different form (polymorphed) by a monster, spell, or magical item other than a rod, staff, or wand. It can also apply when the character must withstand massive physical alteration of his or her body.

**Breath Weapon:** A character makes this saving throw when facing monsters with magical breath, particularly the powerful blast of a dragon. It can also be used when physical stamina and Dexterity are critical to survival.

**Spell:** This is appropriate whenever a character attempts to resist the effects of a magical

attack, either by a spellcaster or from a magical item, provided no other type of saving throw is specified. It can also be used when resisting an attack that defies any other classification.

### *Voluntarily Failing Saving Throws*

No save is made if the target voluntarily chooses not to resist the effect of a spell or special attack—even if he or she was duped as to its exact nature. When a character announces that he or she is not resisting, that spell or effect has its full efficacy.

The intention not to resist must be clearly stated, however. A character who is attacked by surprise or caught unawares is normally allowed a saving throw. The DM can modify this, perhaps making the chance of success worse, if the situation warrants it. Only in extreme cases of trickery and deception should an unwitting character be denied a saving throw.

### *The Battle at the Bridge: An Example of Combat*

Using my charm and impressive contacts in the film industry, I've gotten together Jet Li, Michelle Yeoh, and Jackie Chan for a game of Dragon Fist. Unfortunately for these Hong Kong glitterati, they were forced to have dinner with Tony Danza the previous evening. Tony's influence is all too clear when they name their characters Li, Yeoh, and Chan. Li is a 5th-level Righteous Fist, Yeoh is a 6th-level Iron Monkey, and Chan is a 5th-level Dragon's Breath.

This heroic trio is seeking the Five Legendary Weapons (see Chapter 5: Experience and Magic Items), which are rumored to be hidden in the Forest of Clouds. Making their way through the Ling Mu Mountains, they come to a long rope bridge over a yawning chasm. Defending the bridge are an imperial guard captain (a 5th-level fighter), a eunuch sorcerer (a 3rd-level wizard), and six soldiers. Neither side is surprised, so combat begins as normal.

First, everyone declares and rolls their stunts and then determines initiative. Li performs a Might stunt, rolling 1d6. He rolls a 4, adds 6 for the Fast action he plans, and ends up with an initiative of 10. Yeoh makes an Acrobatics stunt, rolling 1d8, gets a 6, and adds 6 more for a Fast action for an initiative of 12. Chan executes a Savvy stunt on 1d6, gets a 3, adds 4 for an Average action, and ends up with an initiative of 7.

Meanwhile, I roll for the villains. The captain does a Might stunt, rolls a 4, adds in 4 for an Average action, and ends up with an initiative of 8. The eunuch sorcerer performs a Fortitude stunt, rolls a 3, adds 6 for a Fast action, and gets an initiative of 9. The soldiers have no stunts, so their initiative is equal to the speed of their action. They are using spears, which have an Average speed, so their initiative is 4.

Based on these results, the characters will act in this order: Yeoh, Li, eunuch sorcerer, captain, Chan, soldiers. We now join the action.

**DM:** OK, Michelle, you act first. What do you want to do?

**Yeoh:** I use my Wuxia to leap onto the support ropes of the bridge. As I'm flying through the air, I pull out three throwing spikes and hurl them at the imperial guard captain.

**DM:** Great! His AC is 16. Roll to hit.

*Michelle rolls to hit. Since she performed an Acrobatics stunt this round, which improves missile weapon use, she gets +6 to hit with her throwing spikes. She also gets +1 for being a thief, so her total bonus to hit is +7. She can throw three spikes, so she rolls three times: 3, 10, and 16. Adding in her bonuses, she ends up with 10, 16, and 22. Since she had to get 16 (the captain's AC) or better, she has hit twice.*

**Yeoh:** All right! I say, "Take that, lackey!" as my spikes slam home.

*Michelle now rolls damage. Throwing spikes do 1d4 damage each, so she rolls 2d4, which come*



up 2 and 4. Her total damage is 6.

**DM:** The captain says, "You'll have to do better than that, rebel dog!"  
Jet, you're up. What are you doing?

**Li:** I run across the bridge, deliver a flying kick to the captain's head, and then backflip off him so I land in my stance.

**DM:** Man, you guys have it in for that poor captain. OK, roll to hit.

*Jet rolls 1d20. He gets +2 to hit because he's a fighter, +1 because he's specialized in martial arts, and +4 because of his Might stunt, for a total bonus to hit of +7. He rolls a 10, adds 7, and hits with a final score of 17. His martial arts damage is 1d8. He rolls an 8, adds his damage bonus of +6 (+4 for the Might stunt and +2 for specialization), and does a whopping 14 points of damage to the captain.*

**Li:** "Ha ha, you'll never defeat my Twirling Crane style!"

**DM:** As you stand gloating over the captain, the eunuch sorcerer shouts words of power and lashes out at you with a long silk scarf. You hear his high-pitched voice scream, "Iron scarf!" as the blow takes you full in the face.

*Iron scarf is a 1st-level wizard spell. It hits automatically and does 1d8 damage, plus 1 hit point per level of the caster. I roll for the eunuch. He gets a 5, adds 3 for his level, and does 8 points of damage to Li, reducing him from 35 hit points to 27.*

**Li:** "Curse you, eunuch. You'll face my wrath soon enough."

**DM:** Li, as you turn to curse the sorcerer, the captain leaps towards you with sword drawn. He grasps the hilt with both hands and drives the point towards you as finishes his leap.

*I roll for the captain. The total of his class, specialization, and stunt bonuses is +7. Li's AC is 14, but the captain rolls a 5. Even with his bonuses, this is adds up to only 12, so he misses.*

**Li:** I backflip out of the way, easily avoiding his clumsy blow.

**DM:** The captain growls in anger, but there is nothing he can do. Jackie, it's your turn. What are you doing?

**Chan:** Well, no one else is taking care of these soldiers, so I cast heart ripper at them. I want to use my Savvy stunt to increase the number of targets I can affect.

**DM:** You want to justify that stunt for me, Jackie?

**Chan:** Sure! I've noticed that a couple of the soldiers are standing behind some of the others. If I line up the spell just right, I can send my bolts of power through the soldiers in the front and into those behind them.

**DM:** [chuckles] You're a slick one, Jackie. I'll buy that. Roll for the number of targets.

*Heart ripper is a 2nd-level wizard spell (see Chapter 4: Magic). Jackie rolls 1d4 (as per the spell description) to see how many targets he can affect. He rolls a 3, adds 3 for his earlier Savvy stunt, and ends up with a 6. Since there are only six soldiers, he can nail them all!*

**DM:** OK, these guys get a saving throw vs. spell to resist this. Let me roll.

*I roll, and each and every soldier fails to save.*

**DM:** Oh man, it's a bad day for these guys. They all failed their saves, so your bolts of power tear out their hearts. The soldiers fall to the ground in unison, leaving the captain without a unit to command. Both he and the sorcerer pale visibly.

**Michelle:** Way to go, Jackie. You're the man!

**DM:** OK, since all the soldiers are dead, they don't get to go. That's the end of the round. So everyone declare your stunts and figure your initiative . . .

Combat now continues in a new round, following the same sequence. Things don't look too good for the lackeys of the emperor, though.

### *Combat Considerations*

For the most part, combat is easy to resolve. However, a number of wrinkles tend to crop up in games, which need to be addressed.

#### *Called Shots*

The hit point system of **Dragon Fist** does not take into account where blows land, but generalizes damage and vaguely defines the effect of wounds. However, sometimes characters may want to hit a specific point for an unusual effect. These attempts are known as called shots and can be made with both missile and melee attacks.

When a player describes his or her major action for the round, the attempt at a called shot must be specified and the intended result described in detail. If the DM agrees that this is a reasonable, the player can make an attack roll at  $-4$  to hit. If the attack succeeds, the called shot has the intended effect. Characters with the martial arts maneuver Cobra Strike suffer only a  $-2$  penalty to called shots.

Players may think they can cause extra damage by hitting enemies in the head or maiming them, but this is not the case. Called shots inflict only the normal damage of the weapon or martial arts attack. So what good are they?

The most potent effect of a called shot is to reduce the target's stunt bonuses. If the player can explain convincingly how the attack would inhibit a particular stunt type, that stunt's die type is reduced by one step for the rest of the combat.

**Example:** *A Heavenly Gates archer opts to shoot a villainous eunuch in the feet with two arrows (two separate called shots), hobbling the opponent's ability to move about. If both attacks hit, the eunuch's Acrobatics stunt roll would be reduced by two die types (from 1d6 to 1d3, for instance). Blows to the head could daze the eunuch, reducing Savvy stunts and magic use, and so on.*

Called shots can also trigger traps, shatter vials or flasks, or make opponents drop held items. As always, the DM should be flexible. If a called shot just seems too outrageous, though, try resolving it as a feat instead.

#### *Charging*

Characters next to an opponent can always make a melee attack, but just swinging at the foe lacks panache. Players love to catapult their characters into combat with a bloodcurdling battle cry. In game terms, this is called charging. Any character can charge into hand-to-hand combat, as long as he or she is less than 60 feet away from the target and not already engaged

with another foe. The psychological rush of charging a hated enemy gives the PC +1 to hit that round. However, rushing straight towards an opponent is not exactly subtle, so the character also suffers a -1 reduction to Armor Class.

### *Falling*

Occasionally characters suffer a really bad fall, most likely because a gloating villain pushed them off a 50-foot wall. With all the leaping and flying about of wuxia films, falling damage is not usually a major concern, but sometimes it does matter. Falling characters take 1d6 damage for each 10 feet they fall; this is offset by the martial arts maneuver Grace of the Crane. To enhance the cinematic action, you may want to let characters drop for multiple rounds, so other characters can perform impressive feats to save them.

### *Mounted Combat*

Some roleplaying games have elaborate rules for mounted combat, but Dragon Fist isn't one of them. Any character can ride a horse, and fighting on horseback is handled exactly the same way as normal combat. Think of horses as "mobile stunt platforms" and you get the idea.

### *Multiple Attacks and Initiative*

Sooner or later, most characters are going to end up with multiple attacks per round, which can create headaches as far as initiative goes. The "realistic" answer is to stagger the attacks so that some occur early in the round and others at the end, but Dragon Fist simplifies things: Characters roll all their attacks at once when it is their turn to act. This speeds up combat immeasurably, and it's easy to imagine a martial arts master raining blows down on an opponent in quick succession.

### *Nonlethal Combat*

Martial artists aren't always looking to kill each other. Sometimes opponents want to test their skill without doing permanent damage. Such nonlethal combat is handled as follows. Run the combat as you normally would, but keep track of the number of hit points inflicted. Only 25% of the damage is "real"; the rest is temporary and returns after the combat is over. A character knocked below 1 hit point in nonlethal combat is knocked out, but not killed.

### *Two-handed Attacks*

Players just love the idea of attacking with weapons in both hands and are sure to ask about it. This is indeed possible. A character can use a second weapon or make an additional martial arts attack with the off hand (for example, the left hand if he or she is right-handed), but this attack has a -4 penalty to hit, while the primary attack has -2 to hit. Regardless of level or specialization, only one extra attack per round is allowed. A 9th-level Red Tiger, for instance, could make two attacks with the war sword at -2 to hit as normal, as well as one extra martial arts attack at -4. These penalties are offset by the martial arts maneuver Rain of Heaven, which is sure to be popular with your players.

### *Poison*

Unscrupulous characters and minions of the emperor may resort to poison. Most poisons simply do damage, and the DM sets the appropriate amount. For example, a mild poison might cause 1d6 damage, while a virulent one would cause 5d10. The target usually gets to make a saving throw vs. poison to take half damage. Other poisons may cause unconsciousness or paralyzation. These allow a saving throw, and those who fail suffer the full effects. These poisons normally have a duration (1 turn, 3 hours, and so on), again set by the DM.

Dragon Masters should limit the accessibility of poison to the player characters, or risk having the game dominated by poison-crazy Ghost Eaters. When it comes down to it, poison isn't very heroic, so discourage your players from using it. Leave it in the hands of the villains, where it belongs.

## Contests

Often in Hong Kong movies, two characters vie to gain the upper hand, performing outrageous stunt after outrageous stunt back and forth. These types of scenes feature a great deal of action and reaction, and are difficult to simulate in a roleplaying game. Rolling to hit, even performing feats, doesn't quite capture the right flavor. Therefore contests are used to handle these types of engagements.

Contests can be based on any of the stunt types, although Might and Acrobatics are most common. Initiating a contest is a major action, but accepting one is not. A contest works as follows.

1. One character initiates a contest based on the type of stunt he performed that round. He or she declares the kind of contest and then describes the opening move.
2. The challenged character can accept or decline, regardless of which type of stunt he or she had previously performed that round. By accepting the challenge, the character in effect changes the stunt type to what the challenger has declared.
3. If the challenged character accepts, he or she declares the reaction and rolls the appropriate stunt die. (If the character has already performed the applicable stunt, he or she keeps the result rolled at the beginning of the round.)
4. Either character can decide to resolve the contest. If neither chooses to, the contest continues. Otherwise, skip to step 6.
5. If the contest continues, the challenger declares his or her reaction and rolls another stunt die. The challenged character does the same. Then either has another chance to resolve the contest. This continues until one of the characters decides on resolution.
6. To resolve a contest, both characters roll 1d20 and add all their respective accrued stunt bonuses. Whoever has the highest result has won.

## Contest Results

The winner of a contest determines how the contest ends. He or she can choose from any of the standard results described below or try for an original effect. If the winner wants to do something out of the ordinary, it's up to the DM to decide whether the desired outcome is reasonable. Use the winner's accrued stunt bonuses as a general guideline: In general, the higher the final bonus, the more likely the desired result.

### Damage

Nearly any contest can result in the loser taking damage. If the contest has lasted for multiple exchanges, this can be deadly. To determine the amount of damage, the winner rolls his or her martial arts damage and adds the accrued stunt bonus for the contest. Physical stunts use this result most frequently, but it is possible to come up with contests of Savvy and Insight that result in damage.

**Examples:** Two characters have been fighting in a rickety structure, destroying it as they do so. Each has been holding up a section of the building while fending off blows (a Might contest). When the contest resolves, the winner decides to have the collapsing building fall on top of the loser. The winner's base martial arts damage is 1d8 and his final stunt bonus was +9. The die roll is a 4, so the loser takes 13 points of damage.



Two characters face off in a battle of willpower (an Insight contest). Each had used her chi to batter down the opponent's will, and the winner decides to inflict damage. The contest was such a struggle that the loser was drained of chi, translating into physical injury.

### *Unconsciousness*

This is a variant of the damage result, with the goal of knocking someone out. Damage is calculated just as described above, but if the loser's hit points total drops below 0, he or she is only rendered unconscious. The loser stays unconscious for a number of rounds equal to the winner's accrued stunt bonus and regains all lost hit points on waking up. If the winner failed to inflict enough damage to knock his or her opponent unconscious, it is still a victory, but the loser only gets kicked around some. A quarter of the damage is inflicted as "real" damage instead, reducing the loser's hit point total.

Fortitude contests are the most common way to achieve this result, especially through drinking challenges.

**Examples:** *Two characters were fighting in a burning building, a contest of Fortitude to see who could last longer in the thick smoke. The winner decides that the smoke overcame her opponent and caused him to fall unconscious.*

Two characters whack at each other with tables and chairs in an inn (a Strength contest). The winner tries to knock the loser out. His martial arts damage plus accrued stunt bonus is 16, but the loser has 20 hit points and so avoids unconsciousness. The winner still connects with a chair, sending the loser sprawling and inflicting 4 hit points of damage.

### *Humiliation*

This result is most useful when two characters are competing in front of a crowd. As the contest concludes, the winner succeeds in completely humiliating the loser. The precise results are best roleplayed out, but the winner's accrued stunt bonus should serve as a rough guide to how badly the loser is humbled.

**Examples:** *Two characters are trying to gain the favor of one of the Dragon Kings (a Charm contest). Each tried to flatter the Dragon King by comparing him to precious objects. The winner decides to humiliate his foe by verbally tricking her into likening the Dragon King to a mollusk.*

Two characters have been fighting their way across the rooftops of a town, drawing a large crowd. Their leaping and flipping was dangerous and impressive, making this an Acrobatics contest. The winner decides to humiliate her opponent, so she trips the loser and sends him face first into a cesspool.

### *Approval*

Rather than trying to humiliate your enemy, you can pump yourself up. In this situation, both sides try to win over a crowd or even one important individual. The winner succeeds in looking good—really good. Charm contests are most appropriate for this result, but Acrobatics and Savvy can impress equally well.

**Examples:** *Two characters are trying to win over a crowd by making outrageous promises (a Charm contest). The winner decides on approval, so after his last promise the crowd showers him with adoration and boos the loser off the stage.*

Two characters engage in a battle of wits (a Savvy contest) to impress a wizard. Both had tried to demonstrate with their knowledge of magical techniques. The winner secures the approval of the wizard, who agrees to teach her a new spell.

### *Timing and Declining*

Contests count as the challenger's major action, and the entire thing resolves in a single round. (This may seem unrealistic, but remember how much action goes on in a Hong Kong movie in a minute.) Nothing else happens until the contest is over; thus no one can interfere. Once the contest has resolved, the character or creature with the next highest initiative takes his or her action as usual.

As mentioned above, contests can be declined. While this may cause a loss of face, sometimes it's the safest course. In this case, the challenger's action resolves as a feat or as an attack (if he or she just wants to do damage).

**Example:** *A character tries to initiate an Acrobatics contest and starts by kicking two flagstones at her opponent. The challenged character decides that he's bound to lose, so he declines. Since there is no contest, the challenger decides to make the flagstone trick into an attack and rolls to hit instead, adding her Acrobatics stunt bonus (the kicked flagstones count as missile weapons).*

### *Challenging Multiple Opponents*

Extremely skilled—or at least, extremely overconfident—characters can challenge more than one opponent. In this case, all of the challenged characters get to react to each of the challenger's actions. When the contest is resolved, each side rolls a single d20, but the challenged characters add together all of their stunt bonuses. Likewise, results affect all the losers.

**Example:** *A brash Red Tiger has challenged two opponents to a contest of Might. The two challenged characters each have an accrued stunt bonus of +4, rolling 1d20 and adding +8. The challenger had better make this good!*

## *Running an Exciting Combat*

This chapter gives the basic rules DMs need to run combats in Dragon Fist. Hong Kong action movies are all about style, however, so no discussion would be complete without some advice on running cinematic fight scenes. In general, aim for an atmosphere in which anything can happen. Who's going to come up with the coolest stunt, and how improbably can the characters succeed? You can always assign an extremely high TN to a stunt, but let the players think they have a chance. This is not about realism, after all—try not to limit their imaginations.

Feel free to use or ignore the more specific advice that follows. These are just suggestions; it's your game, after all, and the most important thing is that you and your group have fun.

### *Fast-paced Action*

Dragon Fist is meant to simulate the frenetic world of martial arts action. Your combat scenes should reflect this, so keep up a breakneck pace. Try to avoid looking up rules if at all possible, as this really slows things down. With the stunt and feat system, you can jury-rig almost anything—don't be afraid to use it.

Don't let players dilly-dally, especially when coming up with feats. Their characters don't have 10 minutes to think over their move, so neither should the players. Encourage players to have ready details of the spells they want to cast before their characters act. This goes for the DM too! Photocopies of spells you know you'll need are really handy, since you'll have the info at hand in the heat of battle. The same goes for the vital statistics of your PCs' opponents. The more quick-reference material you have ready, the faster you'll be able to run the combat.

### *No Double Declarations*

What often happens in combat is the DM works around the table asking each player what stunt he or she wants to perform that round. Players also get into the habit of telling you their stunt type and exactly what they want to do with it. Then they tell you all over again when it's

their turn to act. This is wasted time that only hampers the pace of the game. Instead, have players state only their stunt type at the start of the round. Then, when his or her character is about to act, the player can explain the action in detail. For this to work properly, players need to know the speed of the action they plan to use that round, so they can determine initiative correctly. Most players know what they want to do already, so this shouldn't be a problem. A little practice should help everything run smoothly.

### *Justify Those Stunts!*

You may find players are draining all the color from combat because they treat the stunt system too mechanically. When players tell you they're going to do a Might stunt and "swing at the guy," you know you're in a rut. Everyone needs to remember that stunt bonuses represent the wild moves of action-movie heroes. When you watch Jackie Chan fight onscreen, nothing is routine; the same should go for your game. Players should never take stunt bonuses for granted. Make them earn those plusses by coming up with colorful and entertaining explanations. You can encourage this behavior by doing the same with your villains. A player who "attacks with his sword" is going to look pretty foolish when the villain counters by backflipping out of the way, kicking up a table, and sending it whirling at the player's character.

### *Make Misses Matter*

Frequently in roleplaying games, misses in combat have no effect at all. Characters are bound to be disappointed when they don't connect with their super-cool stunts, but you can make up for this by looking once again to HK flicks. In martial arts movies, misses are almost never clean. Furniture is destroyed, buildings set on fire, windows shattered, and so on. Such random property destruction adds a great deal of color to combat scenes. Play this stuff up—sets in movies are made to be destroyed. A player won't feel as bad for missing the big baddie if he or she manages to put a hole in the wall as the villain leaps out of the way.

Destroying items or places important to the story is off-limits, of course, but you still have plenty of options. Use these events to increase the excitement of the fight or end it if it's dramatically appropriate; you can also guide the PCs to where the story needs to go. Let's say you want a combat to end because the PCs have got what they came for. Just have a missed blow knock over a lantern and set alight the building. As the place goes up in flames, anyone who wants to live will have to stop fighting and flee. You are now free to move on to the next scene.

### *Don't Forget the Posing!*

As you run through the mechanics of having a big ol' fight, you and your players may find yourselves losing touch with the setting. Sometimes entire rounds go by without anyone saying anything in character. The players are describing their actions but aren't interacting with each other or the villains. This is no good. A big part of the fun of martial arts movies is the posing. Characters in wuxia films in particular love to shout out what they are doing as they do it: "Your Ultimate Stance is most impressive, but it cannot compare to my Five Elements Fist!"

The 1-minute combat rounds of Dragon Fist allow plenty of time for posing and character interaction during fight scenes. As the DM, don't forget to have your villains gloat and cackle. This kind of wackiness makes it all the more enjoyable for the players when they finally bring the bad guy down.

### *Monster Go Boom*

In most wuxia films, a monster isn't dead until it blows up. Hey, they've got to use those special effects budgets somewhere, right? Feel free to add this detail to your games. You can have a lot of fun fooling your players with monsters that go down and play dead. Just as the heroes are catching their breath, up comes the critter to attack them again. Do this a few times and your players will really appreciate it when the monsters go boom!

### *Use Exotic Locations*

A 10 × 10 room made of stone is not an exciting fight location. To spice up your game, take a cue from the movies when designing your adventures. Big onscreen fights usually happen in unusual places, which add atmosphere and inspire great stunts. The ideal location should have plenty of ways for the characters to interact with it. For example, rather than just saying the fight is in a warehouse, go that extra step and specify that it's full of wine casks. And look—there are ropes hanging from the ceiling so the workers can move around, and ramps and ladders for hauling casks. Suddenly that old warehouse is full of possibilities. Characters can swing from ropes, roll casks onto their enemies, and fight spectacularly on ladders. The more you detail your fight locations ahead of time, the more your players will have to work with.

### *Learn to Say Yes*

A DM's first instinct is to refuse a player who suggests an absurd course of action. But *Dragon Fist* is all about cinematic possibilities, so try to curb that instinct. You have nothing to lose from letting your players try, and they'll be more creative when they know such imagination is rewarded.







Magic is a fact of life in Tianguo. Even the most ignorant of peasants has seen the local shaman perform feats of magic, and no one doubts the power of spirits. Player characters have access to two kinds of magic, that of shamans and that of wizards. Shamans are granted spells by patron spirits and gods, while wizards manipulate the Five Elements to create spells of their own.

At the start of each day, all spellcasters must choose their spells. Both shamans and wizards can cast only a certain number of spells per day (see their class descriptions in Chapter 2: Character Creation), though the same spell may be selected more than once. Shamans must pray and offer sacrifices to their patron spirits, while wizards must memorize their spells from books and scrolls. Once spells are chosen for each day, they cannot be changed. Picking the right mix of spells for the day ahead is one of the challenges of playing a spellcaster.

### *Wizards' Spellbook*

Every wizard has a book that reveals the magical formulas and ritual phraseology that must be used to successfully cast spells. A wizard starts the game with eight spells in his or her spellbook, four of 1st level and four of 2nd level. The player can choose the spells, but these are the only ones the wizard can memorize until more are added to the book.

To add a new spell, the wizard must first find a scroll of the desired magic. Wizards often trade scrolls to learn new spells, and some scrolls can even be bought if the price is right. However it is acquired, the scroll must then be copied into the wizard's spellbook. This takes 2 hours per level of the spell, but once it is in the book it is available for use the following day.

**Example:** *Chao Tu buys a scroll with the spell poison needles on it. Since it's a 3rd-level spell, it takes 6 hours to copy into his spellbook. Once he is done, Chao Tu can memorize the spell the following morning.*

Shamans do not need to use a spellbook because they are granted their spells by higher powers. They simply choose which ones they'd like that day. As long as the patron spirits are happy with the shaman and are able to grant them, he or she should receive the requested spells. If the shaman's patron spirits are displeased, however, they can withhold some or all of their favors. This is entirely up to the DM, but it should be in keeping with the shaman's offense.

### *Spell Listings*

The spells are presented in two separate lists (one for wizards and one for shamans) but share a common format. Each spell entry is broken down into these component parts:

**Name:** Each spell is identified by a name. These are standardized for ease of reference, but players should feel free to rename spells to fit their character's style; for instance, calling their version of the rain of needles spell piercing needles of death.

Some spells are reversible, which means they can be cast for an effect opposite to that of the standard spell. This is noted after the spell name. Spellcasters must decide in advance which version they want to use that day. A shaman, for instance, could choose to memorize cure light wounds or its reverse, cause light wounds.

**Type:** This appears in parentheses following the spell name. Most spells are designated as either yin or yang. Yin spells have to do with earth, darkness, cold, wetness, and passivity, while yang spells have to do with sky, light, fire, dryness, and action. Those spells that are more concerned with the balance of yin and yang are known as chi spells.

**Range:** This lists the distance from the caster at which the spell effect occurs or begins. A 0 indicates a spell usable on the caster only, with an effect embodied within or emanating from him or her. Touch means the caster can use the spell on others by physically touching them. Unless otherwise specified, all other spells are centered on a point of the caster's choosing that is visible to him or her and within the range of the spell. That point is often another creature.

**Components:** This lists the categories of components needed to successfully cast the spell. V is for verbal (chanting), S for somatic (gestures), and M for material (physical objects or substances). When material components are required, these are usually specified in the spell description. Those spells that don't specify a component are assumed to need parchment and ink. Although it may seem inconvenient to be using a pen and ink during a battle, spellcasters in Tianguo can whip out the right charm in mere seconds.

**Duration:** This lists how long the magical energy of the spell lasts. Spells of instantaneous duration come and go the moment they are cast, although their results may be permanent. Spells of permanent duration last until the effects are negated by some means, usually dispel magic. Some spells have a variable duration. The caster cannot choose the duration in most cases. Spells with a set duration (for instance, 2 rounds per level) should be tracked by the player, while those with a variable duration (for instance, 3d4 rounds) are secretly recorded by the DM.

**Casting Time:** This is how long it takes to cast the spell. Most spells are rated as Slow (2), Average (4), or Fast (6), with the same numbers listed under weapon speeds. These are added to the stunt die roll to determine initiative. If a spell requires a round or a number of rounds to cast, it goes into effect at the end of the last round of casting time. Thus, a spell with a casting time of 2 rounds goes into effect at the end of the second round. Spells with a casting time of turns work the same way.

**Area of Effect:** This lists the creatures, dimensions, weight, etc., that can be affected by the spell.

**Saving Throw:** This lists whether the spell allows the target a saving throw and explains the effects of a successful save. Negates means the spell has no effect; 1/2 means the target suffers half the normal amount of damage, rounded up; and none means no saving throw is allowed.

**TABLE 4-1: WIZARD SPELLS**

1st Level	2nd Level	3rd Level
Backbiter		Delusion Blinding Flash
Charm Person	Doubt	Dispel Magic
Cobra's Breath	Entangling Scarf	Earthbolt
Detect Magic		Poison Needles
Elemental Charm	Heart Ripper	Scuttle of the Centipede
Give Me Face!	Ice Blast	Shield of Diao Zu'en
Iron Scarf	Kiss of the Toad	Waterskin
Light of Yang	Rain of Needles	Wood Shape
Read Magic	Terra Cotta Warrior	Woodskin
Scales of the Lizard		
Suppress Magic		
4th Level	5th Level	
Breath of Wind	Decapitating Scarf	
Dancing Weapon	Essence Absorption	
Earthskin	Fire Breath	
Needle's Puppet	Metalskin	
Shout	Scorpion Form	
Snake Darts	Tomb of Ice	
Stone Shape	Transmute Wood to Ash	
Terra Cotta Lion		

TABLE 4-2: SHAMAN SPELLS

**1st Level**

Ancestral Blessing  
 Commune with Local Spirit  
 Cure Light Wounds  
 Detect Harmony  
 Detect Magic  
 Eyes of Fire  
 Interpret Dream  
 Light of Yang  
 Mantle of Heaven  
 Oracle Bones  
 Suppress Magic

**4th Level**

Burning Ring of Fire  
 Cure Serious Wounds  
 Detect Lie  
 Fury of Ying Weihan  
 The Hungry Earth  
 Neutralize Poison

**2nd Level**

Ancestral Vengeance  
 Cure Moderate Wounds  
 Divine Future  
 Flame Fist  
 Mediumship  
 Rebuke  
 Skyclimb  
 Spirit Barrier  
 Understand Curse

**5th Level**

Blood of Fire  
 Commune with Deity  
 Cure Contagion  
 Cure Critical Wounds  
 The Hand of Heaven  
 Return the Soul

**3rd Level**

Animate Dead  
 Cast Out Spirit  
 Commune with Major Spirit  
 Cure Disease  
 Dispel Magic  
 Dream Message  
 Earth to Heaven  
 Lash of Fire  
 Remove Curse

## Wizard Spells

### Level 1

#### *Backbiter (Yang)*

Range: 20 yards  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: Special  
 Casting Time: Fa (6)  
 Area of Effect: 1 weapon  
 Saving Throw: None

This spell can be cast on any wooden hafted weapon within range. Such weapons include halberds, lances, monk's spades, and three-section staffs. The next time the weapon is used to attack, its shaft twists around so that the weapon strikes at its wielder. This attack hits automatically and includes all relevant damage bonuses. For instance, a fighter who had performed a Might stunt with a result of 3 would inflict the weapon's damage +3 to himself or herself.

The material component of this spell is a dagger. Magical weapons cannot be targeted with backbiter.

#### *Charm Person (Yin)*

Range: 120 yards  
 Components: V, S  
 Duration: Special  
 Casting Time: Fa (6)  
 Area of Effect: 1 person  
 Saving Throw: Negates

This spell affects any single person it is cast upon. The term person includes any bipedal human or humanoid of human size or smaller. Thus, a 10th-level fighter could be charmed, but an ogre could not.

The person receives a saving throw vs. spell to avoid the effect, with bonuses for any pertinent stunts (usually Insight and Charm). If the person receives damage from the caster's group in the same round the charm is cast, an additional bonus of +1 per hit point of damage is added to his or her saving throw.

If the spell recipient fails the saving throw, he or she regards the caster as a trusted friend and ally to be heeded and protected. The spell does not enable the caster to

control the charmed creature as if it were an automaton, but any word or action of the caster is viewed in the most favorable way. Thus, a charmed person would not obey a suicide command but might believe the caster if assured that the only chance to save the caster's life is to hold back an onrushing dragon for "just a minute or two." Note also that the spell does not endow the caster with linguistic capabilities beyond those normally possessed; he or she must speak the person's language to communicate commands.

The duration of the spell is a function of the charmed person's Intelligence and is tied to the saving throw. The spell may be broken if a successful saving throw is rolled, and this saving throw is checked on a periodic basis, according to the creature's Intelligence (see the following table). If the caster harms, or attempts to harm, the charmed person by some overt action, or if a dispel magic spell is successfully cast upon the charmed person, the spell is broken.

If two or more charm effects simultaneously affect a creature, the result is decided by the DM. This could range from one effect being clearly dominant, to the subject being torn by conflicting desires, to new saving throws that could negate both spells.

The subject has full memory of the events that took place while he or she was charmed.

**TABLE 4-3: SAVING THROW CHECKS FOR CHARMED SUBJECTS**

Intelligence Score	Time Between Checks
3 or less	3 months
4–6	2 months
7–9	1 month
10–12	3 weeks
13–14	2 weeks
15–16	1 week
17	3 days
18	2 days
19 or more	1 day

Note: The time between checks is the period during which the check occurs. The DM determines when to roll the check during this time. The roll is made secretly.

*Cobra's Breath (Yin)*

Range: 20 yards  
 Components: S, M  
 Duration: 3 rounds, plus 1 round/level  
 Casting Time: Fa (6)  
 Area of Effect: 10-foot-long × 10-foot-diameter cone  
 Saving Throw: 1/2

The wizard changes his or her saliva into a virulent poison and then spits it out in a cone 10 feet long and 10 feet in diameter at its widest point. Anyone inside this area must make a saving throw vs. poison or take 1d6 points of damage. Those who take damage from the poison are debilitated, and their Might stunts are reduced by one die type (for instance, from 1d8 to 1d6) for the duration of the spell. Those who make their save take half damage but are otherwise unaffected.

The material component of this spell is a cobra's fang.

*Detect Magic (Chi)*

Range: 0  
 Components: V, S  
 Duration: 2 rounds/level  
 Casting Time: Fa (6)  
 Area of Effect: 10-foot-wide path, 60 feet long  
 Saving Throw: None

When the detect magic spell is cast, the wizard detects magical emanations in a path 10 feet wide and up to 30 yards long, in the direction he or she is facing. By turning in place, the caster can scan a 60-foot arc per round. The intensity of the magic can be detected (dim, faint, moderate, strong, or overwhelming). The caster has a 10% chance per level to determine the type of magic (yin, yang, or chi, wizard or shaman, mortal or divine). The spell is blocked by solid stone at least 1 foot thick, solid metal at least 1 inch thick, or solid wood at least 1 yard thick.

*Elemental Charm (Varies)*

Range: Touch  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: 1 day/level  
 Casting Time: 1 hour  
 Area of Effect: 1 item  
 Saving Throw: None

A wizard can use his or her knowledge of the Five Elements to craft protective charms. These can be small tokens like coins or rings, or organic charms that must be swallowed to be effective. When casting the spell, the wizard chooses which element the charm will protect against. Against attacks or spells based on that element, the user of the charm gets a +1 bonus to saving throws and reduces each die of damage by –1.

The type of this spell depends on the element to be protected against; it is the opposite of that element's type (see the table below).

**TABLE 4-4: TYPES OF CHARMS**

Charm Vs.	Spell Type	Protects Against
Earth	Yang	Falling damage, rock/stone spells
Fire	Yin	Fire, both mundane and magical
Metal	Yang	Metal weapons, needle spells
Water	Yin	Ice spells, drowning
Wood	Yin	Wooden weapons and spells

*Give Me Face! (Yang)*

Reversible  
 Range: Touch  
 Components: V, M  
 Duration: 1 turn/level  
 Casting Time: Fa (6)  
 Area of Effect: Creature touched  
 Saving Throw: None

"Face" is a very important concept in Tianguo. "Giving face" means showing the proper respect, and denying a powerful figure his or her due is a grave error. This spell surrounds the recipient with an aura of power and prestige. While it is in effect, the recipient receives a +4 bonus on all Charm feats related to social position and power. This is most useful in social situations.

The reverse, you lose face, makes the recipient appear foolish and ill-mannered and confers a –4 penalty on his or her Charm feats. The material component for either version is small porcelain mask.

*Iron Scarf (Yin)*

Range: 5 yards/level  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: Instantaneous  
 Casting Time: Fa (6)  
 Area of Effect: 1 target  
 Saving Throw: None

When this spell is cast, the wizard seizes a silk scarf (which is also the material component) and lashes it towards one creature within range. The wizard must have a line of sight to the target but can ignore other targeting restrictions (such as those on shooting into melee). The scarf magically extends towards the creature and becomes as hard as iron on impact. The target is hit automatically and suffers 1d8 points of damage, plus 1 hit point per level of the caster.

*Light of Yang (Yang, yin for reverse)*

Reversible  
 Range: 60 yards  
 Components: V, M  
 Duration: 1 turn/level  
 Casting Time: Fa (6)  
 Area of Effect: 20-foot-radius globe  
 Saving Throw: None

This spell creates a luminous glow within 20 feet of the spell's center. The illumination is equal in brightness to torchlight. Objects in darkness beyond this sphere can be seen, at best, as vague and shadowy shapes. The spell is centered on a point selected by the caster, who must have a line of sight or unobstructed path to that point when casting the spell. Light can spring from almost any substance. The effect is immobile unless it is specifically centered on a movable object or mobile creature. If this spell is cast upon a creature, any applicable magic resistance and saving throws apply. Successful resistance negates the spell, while a successful saving throw indicates that the spell is centered immediately behind the creature, rather than on the creature itself.

The reverse of this spell, darkness of yin, causes darkness in the same area and under the same conditions as the light of yang spell. Magical darkness is equal to that of an unlit interior room—pitch darkness. Any normal or

magical light source of lesser intensity than full daylight does not function in magical darkness. A darkness of yin spell cast directly against a light of yang spell cancels both, and vice versa.

*Read Magic (Chi)*

Range: 0  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: 2 rounds/level  
 Casting Time: 1 round  
 Area of Effect: Special  
 Saving Throw: None

With this spell, the wizard is able to read magical inscriptions on objects—books, scrolls, weapons, and the like—that would otherwise be totally unintelligible. (The wizard's personal books, and works already magically read, are intelligible.) This deciphering does not normally invoke the magic contained in the writing, although it may do so in the case of a cursed scroll. Once the spell is cast and the wizard has read the magical inscription, he or she is thereafter able to read that particular writing without another read magic spell. The wizard can read one page or its equivalent per round.

The wizard must have a clear crystal or mineral prism, which is not expended, to cast the spell.

*Scales of the Lizard (Yin)*

Range: 0  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: 2 rounds/level  
 Casting Time: Fa (6)  
 Area of Effect: Caster  
 Saving Throw: None

To use this spell, the caster must have a tattoo of a lizard, which counts as the material component. When the spell is cast, the tattoo is activated, toughening the wizard's skin and giving him or her a +2 bonus to Armor Class. While this spell is in effect, the wizard's skin shimmers as if it were covered with scales.

*Suppress Magic (Yang)*

Range: 60 yards  
 Components: V, S  
 Duration: 1 round  
 Casting Time: Fa (6)  
 Area of Effect: 10-foot cube or 1 item  
 Saving Throw: None

Suppress magic has a chance to temporarily negate any spell or magical ability within its area of effect. Note that the wizard cannot pick and choose targets; everything in the area is affected. The spell resolves as a Savvy feat with a TN of 15, modified as follows. Compare the level (or number of Hit Dice if they have no level) of the original caster with that of the wizard attempting to suppress. If the wizard is of higher level than the original caster, subtract the difference from the TN; if the wizard is of lower level, add the difference. For example, a 7th-level Dragon's Breath attempting to suppress a curse cast by a 10th-level shaman needs to make a Savvy stunt with a TN of 18.

This spell does not normally negate the magical powers of items carried by a target within its area of effect. However, if the spell is cast directly at such an item, and the owner fails a saving throw vs. spell, then the item is rendered inoperable for 1 round.

*Level 2**Delusion (Yin)*

Range: 10 yards  
 Components: V, S  
 Duration: 1 round/level  
 Casting Time: Av (4)  
 Area of Effect: 1 target  
 Saving Throw: Negates

This spell magically fools the target into believing something that just isn't so. The wizard can make the deluded character mistake any one normal thing for a different normal thing. This can be an item, an emotion, or even a relationship. For instance, a person could be made to believe that her sword was a spoon, her hate for someone was really love, or that her brother was really her enemy. The wizard could not make someone believe that it is safe to jump off a cliff, or that

he can gain immortality by falling on a sword. As always, the DM is the final arbiter of what is an appropriate use of this spell.

*Doubt (Yin)*

Range: 10 yards  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: 1 round  
 Casting Time: Fa (6)  
 Area of Effect: 1 creature  
 Saving Throw: Negates

The target of this spell is filled with feelings of self-doubt. Lacking faith in his or her own abilities, the target will not take undue risks in combat. On the round after this spell is cast, he or she can take actions normally but cannot perform a stunt or attempt a feat. So, for example, a fighter affected by doubt could make a melee attack, but could not supplement it with a Might stunt.

The material component for doubt is the foot of a hare.

*Entangling Scarf (Yin)*

Range: 5 yards/level  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: 2 rounds/level  
 Casting Time: Av (4)  
 Area of Effect: 1 target  
 Saving Throw: Special

This spell is similar to iron scarf, but the wizard uses the scarf to entangle a foe instead of dealing damage. The target can do nothing as the scarf wraps around and around his or her body and is immobilized for the duration of the spell. However, each round the target can attempt a Might feat to break free. The Target Number of the feat is 12 plus the caster's level (for instance, the TN would be 17 for a 5th-level caster).

Entangled characters are hit automatically in combat and cannot perform stunts. Friendly characters can attempt to free them by making Might feats with the same TN as the target has to escape.





### *Fire Spikes (Yang)*

Range: 60 yards  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: Instantaneous  
 Casting Time: Av (4)  
 Area of Effect: 1–3 targets  
 Saving Throw: None

This spell allows the wizard to create flying spikes wreathed in flame that streak towards the foes. The wizard must roll to hit and can add the results of an Acrobatics stunt if one is performed that round. Each fire spike causes 2d8 points of damage. Wizards of level 1 to 4 can throw one spike, those of 5 to 8 can throw two, and those of 9 and 10 can throw three. Each spike can target a different character or creature and requires a separate roll to hit. The material component of this spell is a small throwing spike made of jade.

### *Heart Ripper (Yang)*

Range: 15 yards  
 Components: V, S  
 Duration: Instantaneous  
 Casting Time: Av (4)  
 Area of Effect: 1d4 targets  
 Saving Throw: Negates

With the sweep of a hand, the wizard sends invisible bolts of power surging towards 1d4 targets within range. These targets, who must each have 2 or fewer Hit Dice, get a saving throw vs. spell. On a failure, the unleashed power caves in the target's chest and drives his or her heart out of the body. Needless to say, such victims are slain regardless of hit points. This spell has no effect on creatures or characters with more than 2 Hit Dice.

### *Ice Blast (Yin)*

Range: 30 yards  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: 3 rounds  
 Casting Time: Av (4)  
 Area of Effect: 1d6 targets  
 Saving Throw: Negates

Calling upon the powers of the element of water, the wizard sends forth a blast of icy crystals, engulfing 1d6 target creatures. The wizard chooses a location within 30 yards, and the spell affects the targets closest to that spot. Affected creatures are covered with a thick layer of ice, which chills them and makes movement difficult. For the duration of this spell, targets' Might and Acrobatics stunt dice are reduced by one type (for instance, from 1d10 to 1d8).

The material component is mouthful of water, which the wizard spits out to begin the spell.

### *Kiss of the Toad (Yin)*

Range: 0  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: 3 rounds  
 Casting Time: Fa (6)  
 Area of Effect: 1 creature  
 Saving Throw: 1/2

To use this spell, the caster must have a tattoo of a toad, which counts as the material component. While the spell is in effect, the caster's touch is poisonous. If the caster successfully hits an opponent, the victim must make a saving throw vs. poison or take 3d6 points of damage (half if the save is made). This damage replaces the wizard's normal martial arts damage. Any Charm stunts the wizard makes while kiss of the toad is in effect suffer a –2 penalty.

### *Rain of Needles (Yin)*

Range: 10 yards/level  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: Instantaneous  
 Casting Time: Fa (6)  
 Area of Effect: Up to 1 target/level  
 Saving Throw: None

The caster takes a needle and, with a flick of the wrist, sends it hurtling towards one target

within range. The needle multiplies in flight, becoming a veritable hail by the time of impact and causing 1d4 points of damage per level of the caster. The wizard must roll to hit and can add the results of an Acrobatics stunt if one is performed the same round.

Alternately, the wizard can throw needles at multiple opponents, dividing the damage dice as he or she sees fit among up to one target per level. For example, a 4th-level wizard could launch one attack causing 4d4 points of damage, two attacks of 2d4 each, or four attacks of 1d4 apiece. A separate attack roll must be made against each target.



### *Terra Cotta Warrior (Yin)*

Range: 5 feet  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: 2 rounds/level  
 Casting Time: Sl (2)  
 Area of Effect: 1 statuette  
 Saving Throw: None

Terra cotta statues are popular items of decoration and devotion. This spell turns an innocuous statuette into a full-sized warrior, ready to fight the wizard's foes. By manipulating the power of earth, the wizard causes the statuette to grow and animate. For the spell's duration, the terra cotta warrior will attack targets of the wizard's choice. The wizard can select a new target each round if he or she so desires. The terra cotta warrior is not intelligent as such and cannot perform other tasks. However, the warrior also cannot be affected by Charm stunts or by mind-altering spells or abilities of any kind.

The material component of this spell is a small terra cotta statue of a warrior (usually no more than 6 inches tall and costing an average of 10f). If the warrior survives the combat, the statuette can be reused. If reduced to 0 or fewer hit points, it is smashed

into pieces; a replacement is necessary before the spell can be cast again. Carrying several is common practice.

**Terra Cotta Warrior:** AC 18; HD 3; Move 120; Att/round 1; To hit +3; Damage 1d8+3 (regardless of statue's armament); Stunts—Fortitude 1d3.

## Level 3

### *Blinding Flash (Yang)*

Range: 10 yards/level  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: Instantaneous  
 Casting Time: Av (4)  
 Area of Effect: 20-foot-radius sphere  
 Saving Throw: Special

This spell creates a flash of intense light that incapacitates all sighted creatures caught in its area or looking at the effect when it goes off. Those affected are automatically blinded for the next round and must make a saving throw vs. spell to avoid being blinded for an additional 2d10 rounds. Blinded creatures have a -4 penalty to their rolls to hit and a -20% chance to any pertinent thieving skills.

Forewarned creatures can avoid the effects merely by closing their eyes, if in the area, or averting their eyes, if outside it.

### *Dispel Magic (Yang)*

Range: 120 yards  
 Components: V, S  
 Duration: Instantaneous  
 Casting Time: Fa (6)  
 Area of Effect: 30-foot-cube or 1 item  
 Saving Throw: None

Dispel magic has a chance to negate any spell or magical ability within its area of effect. Note that the wizard cannot pick and choose targets; everything in the area is affected. The spell resolves as a Savvy feat with a TN of 15, modified as follows.

Compare the level (or number of Hit Dice if they have no level) of the original caster with that of the wizard attempting to dispel. If the wizard is of higher level than the original caster, subtract the difference from the TN; if the wizard is of lower level, add the differ-

ence. For example, a 7th-level Dragon's Breath attempting to dispel a curse cast by a 10th-level shaman needs to make a Savvy feat with a TN of 18.

This spell does not normally negate the magical powers of items carried by a target within its area of effect. However, if the spell is cast directly at such an item, and the owner fails a saving throw vs. spell, then the item is rendered inoperable for 1d4 rounds. The dispel magic has no other effect.

### *Earthbolt (Ujin)*

Range: 0

Components: V, S

Duration: Instantaneous

Casting Time: Fa (6)

Area of Effect: 5-foot-wide path, 10 feet long/level

Saving Throw: 1/2

With a shout, the wizard strikes the ground and creates a bolt of geomantic force. This bolt travels through the earth, tearing up the ground as it goes. Anyone caught in the area of effect takes 1d6 points of damage per level of the caster (maximum 10d6), although a successful saving throw vs. spell reduces the damage by half. Any target that made an Acrobatics stunt that round can add the result of the stunt die to this saving throw.

Earthbolt works on dirt, clay, stone, and even sand. However, it cannot be used on a different element (for instance, if the caster were standing on a wooden floor or walking on water).

### *Poison Needles (Ujin)*

Range: 10 yards/level

Components: V, S, M

Duration: Varies

Casting Time: Av (4)

Area of Effect: 1 target

Saving Throw: Negates

This spell is similar to rain of needles, but the magical needles created drip with poison. The spell can be cast at any target within range, and the wizard must roll to hit (adjusted by an Acrobatics stunt if he or she performed one that round). If hit, the target must make a saving throw vs. poison or suffer one of the following effects (wizard's choice):

- 1d6 damage per level of the wizard (10d6 maximum).
- Paralysis for 1d6+1 rounds.
- -4 penalty to all actions and AC for 1d6 turns.

### *Scuttle of the Centipede (Ujin)*

Range: 0

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1 round/level

Casting Time: Fa (6)

Area of Effect: Caster

Saving Throw: None

To use this spell, the wizard must have a tattoo of a centipede, which counts as the material component. While the tattoo is activated, the caster moves with incredible speed, doubling his or her normal Move (this usually works out to 240 feet/round) and taking two major actions per round. So the wizard could, for example, move 120 feet, then attack or cast a spell. However, the wizard cannot cast two spells in a round, although each round does count double for spells with a casting time of more than 1 round.

While scuttle of the centipede is in effect, the caster must move at least 60 feet and take one major action per round. Failure to do so results in the wizard taking 1d10 damage as the magical energy burns up his or her body.

### *Shield of Daio Zu'en (Ujin)*

Range: 0

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1 turn/level

Casting Time: Av (4)

Area of Effect: Caster

Saving Throw: None

This spell surrounds the caster with swirling winds that provide immunity to nonmagical missiles of all kinds. While protected by the shield of Daio Zu'en, the wizard simply cannot be hit with normal arrows, spears, and so on. The wizard can cast spells normally but cannot use nonmagical missile weapons. The shield offers no protection against martial arts or hand-to-hand attacks.

The material component of this spell is a turtle shell.

*Waterskin (Yin)*

Range: 0  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: 3 rounds  
 Casting Time: Av (4)  
 Area of Effect: Caster  
 Saving Throw: None

When this spell is cast, the wizard becomes so completely attuned to the element of water that his or her skin becomes as malleable as liquid. This makes the wizard's body extremely flexible, so as to change and distort his or her features (useful for scaring opponents or for impersonations). For the duration of the spell, the wizard's Acrobatics and Charm stunts are increased by one die type. However, he or she cannot perform Fortitude stunts and suffers a -2 penalty to saves vs. yang spells while waterskin is in effect.

The material component of this spell is a vial of water.

*Wood Shape (Yang)*

Range: Touch  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: Permanent  
 Casting Time: 1 round  
 Area of Effect: 1 cubic foot/level  
 Saving Throw: None

This spell allows the caster to reshape wood into any desired form. For example, the wizard can cast it upon any appropriate-sized piece of wood to fashion a weapon, make a rough door, or create a crude statue. The spell also allows the caster to reshape an existing wooden door, perhaps to escape imprisonment. Again, the volume of the wooden object must be appropriate to the desired result and fit in the area of effect.

Normally, such objects are crude and undetailed. A wizard who wants to craft a higher-quality piece can spend 1 turn casting the spell instead of a round. If the extra time is taken, the wizard can attempt a Savvy feat with a TN of 20; if this is successful, the object appears handcrafted and suitably artistic.

The spell's effect is permanent, although the wood can still rot or be physically destroyed. The material component is a sprinkle of fertile soil.

*Woodskin (Yang)*

Range: 0  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: 1 round/level  
 Casting Time: Av (4)  
 Area of Effect: Caster  
 Saving Throw: None

When this spell is cast, the wizard becomes so completely attuned to the element of wood that his or her skin sprouts thorns all over. These thorns do not damage the wizard in any way, since they are but a manifestation of this attunement. However, they make the wizard's martial arts attacks more deadly, increasing his or her damage by one die type (for instance, from 1d6 to 1d8) for the duration of the spell. The downside of the attunement is that wizard suffers a -2 penalty to saves vs. yin spells while woodskin is in effect.

The material component is, of course, a thorn.

*Level 4**Breath of Wind (Chi)*

Range: 0  
 Components: S  
 Duration: 1 round  
 Casting Time: Av (4)  
 Area of Effect: 30-foot-long × 10-foot-diameter cone  
 Saving Throw: Negates

The wizard draws in chi from the surrounding air and then blows out a great gust of wind in a cone 30 feet long with a 10-foot diameter at its widest end. Anyone in the area of effect must make a saving throw vs. breath weapon or be knocked over. Characters that made a Fortitude stunt that round can add the result of the stunt die to their saving throw. Those blown off their feet lose any remaining actions this round and must spend next round getting up (unless they have Wind in the Reeds or a similar ability).

In addition to knocking over opponents, breath of wind extinguishes small open flames (such as torches), disperses fog and other vapors, and blows down light objects. Even those who make their save cannot

move towards the caster during the round the spell is cast. The caster is also immune to missile attacks coming from his or her front.

### *Dancing Weapon (Yin)*

Range: Touch  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: 1 round/level  
 Casting Time: 1 round  
 Area of Effect: 1 weapon  
 Saving Throw: None

This spell allows the wizard to animate a nonmagical weapon, causing it to “dance” in the air and attack those designated by the caster. Any weapon can be so animated, but the wizard must be able to touch it while casting the spell. Once the spell is cast, the weapon remains within 10 feet of the wizard, moving to intercept anyone who tries to attack him or her. If the wizard is slain, the weapon falls to the ground.

The weapon attacks as if the wizard were wielding it but has two attacks per round. Controlling the weapon requires no concentration, and the wizard can cast further spells or take other actions. However, if the wizard spends a round performing a Savvy stunt to control the weapon more actively, the result of the stunt die adds to rolls to hit and do damage that round. Otherwise, the weapon inflicts its normal damage.

The material component of the spell is a small puppet of the caster.

### *Earthskin (Yin)*

Range: 0  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: Special  
 Casting Time: Av (4)  
 Area of Effect: Caster  
 Saving Throw: None

When this spell is cast, the wizard becomes so completely attuned to the element of earth that his or her skin becomes as hard as stone. The wizard gains complete immunity from a limited number of hand-to-hand and missile attacks (but not from spells). The spell blocks 1d4 attacks, plus one attack for every two levels of the caster. Note that the spell does not discriminate against attacks, and it blocks the first attacks made against the wizard regard-

less of their source. For example, a wizard with earthskin is protected against five attacks; five bandits shooting arrows will use up the spell's protection, allowing the bandit leader to close and attack the wizard as normal.

The caster suffers a -2 penalty to saves vs. yang spells while earthskin is in effect. The material component is a piece of granite inscribed with the character for earth.

### *Needle's Puppet (Yin)*

Range: 10 yards  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: Special  
 Casting Time: Sl (2)  
 Area of Effect: 1-2 targets  
 Saving Throw: Special

This spell allows the wizard to shoot out five needles from each hand, each of which trails a strong thread. Each set of needles can pierce a different target, one needle attaching to each of the four limbs plus the torso. Once the needles are in place, the wizard can manipulate the target like a puppet, causing him or her to move or attack at the wizard's will.

This spell has two applications. First, it can be used on living targets. These creatures get a saving throw vs. spell, which if successful negates its effect. If the save is failed, the wizard can control the targets' actions for as long as he or she continues to manipulate the strings. However, each round the victims can make Might feats with a TN of 18 to break free.

The spell can also be cast on the recently slain. In this case, the dead get no saving throw, and the wizard can manipulate them at will. The corpses get no bonuses to hit and cannot perform stunts. However, attacks against them have no effect (they are, after all, dead).

In both cases, the wizard must perform an Acrobatics stunt every round he or she wishes to continue the spell. As well, the wizard receives a -2 reduction to AC; it is difficult to dodge attacks while manipulating the “puppets.” The controlled creature rolls to hit as if the wizard were attacking, but damage is based on the puppet's weapon or martial arts technique. The creatures have the same initiative as the wizard.

Example: A wizard casts needle's puppet at two targets, one alive and one dead. The liv-

ing target makes his saving throw, so the spell does not affect him. The corpse, however, is affected automatically and becomes the wizard's puppet. On the following round, the wizard can make the corpse attack a nearby foe. The wizard rolls an Acrobatics stunt die and gets a 4. This puppet's attack is at +4, but the wizard adds only +2 to her AC this round because of the -2 penalty. The corpse is armed with a battle-ax, so it will do 1d8 points of damage if the wizard scores a hit.

### *Shout (Yang)*

Range: 0

Components: V

Duration: Instantaneous

Casting Time: Fa (6)

Area of Effect: 30-foot-long ¥ 10-foot-diameter cone

Saving Throw: Negates

This spell greatly enhances the vocal power of the caster. The wizard unleashes a shout of staggering intensity: Those who fail their saving throw vs. spell are deafened for 2d6 rounds and suffer 2d6 points of damage. In addition, exposed brittle substances may be shattered. The wizard can cast this spell only once a day, as more frequent use results in permanent deafness.



### *Snake Darts (Yin)*

Range: 60 yards

Components: V, S, M

Duration: Instantaneous

Casting Time: Fa (6)

Area of Effect: 1-2 creatures

Saving Throw: 1/2

To use this spell, the caster must have a pair of snake tattoos, usually coiled around the forearm. These tattoos are the material component. When the spell is cast, the tattoos fly off

the caster's arm, turn into real snakes, and speed towards one or two target opponents. The snakes seek out their target(s) with unerring accuracy, hitting automatically. Victims take 2d6 points of damage from the impact and then must make a saving throw vs. poison as the snakes' venom takes effect. Those who fail their save suffer an additional 2d12 points of damage (half if the save is made).

On the following round the snakes fly back to the caster. Before the spell can be cast again, the wizard must swallow the two snakes (and yes, they are still alive), which causes the tattoos to reappear on his or her arms. Eating the snakes is a major action.

### *Stone Shape (Yin)*

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M

Duration: Permanent

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: 1 cubic foot/level

Saving Throw: None

By means of this spell, the wizard can form an existing piece of stone into a shape that suits his or her purpose. For example, he or she can make a stone weapon, a special trapdoor, or an idol. This spell can also be used to reshape a stone door to escape imprisonment, providing the volume of stone involved is within the limits of the area of effect. The fineness of detail is not great in the created object; a wizard who wants to craft higher-quality piece can spend 1 turn casting the spell instead of a round. If the extra time is taken, the wizard attempts a Savvy Feat with a TN of 20. If this is successful, the object appears handcrafted and suitably artistic. The material component of this spell is a cupful of water.

### *Terra Cotta Lion (Yin)*

Range: 5 feet

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 2 rounds/level

Casting Time: Sl (2)

Area of Effect: 1 statuette

Saving Throw: None

A more powerful version of the 2nd-level wizard spell terra cotta warrior, this spell enlarges and animates a small statue of a lion (the

material component, usually costing 3 tael). These types of statues are often found at temples and monasteries, guarding the holy places from harm. All special rules and limitations of the terra cotta warrior spell apply.

**Terra Cotta Lion:** AC 22; HD 7; Move 150; Att/round 2; To hit +7; Damage 1d10+3; Stunts—*Might* 1d4, *Fortitude* 1d4. (H3) Level 5

### *Decapitating Scarf (Yin)*

Range: 5 yards/level  
Components: V, S, M  
Duration: Instantaneous  
Casting Time: Av (4)  
Area of Effect: 1 target  
Saving Throw: Negates

The most deadly of the scarf magics, this spell is rightly feared in the World of Martial Arts. The wizard sends a scarf streaking towards a single target within range. The scarf wraps around neck of the target, who must make a saving throw vs. spell. If the save is failed, the wizard yanks the scarf and decapitates the hapless victim. This kills the target outright, regardless of hit points or level.

### *Essence Absorption (Yang)*

Range: Touch  
Components: V, S, M  
Duration: Instantaneous  
Casting Time: Sl (2)  
Area of Effect: Creature touched  
Saving Throw: 1/2

With this dreaded spell, the wizard tears the yang energy out of an opponent and absorbs it into his or her own being. Favored by the Great Immortals, essence absorption is dangerous: Wizards who take on more yang energy that they can handle run the risk of damaging themselves.

To successfully cast the spell, the wizard first must hit an opponent with a martial arts attack. If hit, the target takes 5d10 points of damage (half if a saving throw vs. spell is made). Anyone who fails the save is also stunned for 1 round. The wizard then internalizes the stolen yang energy, regaining a number of hit points equal to the damage just inflicted. However, if this brings the wizard's

hit points over his or her normal total, the extra points are taken in damage instead. Great Immortals, due to their knowledge of yang magic, take only 1 point of damage for every 2 points over their normal total. Note that a wizard cannot steal more hit points than the opponent has; dealing 50 points of damage to a peasant with only 5 hit points does not earn 50 points of free healing.

Example: A *Dragon's Breath* wizard casts essence absorption on a foe. The wizard normally has 43 hit points, but he has taken 20 points of damage in an earlier encounter and now has only 23. He makes a successful martial arts attack and hits his opponent, who obligingly fails her saving throw. The wizard inflicts 30 points of damage, then absorbs the same amount. Unfortunately, he has taken on too much yang energy (he could absorb only 20 points). As a result, he is first restored to full hit points but then suffers 10 points in "overload" damage. After the attack, the wizard now has 33 hit points. Had he been a Great Immortal, he would have lost only 5 points to yang damage and would end the round with 38 hit points instead.

The material component of the spell is a jade dagger worth 100 tael. This component can be reused.

### *Fire Breath (Yang)*

Range: 0  
Components: V, S, M  
Duration: Instantaneous  
Casting Time: 1 round  
Area of Effect: 30-foot-long ¥ 15-foot-diameter cone  
Saving Throw: 1/2

This spell allows the wizard to breathe a cone of magical fire into the area of effect. All within the cone suffer 1d6 points of damage per level of the caster (half if they make a saving throw vs. breath weapon). Maximum damage is 15d6 (this maximum applies only to enemy creatures unless characters over 10th level are allowed by your DM). Combustible objects are ignited automatically. This may cause additional damage to those within the area. The DM must rule on these situations.

The material component for this spell is a piece of red-hot charcoal clenched between

the teeth of the caster. This charcoal does no damage to the wizard.

### *Metalskin (Yin)*

Range: 0  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: 3 rounds  
 Casting Time: Sl (2)  
 Area of Effect: Caster  
 Saving Throw: None

When this spell is cast, the wizard becomes so completely attuned to the element of metal that his or her skin turns into gleaming bronze. For the duration of the spell, the wizard's AC is increased by 4 and his or her Might and Fortitude stunts increase by one die type. However, the caster's Move is reduced by half, and he or she cannot perform Acrobatics stunts. The wizard also suffers a -2 penalty to saves vs. yang spells while metalskin is in effect.

The material component of this spell is a small bronze gong, which may be reused.

### *Scorpion Form (Yin)*

Range: 0  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: 1 turn  
 Casting Time: Sl (2)  
 Area of Effect: Caster  
 Saving Throw: None

To use this spell, the caster must have a tattoo of a scorpion, which counts as the material component. When the tattoo is activated, the wizard is transformed into a giant scorpion but retains his or her mental faculties, along with hit points, attack rolls, and saving throws. However, the wizard's Armor Class becomes 18, his or her Move increases to 150 feet per round, and he or she can make three attacks per round. The first two of these attacks are made with the scorpion's claws. These do 1d4 damage each, but their primary purpose is to hold the victim so that the third attack, the sting, can be delivered. For each claw that hits, the sting attack gets a +2 bonus to hit. The sting does 1d4 points of damage, and the stung opponent must make a saving throw vs. poison or die.

While in scorpion form, the wizard gets a +4 bonus to Charm feats related to fear, but

Acrobatics stunts suffer a -2 penalty due to the unfamiliar body. Also, the wizard can cast no spells while scorpion form is in effect, though he or she can choose to end the spell at any time.

### *Tomb of Ice (Yin)*

Range: 10 yards  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: 1 turn  
 Casting Time: Sl (2)  
 Area of Effect: 1 creature  
 Saving Throw: Negates

Combining water with the strength of stone, this spell encases a single target in an enormous block of ice. The entombed being is completely protected from most forms of attack. However, the only action the prisoner can make is attempting to break out of the ice. This requires making a Might feat with a TN of 25, with one attempt each round. Every round that a creature is entombed, it takes 2d6 points of damage from chill and suffocation.

The material component of this spell is a small diamond worth 75 tael.

### *Transmute Wood to Ash (Yang)*

Range: 50 yards  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: Permanent  
 Casting Time: Av (4)  
 Area of Effect: 10-foot radius  
 Saving Throw: None

This spell speeds up the natural transmutation of the elements by turning wood into ash. The caster chooses a point within range, which acts as the center of the spell. Any wood within a 10-foot radius of this point is instantly turned to ash. This includes both natural wood (trees) and crafted wood (such as planks and arrows). Nonwooden components of items remain intact, so a spearhead would survive the spell whereas the shaft would not.

The material component of this spell is an open flame of candle size or larger.



## Shaman Spells

### Level 1

#### *Ancestral Blessing (Uin)*

Range: 0  
 Components: V, S  
 Duration: 2 rounds/level  
 Casting Time: Av (4)  
 Area of Effect: Caster  
 Saving Throw: None

The shaman entreats his or her ancestor spirit for aid. If the shaman has faithfully made offerings to the spirit, the request is granted. For the duration of the spell, the shaman gains +1 to AC and +2 to all saving throws.

#### *Commune with Local Spirit (Yang)*

Range: 20 yards  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: Special  
 Casting Time: 1 turn  
 Area of Effect: Special  
 Saving Throw: None

With this spell, the shaman can attempt to contact a local spirit, such as lake or forest spirits or ghosts who haunt a particular area. The shaman must dance and chant and make an offering of food and wine (the material component). If the shaman knows the name of the spirit, the spell automatically succeeds. Otherwise, the chance of success is 10% per level of the shaman. The DM can secretly modify this based on the sacrifices made and any other pertinent conditions.

If the spirit answers the summons, the shaman can ask it one question per level. The spirit will answer to the best of its ability, though its knowledge is usually limited to the immediate surroundings.

Alternatively, the shaman can forgo questioning and attempt to gain the spirit's aid. These negotiations are best roleplayed out. Remember, however, that spirits rarely do favors without requiring something in return.

#### *Cure Light Wounds (Uin)*

Reversible  
 Range: Touch  
 Components: V, S  
 Duration: Permanent  
 Casting Time: Av (4)  
 Area of Effect: Creature touched  
 Saving Throw: None

Upon touching a wounded being, the shaman instantly heals 1d8 points of damage, so long as the recipient has a solid body and is still alive. The shaman can perform an Insight stunt on the same round to increase the number of hit points restored by the result of the stunt die.

The reverse, cause light wounds, inflicts 1d8 points of damage on an opponent, who must be hit in melee combat as normal.

#### *Detect Harmony (Chi)*

Range: 0  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: 1 turn  
 Casting Time: 1 round  
 Area of Effect: 10-foot-wide path, 30 yards long  
 Saving Throw: None

When the detect harmony spell is cast, the shaman detects the balance of natural forces in a path 10 feet wide and up to 30 yards long, in the direction he or she is facing. By turning in place, he or she can scan a 60-foot arc per round. The shaman can detect yin and yang energy and ascertain the relative strength of each.

#### *Detect Magic (Chi)*

Range: 0  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: 1 turn  
 Casting Time: 1 round  
 Area of Effect: 10-foot-wide path, 30 yards long  
 Saving Throw: None

This spell works the same as the 1st-level wizard spell of the same name.

*Eyes of Fire (Yang)*

Range: 0  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: 1–3 rounds  
 Casting Time: Sl (2)  
 Area of Effect: Caster  
 Saving Throw: 1/2

This spell causes the shaman's eyes to glow with an unnatural light. Once each round, the shaman can focus his or her eyes on a target within 30 feet and cause it to burst into flames. If focused on a living target, the spell causes 1d8 points of damage (half damage on a successful saving throw vs. spell). The duration is 1 round per 4 levels of the caster (1 round for shamans of level 1 to 4, 2 for those of level 5 to 8, and 3 for those of level 9 to 10). Using eyes of fire in subsequent rounds counts as the shaman's major action for that round; he or she cannot use the spell and attack with a weapon, for instance.

*Interpret Dream (Yin)*

Range: Touch  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: Instantaneous  
 Casting Time: 1 turn  
 Area of Effect: Creature touched  
 Saving Throw: None

Shamans are famed for their ability to interpret dreams. Their advice is often sought regarding strange or disturbing visions, and whether they might contain warnings or advice. This spell allows the shaman to tap into the spirit world to correctly interpret a dream.

The dreamer approaches the shaman, who lights a fire and listens to the account of the dream. As the dreamer talks, images begin to flicker in the fire. When the dreamer is finished, the shaman touches his or her own head and interprets the dream. (The DM tells the shaman's player what the spell has revealed.) This information is usually both general and correct. Details are up to the DM, but dream interpretation is a great way to pass along information to the players.

*Light of Yang (Yang, yin for reverse)*

Reversible  
 Range: 120 yards  
 Components: V, S  
 Duration: 1 hour + 1 turn/level  
 Casting Time: Fa (6)  
 Area of Effect: 20-foot-radius globe  
 Saving Throw: Special

This spell works the same as the 1st-level wizard spell of the same name.

*Mantle of Heaven (Yang, yin for reverse)*

Reversible  
 Range: 0  
 Components: V, S  
 Duration: 2 rounds/level  
 Casting Time: Av (4)  
 Area of Effect: 10-yard radius  
 Saving Throw: None

When this spell is cast, the shaman is bathed in the light of Heaven. All can see that he or she has the favor of powerful spirits. Those allied to the caster draw inspiration from this display and receive a +1 bonus to hit. NPCs are also far more likely to give weight to what he or she has to say, giving the shaman +2 to Charm feats.

The reverse of this spell, mantle of Hell, imposes a –1 penalty to hit on enemies of the caster within range, and also confers a bonus on Charm feats by the caster as above.

*Oracle Bones (Yang)*

Range: 0  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: Special  
 Casting Time: 2 rounds  
 Area of Effect: Caster  
 Saving Throw: None

The shaman attempts to predict good or evil fortune by reading the oracle bones. He or she picks an action that has just taken place or will take place in the next hour and records the details on the shoulderblade of a cow, or the shell of a turtle, through which a hole has been drilled. A hot iron rod is then thrust through the hole, creating cracks in the bone, which the shaman interprets. The base

chance of a successful reading is 70% plus 1% per level of the caster. The DM decides the answer, which is always stated in general terms. This spell never reveals precise details, but only whether the given action will be auspicious or inauspicious. A failed reading generates no answer or, at the DM's option, a false answer.

### *Suppress Magic (Yang)*

Range: 60 yards  
 Components: V, S  
 Duration: 1 round  
 Casting Time: Fa (6)  
 Area of Effect: 10-foot-cube or 1 item  
 Saving Throw: None

This spell works the same as the 1st-level wizard spell of the same name, but the shaman makes an Insight feat rather than a Savvy feat.

## *Level 2*

### *Ancestral Vengeance (Yin)*

Range: 10 yards  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: Instantaneous  
 Casting Time: Sl (2)  
 Area of Effect: 1 creature  
 Saving Throw: None

The shaman calls out the crimes of the intended target to his or her ancestor spirit, enraging that forebear to such a degree that the spirit briefly manifests to deliver a sharp blow to the offending creature. The casting shaman must perform a Charm stunt on the round ancestral vengeance is cast, and the result of the stunt die is added to the spirit's damage (the better the stunt result, the more angry the spirit has become). The spirit's attack automatically hits and does a base damage of 2d8, which is increased to 3d8 if the target is undead. (Such creatures must realize the proper place for them is in a grave!)

### *Cure Moderate Wounds (Yin)*

Reversible  
 Range: 20 yards  
 Components: V, S  
 Duration: Permanent

Casting Time: Av (4)  
 Area of Effect: Creature touched  
 Saving Throw: None

This spell works identically to cure light wounds but heals 1d10+1 points of damage. Its opposite, cause moderate wounds, inflicts 1d10+1 points of damage on an opponent, who must be hit in melee combat as normal.

### *Divine Future (Yang)*

Range: Touch  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: 1 round  
 Casting Time: Sl (2)  
 Area of Effect: Creature touched  
 Saving Throw: None

When this spell is cast, the shaman divines the best choice for the target creature's next stunt. On the following round, the affected creature may make two stunt rolls and keep the best result.

**Example:** A Black Lotus casts divine future and touches an allied Iron Monkey. The next round the thief makes an Acrobatics stunt (stunt bonus 1d8), but rolls two eight-sided dice instead of the usual one. The results are a 2 and a 7. The Iron Monkey happily takes the higher result.



### *Flame Fist (Yang)*

Range: 0  
 Components: V, S  
 Duration: 1 turn  
 Casting Time: Av (4)  
 Area of Effect: Caster  
 Saving Throw: None

The shaman uses mastery of fire to wreath

his or her hands in glowing flame. For the duration of the spell, the shaman's martial arts damage is increased by two die types (for instance, from 1d4 to 1d8), to a maximum of 1d12. Blows from flame fist can also set flammable objects alight.

### *Mediumship (Yang)*

Range: 50 yards  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: Special  
 Casting Time: 3 turns  
 Area of Effect: Caster  
 Saving Throw: None

This spell is a long ritual in which the shaman invites a friendly spirit to possess his or her body. It is often used to communicate with ancestors, especially when important advice is needed.

The shaman sings and dances, and offers sacrifices of food and wine to the spirit, who must be within range. If the identity of the spirit is known, it will enter the shaman's body automatically after such an entreaty. The spirit then takes control of the body, gaining the power of speech and any other reasonable activity. Once possessed, the shaman cannot talk to the spirit, so others must be present to ask questions.

This spell can also be cast in regions where the presence of spirits is suspected, in the hopes of attracting a friendly one. It is up to the DM to determine the intent of local spirits. Malevolent spirits will attempt to take over the shaman's body permanently. The shaman receives a saving throw vs. paralyzation with a +1 bonus per level. If the save is successful, the spirit is driven off. Otherwise, the shaman is possessed.

This spell can also be used to bargain with demons, but the risks are much greater. Even members of the Black Lotus are loath to let demons possess them. In either case, the DM must determine what the entity hopes to gain through possession and under what circumstances it will return the body to its owner.

### *Rebuke (Yang)*

Range: 30 yards  
 Components: V, S  
 Duration: 2 rounds  
 Casting Time: Fa (6)  
 Area of Effect: 1 creature  
 Saving Throw: Negates

The shaman, invoking Heaven and Earth, stuns one opponent with a thunderous rebuke. The target receives a saving throw vs. spell; on a failed save, he or she is stunned for 2 rounds. Stunned characters and creatures are hit more easily (+4 to opponent's roll) and cannot perform stunts.

### *Skyclimb (Yin)*

Range: 0  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: 1 turn  
 Casting Time: Sl (2)  
 Area of Effect: Caster  
 Saving Throw: None

By casting this spell the shaman can climb into the sky (that is, levitate) at a rate of 20 feet per round. This movement can be up or down but is strictly vertical. The shaman could move from side to side by pulling himself or herself along a wall, for example, but the spell itself does not enable horizontal movement. Once cast, the spell requires no concentration.

The material component of this spell is a "pill" of jade, which the shaman must swallow.

### *Spirit Barrier (Yin)*

Range: 0  
 Components: V, S  
 Duration: Special  
 Casting Time: Sl (2)  
 Area of Effect: 1 yard/level  
 Saving Throw: None

The shaman makes a circle on the ground with sticks of burning incense. Any mortal within the confines of the circle becomes immune to possession by spirits and demons, and receives a +2 AC versus attacks by such creatures. The circle has no adverse effects on the shaman's own abilities, but it does affect allied spirits. As soon as the caster leaves the circle, it ceases to function.

### *Understand Curse (Yin)*

Range: 10 feet  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: Instantaneous  
 Casting Time: 1 turn  
 Area of Effect: 1 target  
 Saving Throw: None

This spell may be cast upon any person or object that is suffering from any harmful magical effect or the unwelcome attention of a supernatural power. The spell reveals to the shaman the manner of the target's curse, the reason for it, and who is responsible. Thus the shaman can discover the name of the person, creature, or power who cursed the target and what sort of being it is (spirit, demon, god, and so on). He or she can also learn whether the curse is punishment, revenge, or unprovoked assault, as well as its nature (whether from a curse spell, a spirit's power, or some other source). Note that the spell does not reveal the nature of the spirit, though the shaman may recognize the names of ancestors and patron entities.

The material component of this spell is a star chart, which the shaman uses to track correspondences.

## Level 3

### *(HA) Animate Dead (Yin)*

Range: 10 yards  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: Permanent  
 Casting Time: 1 round  
 Area of Effect: Special  
 Saving Throw: None

This spell creates the lowest of the undead monsters—skeletons or zombies—usually from the bones or bodies of dead humans. The remains become animated and obey simple verbal commands of the caster, regardless of how the beings communicated in life. The skeletons or zombies can follow the caster, remain in an area and attack any creature (or just a specific type of creature) entering the place, and so on. They remain animated until destroyed in combat or immobilized; the magic cannot be dispelled.

The shaman can animate one skeleton or one

zombie per level. If creatures with more than 1 Hit Die are animated, the number of undead created is determined by the living creature's Hit Dice. Skeletal forms have the Hit Dice of the original creature, while zombie forms have 1 additional Hit Die. This is based on the standard for the creature's race; thus, a high-level human adventurer would be animated as a skeleton or zombie of only 1 or 2 Hit Dice, without special class or kit abilities. The caster can, alternatively, animate two small animal skeletons (1–1 Hit Die or less) for every level of experience he or she has achieved.

The spell requires a drop of blood, a piece of flesh of the type of creature being animated, and a pinch of bone powder or a bone shard. Animate dead does not return the souls to the dead but only gives them a hideous unlife. Treating the dead in such a manner is tremendously disrespectful and only those of a thoroughly evil character would consider using this spell.

### *Cast Out Spirit (Yang)*

Range: Touch  
 Components: V, S  
 Duration: Permanent  
 Casting Time: 1 turn  
 Area of Effect: 1 spirit  
 Saving Throw: Special

Through this spell the shaman can attempt to cast out a possessing spirit or demon. It can't be used to drive out spirits possessing willing hosts.

As the shaman dances, he or she berates the spirit and threatens it with spiritual retribution. When the ritual is complete, the shaman must make a Charm feat. The Target Number to successfully cast the spirit out is set out in the following table.

**TABLE 4-5: CASTING OUT SPIRITS**

HD of Spirit or Demon	TN
Fewer than caster	10
Same as caster	15
More than caster	20

*Commune with Major Spirit (Yang)*

Range: 100 yards  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: Special  
 Casting Time: 2 turns  
 Area of Effect: Special  
 Saving Throw: None

This spell is similar to the 1 level spell commune with local spirit, but it allows contact with more powerful entities (such as the spirits of mountains and rivers, or deified heroes). These spirits must be treated with the utmost respect, and they will not even consider answering the summons unless generous sacrifices are made. The base chance of success is 7% per level of the shaman. The DM can secretly modify this based on the sacrifices made and any other pertinent conditions.

If the spirit answers the summons, the shaman can ask it one question per level. Generally, it will answer to the best of its ability. However, major spirits tend to pursue their own interests, so they often feed the shaman whatever information best serves those ends.

Alternatively, the shaman can forgo questioning and attempt to gain the spirit's aid. These negotiations are best roleplayed out. Remember, however, that spirits rarely do favors without requiring something in return.

*Cure Disease (Yin)*

Range: Touch  
 Components: V, S  
 Duration: Special  
 Casting Time: 1 round  
 Area of Effect: Creature touched  
 Saving Throw: None

This spell quickly removes the effects of any one disease. Symptoms usually disappear within a turn to a week, depending on the severity and advancement of the disease at the time of casting. The exact amount of time for complete recovery is up to the DM. Regardless of how long it takes to disappear, though, the disease causes no more damage to its victim.

*Dispel Magic (Yang)*

Range: 120 yards  
 Components: V, S  
 Duration: Instantaneous  
 Casting Time: Fa (6)  
 Area of Effect: 30-foot cube or 1 item  
 Saving Throw: None

This spell works the same as the 3rd-level wizard spell of the same name, but the shaman makes an Insight feat instead of a Savvy feat.

*Dream Message (Yin)*

Reversible  
 Range: 0  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: Special  
 Casting Time: 3 turns  
 Area of Effect: Caster  
 Saving Throw: None

This spell allows the shaman to deliver messages to others in their dreams. The shaman must know the name of the recipient, who must be asleep when the spell is cast. The ritual takes half an hour, at the end of which the shaman falls into a trancelike state. At this point, the shaman's spirit leaves his or her body and travels instantaneously into the sleeping mind of the recipient (unless that person is protected against spirits in some way, such as by the spell spirit barrier).

If the spell is cast successfully, the shaman can deliver a message of any length, and this determines the spell's duration. Exactly how this is done is up to the caster. The shaman could appear in person in a dream and simply speak the message, or he or she could fill the recipient's mind with images meant to convey a warning. The dreamer cannot reply, and the shaman can glean no information from the other's mind.

Once the message is sent, the shaman's spirit returns to his or her body. If the body is disturbed in any way before then, though, the spirit has a 25% chance of becoming lost. In this case, the body remains comatose until the shaman's spirit can find its way back—which may take some time. There is a 5% chance per level of the shaman that the spirit succeeds. Roll percentile dice once for each day of game time.

The reverse of this spell, nightmare message, works in exactly the same way, but the shaman's goal is to frighten and disturb the recipient. The nightmare prevents restful sleep and causes 1d10 points of damage plus the result of the shaman's Charm stunt (representing the shaman's skill at creating unsettling images). A victim who has not rested cannot regain spells as normal. The victim of nightmare message is allowed a saving throw vs. spell to avoid its effects.

The material components of this spell are a bowl of incense and a small gong.

### *Earth to Heaven (Yin)*

Range: 0  
 Components: S, M  
 Duration: 1 turn/level  
 Casting Time: Fa (6)  
 Area of Effect: Caster  
 Saving Throw: None

This spell gives the shaman the power of flight. He or she is able to move both horizontally and vertically at a rate of 180 feet/round. While flying at less than 90 feet/round, the shaman can cast other spells, perform stunts, and attack in combat. If the shaman wants to extend the flight, he or she makes a Fortitude stunt to stay in the air an additional number of turns equal to the result of the stunt die.

The material component of this spell is a "pill" of jade, which the shaman must swallow.

### *Lash of Fire (Yang)*

Range: 0  
 Components: V, S  
 Duration: 2 rounds  
 Casting Time: Av (4)  
 Area of Effect: 20-foot-long ¥ 5-foot-diameter cone  
 Saving Throw: 1/2

With this spell, the shaman causes a jet of fire to burst from his or her outstretched hands. This cone of flame is 20 feet long and 5 feet in diameter at its widest end. In the first round, it inflicts 1d4 points of damage, plus an additional 2 points of damage per level of the caster; the spell inflicts half this amount on the second round. A successful saving throw vs. spell halves the damage dealt in either round.

### *Remove Curse (Yang)*

Reversible  
 Range: Touch  
 Components: V, S  
 Duration: Permanent  
 Casting Time: Sl (2)  
 Area of Effect: Special  
 Saving Throw: Special

By casting this spell, the shaman can usually remove a curse on an object, on a person, or in the form of some undesired sending or evil presence. Note that the spell does not remove the curse from a weapon or item, for example, although it typically enables the afflicted person to get rid of it. Certain special curses may not be countered by the remove curse spell, or may be countered only by a caster of a certain level or higher. Other curses require special circumstances or ingredients to remove. For instance, preventing someone from turning into a hopping vampire requires sticky rice.

The reverse of the spell, bestow curse, is not permanent; it lasts 1 turn for every experience level of the shaman. The curse can have one of the following effects: Reduce one stunt die by two die types (the shaman chooses which); lower the victim's attack and saving throw rolls by -4; or make the victim more susceptible to yin or yang magic (victim takes +1 extra damage per die from one type of the shaman's choice). The shaman must state who is being cursed and what form the curse will take. The subject of a bestow curse spell must be touched. If the attack succeeds, a saving throw vs. spell still applies; if the save is successful, there is no effect. The curse cannot be dispelled.

It is possible for a shaman to devise an original curse, which should be similar in power to those given here. The DM is the final arbiter of what is reasonable.

## *Level 4*

### *Burning Ring of Fire (Yang)*

Range: 0  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: 1 round/level  
 Casting Time: Fa (6)  
 Area of Effect: Special  
 Saving Throw: None

This spell creates a hollow ring of fire up to 15 feet across around the shaman. The ring is stationary and does no damage to the shaman or any of his or her worn or carried items; he or she can pass through the ring at will. All other creatures take 3d6 points of damage from passing through any part of the ring, and 1d6 points of damage from each lesser contact. The ring can be up to 20 feet high.

The material component of this spell is a bit of flint.

### *Cure Serious Wounds (Ujin)*

Reversible

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: Permanent

Casting Time: Sl (2)

Area of Effect: Creature touched

Saving Throw: None

This spell works identically to cure light wounds but heals 2d8+1 points of damage. Its opposite, cause serious wounds, inflicts 2d8+1 points of damage on an opponent, who must be hit in melee combat as normal.

### *Detect Lie (Chi)*

Reversible

Range: 30 yards

Components: V, S

Duration: 1 round/level

Casting Time: Sl (2)

Area of Effect: 1 creature

Saving Throw: Negates

A shaman who casts this spell is immediately able to determine if the target creature deliberately and knowingly speaks a lie. It does not reveal the truth, uncover unintentional inaccuracies, or necessarily reveal evasions. The target receives a saving throw vs. spell. If the shaman performs an Insight stunt on the round the spell is cast, the target receives a penalty on the saving throw equal to the result of the stunt die.

The reverse of the spell, undetectable lie, prevents the magical detection of lies spoken by the target for 24 hours. Members of the Black Lotus often cast this spell on themselves.

### *Fury of Ying Weihan (Uang)*

Range: 5 yards

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 5 rounds

Casting Time: Sl (2)

Area of Effect: 1 creature/level

Saving Throw: None

In the heat of battle, the shaman can call down the power of Ying Weihan [YEEN WAY-SUN], the God of War. The god's might spurs the shaman's allies on to greater deeds and fills them with battle lust. The shaman must perform an Insight stunt on the round this spell is cast. For the duration of fury of Ying Weihan, affected creatures are subject to the following rules:

- They receive bonus hit points equal to the result of the shaman's Insight stunt. These hit points are temporary, and any damage sustained is absorbed by them first. At the end of the spell, any remaining bonus hit points are lost.
- They receive a +2 bonus to all their damage rolls in combat.
- They must perform a Might, Acrobatics, or Fortitude stunt each round.
- They must try to attack their foes every round in some fashion (whether it be with weapons, martial arts, or spells).

The shaman must be one of the subjects of the spell, and he or she must strive to embody the precepts of the God of War on the field of battle. Should the shaman act in a cowardly manner (fleeing the battle, leaving others to fight, etc.), the spell automatically ends, and Ying Weihan will not let the shaman use it again until he or she has atoned for such cowardice. (This is best roleplayed out.)

The material component of this spell is a small bronze halberd (the symbol of Ying Weihan).





### *The Hungry Earth (Yin)*

Range: 30 yards  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: Instantaneous  
 Casting Time: Sl (2)  
 Area of Effect: Circle with a diameter of 1 foot/level  
 Saving Throw: Negates

By casting this spell, the shaman rouses an angry earth spirit to attack his or her enemies. The shaman picks a point within range, and a circular pit with a diameter of 1 foot per level of the caster opens up on command. The earth gapes like a maw, then snaps shut with crushing force. Anyone within the area of effect must make a saving throw vs. spell or suffer 3d10 points of damage and be buried beneath the ground. Characters who made Acrobatics stunts that round can add the result of their stunt die to the saving throw; by making the save, they manage to jump away before the earth falls away beneath them.

Characters trapped below ground can attempt a Might feat with a TN of 15 each round to claw their way out. Those who fail take 1d10 points of damage per round from suffocation. Characters above ground can attempt Might feats with the same TN to free trapped friends. One is rescued per successful feat.

The hungry earth can be cast only on an

area with dirt underfoot, so it is ineffective in regions of stone or inside buildings. The material component of the spell is a bag of beans.

### *Neutralize Poison (Yin)*

Reversible  
 Range: Touch  
 Components: V, S  
 Duration: Permanent  
 Casting Time: Sl (2)  
 Area of Effect: Creature touched or 1 cubic foot of substance/2 levels  
 Saving Throw: None

By means of this spell, the shaman detoxifies any sort of venom in the creature or substance touched. Note that an opponent, such as a poisonous reptile or snake (or even an envenomed weapon of an opponent), unwilling to be so touched requires the shaman to roll a successful attack in combat. This spell can prevent death in a poisoned creature if cast before death occurs. The effects of the spell are permanent only with respect to poison existing in the creature at the time of the touch; thus, creatures and objects that generate new poison are not permanently detoxified.

The reversed spell, *poison*, likewise requires a successful attack roll, and the victim is allowed a saving throw vs. poison. If the save is unsuccessful, the victim is incapacitated and dies in 1 turn unless the poison is magically neutralized.

## *Fifth Level*

### *Blood of Fire (Yang)*

Range: 40 yards  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: Instantaneous  
 Casting Time: Av (4)  
 Area of Effect: Special  
 Saving Throw: Special

A shaman casting this spell cuts a mystic pattern into his or her hand with a knife (causing 2 points of damage) and enchants his or her own blood. The shaman can then send four missiles of blood streaking from the upturned palm, which explode on impact. The shaman can choose a separate target for each missile and must roll to hit for each (modified by an

Acrobatics stunt if one is performed that round). A direct hit causes 2d8 points of damage with no saving throw possible. Those within 5 feet of the blast must make saving throws vs. spell or take the same damage.

The shaman's blood counts as the material component.

### *Commune with Deity (Yang)*

Range: Special  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: Special  
 Casting Time: 3 turns  
 Area of Effect: Special  
 Saving Throw: None

This spell is similar to the 1st-level spell commune with local spirit, but it allows contact with deities (such as city or elemental gods). Gods, needless to say, must be treated with utter reverence, and they will not even consider answering the summons unless lavish sacrifices are made. The base chance of success is 5% per level of the shaman. The DM can secretly modify this based on the sacrifices made and any other pertinent conditions.

If the deity answers the summons, the shaman can ask him or her one question per level. The gods are well-known for doing what is in their own best interest, so there is no guarantee that they are telling the whole—or even part—of the truth. Shamans with a long history of generous sacrifice are more likely to be rewarded.

Alternatively, the shaman can forgo questioning and attempt to gain the deity's aid. These negotiations are best roleplayed out, but characters should be on their best behavior. Deities do things only when it suits them, so the PCs had best be convincing.

### *Cure Contagion (Ujin)*

Range: 10 yards  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: Permanent  
 Casting Time: 1d8+2 hours  
 Area of Effect: 10 yards/level  
 Saving Throw: None

Disease kills more people in Tianguo than war ever has, but powerful shamans can combat its effects with this powerful spell. A lengthy ritual, cure contagion appeals directly

to the Jade Emperor for mercy. The shaman must spend 3 to 10 hours making prayers and offerings to the Lord of Heaven and must be accompanied by no fewer than fifty supplicants. As these cries rise to Heaven, the Jade Emperor focuses his power through the shaman, and a wave of purifying chi flows outward. Anyone within the area of effect at the conclusion of the spell is healed of all diseases, though lost hit points must be regained by rest or magic as usual.

Due to the power of cure contagion, the DM always has final say over whether the spell works or not. If the sacrifices are not appropriate, or the supplicants not fervent enough, the DM can rule that the spell does not take effect. Mercy is for the Jade Emperor alone to give or withhold.

### *Cure Critical Wounds (Ujin)*

Reversible  
 Range: Touch  
 Components: V, S  
 Duration: Permanent  
 Casting Time: 1 (2)  
 Area of Effect: Creature touched  
 Saving Throw: None

This spell works identically to cure light wounds but heals 3d8+3 points of damage. Its opposite, cause critical wounds, inflicts 3d8+3 points of damage on an opponent, who must be hit in melee combat as normal.

### *The Hand of Heaven (Yang)*

Range: Touch  
 Components: V, S, M  
 Duration: 1 round  
 Casting Time: 1 round  
 Area of Effect: Creature touched  
 Saving Throw: None

A spell no shaman casts lightly, the hand of Heaven is a direct appeal to the Jade Emperor. The shaman invokes the Lord of Heaven and begs for his aid in a specific endeavor. He or she then touches a target creature, who becomes filled with the power of Heaven. On the following round, if the target creature performs the action that the shaman described, the action is automatically successful. This is usually a feat of some kind, though the spell can be used in combat

to hit a target automatically with one blow. Should the target attempt a different action from that requested, the spell is wasted.

To gain the attention of the Lord of Heaven, the shaman must offer a jade sacrificial object of no less than 100 tael value. The DM should carefully monitor use of this spell. Should a shaman abuse the privilege, the Jade Emperor may simply deny the spell until he or she learns proper respect.

### *Return the Soul (Chi)*

Range: 30 yards

Components: V, S, M

Duration: Permanent

Casting Time: 1 hour

Area of Effect: 1 human

Saving Throw: Special

When a human dies in Tianguo, two souls leave the body. The hun ascends to Heaven and the po descends to Hell. These journeys, however, are not instantaneous. If a shaman acts fast enough, he or she can call the souls back into their body and return the dead to life.

The length of time the person has been dead is of vital importance. The shaman can attempt this spell only on someone who's been dead a number of days equal to or less than the shaman's level (for instance, a 10th-level shaman can attempt to raise someone who's been dead up to 10 days). The body must also be made whole before the souls can return. At least one cure spell must be cast on the corpse to remove the most grievous injuries. Similarly, diseases and poisons must be cured before the spirit returns, or the resurrected person will simply die again.

Once all the preconditions are met, the shaman can cast the spell. The dead character must make a Fortitude feat with a TN of 10 to survive the resurrection. If this roll fails, the body simply couldn't take the reanimation process and remains dead. If the feat is successful, the character loses 1 point of Constitution permanently but returns to life. The returned character is weak and needs at least 1 day of bed rest per day he or she was dead. Regardless of the healing spells cast on the corpse, the revived character has just 1 hit point and must regain the rest through natural or magical healing.

The shaman must sacrifice at least 100 tael worth of jade and gold to Heaven as the material component of this spell.

The rules in the preceding chapters described how to make a character with a limited set of abilities and powers. This new character embarks on adventures, overcoming challenges and opponents and furthering the cause of his or her secret society. But sooner or later, players are bound to ask how their characters can become better martial artists or spellcasters. This is done by acquiring experience points (abbreviated xp).

Experience points are a concrete measure of a character's improvement. They represent a host of abstract factors: increased confidence, physical exercise, insight, and on-the-job training. When a character earns enough experience points to advance to the next experience level, these abstract factors translate into measurable improvement in his or her abilities. Just what areas improve and how quickly depend on the character's class.

## Experience

### Categories of Experience

After a game session is over, it's the DM's job to award experience points to all the players. In *Dragon Fist*, experience comes in three basic kinds.

- **Group experience:** This is an award each player gets for achieving group goals. Usually this relates to the plot of the main adventure played that session.
- **Individual experience:** Every character has his or her own motivations and goals. A Red Tiger, for instance, may have vowed vengeance against a brutal member of the Imperial Guard. On achieving an individual goal, the character should receive an experience award. Note, however, that the DM needn't hand these awards out after every session, but only as players earn them. The group should not assume they'll get bonus points each time they play.
- **Roleplaying experience:** Players also get experience points for portraying their characters well. That's what roleplaying is all about, after all. The more effort a player devotes to getting in character, the greater the reward he or she should receive.

### Rating Each Category

At the end of the session, the DM needs to consider how many points to award. The easiest way is to assign a rating to each category of experience.

- **Easy:** Not a challenge. *Examples:* Defeat a villain of lower level (group); just go through the motions (roleplaying).
- **Average:** What is expected. *Examples:* Resanctify a defiled temple (group); avenge a friend's death (individual); create an active and believable character (roleplaying).
- **Challenging:** Exceptional. *Examples:* Kill one of the emperor's eunuch lieutenants (group); restore the honor of your family (individual); *De Niro's got nothing on you* (roleplaying).

Once you have rated each of the categories, consult Table 5-1 below. Cross-referencing the characters' level with the rating determines the experience award. (For group awards, use the average level of the participating characters.)

TABLE 5-1: EXPERIENCE AWARDS

Character Level	Experience Point Rating		
	Easy	Average	Challenging
1–5	500	1,500	2,500
5–7	2,000	4,000	6,000
8–10	5,000	10,000	15,000

## The Story Bonus

In general experience should be awarded after each game session. This way, the action is still fresh in the DM's mind so that he or she can give out appropriate awards. Oftentimes, however, adventures don't end neatly at the end of the evening. Longer stories can play out over four or five sessions, and even more in some cases. When such a grand adventure is concluded, it is only natural for players to want some special reward. And if they've succeeded against the odds, they certainly deserve it. This is what the story bonus is for.

A story bonus is appropriate at the conclusion of a multisession adventure if the DM feels the players really deserve it. The amount of this bonus is entirely up to the DM but should generally range from 3,000 to 10,000 xp, depending on the length and difficulty of the adventure and the levels of the characters involved.



## Effects of Experience Points

The prowess of player characters is measured in levels, which are earned by accumulating experience points. The description of each character class in Chapter 2: Character Creation contains a table listing the experience points needed per level.

When a character earns enough experience to attain the next level for that class, he or she immediately gains several benefits:

- An additional hit die of the appropriate type, plus bonus hit points equal to the result of a Fortitude stunt.
- One stunt die increase of one die type (for instance, from 1d6 to 1d8).
- A possible improvement to saving throws, as set out in Table 3-1 in Chapter 3: Martial Arts and Combat.
- One or more additional martial arts maneuvers, as set out in the appropriate table for each character class.
- For spellcasters, one or more additional spells, as set out in the appropriate table for each character class.
- For thieves, additional discretionary points to be spent improving thieving skills, as set out in the kit description.

### Awarding Experience: An Example

Sam is playing a 6th-level White Lotus, and Jefferson, a 5th-level Great Immortal. They have just finished a **Dragon Fist** adventure in which they foiled an assassination attempt against the Lord Shaman of the White Lotus and killed the eunuch sorcerer responsible.

As DM, I first consider group experience. Since there were only two characters and they faced some tough opposition, I rate the adventure as Challenging. Both characters are between levels 5 and 7, so I award Sam and Jefferson receive 6,000 xp apiece as their group award.

Next I look at individual goals. Sam's character had previously sworn an oath to protect the Lord Shaman from danger, and foiling the assassination attempt certainly qualifies. I decide this rates an Average individual award, so Sam gets an additional 4,000 xp. Tonight's adventure didn't involve any of Jefferson's goals, so he gets no individual bonus.

Third, I consider how each of my players roleplayed their characters. Sam did his usual good job, which I rate as Average for 4,000 xp. Jefferson put in quite a performance, though, especially during his magical duel with the eunuch sorcerer. I therefore rate that as Challenging and award him 6,000 xp.

Tonight's adventure was the conclusion of a three-session story, and I feel the boys deserve something special. I award a story bonus worth an additional 5,000 xp for a job well done. Tonight's totals are 19,000 xp for Sam and 17,000 xp for Jefferson—a good night for both of them.

### Improving Stunt Dice

Each time a character goes up in level, one of his or her stunt dice increases by one type. Depending on the new level, this improves a Primary, Secondary, or Tertiary ability score. Table 5-2 summarizes this. Note that you always have the choice of which of your Secondary or Tertiary stunts you want to increase.

**TABLE 5-2: STUNT DIE INCREASE**

New Level	Attribute for Stunt
2	Primary
3	Secondary
4	Tertiary
5	Primary
6	Secondary
7	Tertiary
8	Primary
9	Secondary
10	All

**Example:** A Red Tiger rises from 5th to 6th level. Although he would like to improve his Might stunt (associated with Strength, his primary attribute), 6th level allows improvements only to stunts based on secondary attributes (in his case, Dexterity and Constitution). He can choose to raise either his Acrobatics or his Fortitude stunt, but not both. Since performing Acrobatics stunts provides a better AC, he opts for defense and raises that stunt die from 1d4 to 1d6.

Characters who reach 10th level become masters. At this level only, all of their stunt dice increase by one type. Their kung fu is strong indeed.

### The Benefits of Mastery

Characters who reach 10th level become masters in the World of Martial Arts. Masters are renowned for their skill, and students often seek them out to learn martial arts secrets. As shown in the martial arts maneuvers charts for character classes in Chapter 2: Character Creation, masters gain one maneuver of each rank upon achieving 10th level. Masters also gain these additional benefits:

- A Master of Martial Arts (fighter) can specialize in an additional weapon or in unarmed combat.
- A Master of Magic (wizard) has such power that the targets of his or her spells suffer a -1 penalty to their saving throws.
- A Master of Spirits (shaman) is always protected by local spirits and receives a +1 bonus to all his or her saving throws to represent this beneficence.
- A Master of Trickery (thief) can use two thieving skills each round, instead of one, with the following restrictions. The thief cannot use the same ability twice in the same round (so no double backstabbing), nor can he or she apply a stunt bonus to both abilities (it's one or the other). A Master of Trickery can thus move silently and make a backstab attack on the same round, or pick locks while hiding in shadows.

## Magic Items

Enchanted items in Tianguo are rare. Characters who own even one should consider themselves lucky. To most people, such wonders are the stuff of legend.

Magic items in the Heavenly Kingdom are usually created for a reason—there isn't a

smith in Zuyang mass-producing magic swords. Their unique purpose and history should come across in the game. When introducing a magic item into your campaign, try to answer the “five Ws”: Who created this item; what does it do; when and where was it enchanted; and why was it made? Such details make even minor magics seem important and add to the flavor of the campaign. Would you rather have a simple war fan+1 or the War Fan of Chin So, famed abbot of the White Peacock Monastery and renowned slayer of demons?

There are five basic categories of magic items: potions, scrolls, weapons, items of protection, and miscellaneous. Each is detailed below, along with several examples. Don't let this list restrict your creativity when deciding on items to add to your game.

## Potions

Potions are enchanted brews with magical effects. They are usually found in flasks or vials containing single or multiple doses. Drinking a potion is a Fast action, but the magic doesn't take effect until the beginning of the following round. Most potions have a duration of 4+1d4 turns.

Before using a potion, it's wise to identify the substance; some vials are labeled, but many are not. Identifying a potion requires that the character take a small taste. This is usually enough to indicate the potion's power, which can be conveyed by appropriate clues. A potion of flying, for example, might make the character float off the ground a couple of inches.

### *Elixir of Harmonious Purification*

This potion cures blindness, deafness, disease, feeble-mindedness, insanity, infection, infestation, poisoning, and rot. It will not heal wounds or restore hit points lost through any of the above causes. Imbibing the whole potion will cure all of the above afflictions suffered by the imbiber. Half a flask will cure any one or two of the listed ills (DM's choice).

### *Alchemist's Elixir of Youth*

Drinking this rare and potent elixir will reverse aging, although it will not grant the immortality that so many crave. Taking the full potion at once reduces the imbiber's age by 1d4+1 years. Taking just a sip first reduces the potency of the liquid so that it reduces age by only 1d3 years. Supposedly, some of those who have made it to the Isle of the Immortals used a variation of this elixir. Even if that is true, though, no copies of that formula are known to exist.

### *Wings of the Dragon*

Drinking this potion allows the imbiber to fly, exactly as the 3rd-level shaman spell earth to heaven. (See Chapter 4: Magic.)

### *Potion of Healing*

These potions are fairly common and, sadly, always in great demand. Drinking down the whole bottle heals 2d4+2 hit points of damage. A more potent version, the potion of extra healing, restores 3d8+3 hit points.

## Scrolls

Magical scrolls reveal the magical formulas needed to cast wizard spells. A read magic spell must be cast on a scroll before the wizard can discern its contents. Once a scroll has been read, there is no need to cast read magic again to invoke its magic.

Scrolls usually contain one or more spells and can be used in two ways. A wizard of the appropriate level can cast a spell by reading the words directly from the scroll. This is in addition to the spells the wizard is normally allowed to cast that day. However, using the scroll this way erases the text as soon as the spell is cast. A wizard can also choose to copy the spells from the scroll into his or her spell book. This also erases the scroll, but gives the wizard permanent access to the spell(s).

### *Art of the Tattoo*

This scroll was written by the famed tattoo artist and wizard Gao Chunlei [GO TSEUN-LAY]. It includes a practical manual on tattooing, as well as the spells scales of the lizard, kiss of the toad, and scuttle of the centipede.

### *A Treatise on Needlework*

No author has taken credit for this scroll. It details some very strange theories on needle magic and refers to several spells that are now unknown. While it may have once contained more spells, now it includes only rain of needles and needle's puppet.

## *Weapons*

Most magical weapons are rated from +1 to +5, and this bonus adds to rolls to hit and do damage. Some are specially enchanted against a particular type of foe: These weapons get extra bonuses only when fighting that kind of creature. For instance, a war sword+1, +3 vs. undead provides the +3 bonus only when fighting creatures such as hopping vampires and skeletons.



### *The Spears of Yang*

The Yang family has a long tradition of loyalty to the empire. Many centuries ago, magical spears were made for the five sons of the elder Yang, most of whom were later treacherously slain. Three are known to survive to this day. These spears are normally of +2 enchantment but are +4 against opponents of a chaotic alignment.

### *The Abbot's Staff*

This was a gift from Emperor Baoxin to the abbot of the Huang Ren Monastery. It is a lacquered staff of exceptional beauty, topped with a golden dragon head. All shaman spells cast by its wielder are treated as though the shaman were 1 level higher; for example, a 3rd-level shaman casting lash of fire would deal 1d4+8 damage rather than 1d4+6. It is a +3 weapon and can be wielded only by those of good alignment.

### *Flying Phoenix Sword*

This sword was forged for the bodyguard of Empress Peiyan [PAY-YEN] in 1060 N.Z. After his death the sword was stolen, shaming his family and causing his son to kill himself. It is said that the descendents of any who wield this sword will come to a bad end. The flying phoenix sword increases the wielder's Might stunt by two die types (to a maximum of 1d12). It can also be thrown to a range of 30 feet, with the same chance to hit as the wielder, and returns to his or her wielder's hand the following round.

## *Items of Protection*

These items generally increase the wearer's Armor Class. They include things like rings, bracers, and even boots. This category also includes magical armor, though such items are usually worn only by NPCs, since armor prevents the use of martial arts. Items of protection either provide a bonus of +1 to +5 to a character's existing AC, or grant a particular AC outright. Some may also add to saving throws.

### *Shell of the Ancient Tortoise*

Many wizards and martial artists have sought the key to invulnerability. This rare amulet is made from dragon's hide, tiger's teeth, and the feathers of a phoenix. While it doesn't grant total immunity to weapons, it does provide the wearer with a base AC of 18. This can be modified by Acrobatics stunts as normal, but the protection conferred by other magical devices cannot be combined with that of the amulet.



### *Rings of Fan Xianli*

Wizards are especially enamored of these items and do their utmost to acquire them. Legend has it that these rings were made from the tears of the Goddess of Mercy. The most common provides +2 to AC and saving throws. Rarer forms give +3 to AC and saving throws, and +4 to AC but only +2 to saving throws.

### *Heavenly Sandals*

These magical sandals increase the wearer's base Move by 60 feet per round. They also add +2 to the wearer's AC whenever he or she performs Acrobatics stunts. They are said to have been stolen from a spirit of the wind.

### *Miscellaneous*

This category includes everything that doesn't fit in the preceding categories, including things like rods, robes, books, and so on. The potential effects are nearly limitless; the examples provide some useful ideas.

### *Dust of Immobility*

This rare powder is made from crushed jade and pearl that has been taken to the top of one of the Five Sacred Mountains. It is usually found in vials containing 1d4 doses. As a major action, a character can blow some of this dust into the face of a single opponent. The target must make a saving throw vs. paralyzation or become immobile for 1d10+1 rounds.

### *Flute of the Snake*

This flute is said to be a gift of one of the Dragon Kings, who are the lords of scaly creatures. Its player can make a Charm stunt to summon up deadly snakes that follow his or her commands. Each snake can make one attack at +2 to hit that inflicts 1d8 points of damage (half on a successful saving throw vs. poison) as the summoning character directs. If the character makes a TN of 15, a number of snakes equal to the result of the stunt die appear; on a TN of 20, the number of snakes is the result of the stunt die multiplied by five. This power can be used twice a day.

*Snake:* AC 14; HD 2; Move 90; Att/round 1; To hit +2; Damage 1d8; Special Attack: poison; Stunts: none.

### *Mirror of Truth*

The Black Lotus created this magical mirror centuries ago. It shows the true appearance of any creature, so it is of great use in dealing with demons. It works against spells, demonic powers, and even the magic of spirits. The Black Lotus have since lost the mirror and suspect a demonic plot. They would give much to get this item back.

### *Pearls of Li Baibin*

These magical pearls are said to have been made by Li Baibin [LEE BIE-BEEN], the Goddess of Magic herself. The goddess gives them to mortals on rare occasions, when she feels her aid is needed. Each one can be thrown up to 40 feet and explodes on impact. Anyone within 20 feet of the explosion must make a saving throw vs. spell or take 7d6 points of damage. The pearls are destroyed by the explosion and cannot be used again.

### *Cursed Items*

Sadly, not all magic items are beneficial. Demons, wicked sorcerers, and malevolent spirits all have a nasty tendency to let loose cursed items on an unsuspecting mortal populace. These are usually very difficult to get rid of. Sometimes a simple dispel magic spell will work, but

more often a specific condition must be met before the cursed item can be removed. A cursed ring that makes its wearer hideous, for example, might only be removable after the wearer has been kissed by a beautiful woman.

## *The Five Legendary Weapons of Tianguo*

All magic items in *Dragon Fist* are special, but the Five Legendary Weapons are rivaled only by the weaponry of the gods. Everyone in Tianguo has heard tales of the weapons and their famous wielders, and the folklore surrounding each one could fill volumes. The Five Legendary Weapons are an example of how to do *Dragon Fist* magic right: These are items with a purpose and a history, and they are part of the fabric of Tianguo's society. While you needn't come up with a backstory as elaborate as this for every magic item, this kind of detail for objects of special importance adds a whole new layer of richness to your campaign.

### *The Origin of the Five Legendary Weapons*

*When Zu, the first emperor of Tianguo, felt death approaching, he determined to find someone worthy to succeed him. His family expected to inherit the throne, but Zu chose instead to look among all the people of Tianguo for a benevolent and righteous nature. He eventually found Shao, a peasant whose strength of chi was outmatched only by his humility. Despite the protests of his family, Zu made Shao his heir. When the first emperor died, Shao succeeded him. Zu's family, though distraught, feared the wrath of his angry spirit and did nothing to hinder Shao's ascension to the throne.*

*Three years later the twin children of Zu's youngest brother came of age. The nephew was named Chongze [CHUNG-TZUH] and the niece, Jinghui [JEEN-TSWEE]. The twins had grown up at court and learned the arts of war and diplomacy. Despite his high standing, Chongze resented Shao for taking the rulership of Tianguo away from his family, and he began a plot to assassinate the emperor. He tried to recruit his sister but was vehemently rebuffed. Convinced that Jinghui would now report him, Chongze abandoned his plot and fled the palace. Jinghui, furious at her brother's besmirching of their family honor, took it upon herself to find Chongze and bring him back to the capital for justice.*

*Chongze wandered the empire for many years, seeking allies for his cause. Although he had a few successes, most of Tianguo's powerful remained loyal to Emperor Shao. Driven to despair, Chongze turned to the last refuge of the desperate: Hell. With the help of a black-hearted shaman, he contacted the demon lord Kunqing [KWUN-SHEEN]. Chongze was whisked off to Hell, where he learned at the feet of his new master. Meanwhile, Jinghui searched Tianguo in vain, her commitment unwavering.*

*Six months later Chongze emerged from Hell a changed man. His hair was long and white, and he was suffused with a dark power. With a band of outcasts and demons about him, Chongze cut a bloody swath through the empire. Jinghui relentlessly hunted Chongze's followers wherever she found them. At last she tracked down her brother, finding him in a field strewn with the freshly murdered corpses of his own followers. Sitting atop a huge, batlike creature, Chongze mocked Jinghui. "You are too late, sister," he cackled. "I already have the power I need." With that, he launched into the air, leaving his sister alone with the dead.*

*With Chongze gone, Jinghui could do little else but give the dead a proper burial, so they would at least not come back to haunt the mortal world. When she was finished, an old man approached Jinghui. He praised her for such respect to the dead and asked if there was any way he could help. "Only if you can fly, grandfather," she said. The old man laughed and urged Jinghui to climb onto his back. She declined, politely pointing out that she'd likely hurt him. "I'm afraid I must insist—and you wouldn't want to be impertinent to an elder," said the old man. Jinghui relented and gingerly climbed on his back. When she was in place, the old man transformed into a sinuous dragon with scales of gold. "I am Yunbo [YEUN-BWA]," the dragon roared, "and we must hurry if we are to stop your brother!"*

The two flew through the air, searching the Heavenly Kingdom for Chongze. From far above Chongze unleashed his magical power, and the sun was blotted from the sky. “No light will shine on Tianguo,” he screamed, “until I sit on the throne.” Below, every city and village in the Heavenly Kingdom was plunged into darkness, and the people shook with fear. The only light in the sky was the dragon Yunbo as he scoured the firmament for the traitor Chongze.

After seven days of darkness, Jinghui and Yunbo found Chongze flying above Huang Ren Mountain. When Yunbo saw Chongze’s monstrous mount, he realized it was none other than the demon lord Kunqing, summoned from the very depths of Hell. With the righteous fury of Heaven, Yunbo flew to the attack. The mighty dragon and the demon lord met above the sacred mountain and tore at each other with deadly claws. Jinghui poured arrows into the deformed bat shape of Kunqing, while Chongze tried to scorch his sister with dark magic. After a vicious exchange, Kunqing turned and fled. Yunbo pursued but could not catch the swift demon. Knowing it was her last chance, Jinghui unleashed an arrow of jade that flew straight and true into the demon lord’s heart. Fatally pierced, Kunqing fell from the sky, taking Chongze to his death on the rocks below.

Even with the traitor and his master dead, Yunbo continued his flight above the empire. The wounds he had sustained in the battle bled openly, but the dragon would not slow. With failing strength, he flew to each of the Five Sacred Mountains of Tianguo. As his blood fell on each one, a ray of light pierced the gloom. At last he returned to Huang Ren Mountain, at the very center of the empire, and collapsed on its peak. The magical darkness was instantly banished. Sunlight once again shone on the Heavenly Kingdom.

“I am dying now,” Yunbo said to Jinghui, “so you must make one promise to me before I return to Heaven.” Jinghui, her eyes wet with tears, could only nod in agreement. “When I am dead, you must travel to the Five Sacred Mountains. Where my blood fell you will find a red ore in the earth. You must use it to forge weapons of power. One day another great evil will threaten the Heavenly Kingdom, and the righteous will need weapons such as these if Tianguo is to survive.”

Jinghui readily swore to follow the instructions. Yunbo smiled one last time and died. The emperor erected a shrine in his honor on peak of Huang Ren, while Jinghui did as she was asked and forged what became known as the Five Legendary Weapons. She then recruited others to help her maintain watch over the Heavenly Kingdom. This group, which became known as the Demon Slayers, operated in secret as both guardians of the empire and custodians of the Five Legendary Weapons.

It has been some 1,100 years since the founding of the Demon Slayers, and most doubt that they still exist. As the tyranny of Emperor Jianmin grows, however, many thoughts turn to the Five Legendary Weapons. Surely this is the dark time prophesied by Yunbo so long ago. But if that is so, where are the Demon Slayers—and what has become of their charges?

## *Using the Five Legendary Weapons*

These powerful artifacts are the ultimate magic items of *Dragon Fist*. They are not giveaways, but badges of honor that need to be earned. Investigating the fate of the Demon Slayers and tracking down the weapons could very well turn into a campaign in its own right. The players should work hard to achieve even one of the Legendary Weapons, and collecting all five should be the prelude for the final showdown with the emperor.

### *Axe of the Tiger*

This weapon is a imposing, twin-bladed axe with a haft of enchanted birch. It is a large weapon that requires two hands to use but strikes twice per attack, inflicting a base damage of 1d10/1d10. The Axe of the Tiger is a +2 weapon, but its bonus improves to +4 when the wielder charges in combat. Such ferocity has a price, however. When in combat, the wielder is so overcome by the spirit of the tiger that retreat is not an option. A character who wishes to leave combat for any reason must first make a successful saving throw vs. spell. Failure means the character fights on, though further attempts to break off can be made each round.

### *Bow of Jinghui*

Although this bow is counted as one of the Five Legendary Weapons, only its arrows were forged from the magical ore. The bow itself belonged to Jinghui and was used to slay the demon lord Kunqing. Although only a +1 weapon, it counts as +3 for the purpose of striking certain types of creatures that are otherwise invulnerable. If the wielder's modified roll to hit is 20 or more, the base damage of an arrow fired from the bow increases to 2d6. A character using the Bow of Jinghui must fire at demons in preference to all other targets.

Jinghui made the arrows and sealed their magic by dipping them in her own blood. Only twenty exist, and they are carried in a quiver made of Kunqing's hide. Each arrow is +1 to hit and damage, and has an additional +3 to hit when making called shots. The arrows never break and return to the quiver a turn after firing.

### *Spear of the Dragon*

This green-tasseled spear features a three-pronged blade mounted on a long shaft of flexible bamboo. The deadly center blade is flanked by two secondary blades that are useful for parrying and disarming. The Spear of the Dragon is a +2 weapon, +4 vs. demons, and its base damage is 1d6+1/2d6 per attack. It also allows the bearer to fly three times per day as per the 3rd level shaman spell earth to heaven. (The spellcaster's level is considered to be 10 for purpose of duration.)

Due to the honored place of dragons in the Celestial Hierarchy, only characters of lawful good alignment can wield this weapon. Its bearer is incapable of attacking those of good alignment, whatever the circumstances.

### *Sword of the Phoenix*

This elegant double-edged sword was the weapon that took Jinghui the longest to forge. She is said to have spent a year tempering its blade, and two more completing its enchantment. The Sword of the Phoenix is a +2 weapon, +4 vs. flying creatures. When Jinghui's name is said aloud by its wielder, the blade bursts into flame. This illuminates the area as brightly as a torch and adds +1 to the sword's damage. Repeating her name extinguishes the flames. Furthermore, the bearer receives a +2 bonus to all saving throws vs. yang magic.

The phoenix is known for bringing prosperity to the virtuous. Should the bearer of this weapon ever commit an evil act, all the sword's bonuses turn into penalties until the bearer receives the forgiveness of his or her ancestors. The bearer can relinquish the sword but can never pick it up again (even if forgiven).

### *War Fan of the Tortoise*

This heavy fan is made entirely of metal, colored black and deeply attuned to yin magic. Like its namesake, it brings good fortune and protects the bearer from harm. The War Fan of the Tortoise is a +2 weapon, and also provides a +2 bonus to the wielder's Armor Class. Whenever the wielder is targeted by a spell that inflicts damage, he or she can make saving throw vs. spell to negate all damage regardless of the spell's normal rules (very useful against fireball, for example). Furthermore, spells of 1st and 2nd level that specifically target the wielder and are successfully saved against are reflected back at their casters.

The tortoise, though wise, is never hasty. Because of this, the wielder of the War Fan of the Tortoise can never charge into combat.



# GOODS & MONSTERS

*This chapter explains the cosmology of Tianguo and details many of its most popular gods. Of course, you can't have the good without the bad, so the villains also get their due. You'll find NPC kits for some of the more common bad guys, as well as stats for the emperor himself and a number of his key lieutenants. And no fantasy game would be complete without a stable of nasty monsters, so the chapter is rounded out with a fine selection of inhuman opponents for the PCs.*

## *The Creation of the Universe*

According to the shamans, the universe came into being when the two cosmic forces of yin and yang came together out of chaos. From these two opposing forces rose the Five Elements, and these agents created the Ten Thousand Things. The realm of yang became known as Heaven, and realm of yin, Earth. Beneath the Earth there was Hell, which for this reason is also known as the Earth-prison.

### *Heaven and Earth*

The ruler of Heaven is the Jade Emperor, who is also known as the Lord-on-High and the Lord of Heaven. The Jade Emperor presides over a Heavenly Court, which is mirrored by the earthly court of Tianguo. He rules over an assemblage of gods and spirits, and is served by ministers and generals. His most important servants are the Dukes of the Five Elements, each of whom controls a ministry based on his element (so, for example, the Duke of Wood controls the Ministry of Wood). Other ministries are within the purview of the different elements. War, for instance, is under the Ministry of Metal, while Flood Control is under the Ministry of Water. Each ministry is served by a number of lesser gods and countless spirits.

Some of the Jade Emperor's vassal gods live on Earth. The most important of these is the Stove God (also known as the Kitchen God). The Stove God watches over mortal households throughout the year and ascends to Heaven on the New Year to give a report to the Jade Emperor on the people's activities. Also important are the City Gods. These are usually deified mortals who are in charge of protecting particular cities. They are served in turn by the Earth Gods, who protect the local citizens from wandering ghosts and other dangers.

In addition to gods and mortals, Earth is also home to many spirits. Many of these are Nature spirits, and represent such things as mountains, springs, and rivers. Others are ancestors, or other spirits of the dead.

Lastly, there are the dragons, who are found in Heaven and Earth. For the most part, dragons are just and benevolent, widely hailed as bringers of luck and good fortune. The Heavenly Dragons pull the chariots of the gods and help defend the Jade Emperor; the Spirit Dragons live in the sky and cause the rain to fall; and the Dragon Kings rule the seas and other bodies of water. The only truly malevolent members of the species are the hoard dragons, who greedily guard their treasure and usually live alone in forsaken places.

### *Hell*

Hell is under the Earth, and it is the place where po souls go for judgement and punishment after death. Since the birth of the universe, Hell had been ruled by Zhongwen. The King of Hell is served by ten demonic magistrates, whose job is to judge the dead and who rule the courts of Hell. The rest of Hell is given over to the torment of the condemned.

The corruption of the fourth emperor had an enormous effect on Hell. Musheng, the demon lord who gave Jianmin the tainted lotus, was able to steal the power of the hun souls, using it to overthrow Zhongwen and proclaim himself the King of Hell. Most of the demons followed his lead, but some remained loyal to Zhongwen. The two factions have been at war for decades now, but the Jade Emperor has not stepped in.

### *The Fate of the Soul*

Human beings in Tianguo are born with two souls. The upper soul, or hun, comes from Heaven itself. It is the divine spark that provides the animating force. The lower soul, or po, comes from Earth and represents human nature. It is the personality and consciousness, and also the animal and the instinct.

When a human dies, the souls part ways. The hun ascends back to Heaven, where the Jade Emperor absorbs it. The po descends to Hell, the Earth-prison. Since the po is the personality, it is this soul that is judged by its deeds during life. When the soul arrives in Hell, it is brought before a demonic magistrate who passes judgement. The po can meet any of several fates, including but not limited to the following.

- The soul is sentenced to serve time in Hell for shortcomings during life. After the sentence is carried out, it either is reborn on Earth or becomes a demon.
- The soul is rewarded for its good deeds during life by becoming a spirit. Some become the guardians of particular places, others are sent to serve the City Gods, and yet others return to guide their descendents.
- A very few souls are deified upon death. They either ascend to Heaven to serve the Jade Emperor or are sent to Earth to fulfill their new duties. Spirits who perform exceptional deeds can also be deified. Many of the City Gods are former mortals who were rewarded for their virtue.

The above options assume that the departed received a proper burial. Those who were not buried at all return to Earth as ghosts and haunt the mortal world. Those who were buried improperly return to their dead bodies and animate them, becoming hopping vampires.

It is proper to make sacrifices to deceased relatives. Most families have a shrine where they offer food and wine to their dead. Spirits of the dead expect such veneration and may become angry if it is not forthcoming. Many of the “hungry dead” are ancestor spirits who have been ignored by their descendents.

### *The Vassals of Heaven*

The heavenly pantheon is far from static. While the Jade Emperor and Gods of the Elements have been in Heaven since time immemorial, they are frequently joined by humans whose earthly deeds warrant deification. Usually a member of the Jade Emperor’s court will notice a worthy candidate and act as an advocate for the po soul of the deceased. If the advocate is persuasive enough, the Lord of Heaven grants the worthy one immortality and godhood by reuniting the po soul with its hun counterpart. Some of these new gods stay in Heaven to serve the Jade Emperor’s court, while others return to Earth to become City Gods or the like. With few exceptions, most of the gods of Tianguo were once human. Some of more popular gods are described here.

### *The Three Legendary Emperors*

These three culture heroes, who defined so much of Tianguo’s society, were deified immediately upon death. They are primarily worshiped in their aspects of the Builder, the Sower, and the Flood Controller. Zu is usually depicted with a scroll of laws, and his symbol is the wood-cutter’s ax. Shao is depicted holding a stalk of wheat, and his symbol is the farmer’s hoe. Xian, last of the Legendary Emperors, is usually surrounded by nine dragons (for the Nine Provinces of the empire), and his symbol is the arrow that tragically took his life.

### *Diao Zu'en*

This famous soldier, who helped defeat the strange barbarians from over the sea and then convinced the Dragon Kings to protect Tianguo with the bao feng, is worshipped as the God of Loyalty. He never wavered in the face of adversity, and sacrificed all for Tianguo. He is a popu-

lar god among the imperial soldiery. His symbol is a shield made of tortoise shell.

### *Ying Weihan*

Ying was a general of Zhuo during the Seven Kingdoms period. He is celebrated for the Ten Battles, in which he saved Zhuo from destruction by defeating ten different armies in four years. He is worshiped as the God of War, and his tactics in the Ten Battles are studied to this day. He is usually depicted riding a chariot pulled by dragons, and his symbol is the halberd.

### *Chu Zhongtai*

This man was a low-ranking official in the court of Emperor Shangwei. When some plotters tried to bribe their way into the palace, Chu Zhongtai [CHOO ZHUNG-DIE] repeatedly refused their advances. Shortly after reporting the matter, he was murdered by the plotters. He is worshipped as the Honest Official and has a place of honor in the Jade Emperor's court. His symbol is a pair of open hands, colored white.

### *Fan Xianli*

Born into a impoverished noble family, Fan Xianli [FAN SHYEN-LEE] stayed at home as all her brothers went to war against the Yi and were killed. When finally her father was called up to serve, she cut her hair and went in his place. Her great heroism helped defeat the Yi, and she covered her family's name with glory. She is now worshiped as the Filial Daughter. Many female martial artists also honor her as a Goddess of War. Her symbol is a simple soldier's sword.

### *Niu Dahan*

A merchant during the Seven Kingdoms era, Niu Dahan [NYOH DAH-TSEUN] made a fortune running caravans throughout Tianguo during that dangerous time. He was always ready with a scheme or a scam and managed to avoid both bandits and treasure-hungry generals. According to one story, he escaped capture by riding away on the back of a tiger, and is often depicted riding one in statues. He is worshipped as the God of Wealth, and his symbol is a set of scales.

### *Li Baibin*

The second son of Emperor Chaoshi was cursed by a powerful demon. Li Baibin, a famous wizard, was called in to remove the curse. Unable to do so, she crafted a spell to take her to Hell, where she defeated the demon with exploding pearls and forced him to remove the curse. Li Baibin is worshipped as the Goddess of Magic and is often invoked for aid against demons. Her symbol is a pearl ringed with fire.

### *Qishi*

In the early days of the Jade Brotherhood, the monks had yet to develop their formidable martial arts. A gang of bandits attacked Qishi's monastery, looking for treasure. Many of the monks were slain by the well-armed bandits, but Qishi [CHEE-TSEU] picked up a spade and killed all the enemies with his mighty blows. He is worshipped as the Protector of Temples, and his symbol is the monk's spade.

## *Nonplayer Characters*

### *NPC Kits*

Nonplayer characters (NPCs) are everyone else in the game world of Tianguo, with whom the PCs interact—and, frequently, fight. Just like PCs, these characters can also have kits that represent specialized roles. While most average foes don't require much beyond a character class,



kits help detail recurring or especially powerful enemies. This section details two kits, the eunuch sorcerer and the Imperial Guard soldier. As the PCs fight against the emperor's corruption, they're likely to encounter these two types of villains repeatedly. As the DM, you may want to design other NPCs specifically for your campaign. These kits, as well as those for the PCs, are good guidelines.

### *Eunuch Sorcerer*

**Description:** While there have been eunuchs in imperial service for many centuries, they have risen to prominence only in the last twenty years. Previously emasculation was a punishment, and eunuchs were relegated to menial duty in the palace. Emperor Jianmin, however, saw an opportunity to create a power bloc in the capital loyal only to him. He began to use the eunuchs to spy for him and put them in charge of running the palace. He later convinced some of the Dragon's Breath to teach a small number of eunuchs the secrets of magic. It was thus that the eunuch sorcerers were born.

When the emperor ate the tainted lotus and turned to evil, the eunuchs continued to support him against all detractors. In return Jianmin gave them more and more power. Ten years ago he appointed the four most powerful eunuch sorcerers as his lieutenants. Now they rule as the Lords of the North Wing, South Wing, East Wing, and West Wing. They and their minions are the pillars of Jianmin's reign.

**Organization:** The Lords of the Four Wings control the eunuchs and, in effect, the empire. Each is responsible for administrating a quarter of the empire, and provincial governors report directly to them. They in turn answer to the emperor himself.

Within the eunuchs, sorcerers are the elite. The leadership all come from their ranks; lesser eunuchs act as spies, couriers, and informants.

**Requirements:** Apart from the obvious, a eunuch sorcerer must have an Intelligence of at least 12.

**Benefits:** Eunuch sorcerers are both feared and respected. They have nearly unlimited power in the capital, where they can requisition anything they need. Their power isn't so great outside Zuyang, but provincial officers are careful to treat them with respect. Most members of the imperial bureaucracy obey the commands of a eunuch sorcerer without question.

Although they learned magic from the Dragon's Breath, the sorcerers have not pursued the path of harmony. Instead, they have chosen to codify magic into a rigid structure. This allows them to cast certain spells with increased effect, but denies the bonus spells available to Dragon's Breath members.

At each level, a eunuch sorcerer can chose one preferred spell that has been practiced to perfection. This mastery means that when casting a preferred spell, the sorcerer gets +1 to each damage die (if applicable) and -1 to the target's saving throw.

Due to their rigorous training, eunuch sorcerers are immune to all forms of charm and beguilement.

**Hindrances:** Eunuch sorcerers must of course be eunuchs. While this is often inflicted as a punishment, many have begun volunteering for the procedure because of the power the eunuchs hold.

Eunuch sorcerers must answer to the emperor. It is their loyalty that keeps them in power and safe from the emperor's whims. Those who act out of line are dealt with quickly and never heard from again.

**Equipment:** Eunuch sorcerers wear the finest of robes and generally have as much money as they need. Other than the spellbook, equipment varies highly from one individual to the next.

### *Imperial Guard*

**Description:** The Imperial Guard of Tianguo has a long and glorious history. They were founded during the reign of Xian, last of the Three Legendary Emperors. While the previous emperors had used personal troops, these usually were members of the emperor's clan and acted more as bodyguards than anything else. It was Xian who founded the Imperial Guard as the emperor's own army. He opened the Guard to any who could prove their courage and skill at arms, and he commanded it personally. The Imperial Guard struck terror into the Yi and was instrumental in freeing the empire of the troublesome horse barbarians. Their only shame was in Emperor Xian's untimely death and their inability to prevent the empire from breaking apart as the generals squabbled.

The Imperial Guard broke apart, along with the rest of the empire, during the era of Seven Kingdoms. Like Xian, each of the kings had a personal army, but none matched the glory of the original. When Shanwei reunited Tianguo, one of his first acts was to reconstitute the Imperial Guard. Harkening to the past in this as in most things, Shangwei once again made the Imperial Guard a force to be reckoned with. This proud tradition carries on to the current day.

Sadly, the glory of the Imperial Guard seems to be coming to an end. As a unit the Guard has always prided itself on loyalty, and its members have remained loyal to Emperor Jianmin. If the eunuchs are the emperor's eyes, then the Imperial Guard are his fists. He has used them in strikes against the Jade Brotherhood, the Ghost Eaters, and countless others. And each time the Guard takes part in an unjust attack or slaughter of the innocent, they lose a little more of their honor. It is no surprise that desertions are on the rise and the ranks are increasingly filled out with power-hungry ruffians. Soon, all the Imperial Guard will have left is loyalty to the emperor and the memories of glory past.

**Organization:** The Imperial Guard form the emperor's personal army, and he commands them directly. Under him are seven generals who each control a division (four of infantry, two of cavalry, and one of chariots). Each division has four captains, assisted by lieutenants. The lower ranks are filled out by troopers and sergeants. The chain of command is of utmost importance, and those who flout it are quickly demoted or executed.

**Requirements:** Members must have a minimum Strength of 11. This kit is open only to fighters.

**Benefits:** Imperial Guard soldiers more or less have the run of the empire. As the emperor's personal force, they can get away with nearly anything. The emperor lets them have their fun, as long as they follow his orders and obey the chain of command. While higher-ranking members of the regular army can technically order lower-ranking Guard soldiers about, this rarely happens in practice. No one wants to offend the emperor's pet troops.

Even with the desertions of veterans and the influx of new blood, the Imperial Guard are still a military force to be reckoned with. Members are trained vigorously and are especially adept at fighting in units. Imperial Guard soldiers fighting in formation get a +1 bonus to hit and damage to represent this training and discipline.

Additionally, the Guard are trained to be effective in single combat. At 1st level, each soldier must specialize in either the double-edged sword or the halberd. Those who reach 5th level can specialize in a second weapon of their choice. They also learn a special form of martial arts taught only in the Guard. At 1st level, to increase movement in times of need, they learn Speed of the Leopard. At 2nd level they add Iron Palm, to help in unarmed combat, and Claw of the Crab, to help in making arrests. At 3rd level they learn the Wuxia ability, as well as Pounce of the Tiger. They can use their special maneuvers even while wearing armor.

**Hindrances:** Imperial Guard soldiers are part of a military organization: They must follow orders and do as the emperor instructs. This is often distasteful, but oaths of loyalty must be adhered to.

Members of the Guard practice a slightly different kind of martial arts than do the secret societies. On the upside, they can use martial arts maneuvers while wearing armor. However, they can never learn any of the Stance maneuvers, which require far too much space for a unit in formation. They must rely on armor for protection, but increasingly, this is not sufficient. Equipment: Each Imperial Guard soldier receives a standard kit of equipment: full iron lamellar armor with shield (AC 16), double-edged sword, and halberd. (Cavalry use lances instead of halberds.) A quarter of the units are equipped with bows, as is one member of each chariot crew (these normally have a crew of three).

## The Villains

Once your players have played *Dragon Fist* for awhile, they'll probably want to get at the root of the evil that plagues Tianguo: Emperor Jianmin. Below you'll find statistics for the emperor, as well as one of his eunuch lieutenants. These villains are both quite powerful, so only PCs approaching Master status should go up against them.

### Emperor Jianmin

*The Son of Heaven*

**AC:** 25

**To Hit:** +4

**Hit Points:** 100

**Martial Arts Maneuvers:** Breath Stealing, Claw of the Crab, Five Elements Fist, Grace of the Crane, Mantis Strike, Might of the Tiger, Nerve Strike, One Hundred Eyes, Plum Blossom Fist, Rain of Heaven, Ride the Wind, Scorpion's Sting, Speed of the Leopard, Spring of the Tiger, Step of the Crane, Torrent of Chi, Way of the Crab (missile), Wind in the Reeds, Whirlwind Strike, Wuxia.

**No. of Attacks:** 3

**Martial Arts Damage:** 1d20/1d20/1d20

**Stunts:** Might 1d10, Acrobatics 1d8, Fortitude 1d10, Savvy 1d8, Insight 1d3, Charm 1d8

**Special Items:**

- **Tainted lotus:** This cursed item keeps the emperor young—as long as he consumes souls. Due to its magic, Jianmin regenerates 5 hit points at the start of every round, has a saving throw of 5 in all categories, and has 25% magic resistance. It has also enhanced his martial arts ability to superhuman levels (reflected in his high AC and martial arts damage).
- **Robes of the Dragon:** These are the hereditary robes of the emperors of Tianguo. According to legend, they were made for the first emperor by the Lord of Heaven himself. They allow the wearer to use the 5th-level wizard spell fire breath three times a day as if cast by a 10th-level wizard.

Jianmin was not always an evil man. After the excesses of his father's reign, the first seventy years of Jianmin's rule seemed, if anything, enlightened. The empire was rebuilt, trade flourished, and two generations knew what it was to live in a time of peace and prosperity. Jianmin's only fault was in fearing death, but none could foresee the consequences of his quest for immortality. That tale has been told already in this book, but exactly why the emperor turned evil remains a mystery to most.

The "peasant" who offered the lotus to Jianmin was in fact the demon lord Musheng. The lotus was both a source of incredible power and a terrible curse. Certainly it restored the emperor's youth, but Jianmin soon discovered that to retain his youth he had to kill his subjects and absorb their souls. At first one victim was enough to satisfy him, but as time went by his hunger increased. Now he must kill dozens daily to retain his dark gift.

What the emperor doesn't understand, however, is the effect of the lotus in Hell. Normally the hun soul ascends to Heaven, and the po soul descends to Hell. But the potent

magic of the lotus, centuries in the making, causes the emperor to absorb the po souls of his victims, while the hun souls descend to Musheng. It was the heavenly power of the stolen hun souls that allowed Musheng to usurp the throne of Hell, and it is the accumulated evil of thousands of po souls that has made the emperor into a malevolent tyrant.

Musheng knows that it is Jianmin who keeps him in power, so the emperor is protected by scores of demons. With an evil ruler on the throne and a usurper ruling Hell, it is only a matter of time before the Jade Emperor restores the natural order—or so Jianmin fears. The way of Heaven is not so easily understood, however, and Jianmin may find defeat where he least expects it.

**Combat Notes:** The emperor is an incredibly tough opponent. Only a group of martial arts masters, backed up with magic and the blessings of the Jade Emperor, could hope to defeat him. The PCs should fight Jianmin himself only at the very climax of the campaign, and even then it is likely that some will die in the battle. When this showdown does occur, pull out all the stops and use the emperor's considerable abilities to the utmost. If there's one combat your players remember above all the others in the campaign, this should be the one.

### *Kuang Taojun*

*Lord of the East Wing*

*10th level eunuch sorcerer*

**AC:** 21

**To Hit:** +0

**HP:** 50

**Martial Arts Maneuvers:** Cobra Stance, Ride the Wind, Crane Stance, Dance of the Golden Lotus, Flying Dragon Fist, Iron Palm, Mantis Stance, Poison the Spirit, Spring of the Tiger, Step of the Crane, Ultimate Stance, Way of the Crab (slashing), Way of the Dragon (missile), Wuxia.

**No. of Attacks:** 1

**Martial Arts Damage:** 1d8

**Stunts:** Might 1d3, Acrobatics 1d6, Fortitude 1d4, Savvy 1d10, Insight 1d3, Charm 1d6

**Spells per Day:** 4/4/3/2/2

**Spellbook:** Kuang Taojun has access to nearly any spell he might need. Before using him as an opponent, determine his purpose (such as spying or fighting) and give him whatever spells seem appropriate (bearing in mind the limits imposed by his level).

Kuang Taojun [KWONG DOW-JEUN] is perhaps the emperor's most feared lieutenant. One of the first of the eunuch sorcerers, Kuang has used his power to rise high in the emperor's graces. He is Lord of the East Wing of the imperial palace and ruler of a quarter of the empire itself. He controls a network of sorcerers, spies, and assassins and makes sure that the enemies of Jianmin conveniently disappear.

There is no one left alive who knows how Kuang Taojun came to be a eunuch. Kuang himself made sure of this, of course. A consummate schemer, he has a stranglehold on the imperial court, and his spies make sure he knows everything worth knowing. Rumors have it that he and the Lord of the North Wing are at odds, but if there is conflict between them it is so subtle as to be almost unnoticeable. And these days, a few more deaths in the capital are hardly likely to be noticed.

Kuang Taojun has made it his personal mission to destroy the Dragon's Breath. Since he was trained by those wizards, he knows their power all too well. He covets their stores of magical knowledge and is using all his resources to locate the new headquarters of the secret society. So far he has been unsuccessful, but his eunuchs are a dagger at the throat of the Dragon's Breath.

**Combat Notes:** Kuang Taojun prefers to kill his opponents with spells. Unlike some wizards in Tianguo, he doesn't like using martial arts. He'd rather lurk behind his minions and destroy his enemies with earthbolts. He is usually accompanied by a bodyguard of six 2nd-level fighters (who are also eunuchs).

Kuang is a typical example of the Lords of the Wings. If you want to introduce any of the others into your campaign, you can base them on him.

## Monsters

Despite the emperor, the army, and countless wizards and shamans, the land of Tianguo has never been able to rid itself of monsters. Although civilization has risen to great heights, there's always a hopping vampire around the corner or a weretiger in the jungle. The following section details are many of the most common monsters of Tianguo. These are ready-made foes for your characters that can be dropped into nearly any adventure.

### Monster Statistics

Like player characters, monsters also have abilities, although they are presented in a slightly different form. Many of these entries are identical to those for PCs, such as alignment, Armor Class, and Move. The remaining entries are explained here.

- **Climate/Terrain:** The area or type of landscape the monster is most likely to be encountered in.
- **Organization:** The basic structure of the creature's society, whether it be solitary, pack, tribal, or an entire civilization.
- **Intelligence:** This is the same as the player character ability score. The ratings run from 0 (nonintelligent) through 21+ (godlike intelligence).
- **No. Appearing:** The average number of these creatures encountered at one time. This is meant as a guideline; should be careful not to overwhelm your players with a horde of monsters. When designing an encounter, try to include enough monsters to make it challenging, but not so many that the PCs have no chance.
- **Hit Dice:** This controls the number of hit points of damage a creature can take before being killed. Unless otherwise stated, monster Hit Dice are 1d8 (1–8 hit points). Roll the creature's Hit Dice and total the results to determine its hit point total. Some creatures have a "+" and a numeral following the number of Hit Dice; this indicates that the listed number is to be added to the total rolled on the dice. For example, a weretiger has 6+2 Hit Dice, so its hit points are determined by rolling 6d8 and adding 2 to the result.
- **To Hit:** This represents the creature's natural ability to fight. Most creatures will have a base score to hit between 0 and +5, which is added to the result of a twenty-sided die roll. Unarmed attacks have a speed of Av (4) unless otherwise noted. Attacks with weapons use the speed of that weapon.
- **No. of Attacks:** How often the creature gets to strike in a given round, excluding special attacks.
- **Damage/Attack:** The amount of damage a given successful attack causes.
- **Special Attacks/Defenses:** Unusual or magical attack or defense forms.
- **Magic Resistance:** Some creatures have the ability to shrug off the effects of magic. Whenever a creature with magic resistance is the direct target of a spell (even beneficial spells such as cures), the DM rolls percentile dice. If the roll is equal to or less than the creature's magic resistance, the spell has no effect. Note that a creature receives any applicable saving throws in addition to its magic resistance.
- **Size:** The relative size of a creature. This information is most useful in determining weapon damage. Tiny (T), Small (S), and Medium (M) creatures take the damage from the S–M category, while Large (L), Huge (H), and Gargantuan (G) creatures take the damage from the L category. For example, a spear would do 1d6 points of damage to a Yi barbarian (a Medium-sized being), but 1d8 to a hoard dragon, a Gargantuan beast.
- **Stunts:** Monsters also have stunts, though they usually are only good at a few types. These are abbreviated with the first letter of the stunt type, followed by the die type. For example, "M 1d6" means a Might stunt, rolling a six-sided die, while "I 1d4" is an Insight stunt rolled on a four-sider.

### Possession

All spirits (including ghosts) and demons have the power to possess mortals. Those of good alignment usually only possess willing victims, while those of evil alignment do whatever suits them. Often possession is the only way for a demon to get to Earth.

Possession is an Insight feat, with a TN equal to the Wisdom score of the victim or 15, whichever is higher. Once in control of a mortal body, the possessing entity can use it as desired. However, it has no access to the memories of the host (so it could not cast spells known the victim, for instance). Possession lasts a number of days equal to the result of the stunt die; the possessing entity can attempt another Insight feat to retain control. While they are free to leave the body at any time, possessing spirits and demons usually must be cast out by shamans.

### Ghost

<b>Climate/Terrain:</b>	Any
<b>Organization:</b>	Solitary
<b>Intelligence:</b>	Average (8–10)
<b>Alignment:</b>	Lawful evil

<b>No. Appearing:</b>	1
<b>Armor Class:</b>	18
<b>Move:</b>	140, fly 140
<b>Hit Dice:</b>	8
<b>To Hit:</b>	+4
<b>No. of Attacks:</b>	2
<b>Damage/Attack:</b>	1–10/1–10
<b>Special Attacks:</b>	See below
<b>Special Defenses:</b>	See below
<b>Magic Resistance:</b>	15%
<b>Size:</b>	M (5–6 feet tall)
<b>Stunts:</b>	M 1d3, A 1d3, S 1d3, I 1d4, C 1d8

Most commonly, ghosts are the souls of those buried improperly who return to Earth. Some want vengeance on those who botched their burial, while others simply want to be set free. Unfortunately, without the balancing effect of the human soul, many ghosts degenerate into evil monsters who exist only to cause pain and suffering.

Ghosts usually appear only at night. However, they are not insubstantial. They look like a normal person and can be touched, fought with, or even kissed. Their ghostly nature gives them great strength, though, and their blows are fearsome. They are also resistant to many magical effects. They can fly at their normal rate at will and have the Wuxia martial arts ability (based on hit dice instead of level).

Once per turn a ghost can use the delusion spell. Once a day it can use the charm person spell. Even without spells, ghosts are excellent manipulators and use their high Charm stunt to good effect. The ghosts of young and beautiful women can be especially good at charming mortals.

Those ghosts who have embraced the darkness of their soul can separate their heads from their bodies. The bodies fight on as normal, while the heads fly around inciting terror (a Charm feat) or biting opponents for 1d6 points of damage.

### Hoard Dragon

<b>Climate/Terrain:</b>	Any mountains
<b>Organization:</b>	Solitary
<b>Intelligence:</b>	Exceptional (15–16)
<b>Alignment:</b>	Chaotic neutral

<b>No. Appearing:</b>	1
<b>Armor Class:</b>	25
<b>Move:</b>	180
<b>Hit Dice:</b>	15
<b>To Hit:</b>	+5
<b>No. of Attacks:</b>	4
<b>Damage/Attack:</b>	1–8/1–8/1–10/3–18
<b>Special Attacks:</b>	See below
<b>Special Defenses:</b>	See below
<b>Magic Resistance:</b>	25%
<b>Size:</b>	G (50+ ft. long)
<b>Stunts:</b>	M 1d10, A 1d6, F 1d8, S 1d8, I 1d4, C 1d6

Most dragons are benevolent and serve the Jade Emperor in some capacity. Hoard dragons are the exception. These greedy creatures used to guard the Jade Emperor's treasure in Heaven. Over time, however, they came to believe the treasure was rightly theirs and failed to give face to the Lord of Heaven. This was a grave mistake indeed: The Jade Emperor banished the dragons to Earth. Since they loved treasure so, hoard dragons were consigned to live in the mountains and protect the treasures of humanity until they were needed. Each and every hoard dragon is fated to die defending its treasure—it is only a question of when. This is the Lord of Heaven's curse.

Hoard dragons are long and serpentine and come in a variety of colors. They have many legs and can move very quickly. In combat they attack with their two front claws (1d8 points of damage apiece), a tail lash (1d10 damage), and a fearsome bite (3d6 damage). They also have a full range of stunts and use them with ruthless efficiency.

Hoard dragons can take human form at will, but they rarely do so. While other dragons often travel amid humanity, hoard dragons stay close to home. They must, after all, guard their treasure.

*Hopping Vampire*

**Climate/Terrain:** Any land  
**Organization:** Solitary  
**Intelligence:** Low (5–7)  
**Alignment:** Chaotic evil

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**No. Appearing:** 1–4  
**Armor Class:** 16  
**Move:** 90  
**Hit Dice:** 6–9  
**To Hit:** +2  
**No. of Attacks:** 2  
**Damage/Attack:** 1–8/1–8  
**Special Attacks:** See below  
**Special Defenses:** See below  
**Magic Resistance:** 10%  
**Size:** M (5–6 ft. tall)  
**Stunts:** M 1d8, F 1d6, C 1d6

Hopping vampires are the most fearsome undead in Tianguo. When a body is buried improperly or in an inauspicious location, the po soul returns to the body and animates it; however, the hun soul has already moved on to Heaven. The po soul, already suffering after death, reverts to animalistic behavior and hungers to kill mortals. Without the heavenly spark of the hun soul, the body is not truly alive, so it retains the rigidity of death. The result is a hopping vampire. This spectacle of these creatures hopping around looking for victims is vaguely ridiculous; they are deadly opponents, however, and not to be underestimated.

The return from death gives the hopping vampires a greenish tint to their skin, fangs in their mouths, and razor-sharp fingernails that are virtual claws. They are usually dressed in the decaying remnants of funerary wear. In combat they use both claws and bite, each inflicting 1d8 of damage.

Hopping vampires are very difficult to kill. They take only half damage from weapons and martial arts, unless the attacks count as magical (such as blows from a magic weapon or martial arts attacks dealt by a high-level Righteous Fist). Fire-based attacks also inflict normal damage.

Experienced vampire hunters know that hopping vampires can locate humans only by “seeing” their breath. By holding their breath and covering their nostrils, the hunters are virtually invisible. This trick is easy to get

wrong, however, and many adventurers have been killed when they thought they were safe. A character who wants to hide from the vampire must make a Fortitude feat with a TN of 10. If successful, the character can hold his or her breath for a number of rounds equal to the result of the stunt die (minimum 1 round). Once the feat is performed, the character can take actions as normal on subsequent rounds.

Anyone who suffers more than 15 points of damage from a hopping vampire runs the risk of becoming a vampire in turn. Exactly how this occurs is a mystery, but most shamans agree it is a form of curse. After combat is over, the injured character must roll percentile dice. The chance of turning into a vampire is equal to the amount of damage he or she sustained (so if the vampire inflicted 20 points of damage, the chance would be 20%).

Those who succumb to the curse slowly turn into vampires themselves, growing fangs and long fingernails and becoming more bestial as their po soul takes over. This process takes 1 day, plus an additional number of days equal to a Fortitude stunt roll. To stop the transformation, a shaman must cast the remove curse spell on the victim before the process is complete. Once become a vampire, the victim cannot be changed back without the intercession of a major spirit or god.

Astute readers will notice that hopping vampires have a respectable stunt die in Charm. This does not mean a vampire is eloquent or seductive. Rather, this score represents the vampire’s ability to terrorize hapless humans with displays of supernatural power. Hopping vampires can make Charm feats, but only to induce fear and terror. You’ll never see one using a Charm feat to induce pathos in the PCs for its pitiful existence. In *Dragon Fist*, vampires are monsters, pure and simple.



*Local Spirit*

<b>Climate/Terrain:</b>	Any
<b>Organization:</b>	Solitary
<b>Intelligence:</b>	Exceptional (15–16)
<b>Alignment:</b>	Neutral
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<b>No. Appearing:</b>	1
<b>Armor Class:</b>	16
<b>Move:</b>	150, fly 300
<b>Hit Dice:</b>	5
<b>To Hit:</b>	+2
<b>No. of Attacks:</b>	2
<b>Damage/Attack:</b>	1–10
<b>Special Attacks:</b>	See below
<b>Special Defenses:</b>	See below
<b>Magic Resistance:</b>	10%
<b>Size:</b>	M (4–7 ft. tall)
<b>Stunts:</b>	M 1d3, A 1d6, S 1d4, I 1d6, C 1d8

Local spirits are usually expressions of Nature that are tied to one locale. Ponds, trees, and hills all have spirits associated with them. These spirits have an excellent knowledge of their own territory but an extremely limited awareness of the rest of the world. They can, however, be very helpful when specific information is needed. They are also bound to do the Jade Emperor's will and sometimes perform errands for the gods. For some, this relationship is formalized, especially those who serve the City Gods. Most spirits take the form of beautiful humans when dealing with mortals.

Spirits are magical creatures and so can be hit only by +1 or better magic weapons. Also, as long as they are in their home environment, they can regenerate 5 hit points reach round. They can also fly as fast they can run. As well, spirits can cast spells. Generally speaking, they are able to use any shaman spell of level 1 to 3 at will.

Local spirits can be very generous to those mortals who earn their favor—and equally vengeful to those who incur their wrath. In general, spirits are not foes of the PCs but rather a respected part of the natural order. PCs should be far more interested in getting information or aid from a spirit than fighting it.

Major spirits are similar but far more powerful, associated with mighty rivers and mountains. Stats for them are not provided here, since they should never be used as foes. If you need to determine what they can and

cannot do, let the story guide your decision.

*Neeg Barbarian*

<b>Climate/Terrain:</b>	Tropical jungle and mountains
<b>Organization:</b>	Tribal
<b>Intelligence:</b>	Very (11–12)
<b>Alignment:</b>	Varies
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<b>No. Appearing:</b>	2–12
<b>Armor Class:</b>	12
<b>Move:</b>	120
<b>Hit Dice:</b>	1
<b>To Hit:</b>	+2
<b>No. of Attacks:</b>	1
<b>Damage/Attack:</b>	By weapon type
<b>Special Attacks:</b>	Ambush
<b>Special Defenses:</b>	Hide in natural surroundings
<b>Magic Resistance:</b>	None
<b>Size:</b>	M (5–6 ft. tall)
<b>Stunts:</b>	M 1d3–1, A 1d4

The Neeg barbarians live north of Tianguo, in the tropical lands around the Tibneeg Mountains. They inhabit both the mountains and the jungles, and have a tribal society. Noted for their battle paint and crude weapons, they are largely despised by the civilized people of Tianguo. Despite several attempts to conquer and assimilate the Neeg, though, they remain a fiercely independent people.

In battle the Neeg tend to use spears and axes. The better weapons come from Tianguo, either through trade or as spoils from battle. Neeg war parties often launch raids into the province of Jing. They are most adept at fighting on their home terrain, however. When in their homeland, each Neeg can hide in the surroundings; treat this as a Hide in Shadows roll at 85% (halved in foreign territory). They are especially adept at fighting from ambush and gain an additional +2 to hit when attacking a surprised foe.

**Neeg Chieftains and Shamans:** The leaders of Neeg society are the tribal chiefs and the shamans. These characters tend to be between 3rd and 7th level, and can be generated using the normal character creation rules. The shamans—and the Neeg in general—focus their worship on spirits of Nature, especially those of the Tibneeg Mountains, whom they consider to be ancestors.



### One-eyed Demon

**Climate/Terrain:** Any  
**Organization:** Brood  
**Intelligence:** Average (8–10)  
**Alignment:** Neutral evil

**No. Appearing:** 2–12  
**Armor Class:** 15  
**Move:** 120  
**Hit Dice:** 3  
**To Hit:** +3  
**No. of Attacks:** 1  
**Damage/Attack:** 1–6  
**Special Attacks:** Gore  
**Special Defenses:** None  
**Magic Resistance:** None  
**Size:** M (4–7 ft. tall)  
**Stunts:** M 1d4, F 1d4, I 1d3

The one-eyed demon is an example of a low ranking minion of Hell. This type of demon is often summoned or sent to Earth to plague humanity. It is unclear whether these demons are native to Hell or the transformed souls of those sent there. They appear as normal humans, but their heads are giant and misshapen, bearing one eye and one horn.

In combat one-eyed demons use their long fingernails. They can also charge and use their horn for a gore attack. This attack automatically goes last in the round but does 2d6 damage if successful.

### Ox-headed Demon

**Climate/Terrain:** Any  
**Organization:** Solitary  
**Intelligence:** Exceptional (15–16)  
**Alignment:** Lawful evil

**No. Appearing:** 1  
**Armor Class:** 20  
**Move:** 180  
**Hit Dice:** 8  
**To Hit:** +4  
**No. of Attacks:** 2  
**Damage/Attack:** 1–12/1–12  
**Special Attacks:** Charge  
**Special Defenses:** See below  
**Magic Resistance:** 15%  
**Size:** L (10 ft. tall)  
**Stunts:** M 1d8, A 1d3, F 1d8, S 1d3, I 1d4, C 1d4

The ox-headed demon is a major servant of the masters of Hell. It is sent to Earth on special missions and usually has a brood of lesser demons to serve it. Shamans disagree as to whether the ox-headed demon is an individual or simply a type of more powerful demon. None, however, doubt its prowess.

The ox-headed demon is a huge mass of muscle covered with filthy hair. As its name indicates, he has an enormous bovine head, complete with a big brass ring through its nose (said to remind it that it too has a master). The pelt of the ox-headed demon is full of small parasites, which can be shaken free and commanded to find any item or person. They unerringly locate the quarry, if it is within 2 miles of the demon's location, and return within the hour.

The ox-headed demon's weapon of choice is an enormous trident that inflicts 1d12 damage against any opponent. It can also choose to charge with horns lowered. This attack can target two adjacent opponents, one with each horn, and inflicts 3d6 damage on each target.

In addition to its listed magic resistance, the ox-headed demon takes only half damage from fire-based spells.



### Skeleton

**Climate/Terrain:** Any  
**Organization:** Band  
**Intelligence:** Non- (0)  
**Alignment:** Neutral

**No. Appearing:** 3–30  
**Armor Class:** 13  
**Move:** 120  
**Hit Dice:** 1  
**To Hit:** +1  
**No. of Attacks:** 1  
**Damage/Attack:** 1–6 (weapon)  
**Special Attacks:** None  
**Special Defenses:** See below  
**Magic Resistance:** None  
**Size:** M (5–6 ft. tall)  
**Stunts:** None

Skeletons are magically animated undead monsters, usually the work of evil shamans with no respect for the dead. Their bones magically hang together, and they follow the commands of their creator.

Skeletons usually fight with weapons, often those they were buried with. Since they are basically mindless, they do not fight very well and inflict only 1d6 points of damage per hit, regardless of what weapon they are fighting with.

Due to their undead state, skeletons are immune to all spells that affect the mind (including charm person and delusion). They are also immune to poison and cold-based attacks, and take only half damage from edged or piercing weapons (like swords, arrows, and spears). Blunt weapons inflict damage as normal, as does fire.

### Spider Demon

<b>Climate/Terrain:</b>	Any
<b>Organization:</b>	Solitary
<b>Intelligence:</b>	High (13–14)
<b>Alignment:</b>	Chaotic evil
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<b>No. Appearing:</b>	1–3
<b>Armor Class:</b>	18
<b>Move:</b>	150
<b>Hit Dice:</b>	6
<b>To Hit:</b>	+2
<b>No. of Attacks:</b>	2
<b>Damage/Attack:</b>	1–8/1–8
<b>Special Attacks:</b>	Poison, web
<b>Special Defenses:</b>	None
<b>Magic Resistance:</b>	10%
<b>Size:</b>	H (14 ft. diameter)
<b>Stunts:</b>	M 1d6, A 1d3, F 1d6, S 1d4, I 1d6, C 1d4

Spider demons are said to be the souls of adulterers. They are sometimes summoned to Earth, where they wreak havoc in mortal affairs. They can change into human form at will, and often take on the appearance of young and beautiful women. However, their true form is a monstrous hybrid of woman and spider: The torso of a woman melds with the body of a spider into a horrific whole. Although the face of a spider demon retains some beauty, the prominent fangs are hide to disguise. Spider demons delight on causing trouble and often take human form to do so.

In combat, the demons use their gigantic spider legs. Opponents who get too close also get a taste of their fangs, which do 1d6 points of damage and inject a virulent poison. Those bitten must make a saving throw vs. poison

or take 3d10 additional points of damage. Additionally, spider demons can shoot webs from their mouths. This is handled as a missile attack with a range of 40 feet. Anyone hit is entangled and can break free only with a Might feat (TN 18). Entangled characters can do nothing except try to break free while the demon yanks the helpless victim into its waiting embrace.

### Wang Liang

<b>Climate/Terrain:</b>	Temperate forests
<b>Organization:</b>	Solitary or tribe
<b>Intelligence:</b>	Exceptional (15–16)
<b>Alignment:</b>	Neutral evil
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<b>No. Appearing:</b>	1–10
<b>Armor Class:</b>	16
<b>Move:</b>	120
<b>Hit Dice:</b>	5
<b>To Hit:</b>	+3
<b>No. of Attacks:</b>	2
<b>Damage/Attack:</b>	1–10/1–10
<b>Special Attacks:</b>	None
<b>Special Defenses:</b>	See below
<b>Magic Resistance:</b>	None
<b>Size:</b>	L (10 ft. tall)
<b>Stunts:</b>	M 1d8, A 1d3–1, F 1d6, S 1d4

Wang Liang [WONG LYUNG] are forest-dwelling ogres who strike terror into peasants and soldiers. They are usually over 10 feet tall and covered with brown fur. Both hands and feet are clawed and can be used to make martial arts attacks (damage 1d10). They sometimes use oversized weapons in combat instead, and these do the damage listed for that weapon type, +3 for their large size.

Wang Liang are found in such places as the Forest of Clouds and the deeper reaches of the An Ying Forest. Luckily for their human neighbors, the ogres seem to fight among themselves frequently. This keeps their numbers relatively small. When they get hungry, however, they organize raiding parties and attack human settlements.

Some Wang Liang know the secret of invisibility. Perhaps one in a hundred has a magical hat that confers invisibility on its wearer. This lasts until the wearer makes an attack or the hat is taken off. Mysteriously, these hats don't seem to work for humans.

*Weretiger*

**Climate/Terrain:** Any wilderness  
**Organization:** Solitary  
**Intelligence:** Average (8–10)  
**Alignment:** Neutral evil

**No. Appearing:** 1–6  
**Armor Class:** 17  
**Move:** 120  
**Hit Dice:** 6+2  
**To Hit:** +3  
**No. of Attacks:** 3  
**Damage/Attack:** 1–6/1–6/1–12  
**Special Attacks:** None  
**Special Defenses:** +1 or better weapon to hit  
**Magic Resistance:** None  
**Size:** M or L (6–9 ft. tall)  
**Stunts:** M 1d6/1d8, A 1d4, F 1d4

Weretigers are said to be those cursed by Nature spirits for their destructive behavior. According to an old saying, “Those who act as animals will become animals.” Weretigers can be found in any wilderness setting, but they most favor the jungles and mountains of the north. Many in Tianguo associate them with the Neeg barbarians and believe that all Neeg are weretigers.

Weretigers have three forms. In their human form, they look entirely normal. They can speak and use weapons and pass for average humans, but cannot retain this form for longer than a day at a time. Their second form is a hybrid of human and tiger, the weretiger proper. The final form is that of the tiger itself, with no trace of humanity.

In human form, weretigers use weapons as normal. In hybrid and full tiger form, a weretiger gets two claw attacks and one bite as detailed above. In full tiger form, the weretiger’s Might stunt die increases to 1d8 to simulate its increased size.

Weretigers are vicious predators. They will hunt and eat nearly anything but prefer humans above all others. Those killed and eaten by a weretiger return to Earth as ghosts who must haunt the area of their death until they lure a new victim into the weretiger’s jaws. Only then will their souls go to Hell for judgment.

The curse of the weretiger cannot be

reversed under normal circumstances. Only with the aid of a major spirit or god could a shaman hope to restore the weretiger to humanity.



*Uji Barbarian*

**Climate/Terrain:** Southern steppes  
**Organization:** Clan  
**Intelligence:** Very (11–12)  
**Alignment:** Varies

**No. Appearing:** 3–30  
**Armor Class:** 4  
**Move:** 240 mounted/  
 120 afoot  
**Hit Dice:** 1  
**To Hit:** +2  
**No. of Attacks:** 1  
**Damage/Attack:** By weapon type  
**Special Attacks:** Mounted combat  
**Special Defenses:** None  
**Magic Resistance:** None  
**Size:** M (5–6 ft. tall)  
**Stunts:** M 1d3, A 1d3

The Yi barbarians live on the great southern steppes beyond the Horse’s Tail River. They are the bogeymen of southern Tianguo, and many tales are told of their cruelty and barbarism. In fact, though, the Yi are no more or less likely to act evilly than anyone else. They do have an antagonistic history with the empire, and raids across the Horse’s Tail are common. However, they simply have a different culture, one that is not as outwardly “civilized” as that of their neighbors. For this reason conflict between Tianguo and the Yi remains likely.

Unlike the people of Tianguo, the Yi barbarians have a nomadic lifestyle. Their clans

travel throughout the steppes, finding good grazing land and changing location with the seasons. They are excellent riders and raid one another as frequently as they do Tianguo. When they have invaded Tianguo in the past, it has been under a strong war leader. These alliances have inevitably fallen apart once the charismatic leader died.

In combat the Yi tend to wear full hide armor. They make great use of the horse bow, as well as the spear and the single-edged sword. Such is their skill at mounted warfare that they receive a +1 bonus to hit and to damage while fighting on horseback.

**Khans:** Yi clan leaders are known as khans. They are usually fighters of level 5 to 7 and have skills and attributes comparable to PC fighters. They usually specialize in either the horse bow or the single-edged sword. Lesser Yi war leaders tend to be fighters of 2nd to 4th level.

**Shamans:** The Yi have their own shamans, although their religion is slightly different from that of Tianguo. They worship the sky as a deity and look more to spirits for guidance and aid. Yi shamans can be any level and use the normal character-creation rules.

### *Zombie*

<b>Climate/Terrain:</b>	Any
<b>Organization:</b>	Band
<b>Intelligence:</b>	Non-(0)
<b>Alignment:</b>	Neutral

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<b>No. Appearing:</b>	3–24
<b>Armor Class:</b>	12
<b>Move:</b>	60
<b>Hit Dice:</b>	2
<b>To Hit:</b>	+1
<b>No. of Attacks:</b>	1
<b>Damage/Attack:</b>	1–8
<b>Special Attacks:</b>	None
<b>Special Defenses:</b>	Spell immunity, immune to poison
<b>Magic Resistance:</b>	None
<b>Size:</b>	M (5–6 ft. tall)
<b>Stunts:</b>	M 1d3

Zombies are mindless, animated corpses serving the evil shamans that create them. They are similar to skeletons but retain flesh on their bones. The condition of the corpse is not changed by the animating spell. If the body was missing a limb, the zombie created from it is missing the same limb. Since it is difficult to get fresh bodies (mourning rituals often stretching into weeks even after burial), most zombies are in sorry shape, with decomposing flesh literally falling off their bones. This makes their movement slow and jerky. Their rotting stench is detectable up to 100 feet away, depending on the condition of the body. Zombies cannot talk, being mindless, but do often moan horribly. They are usually dressed in the clothes they were buried in—what remains of them.

Zombies move very slowly and always strike last in combat. They keep fighting until called off or destroyed, and nothing short of a White Lotus shaman can turn them back. They are immune to poison, all magic that affects the mind, and cold-based spells.



## THE CAMPAIGN

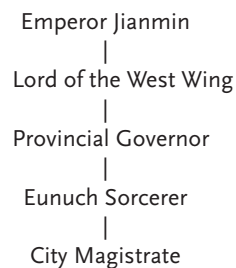
The *Dragon Fist* setting assumes that player characters will take up the struggle to depose the corrupt emperor. The PCs are among the first secret society members to explore this new united front. This style of campaign has a lot to offer: a nasty villain, sinister henchmen, an epic scope, intersociety rivalry, and the fate of an empire. The rules and background presented in the first six chapters give you everything you need to tell this story, but we haven't yet talked about how to construct it. This chapter offers some advice on running a *Dragon Fist* campaign. As well, look for an introductory adventure, "Dragon and Phoenix," available on the *Dragon Fist* web page in December 1999.

## The Villain Tree

Emperor Jianmin is the ultimate villain of the *Dragon Fist* story. If you play through to the end, the climactic battle will pit the PCs versus the Son of Heaven himself. However, the martial arts mastery of Emperor Jianmin is a little much for starting, 3rd-level characters. In the great tradition of Hong Kong action flicks, there must be a good villain for the early stages of the campaign. As DM, you want your players to face challenging villains throughout the campaign, and you know that their ultimate foe is Jianmin. What you need then is a hierarchy of villainy, a procession of bad guys to give your campaign focus as the PCs rise in level. This is the central concept of the "villain tree," one that gives you an easy framework to build a campaign around.

Building a villain tree is easy. Let's say you've decided to start your campaign in the city of Anmei in the province of Bei Jei. The villain for the first part of your campaign could be the magistrate of the city. He's been ordered to clear out the secret societies, creating instant tension for the PCs. Now the first villain is the magistrate, and the last villain will be the emperor. You only need to fill in the rest of the list. A typical campaign escalation could look like this.

### EXAMPLE VILLAIN TREE



After the PCs defeat the city magistrate of Anmei, they come to the attention of the governor of Bei Jei province. If they prove a thorn in his side, he may appeal to the Lord of the West Wing, the eunuch sorcerer in charge of that section of the empire. The Lord might send a powerful eunuch sorcerer to help the governor. Despite this help, the PCs defeat the governor, and move on to confront the Lord of the West Wing. Since the eunuch sorcerers are the emperor's trusted lieutenants, they need only overcome them to face the Son of Heaven himself.

In play you may change certain characters or alter things due to the PCs' actions. That is to be expected. You may also want to adjust the villain tree to keep it in line with the experience of the PCs. Generally speaking, each villain should be good for two character levels of game play. If in the example above the PCs have made it to 9th level but are still fighting the provincial governor, you may need to skip the eunuch sorcerer and bring the Lord of the West Wing himself to the province.

Remember that these won't be your only villains, just the focal ones for different periods of the campaign. The example features many bureaucrats, in part because they command hordes of underlings to fling at the PCs. The defeat of each villain should be the climax of that stage of the campaign.

## The Campaign Focus

With your villains in place, it's time to think about the general plotline of the game. While the backstory and a good villain are enough to get things going, you're going to need more than that for a continuing campaign. Wanting to overthrow the evil emperor is one thing, but figuring out how to do that is something else entirely.

As the DM you have many plot options at your disposal. Ideally, you should pick one overarching story to organize your adventures around: This is the campaign focus. This is not to say that all the adventures you run should relate to this plot—far from it. However, having a framework in the background is very useful, especially during those times when you're fresh out of ideas and need to have an adventure ready in an hour.

Here are three different campaign foci, the first of which was used during the in-house playtest of *Dragon Fist*. All of these lend themselves to player choice. You certainly could just start your players down a particular path, but you don't want them to feel disenfranchised. They should always feel like they have control over their characters and that their decisions make a difference. Experienced Dragon Masters know that this is mostly an illusion; it is, however, an important one to maintain. As long as your players feel like they're important, they'll be happy.

### The Five Legendary Weapons

You've already read about the Five Legendary Weapons in Chapter 5: Experience and Magic Items. Just from the story of these fabulous artifacts it should be clear that they would be of great aid to anyone struggling against the emperor. Drop a few hints about the fate of the Five Legendary Weapons, and your players are bound to run off looking for them. That's five good adventures for your campaign, related by theme and working towards a final goal. Once the PCs have collected all five artifacts, they'll feel ready for a final showdown with Jianmin.

### The Mandate of Heaven

The concept of the Mandate of Heaven is important in Tianguo's society. The general feeling of the populace is that the emperor has lost this authority and thus the right to rule. A serious rival claimant to the throne would require the Mandate to prove himself, and certainly many revolutionary leaders will assert that they have it. If the PCs have imperial pretensions of their own, one of them will have to win the Mandate of Heaven. Proving one's righteousness to the Jade Emperor is not an easy task, but a series of heavenly tests makes for excellent adventure.

### The Dragon Kings

Diao Zu'en is one of the great heroes of Tianguo, so great that he is now a god. Diao went to ask the Dragon Kings to protect Tianguo from foreigners; after hearing this legend, your PCs may think it's a good idea to visit the Dragon Kings themselves. The journey should be arduous, itself the pretext for adventure, and any aid given would have a price. To this day no one knows what service Diao Zu'en provided the Dragon Kings. The PCs could find themselves traveling to distant lands, fighting fearsome sea monsters, or lifting ancient curses in return for the dragons' help. And while they're away beneath the sea, who knows what is transpiring in Tianguo?

### Variant Campaigns

The default campaign of *Dragon Fist* is the struggle to overthrow Emperor Jianmin. However, not everyone will be interested in this story. You may have different ideas of how you want to use the setting. Below are some suggestions for other types of campaigns you can run in either the empire of Tianguo or a setting of your own design, using the rules presented in this book.

### *The World of Martial Arts*

Many wuxia films revolve around struggles in the “World of Martial Arts.” While these stories are nominally set in ancient China, the emperor and the army play little part in them. Rather, the action focuses on clans or martial arts schools and the struggle for dominance among them.

If this type of campaign appeals to you, it’s easy enough to set up. Just let the emperor fade into the background. He’s there, he’s evil, but he’s wrapped up in his own schemes and leaves the World of Martial Arts alone as long as they stay out of politics. In this kind of game, most of the action involves the internecine plots of the secret societies. A classic example is to have the leaders of one or more of the societies foully slain after a grand deception, leaving the PCs as the only ones who can restore honor to their societies and get revenge on their enemies. Other plots include a martial arts competition between the societies and stopping the “super-evil secret society” (whichever one you want that to be).

You could also run this type of game in a different historical period of Tianguo. The first half of Jianmin’s reign, for instance, was a time of peace and rebuilding. It makes perfect sense for the martial schools to vie against one another when the empire is at peace. You’ll note that all the secret societies have long histories, even if they weren’t always secret. In a World of Martial Arts campaign, it’s perfectly fine to have many of these groups instead be martial arts societies that are public and open.

### *Oust the Foreign Devils!*

Tianguo has already been invaded once by strange barbarians. Who these barbarians were has been left deliberately vague to allow you flexibility in fitting Tianguo into your existing campaign. You could easily run a campaign in which Tianguo has been defeated by the invaders and the secret societies are struggling to free their homeland. This is a great way to combine *Dragon Fist* with other campaign worlds. Maybe the invaders are from the Scarlet Brotherhood in Greyhawk, or an expansionist power from your own campaign.

This kind of campaign could even draw its inspiration from China’s own woes in the 19th century, when it was beset by imperialist powers like Great Britain and the United States. You could draw a parallel to this in Tianguo with the introduction of a corrupting influence from overseas, perhaps a drug central to a magical ritual that would spell the end of the empire for good.

### *In Search of Adventure*

You might decide you don’t want to run a game that takes place in Tianguo at all. You could run a fun campaign in which the characters are all refugees or explorers from the Heavenly Kingdom. Perhaps they found a hidden pass through the uncrossable Dragon’s Spine Mountains or managed to sail through the bao feng and find the lands beyond. In either case, the characters would be alone in the foreign land, trying to survive and learn something of this strange new world.

Again, you could use nearly any campaign setting for this purpose. While *Dragon Fist* characters use a modified version of the AD&D 2nd Edition rules, they are fully compatible with that system. Every character still has an AC, hit points, and the like. You could adopt the stunt system for your campaign or only let characters from Tianguo use stunts, reflecting their martial arts training. See Appendix 1: Conversion Notes for more about converting *Dragon Fist* to the AD&D system.

### *Adventure in Kara-Tur*

Fans of the **Forgotten Realms**® campaign setting may remember the land of Kara-Tur. This was the “Asian” half of the world of the Realms and was detailed in a series of supplements published in the late ’80s and early ’90s. While this setting has been out of print for many years, there is quite a bit of source material out there for those who want to use it. The **Oriental Adventures** book for 1st edition AD&D was never updated for the 2nd edition, for example. To address that, you could use the rules from this book in conjunction with the Kara-Tur setting. This works best if you set the game in either Shou Lung or T’u Lung, which are



both based on different historical periods of China. You could either add in the secret societies from this book, rename them, and modify their histories to reflect Kara-Tur, or use the kits as virtual character classes. (For example, to create an evil thief, use the Ghost Eaters kit.)

### *Once Upon a Time in China*

The information in this book is solidly based on real Chinese history and mythology, and of course Hong Kong action movies. You may decide you'd like to use these rules to run historical campaigns or recreate famous HK films. Either approach can be great fun. Maybe you've read the justly famous *Romance of Three Kingdoms* or *Outlaws of the Water Margin* and you'd like to run games set in those historical periods. These rules work fine for that purpose.

In the end, what matters most is that the players and the DM have fun. Wherever you set the story and however you customize the game, you're doing *Dragon Fist* right if you're kicking plenty of butt!

## CONVERSION NOTES

Fans of *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* may want to use *Dragon Fist* in conjunction with their home campaigns. Although the *Dragon Fist* game is in many ways its own system, it is solidly based on **AD&D**, and crossovers can be handled with little difficulty. The two systems share some fundamental features: Characters from both games have Armor Class, hit points, spells, saving throws, etc. Most of the rules are fully compatible. The places that require some conversion are discussed below.

### *The Stunt System*

The most important difference between the two games is the stunt system. In traditional **AD&D**, characters get benefits for having high ability scores, and these bonuses are constantly in effect. In *Dragon Fist*, a character gets the bonus only by performing the right stunt.

There may come a time when you want characters from Tianguo to fight opponents from other **AD&D** worlds, such as the **Forgotten Realms** campaign setting. Since the numbers are all compatible, the best thing to do is to let each character follow the rules of his or her home world. While this does mean that *Dragon Fist* characters can get larger bonuses due to the stunt system, characters from other **AD&D** worlds will tend to have a better AC, more magic items, and the continuous increased chance to hit of the THAC0 system.

### *Initiative*

*Dragon Fist* uses an individual initiative system that's very different than that of **AD&D**. Because the two are so incompatible, it is recommended that you use the standard **AD&D** group initiative system when mixing characters from different worlds. Roll 1d10 for each side and let whoever has the highest roll take their actions first. You'll probably find this speeds up your game.

### *Armor Class*

*Dragon Fist* Armor Class is based on an inverted version of the normal **AD&D** 2nd Edition rules to make the combat system more compatible with the feat system. Converting ACs is easy, though. To convert either way, simply subtract the AC from 20. For instance, an AC of 5 in **AD&D** becomes an AC of 15 in *Dragon Fist*. Similarly, an AC of -3 becomes 23. An AC of 14 in *Dragon Fist* becomes an AC of 6 in the **AD&D** game, while an AC of 24 becomes -4.

### *Level Limits*

The *Dragon Fist* game supports play only up to 10th level. This was done partly because of space constraints, and partly because the system isn't as effective at very high levels. Still, there may be players who want to continue on above this limit and find new challenges worthy of such martial arts masters. For the time being, these players can use the **AD&D** *Player's Handbook*, which has appropriate experience point and saving throw tables for higher-level characters. DMs should be careful about which high-level spells they allow, though; not everything is appropriate for the world of Tianguo.

Early in 2000, look for the *Dragon Fist* Grand Master rules on the Wizards of the Coast® website. These rules will allow higher-level characters and reveal the martial arts secrets of Tianguo.

## *Appendix 2: Ten Recommended Films*

Space prohibits an extensive filmography, but it would delinquent not to mention at least the key films of the wuxia genre. Here is a short list of ten Hong Kong films that are highly recommended. Some of these may be available at your local video store; others you may need to seek out in specialty shops. Before embarking on a *Dragon Fist* campaign, try getting your group together to watch at least one of these movies. This should help to get everyone into the proper frame of mind.

### *The Bride With White Hair (1993)*

**Director:** Ronnie Yu

A visually stunning film, *The Bride with White Hair* is the story of Lian, a wild woman raised by wolves. Lian, played by Brigitte Lin, is an assassin for a cult led by a mutant Siamese twin (half male and half female). She falls in love with Zhuo, a swordsman from the World of Martial Arts, and must break her ties with the cult no matter what the cost. *The Bride with White Hair* looks great, tells a compelling story, and features some amazing action sequences. It's also been released commercially in the U.S., so it should be fairly easy to find.

### *Burning Paradise (1994)*

**Director:** Ringo Lam

If you've ever wondered how to mix **AD&D** with kung fu, you must see this film. Nearly the entire movie takes place in the dreaded Red Lotus Temple, an evil place filled with deathtraps and ruled over by the insane Kung. Folk hero Fong Sai Yuk tries to escape from the temple and free his Shaolin monk brethren, and this results in some furious action. Kung, the cult leader, is a great model for Emperor Jianmin.

### *A Chinese Ghost Story (1987)*

**Director:** Ching Siu-Tung

This is the quintessential Hong Kong movie about ghosts. Joey Wang will tear your heart out as the beautiful ghost denied reincarnation by the Tree Devil. She falls in love with a mortal named Ning (played by Tony Leung), who recruits a Taoist wizard to help him set his love free. The movie climaxes with everyone going to Hell to fight the Tree Devil on his home turf. Great stuff!

### *Dragon Gate Inn (1992)*

**Director:** Raymond Lee

Also known as *Dragon Inn*, this film features a top-notch cast and terrific action. Tony Leung and Brigitte Lin star as loyal swordbearers attempting to bring two children to safety. They are pursued by Donnie Yen, an evil eunuch who wants to execute the children. Both parties are trapped by a raging storm in the Dragon Gate Inn, which is run by a swindler played by Maggie Cheung. A tense cat-and-mouse game ensues, and whole thing climaxes in an amazing fight scene in the desert. The nod to *Sweeney Todd* ("Hey, what's in these meat buns?") only adds to the fun.

### *Encounters of the Spooky Kind (1980)*

**Director:** Sammo Hung

One of the first films to effectively fuse horror and martial arts, *Encounters of the Spooky Kind* is a classic. Sammo Hung directs and stars. In the film he plays a bumpkin named Chang whose joke seance succeeds in summoning a number of supernatural creatures. His unfaithful wife and her lover recruit an evil wizard to help them knock off poor Chang, who finds a wizard of his own to help protect him. The final sequence is an intense magical duel between the two wizards, which really should be seen by anyone playing a *Dragon Fist* spellcaster.

### *Mr. Vampire (1985)*

**Director:** Ricky Lau

If you can see only one movie about Asian vampires, this should be the one. *Mr. Vampire* is a vastly entertaining film about "the One Eyebrow Priest," a vampire hunter played by Lam

Ching Ying. He and his two assistants unearth an improperly buried body to prevent it from turning into a hopping vampire. Naturally, the vampire escapes, and chaos ensues. Pauline Wong also makes an appearance as a seductive ghost. In the end the One Eyebrow Priest and his Taoist tricks save the day. This film was so popular it spawned seven sequels and a host of imitators.

### *New Legend of Shaolin (1994)*

**Director:** Wong Jing

Jet Li stars as Hung Shi Kwan, another Chinese folk hero from martial arts lore. Hung and his son get mixed up with a bunch of young Shaolin kids, who hold the keys to lost Ming treasure. Tze Miu is great as Hung's grim son, and father and son fight together in some amazing sequences. Although director Wong Jing couldn't resist some slapstick humor and other silliness, *New Legend of Shaolin* is still well worth seeing.

### *Swordsman II (1992)*

**Director:** Ching Siu Tung

Don't fret if you haven't seen Part I. *Swordsman II* really stands alone and is far superior to the original. Of all the movies in this section, this is one that really captures the essence of wuxia. Brigitte Lin stars as Asia the Invincible, a man so power-hungry he castrates himself to gain the supernatural might of the Ultimate Scroll and turns into a woman by the end of the film! Opposing Asia is Rosamund Kwan, and caught in the middle is the always impressive Jet Li. The stunts are deliciously improbable and Brigitte Lin is just too cool as Asia. In fact, Lin's character was so popular that she returned to star as Asia again in a sequel called *East is Red*. See them both if you can.

### *Tai Chi Master (1993)*

**Director:** Yuen Wo Ping

Jet Li and Chin Siu-Ho star as two best friends who are learning martial arts at a temple. Constantly at odds, the two friends are kicked out of the temple. Jet Li joins a righteous rebel group, but Chin Siu-Ho falls in with the evil eunuchs. After a nasty feat that leaves him insane, Jet Li returns to sanity and invents Tai Chi at the same time! He returns with new moves and has it out with his former friend. Michelle Yeoh, who later achieved notoriety in the West as a Bond girl, also stars.

### *Zu: Warriors of the Magic Mountain (1983)*

**Director:** Tsui Hark

A benchmark film from director and producer Tsui Hark. While you may laugh at the sheer '80s feel of the costuming and effects, this film creates a true fantasy world. Yuen Biao stars as a disillusioned soldier who flees mortal conflicts. Hiding out on the Magic Mountain, however, he turns into a reluctant hero when the Blood Monster threatens the world with his army of demons. Biao and friends must find two magic swords before the Blood Monster can break through and destroy the world. This is a great blend of fantasy and martial arts that still stands up sixteen years later.



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AN ADVENTURE FOR DRAGON FIST

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# DRAGON 龍拳 FIST

THE ROLEPLAYING GAME OF MARTIAL ARTS ACTION

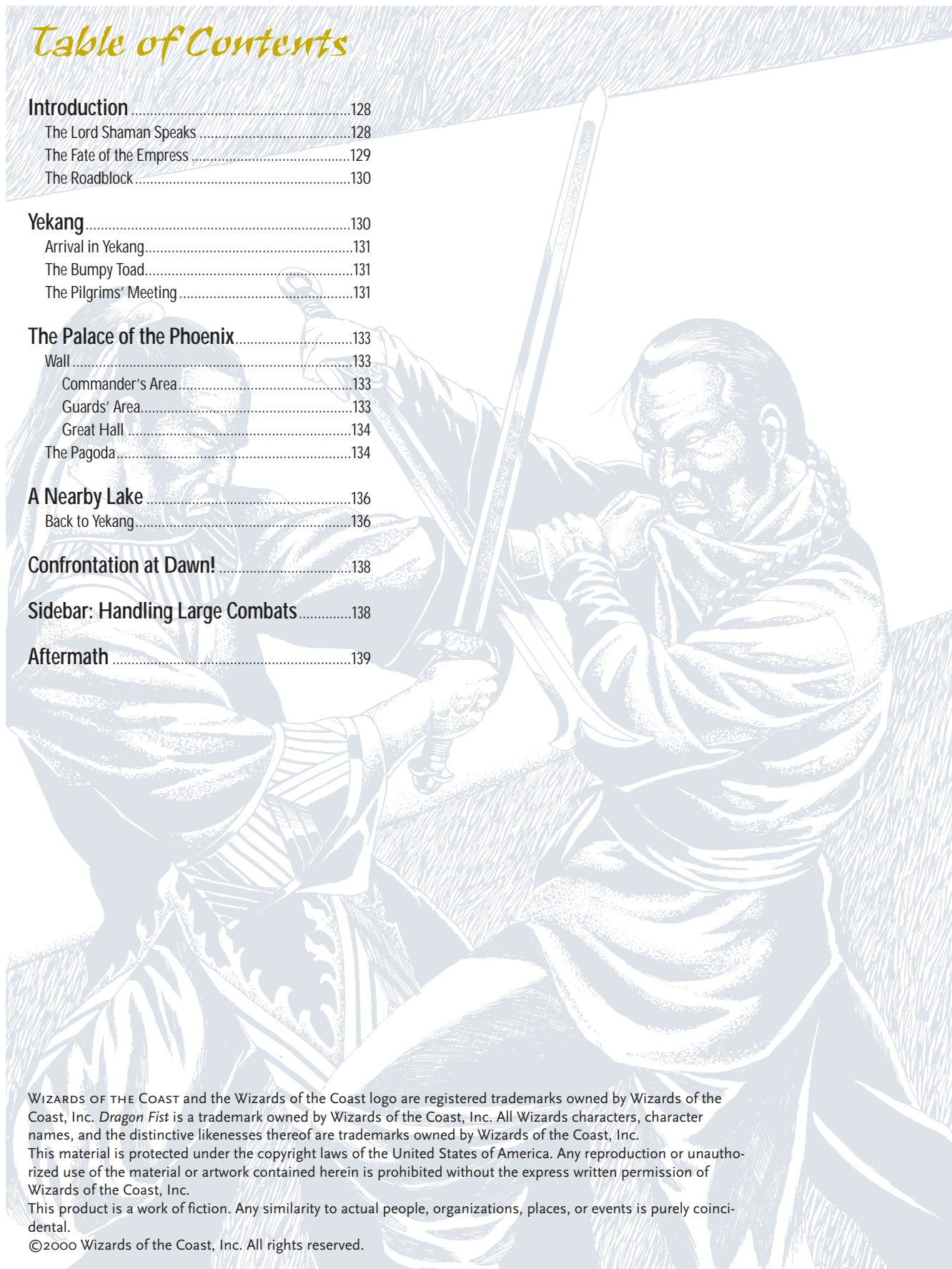
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*Dragon and Phoenix* is an introductory *Dragon Fist*<sup>™</sup> adventure for four to six starting, 3rd-level characters. It is designed to familiarize players with the world of Tianguo, the storyline of the game, and the style of Hong Kong cinematic action. (See Chapter 1: The Heavenly Kingdom in the *Dragon Fist* rules for a background on Tianguo.) At the conclusion you'll find suggestions for developing further adventures.

Throughout the adventure there are boxed areas of text. This is background information for the players, which you can either read aloud to them or paraphrase.

## Introduction

*As the adventure opens, the nine secret societies who form the World of Martial Arts have just agreed to unite against Emperor Jianmin. Whereas each had previously pursued its own goals in isolation, the oppression of Jianmin has thrown them together. The societies' leadership has been putting together cohorts of martial artists, each with members from at least four of the secret societies. The player characters (PCs) are just such a group.*

*The PCs have gathered in the city of Xing, the provincial capital of Hou. Here they will find out what their first mission is and begin what will hopefully be a long and fruitful relationship.*

## The Lord Shaman Speaks

Each of you has been sent to the city of Xing at the behest of the leaders of your secret society, who have instructed you to join members of other societies and form a cohort to help overthrow the emperor. Through contacts with your society, each of you has been led to a secret underground meeting place. As a precaution, you were all blindfolded and brought here separately.

Now that the blindfolds are off, you find yourself in a low-ceilinged room of rough-hewn stone. There are representatives of all nine secret societies in the room, but deference is given to an older man in white robes. From the excited whispers of fellow travelers you learn that this is none other than Luo Hongbo [LWA TSOONG-PWA], the Lord Shaman of the White Lotus. This is truly an auspicious day.

Luo Hongbo bows to you all, then motions for everyone to sit. "I thank you for coming so far," he begins. "As you know, our societies have only just begun to struggle together. Thus, our first operations are of crucial importance. We must learn to forge a trust that cannot be broken by the minions of the emperor.

"We have formed many cohorts, and these have spread across Tianguo to do our work. Now it is your turn. I need true heroes to take on a mission of the utmost importance. Can I count on you?"

(The PCs should answer in the affirmative if they have an ounce of heroism among them.)

Once you have agreed, Luo continues. "Good. Let us begin then." With that, he motions everyone else out of the room. They file out silently, obviously used to the secrecy of such meetings. After they have left, the Lord Shaman addresses you again.

"Many of you are too young to remember it, but Emperor Jianmin and Empress Jieli [JYEH-LEE] used to be inseparable. She was the phoenix to his dragon, just as the Jade Emperor decrees. You may have heard tales of Jieli's generosity and good works. Many remember her with great fondness and wonder why she has been so silent for so long.

"After Jianmin turned to evil, Jieli tried to curb his worst excesses. He quickly tired of her interference and sent her to the Palace of the Phoenix in Yekang. That was eighteen years ago; no one has heard from Empress Jieli since. Pronouncements are still made in her name, but we fear her palace has been turned into a prison.

"I don't need to tell you how much it would help our cause to have the rightful empress on our side. From all we know of Empress Jieli, she would gladly lend her aid if she had the chance. Therefore I need you to travel to the Palace of the Phoenix, find the empress, and free her from the minions of Jianmin. It is a dangerous mission, but it must be done. The blessings of Heaven go with you."



## A Few Questions

The player characters no doubt have some questions about their mission. Luo Hongbo's answers to the most likely are listed below. Since the PCs need to know this information, you'll have to work it in even if they don't ask.

- Where are Yekang and the Palace of the Phoenix?

*Yekang is near the source of the Scarlet River, in the northern part of the province of Bei Ji. It is the furthest point a boat can go upriver, and many pilgrims on their way to White Tiger Mountain travel through there. The palace is a few miles outside of town.*

- What can you tell us about the Palace of the Phoenix?

*As the Righteous Fists know, the Palace of the Phoenix was originally a monastery of the Jade Brotherhood. It was gifted to Empress Yuji in the year 900 N.Z. to honor Shangwei's reunification of the empire. There are likely soldiers of the Imperial Guard there, but how many we do not know.*

- Can we expect any aid in Yekang?

*Yes, we have agents there. When you arrive in Yekang, you should go to the Bumpy Toad Inn. The owner, a man named Li, will provide you with rooms and information. Make sure to tell him you are carrying a lotus to White Tiger Mountain. This will identify you.*

- If we free the empress, where should we bring her?

*The closest safe haven is the Jade Mountain Monastery. I can provide a map that will lead you there, but you must promise to destroy it if you are ever in danger of capture.*

*Note: If there is a Righteous Fist member among the PCs, assume he or she knows how to get to Jade Mountain Monastery.*

- Will we be given any supplies?

*We will provide food for a week and 10 tael each to pay for inns and equipment. I have also brewed three potions of healing for you. Be sure to use them wisely.*

Once the PCs have their answers, Luo summons some of his aides to once again blindfold and take them back to their inn. They can leave in the morning. If they are wise, they will get a good night's sleep: A long journey lies ahead.

Savvy PCs may work out a cover story for the group before they start their journey and want to disguise themselves as peasants, tradespeople, or what-have-you. This is a wise precaution: Let them have whatever they think they need to make the story believable (within reason, of course).

## The Fate of the Empress

What neither Luo nor the PCs know is that Empress Jieli has been dead for fifteen years.

The empress was banished to the Palace of the Phoenix in 1164 N.Z. A contingent of the Imperial Guard, under the command of the emperor's cousin Geng Jiming, [GUNG JEE-MEEN] accompanied her to ensure she could not leave the palace. Geng knew that he was just as much an exile as Jieli, even if he did hold the keys. Shut away together in a remote corner of the empire, Geng Jiming and Jieli fell in love. In 1166, Jieli became pregnant. Despite the danger, she chose to carry the baby. One of Geng's underlings sent a secret message to the capital, informing the emperor that his wife was pregnant with the child of another man.

Jianmin, of course, was furious. He dispatched the Lord of the West Wing to the Palace of the Phoenix to "take care of the matter." The eunuch sorcerer and his entourage arrived shortly after the birth—a girl. He ordered the arrest of Jieli and Geng and had them both secretly executed, but a group of Jieli's loyal retainers spirited the baby away and fled to the

lands of the Yi barbarians in the south. Meanwhile, the Lord of the West Wing set up an imposter in the role of the empress. As far as the empire sees, Empress Jieli is alive and well. Her real fate is known only in the Palace of the Phoenix, a place the PCs will soon become very familiar with.

### The Roadblock

You leave the city of Xing, taking a ferry across the Nine Maidens River and following the roads through the province of Shang Shen. You pass through many villages as the days go by, and signs of trouble never seem far away. While some villages look prosperous and busy, others are deserted or destroyed. The devastation seems almost random, which makes it that much more disturbing.

A week after leaving Xing you are in the heart of Shang Shen. As you crest a low hill, you see a roadblock up ahead. A group of imperial soldiers have cordoned off the road and are searching the wagons of those passing through. From their manner, it is evident that they are more interested in lining their pockets than finding “contraband.” A line of carts awaits inspection, accompanied by nervous-looking peasants and skittish beasts of burden.

The PCs can deal with the roadblock in a number of ways. They might try to talk their way through, try to sneak around it, or fight the soldiers and help out the poor peasants.

There are four rank-and-file soldiers and one sergeant. They are greedy and corrupt, using their office to bully those in their power. They are likely to be suspicious of a large and well-armed party. A cover story certainly would come in handy, if the players have thought ahead.

This encounter is designed to get players used to the *Dragon Fist* combat rules and familiarize them with the stunt system. It’s an easy fight if they choose to go that route. If your players prefer a nonviolent solution, however, you needn’t discourage them. It’s just as useful a learning experience to try out the feat system, perhaps using some Charm stunts or the thief’s ability to bribe.

**Sergeant, male F3:** AC 14; HD 3; hp 21; Att/round 1; To hit +2; Damage 1d8 (sword); Stunts—M 1d3, A 1d3–1.

**Equipment:** Iron lamellar breastplate, shield, double-edged sword, dagger.

**Soldiers, male F1 (4):** AC 12; HD 1; hp 6; Att/round 1; To hit +2; Damage 1d6 (spear); Stunts—none.

**Equipment:** Leather lamellar breastplate, shield, spear.

The morale of the soldiers is not very high: After a couple of rounds getting beat up, they’re likely to flee. As long as the PCs don’t linger at the scene, they needn’t worry about reinforcements. They can simply disappear into the countryside and continue on to Yekang.

## Yekang

Yekang [YEH-KONG] is an ancient city near the source of the Scarlet River. Originally a center of riverborne trade, it became a fortress city in the Seven Kingdoms era. After the reunification of the empire, the city’s military significance declined. Although the walls remained, Yekang once again embraced its mercantile roots and became a routine stopping point for those making a pilgrimage to White Tiger Mountain.

In recent years, the imperial army has returned to Yekang. The city’s walls and defenses have been strengthened, and a permanent garrison has taken up residence. These troops patrol the area around the city and have been very active in hunting for members of the nine secret societies. In charge of Yekang is Commander Hang Fuhan [HONG FOO-TSEUN] of the Imperial Guard. He lives in the Palace of the Phoenix, supposedly in attendance to the empress. Captain Ni Junshi [NEE CHUN-SHEU] commands the garrison, whose headquarters is in the Plaza of Heroes.

### Arrival in Yekang

The rest of the journey to Yekang is uneventful. Ten days out of Xing you crossed the Scarlet River and were able to take passage on a riverboat that took you the rest of the way.

Yekang is a city of medium size surrounded by a sturdy wall. You land at the busy docks, which are crowded with traders and pilgrims. Ahead is a large market, in which merchants sell all manner of goods. As you step off the boat, you are accosted by a swarm of young boys who have come from the many local travelers' inns. Each tries to entice you to stay at a particular establishment: "Cao's Inn, only 40 fen!" "The Happy House—30 fen!" and so on. As this wave of youthful enthusiasm washes over you, you pick up a small voice saying, "The Bumpy Toad, a place for discerning travelers."

The boy is Jinbo, [CHEEN-PWA] the son of the innkeeper Li. Once the PCs express interest in the Bumpy Toad, Jinbo happily replies, "Follow me, aunts and uncles, and I will take you there." Jinbo is true to his word and leads the PCs through the crowded streets of the marketplace. On the way, he keeps up a constant stream of dialogue. He's a curious lad and wants to know about the characters' travels and what they've seen outside of Yekang. This should come across as more endearing than annoying, so don't overdo it.

### The Bumpy Toad

It takes fifteen minutes to wade through the crowds to the Bumpy Toad. Typical of traveler's inns throughout Tianguo, it offers a welcome refuge from the bustling streets of Yekang. You are no sooner inside than you are seated and served hot tea and pork buns. Once you're settled in, the genial host appears. "Welcome to the Bumpy Toad," he says. "My name is Li, and it is my pleasure to serve you."

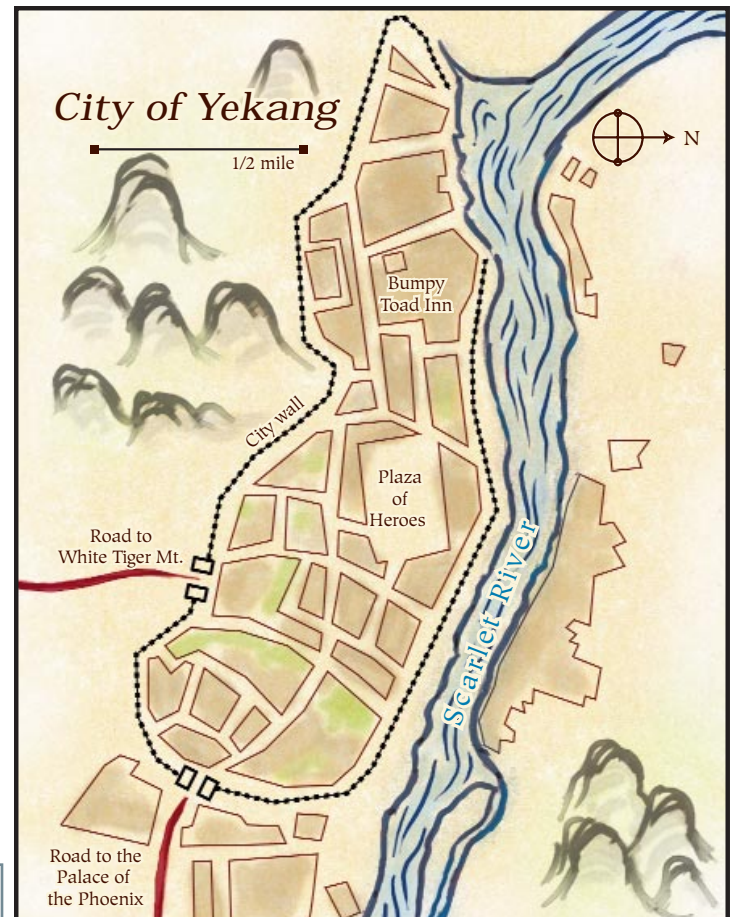
Li is the PCs contact in Yekang. If they tell him they are carrying a lotus to White Tiger Mountain, he nods quickly and says, "You have come just in time. The other pilgrims are meeting here tonight. I'll fetch you from your rooms when it's time."

Li and his staff serve the PCs a fine meal and then lead them to their rooms upstairs. The characters are free to wander about Yekang during the afternoon if they wish, and they can avail themselves of the wares at the outdoor market near the docks. Jinbo is happy to show them around the city, should they need guidance. Unless you decide to add in some local encounters, the afternoon passes without incident.

### The Pilgrims' Meeting

That evening Li comes to your rooms and leads you down the back stairs to the basement of the Bumpy Toad. He introduces you to two other people: Pinmei [PEEN-MAY], a local Iron Monkey wearing a black peasant outfit, and Rendi [LEUN-DEE], a White Lotus shaman disguised as a merchant. Both greet you enthusiastically.

These three are the entirety of the local leadership, and they are excited to have you on board. Once the meeting and greeting are over with, Pinmei briefs you on the situation in Yekang. She squats on the floor, ignoring the chair that Li has provided for her.



*Background*

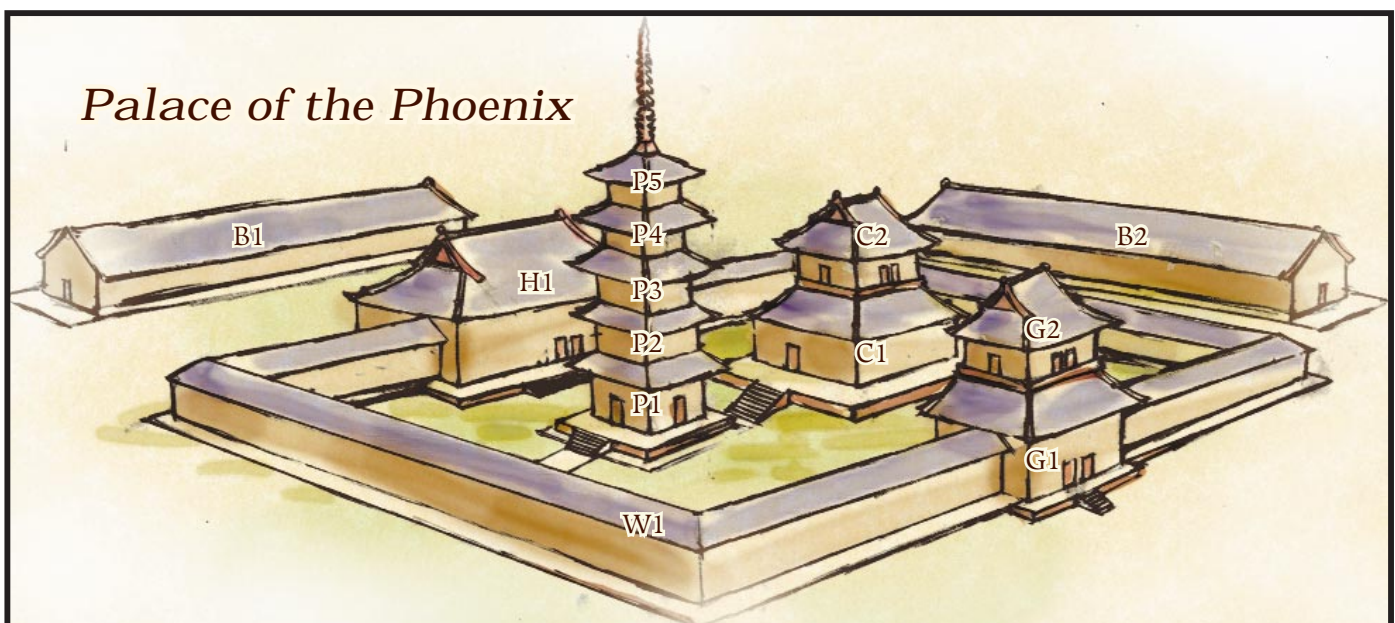
Pinmei provides the following information:

- The commander of Yekang is Hang Fuhan. He lives in the Palace of the Phoenix, guarding the empress with his contingent of the Imperial Guard. Hang has been rather distant, leaving the unpleasant work to his underlings.
- The garrison is commanded by Captain Ni Junshi, a sadistic officer who has had pickpockets impaled to “make examples of them.” His headquarters is in the Plaza of Heroes, an enormous practice ground for the garrison.
- The army has stepped up activity in the region of late, causing many local secret society members to go to ground. Pinmei and the others have not yet figured out what is behind this action.
- A spy within the palace has informed Pinmei that Hang Fuhan is leading some troops south tomorrow. The purpose of this excursion is unknown.
- The spy is a domestic who travels to the palace during the day to wash the garrison’s clothes. She is not there at night, which unfortunately is the best time to sneak in and find the empress.
- The empress spends most of her time on the top floor of the palace’s pagoda. It is said she prays to Heaven for the deliverance of the empire. She never comes to Yekang, and no one from the capital ever visits her.
- The local leadership are willing to help however they can. They don’t have an abundance of resources, but they can provide food, disguises if required, and a boat to use once the mission is complete. There are also enough Iron Monkeys in the countryside to create a diversion if desired, but they are not willing to throw their lives away.

*The Plan*

The PCs must now concoct a plan to break into the palace. It’s best if they wait for Commander Hang to lead his troops away, then sneak in that night. Should your players decide on a different course of action, you may need to modify the information provided below.

Suspicious characters may want to watch the Imperial Guard march out before the raid, lest Hang spirit the empress out of the palace. This is easily accomplished: There are trees along the road where the PCs can hide and observe. A column of some 20 cavalry and 50 infantry leaves at dawn. There is no litter present, and no sign of the empress.



## The Palace of the Phoenix

The Palace of the Phoenix is entirely made of wood. A former monastery, it is a little austere for a palace but quite suitable for its original purpose. The complex is dominated by a five-story pagoda.

This night is a fortuitous one for the PCs' intrusion, because the remaining soldiers started drinking and gambling as soon as their commander left the area. Many are passed out in their bunks, and the rest are not at peak fighting efficiency.

### *B1, B2: Barracks*

These large buildings house the palace garrison and are best avoided. Consisting of one large room with bunks for the troops, each is large enough to house sixty soldiers, though only twenty-five are currently in residence.

At the moment, both are disaster areas: Broken wine jugs litter the floor, and many bunks have been pushed aside. Most of the soldiers are either unconscious or drunkenly gambling.

Drunken Imperial Guard soldiers, male F1 (25): AC 14; HD 1; hp 6 each; Att/round 1 (normally 3/2); To hit +2; Damage 1d8+2 (specialized with sword); Stunts—M 1d3–1.

*Martial Arts Maneuvers:* Speed of the Leopard.

*Equipment:* Iron lamellar breastplate, double-edged sword, dagger.

Note: Many of the soldiers aren't wearing armor, which reduces their AC to 10.

### *W1: Wall*

All of the walls of the palace are 20 feet tall and patrolled by two soldiers each. The PCs can (and probably will) use Wuxia to jump right onto them.

## Commander's Area

### *C1: Commander's Receiving Hall*

This is where Commander Hang receives visitors and makes decisions. Silk banners hang from all the walls, and on a dais are statues of the Three Legendary Emperors behind a lacquered chair. There are a number of tables, with maps and scrolls scattered about. This is a good place for DMs who want to "seed" future adventures to drop some clues.

This building is locked while Hang Fuhan is away.

### *C2: Commander's Private Quarters*

A huge bedchamber for a huge ego, as the troops like to say. These are Hang Fuhan's personal quarters, and they are sumptuous. His large bed is surrounded by silk curtains, his bathtub enclosed by beautifully painted bamboo screens, and even his wardrobe skillfully carved of teakwood.

## Guards' Area

### *G1: Gatehouse*

The gate is, of course, locked at night. A sturdy wooden beam seals it shut and can be lifted only from the inside (Might feat, TN 15). Three torches are mounted above the gate, so the guards can detect anyone that approaches.

### *G2: Gallery*

The guards on duty spend their time in this sparse room, containing a table and four chairs.

Three guards and one sergeant are always on duty, and they take turns watching the road. These guards are not drunk, so they get their normal attacks.

Imperial Guard soldiers, male F1 (3): AC 14; HD 1; hp 6 each; Att/round 3/2; To hit +2; Damage 1d8+2 (specialized with sword); Stunts—M 1d3–1.

*Martial Arts Maneuvers:* Speed of the Leopard.

*Equipment:* Iron lamellar breastplate, double-edged sword, dagger.

Imperial Guard sergeant, male F1: AC 14; HD 2; hp 13; Att/round 3/2; To hit +2; Damage 1d8+2 (specialized with sword); Stunts—M 1d3, A 1d3–1.

*Martial Arts Maneuvers:* Claw of the Crab, Iron Palm, Speed of the Leopard.

*Equipment:* Iron lamellar breastplate, double-edged sword, dagger.

### Great Hall

Years ago, when important visitors would sometimes grace the Palace of the Phoenix, the Great Hall was used for formal audiences. It has not seen such an event in a very long time and now is used only when Hang Fuhan addresses all of his soldiers.

The Great Hall is quite spacious, with room for at least 200 people. Faded banners hang from the walls, and a 20-foot-tall statue of Emperor Jianmin dominates the far end. Benches line the sides, but the room is otherwise bare of furniture.

### The Pagoda

The PCs are likely to make straight for the pagoda, perhaps using Wuxia to jump up the outside. This can let them avoid fighting the spider demon (see “The Pagoda,” below) right away. (Make sure the demon does pop up at an inopportune moment, though, so the PCs can face a real challenge.)

#### P1: Guard Room

There are two soldiers here, both drunk and asleep. They are slumped over a table with an empty wine jug between them.

#### P2: Sorcerer's Quarters

Hang Fuhan retains the services of Ni Hao [NEE TSOH], a eunuch sorcerer from the capital. At the moment, Ni Hao is in the city of Yekang. His quarters are full of books and scrolls, including classic works of literature, religious tomes, and books of magic. Finding anything amid this jumble of knowledge is difficult, especially if the PCs are in a hurry. Those who want to search can make an Acrobatics feat (TN 18): Success lets them find a copy of *A Treatise on Needlework* in the pile.

#### P3: Shrine of Diao Zu'en

The God of Loyalty has always been popular with soldiers, so it should be no surprise that there is a small shrine to him. A shield painted to resemble a tortoise shell hangs on the wall, but the room is otherwise empty.

A dark stain on the floor is the only clue that an evil deed happened here. The White Lotus shaman who kept the shrine was murdered when the emperor turned against the order. Casting *commune with local spirit* spell in this room will contact his ghost, though the dead shaman cannot provide any useful information. He never knew what hit him: He was lighting incense when a soldier beheaded him from behind. The ghost is saddened to learn about the fate of the empire and the White Lotus.

A ladder leads up to the fourth floor. From below, the opening is dark and mysterious. The spider demon (see P4, below) will jump anyone poking a head inside.

*P4: Lair of the Spider Demon*

Commander Hang is serious about keeping the secret of the empress. He ordered Ni Hao to summon a demon as the pagoda's guardian. This horrid creature has made its lair on the fourth floor. The entire place is sticky with webs, which subtract 1 from all physical stunts performed in the room (this does not apply to the demon, of course). Close examination of the webs reveals over a dozen human bodies enshrouded inside. These appear to be local peasants, used to feed the demon's appetite.

There is a hole in the ceiling that leads to the home of the fake empress (see P5, below). The spider demon simply leaps up through the hole when required, so there is no ladder here. Even if the PCs enter the empress's quarters from the outside, the spider demon will surely make an appearance (though this buys them some time).

Spider Demon: AC 18; Move 150; HD 6; hp 35; Att/round 2; To hit +2; Damage 11–8/1–8; Special attacks—poison, web; MR 10%; Stunts—M 1d6, A 1d3, F 1d6, S 1d4, I 1d6, C 1d4.

*Special Attacks:* Poison—save vs. poison or take 3d10 additional points of damage; web—missile attack (range 40 feet), anyone hit is entangled and can take no action other than to break free (Might feat, TN 18).

For detailed information about the spider demon, see *Chapter 6: Gods and Monsters* in the *Dragon Fist* rules.

*P5: The Empress's Prison*

The top level of the pagoda houses the empress—or so Hang Fuhang would have Tianguo believe. The room itself is austere, with one bed, two smaller cots, a dresser, a table, and one nod to opulence in the form of a large mirror. The fake empress spends her days here in the company of two attendants. The windows are screened with paper. Occasionally, Hang has the “empress” and her retainers move about the grounds so the soldiers can see her. She wears elaborate gowns with veils on such occasions, keeping her face concealed.

When the PCs break into the room, they are confronted by an impossibly young “Jieli,” no more than thirty years old, the actress, caught without her veil, nonetheless insists that she is the Empress of Tianguo. However, she tearfully confesses to the ruse if pressed.

If the PCs ask where the real empress can be found, one of the attendants speaks up. Her name is Bailu [BY-LU], who was an attendant to the true empress before her death. Bailu is a small woman, wrinkled with age, but maintains a certain dignity. She tells the PCs that she knows where the empress is and can lead them there. It is nearby, she asserts, but they will have to leave the Palace of the Phoenix quickly before the guard is roused. Bailu wants to escape from the palace, and this is her best chance: She will not reveal where she is going or mention that the empress is dead.

This is a good moment for the spider demon to attack, if it hasn't yet.



the ghost of the empress speaks

### A Nearby Lake

If the PCs agree to Bailu's offer, she leads them out of the Palace of the Phoenix into the woods, away from Yekang. In less than a half-hour, they come to a small lake.

Bailu leads to you a large tree near the lake. She walks assuredly, as if she has been here many times before. Beneath the sagging boughs of the ancient tree are two unmarked graves. Bailu kneels down in front of the left-hand grave and starts to cry.

"Empress Jieli has been here for fifteen years," she says, voice choked with emotion, "with none but me to mourn her."

Before you can even ask the empress's fate, a wind blows up as if in answer to your unspoken question, whistling among the trees. Wisps of fog that glow with an unnatural light swirl across the lake. A lone figure appears from out of the fog, walking across the water as if it were dry land. Even without her imperial regalia, you recognize the Empress of Tianguo from her bearing. Only the rightful empress could have her confident step and regal air. Though dead, she is yet the phoenix to the emperor's dragon.

"Do not cry for me, sweet Bailu," she says tenderly. "Shed your tears for all of Tianguo."

### The Empress Speaks

The PCs should be suitably awed at meeting the ghost of the empress. In a Hong Kong movie, they'd likely be on their knees weeping and swearing oaths, but that may be a bit much to expect from your players. Nevertheless, the PCs will certainly have questions. The empress answers a reasonable number, then flies away into the night.

This is a good place to plant the seeds of later adventures. If you have ideas about how you want your campaign to progress, you can have the ghost drop some clues or provide appropriate information.

- How did you die?  
*Two years after the emperor ate the tainted lotus, I was banished to the Palace of the Phoenix. He could sense the goodness in my heart, I think, and knew I would oppose him if I remained in the capital. His cousin, Geng Jiming, escorted me as my jailer. Yet Jiming knew he was as much a prisoner as I, and soon he and I fell in love. When I became pregnant with his child, word escaped back to the capital. The Lord of the West Wing arrived shortly after the birth of our daughter. Geng Jiming and I were brought here, executed, and buried.*
- What happened to your daughter?  
*A loyal retainer whisked my child out of the palace when the Lord of the West Wing arrived. They escaped to the south, into the land of the Yi barbarians. I do not know my daughter's fate in that savage land.*
- Why do you linger in the mortal world?  
*No shaman was present at my burial, nor does my family say prayers for me, for they believe I yet live. I fear I shall walk the mortal world until a new emperor rules Tianguo.*
- What can we do to help?  
*You are heroes; that I can see plainly. One of you must win the Mandate of Heaven, defeat Jianmin, and found a new dynasty. A true Son of Heaven must rule Tianguo before the land will know peace again.*

### Back to Yekang

By this point, it is late in the night. The nearest shelter is back at the Bumpy Toad, so the PCs probably head back to Yekang to cancel the rescue plans for the empress if nothing else.



When they get close to the city, they hear the sound of running feet. (If they decide to spend the night in the woods, this encounter instead takes place at their camp.)

The panting figure of Jinbo appears out of the dark, sweat and tears mingling as they roll down his face. When he sees you, a wave of relief washes over him. Though he is desperately short of breath, he blurts out his message. “Thank the gods I’ve found you! My father and the others were arrested by soldiers after you left. Captain Ni says they are to be executed at dawn. Hurry, aunts and uncles, you must save them!”

It takes a few minutes to calm down the boy. Once the PCs convince him that his father won’t be executed, they can find out some additional information.

- Li, Pinmei, and Rendi were surprised at the Bumpy Toad and arrested. Jinbo ran away from the soldiers and was able to escape.
- Captain Ni Junshi presided over a “trial” that lasted all of five minutes. Now all three comrades are scheduled to be beheaded at dawn in the Plaza of Heroes.
- There will probably be at least fifty soldiers at the execution.
- The townsfolk are outraged but do nothing because they are afraid of Captain Ni.
- Jinbo has delivered messages for his father before and can contact the local Iron Monkeys if that would be helpful.

The PCs now face a dilemma. Their mission complete, they could just leave Yekang and report the fate of the empress. But abandoning comrades-in-arms to face execution at the hands of the cruel Ni Junshi just isn’t right. If they are true *wuxia* heroes, they’ll immediately start planning for a confrontation at dawn!

### *A New Plan*

It should be clear that the PCs will be desperately outnumbered in the coming battle. If they try to slug it out toe-to-toe with Ni Junshi and his soldiers, they’ll probably end up dead. They do, however, have several advantages.

First, Captain Ni doesn’t know of their existence. He thinks he has just neutralized the local rebel leadership, so he’s not expecting an effective response. Second, the citizenry of Yekang are up in arms about the arrests—Li in particular is a well-loved resident. The PCs can use this popular outrage to their advantage. Third, if the PCs act swiftly (by themselves or sending Jinbo as a messenger), they can summon twenty armed Iron Monkeys from the countryside to the Plaza of Heroes by dawn.

Whatever plan the PCs make, they only have a few hours to get organized. If players get mired down in pointless arguing, remind them that the clock is ticking.

### Handling Large Combats

The last thing anyone wants to do is roll all the dice for a melee involving a hundred combatants. The **Dragon Fist** stunt system easily resolves large-scale actions, using simple abstractions.

### Military Struggle

If the Iron Monkeys enter the fray, treat it as a series of Savvy contests. This represents a battle of wits between the commanders, enacted by the soldiers in the field. It works best if one of the PCs commands the Iron Monkeys, but if not, assume there is an Iron Monkey with Savvy 1d3 in charge (Pinmei, if freed, can take over; she has Savvy 1d6). Captain Ni orders his troops while he can, but once he gets into personal combat, one of his lieutenants will have to take over (also with Savvy 1d3).

Each round, resolve a new contest to determine how the battle is going. Compare the scores as normal, but do not use the usual contest outcomes. Rather, the loser takes casualties equal to the difference between the two scores. For example, if the Iron Monkeys' score is 19 and the soldiers' is 11, the soldiers lose eight of their number that round.

### Appealing to the Crowd

The PCs can also attempt to stir up the crowd (who are already riled) and turn them against the soldiers. This is best resolved as a series of Charm feats. What with the noise and chaos of the scene, each feat can affect only a small part of the crowd, but the PCs can make repeated attempts. *Players* trying this should give a rousing speech if possible, to enhance the Hong Kong feel of the scene.

The feat has a TN of 13, and once again the final score is important. The difference between the final score and the TN is the number of soldiers overwhelmed by the crowd that round. For instance, a charismatic PC plays to the crowd's outrage and rolls a 22 on his Charm feat. Subtract 13 from 22: The crowd has neutralized nine soldiers that round. (They aren't necessarily killed, but they are out of the combat.)

## Confrontation at Dawn!

The crowd starts to gather early at the Plaza of Heroes. Hundreds of townsfolk wind their way through the streets, determined to watch the unfolding drama. As the first rays of the sun begin to glint over the horizon, the Plaza of Heroes is packed with a mob of angry merchants, farmers, laborers, and peasants. A cordon of soldiers with spears blocks the crowd off from the execution area.

Statues of famous heroes line the plaza's sides, and a 30-foot image of the First Emperor acts as a centerpiece. On a raised dais in front of the garrison barracks, Captain Ni Junshi presides over the occasion. He is flanked by a imperial bureaucrat and his chief lieutenant. In front of the dais is a chopping block, where the headsman readies his ax. Li, Pinmei, and Rendu are nearby, tied to posts and guarded by a squad of soldiers.

The crowd quiets as Captain Ni begins to speak. "Good people of Yekang, I bring before you three criminals of the worst sort. These rebels have disgraced their ancestors by conspiring against the Son of Heaven himself. The penalty for such treason is unchanging and implacable. They will be executed this morning, as the law decrees. To show that I am not the monster that some of have dubbed me, however, I have reduced their sentence from impaling to beheading. Such is my mercy."

Li, Pinmei, and Rendu have only minutes to live. What do you do?

Cue one climactic fight scene, no doubt filled with tragedy and heroics. The PCs certainly have their hands full. In addition to Captain Ni, they must face a eunuch sorcerer (the "bureaucrat") named Tong Lixing [DUNG LI-SHEEN], the executioner, and some 70 soldiers. The crowd, and hopefully the Iron Monkeys, can help deal with the soldiers, but taking down the two villains is up to the PCs.

Captain Ni Junshi, male F5: AC 18; HD 5; hp 32; Att/round 3/2; To hit +2; Damage 1d6+3 (specialized with sword); Stunts—M 1d4, S 1d4, A 1d3.

*Martial Arts Maneuvers:* Claw of the Crab, Cobra Stance, Crane Stance, Iron Palm, Mantis Stance, One Hundred Eyes, Ride the Wind, Spring of the Tiger, Wuxia.

*Equipment:* Nine-ring broadsword.

Tong Lixing, male W5 (eunuch sorcerer): AC 12; HD 3; hp 21; Att/round 1; To hit +0; Damage 1d4 (war fan); Stunts—S 1d4, A 1d3-1, C 1d3-1.

*Martial Arts Maneuvers:* Blood of the Dragon, Crane Stance, Wuxia.

*Spells:* Cobra's breath, iron scarf, rain of needles (all preferred).

*Equipment:* War fan, spell scrolls.

Executioner, male F2: AC 15; HD 2; hp 14; Att/round 3/2; To hit +2; Damage 1d8+2 (battle-ax); Stunts—M 1d4; F 1d3.

*Equipment:* Iron lamellar armor, battle-ax.

Soldiers, male F1 (70): AC 12; HD 1; hp 4; Att/round 1; To hit +2; Damage 1d6 (spear); Stunts—none.

*Equipment:* Leather lamellar breastplate, shield, spear.

The Plaza of Heroes is big enough to fit 500 spectators. The plaza is packed with people—both a boon and a bane during the fight.

Captain Ni uses his soldiers, the eunuch sorcerer, and his own martial arts ability in an attempt to crush any resistance. He is a sadistic man, but he's not an idiot. If it becomes clear that he's going to lose this battle, he will flee using Ride the Wind. Until then, though, he tries to stymie the PCs. He may also try to kill the prisoners before they can be freed, just to be a bastard. Should he escape, the PCs will have made a long-term enemy.

## *Aftermath*

If all goes well, the people of Yekang help the PCs defeat Captain Ni and free the imprisoned secret society members. After the big battle in the Plaza of Heroes, things can go a number of different ways. Here are several options for further adventures, which DMs can develop as they see fit.

### *Stay or Go?*

The most immediate question is whether or not to remain in Yekang. The town has been liberated from the emperor's yoke—for now. It probably has several months before retribution falls, likely in the form of an imperial army. The PCs might stay and help organize the town's defenses, or they may try to spread the fervor to nearby towns and villages. Alternatively, they may decide that leaving Yekang is the most prudent course of action.

The PCs could decide to travel south to the Yi lands in search of the empress's daughter. This is a long journey to a strange and hostile place, but finding the child is of enormous importance to the rebel movement.

### *Final Peace*

Perhaps the ghost of Geng Jiming also haunts the mortal world. The empress may ask the PCs to find him and lay him to rest. Alternatively, the PCs can help the empress herself pass on by performing certain deeds.

### *Mysterious Mission*

It is noteworthy that the Imperial Guard commander, Hang Fuhan, left the Palace of the Phoenix with most of his troops. Where was he going, and why did he leave so suddenly? These questions can be answered in future adventures.

### *On the Run*

After the incident in Yekang, the PCs will likely become wanted criminals. This is especially true if Captain Ni escapes, since he can provide descriptions of the instigators. The PCs may now find that agents of the emperor dog their steps, spearheaded by Ni Junshi if he is still alive.

The PCs stand at the threshold of history. The future of Tianguo rests with you and your DM. The blessings of Heaven go with you!