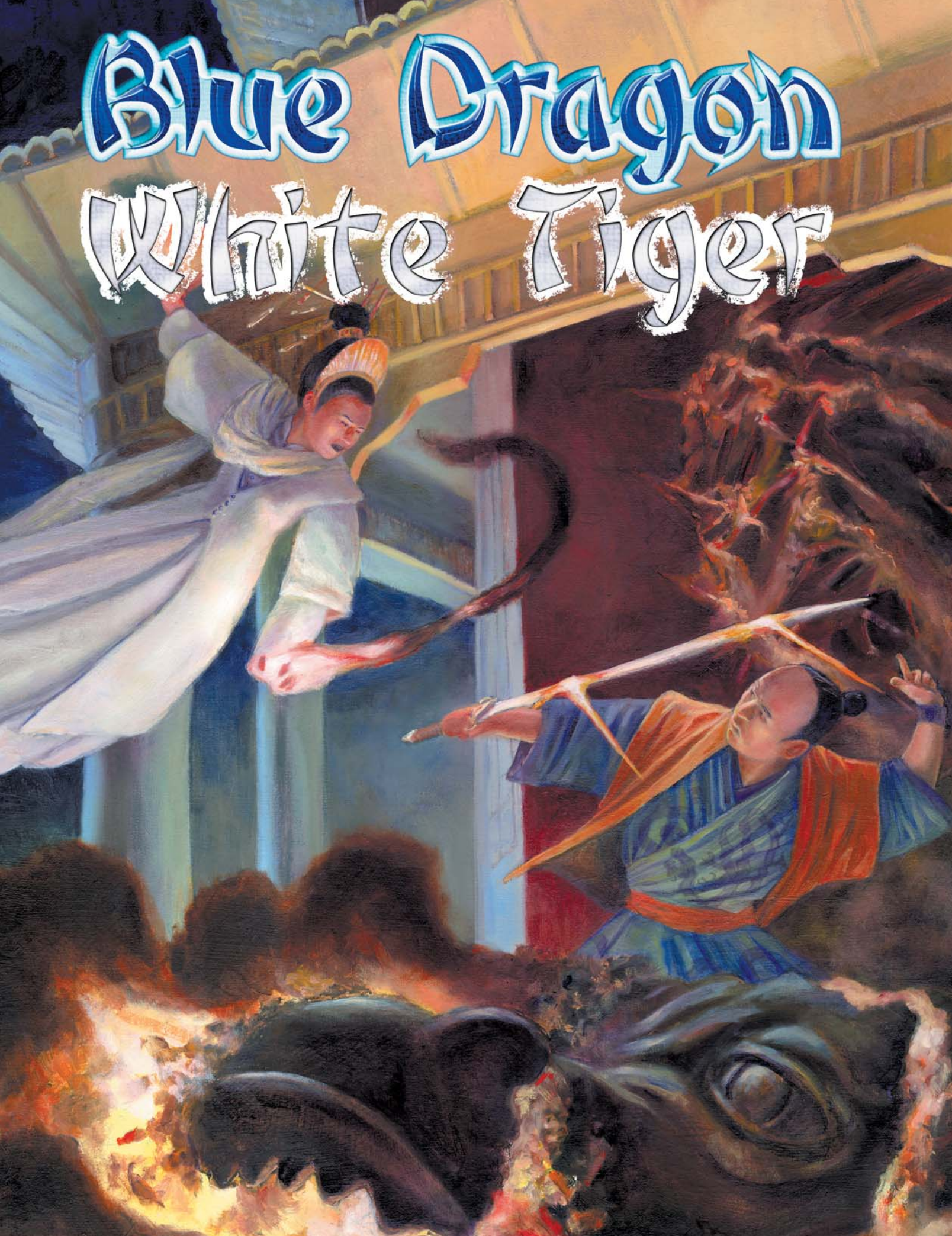


Blue Dragon White Tiger



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Blue Dragon, White Tiger explores the over-the-top, occult-enhanced martial arts and wizardry of wuxia films.

Uncover the conventions and traditions of the mystical genre that has captured the attention of Hong Kong film fans around the world.

Learn how to infuse the mythic excitement into your cinematic *Hong Kong Action Theatre!* role-playing game.

Blue Dragon, White Tiger offers an exploration of the history of wuxia film, a detailed study of Chinese magic and its practitioners including Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism, rules for adding magic to your *HKAT!* game, and a collection of adventures to launch a wuxia campaign.



Blue Dragon White Tiger

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3 INTRODUCTION**4 CHAPTER ONE: HISTORY OF WUXIA AND MAGIC**

- 5 Introduction: Everything in Cycles
- 8 History: The Wave in Motion
- 8 Pre-History (Hsai and Shang Dynasties)
- 11 The Han Dynasty
- 14 Movie Magic

18 CHAPTER TWO: CHINESE MAGIC AND MAGICIANS

- 19 Ancestral Dreams
- 24 Confucianism
- 28 Taoism
- 35 Buddhism
- 40 Hero-Magic
- 41 Kung Fu and Fighting Abilities

46 CHAPTER THREE: MAGIC IN HKAT!

- 47 Magic in HKAT!
- 48 Sample Spells
- 52 New Attributes

55 CHAPTER FOUR: SAMPLE ADVENTURES

- 56 Glorious Crusades for the Righteous
- 56 The Winter Queen
- 59 Shattered Empire
- 63 The Sword of Valour
- 65 Temple War
- 68 The Tomb of Guolong
- 70 The Mistaken Bride

72 CHAPTER FIVE: SAMPLE CHARACTERS

- 73 Chen Dehua
- 73 Yi Liling
- 76 Junren
- 77 Ouyang Biming

78 APPENDIX: FILM FESTIVAL #1

- 78 Five Fists of Kung Fu
- 81 Magic Hunter
- 82 Dragon Knights
- 86 The Mighty Heroes
- 90 Ghost Ship

92 INDEX

INTRODUCTION

If people were to accept the images playing across television and movie screens as truth, then the world would be far more interesting, and frightening, frankly. The evening news would be rife with stories like: "... and in other news, Hong Kong police arrested Fong Wai-kun for the murder of Jimmy Chan and destruction of private property. Witnesses claim Wai-kun struck Chan with the 8-Petal Blossom Palm Fist that destroyed half of downtown yesterday. Meanwhile Iron Crane of the Kowloon Choy Li Fut Academy announced in a press conference today his intention to avenge the death of his two-thousand year old master at the hands of Lord Oblivion. Lord Oblivion was unavailable for comment." Admittedly, this is a silly and exaggerated approach to matters, but in a sense Hong Kong action films have become partial truths in the way Westerners view China. This is especially true of wuxia flicks, where the martial wizardry of Jet Li, Lau Kar-leung, or Yuen Woo-ping have turned kung fu into oriental superpowers and sent thousands of Western students into regional schools in the hopes of learning kicks they could never master without wires and an FX budget.

Blue Dragon, White Tiger does not seek to pull the curtain back and reveal the wizard. In fact, it relies on the almost over-the-top antics of wuxia-style movies. Instead, it intends to offer context for many long-standing traditions extant in wuxia and sorcery flicks. Rather than capitalizing on what the movies offer as truth, this book pays homage to the culture and conventions that fuels the stories entertaining people. In this fashion, Game Masters and players alike can generate ideas, characters, and action more in keeping with the inspiration of HK flicks, thus infusing their games with the exoticism and authenticity of Asian cinema. Without this basis, Hong Kong films exist as nothing more than eye candy rather than as the storyteller of myths — old and new alike. Approaching *HKAT!* games with this level of understanding can therefore only enhance the cinematic role-playing experience.

ANCIENT PROVERBS

Blue Dragon, White Tiger is a wuxia-motivated sourcebook with greater disclosure on the genre's inspirations. China has long protected and kept alive the traditions of the past, adopting new interpretations on age-old themes while still maintaining the authenticity of the original legends. Many survived through well-documented records, through the performance arts, or the recounting of religious parables. *Blue Dragon, White Tiger* follows these various steps, showing how each influenced China's folklore and how they eventually made their way to the big screen.

Act I, the History of Wuxia and Magic, covers the introduction of religion to China as well as the history of Hong Kong cinema's treatment of the genre. China enjoys a unique fusion of faiths. While subsequent sections deal with magic specifically, this establishes the drive behind mysticism: religions. This section deals with the major Chinese movements of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism.

Act II is entitled Chinese Magic and Magicians, and describes the schools of religious/magical thought. Rather than drawing upon movies for inspiration, however, this section remains traditional to Middle Kingdom thought from China's earliest history to the inclusion of "Hero-Magic," which included legendary figures like Fong Sai Yuk or Wong Fei-hung.

Act III applies both the fictional and historical basis of Hong Kong movies to create new rules and system material for productions. This includes a new magic system specifically designed for *Hong Kong Action Theatre!* with an eye on maintaining the quick and easy flow of this game's already fluid mechanics.

Act IV contains six adventure synopses for wuxia-style games. They include a list of potential cast members as well as locations and a recommended adventure chronology. The adventures cover the staples of wuxia flicks, including the fantasy-epic a la *Chinese Ghost Story* and *Storm Riders*.

Act V covers five heroes and rogues available for Game Masters to drop into productions immediately. Each is fully written up with stats, histories, and motivations.

CHAPTER ONE: HISTORY OF WUXIA AND MAGIC

The people are the most precious of all things.

Next come the gods of soil and grain.

The sovereign matters least...

— Confucianism



HISTORY OF WUXIA AND MAGIC

INTRODUCTION: EVERYTHING IN CYCLES

Call it reincarnation or the karmic cycle, but nothing truly dies in the Middle Kingdom ... especially ideas and conceptual forces. Hong Kong cinema is indicative of this truth, for while many of its facets rely on contemporary conventions, the heart and soul of themes, and even genres, draws on the continuation of eminent and respected traditions and practices. This is especially true of one genre called wuxia, more popularly translated (mistakenly) as wire-fu. Almost everybody is familiar with at least one of its conventions in the high-flying fighter capable of physical feats beyond the mundane. Other film practices include the use of magic, the presence of the supernatural, the inhuman martial skills of protagonists and antagonists alike, and the hero's steely virtue. For Western audiences, these are visual feasts for the action oriented; for Chinese audiences, however, the stories are vehicles for themes and legends dating back millennia, reinterpreted for a more visually stunning medium and more sophisticated audiences.

Still, the appreciation of genres like wuxia almost demands some familiarity with the roots of its concepts. Cinema-style wuxia owes its traditions to the Peking Opera, which in turn borrows from the legends and stories of heroes (mostly). These tales, in turn, stem from the religions and faiths of the region, some of which predate Christianity. Wuxia is almost a glimpse into China's venerable past and the roots of its long-standing traditions. This section touches upon the religions, which form the basis of magical beliefs and legends (see Chapter Two), which inspired the Anhui Opera, which provided a framework to the Peking Opera, which motivated the eventual shift to the big screen. More so, with the popularity of video games and the increasingly sophisticated technology developing for this medium, audiences are experiencing wuxia in a more interactive capacity.

XIA

Wuxia is a bridge between two words: *wu* (military or martial skills) and *xia* (which equates to chivalry). Over the years the combination of *wu* and *xia* has become synonymous with tales of Chinese sorcery and combat. When *xia* is ascribed to a person, however, it means something far greater than just chivalry. It almost becomes the driving force behind the protagonist, the one compelling him or her to greater action against injustices. In this fashion its definition is akin to swordsman or knight errant, though any exact denotation is difficult since different periods co-opted *xia* for their own usage. To Confucians, for example, the *xia* were troublemakers who fought the natural and respected order of the Universe. They railed against the *xia*'s willingness to pledge their services to strangers first and their family second. To the Confucians, the *xia* were part of "the Five Vermin," and selfish for thinking of themselves before their duties to the Mandate of Heaven. Yet in another era, *xia* formed the backbone of mercenary armies during portions of the Zhou Dynasty, thus supporting the ruling class, while amidst the chaos following the Sui Dynasty's collapse, the *xia* appeared in the form of revered and trusted Shaolin monks.

Regardless of their historical purpose, *xia* were China's closest brush with counterculture; they were men and women embraced as heroes by the poor and rogues by the existing establishment. Armed with their unwavering honour and bound by their word, the legends of *xia* were highly romanticized and very popular. Certainly, some of these knight-errants pursued selfish agendas, but most upheld some of the qualities believed the ideal: beneficent, honest, loyal, just, poor, fearless, individualistic, and hungry for glory. Unfortunately the last two "conditions" ran contrary to the Confucian sense of a gentlemanly mien and to the spirit of martial virtue, which advocated humility.

TSUI HARK

Tsui Hark (pronounced "Choy Hok") has often been called "the Steven Spielberg of Asia." He dislikes the comparison, but it seems to have stuck, based both on the popular appeal of his movies and their reliance on special effects. His film *Zu: Warriors From the Magic Mountain* is probably single-handedly responsible for the revival of the wuxia genre.

Tsui Hark was born Tsui Man-kong in Canton in 1951, but spent his childhood in Vietnam before moving to Hong Kong when he was fourteen. Later, he attended university in Dallas (where he changed his name to Hark, meaning "to overcome", because he was sick of the other students calling him "King Kong") and spent a few years as a documentary filmmaker in New York.

On returning to Hong Kong, Hark landed a job directing a nightly soap opera at the television network TVB, where he worked with such notables as Ringo Lam and Chow Yun-fat. From there, he moved into the movie business. His first three films were dark, brooding, nihilistic box-office flops. Somehow, a production company called Cinema City believed Hark would be the right director for a wacky comedy film. Apparently, they were right, because the resulting movie (*All the Wrong Clues ... For the Right Solution*) was a critical and popular success. Tsui went on to direct several huge hits for Cinema City, including *Aces Go Places I & III*, before he split in 1985 to found Film Workshop.

At Film Workshop, Hark began his association with John Woo. Woo was depressed about his inability to break out of the comedy genre, and Tsui offered to finance his gangster movie *A Better Tomorrow*. Their partnership would later dissolve in acrimony during the filming of the sequel

(which Woo disowns). He also fired King Hu, one of the best-known directors of the Shaw Brothers era, from a film. Tsui admits that he was difficult to work with at the time, saying "Back then, I got frustrated. I never learned the difference between producing and directing."

Film Workshop produced four of Hong Kong's most beloved movie franchises. As well as the *A Better Tomorrow* series, Tsui created *A Chinese Ghost Story*, the *Swordsman* series, and the *Once Upon a Time In China* series, starring Jet Li (in parts I through III and VI). OUATIC (as it is known) brought back the character of Wong Fei Hong and updated the story for modern times, portraying him as a stalwart defender of Chinese nationalism who nevertheless is able (with difficulty at times) to slowly make an accommodation to the demands of westernization.

Like many Hong Kong directors, Tsui attempted to move into Hollywood, and ended up working with Jean-Claude van Damme. The experience not only sent Hark fleeing back to Hong Kong, but also persuaded him to drop out of the film business for a few years. Hark has recently returned to filmmaking, with several movies scheduled for release in 2001. Best of all, the schedule for this year includes a sequel to *Zu* (titled *The Legend of Zu*, released in August of 2001).

Tsui's films are complex at their best and confusing at their worst. He prefers the "kitchen sink" approach to moviemaking, loading his movies up with sex, violence, special effects, and erotic ambiguity, and often provides rich mines for film students. Nevertheless, Tsui denies that his movies are meant to convey any important messages. Instead, they are simply meant to be fun — an attitude that probably explains his success.

TSUI HARK

徐克



HISTORY: THE WAVE OF MOTION

The history of Chinese religion and beliefs is like a wave rolling towards the beach; with each inch it gains strength and sweeps up new notions and ideas like an unstoppable, steady force. Twentieth Century China, and even Asia, is the aftermath of many waves gathering force and sweeping the world. The focus on harmony and enlightenment have struck an international chord with people, while the focus on physical perfection and martial prowess have become the favoured avatar of action for movie buffs. These popularized trends, however, are but two manifestations of greater forces that have shaped China's direction for well over two-thousand years.

PRE-HISTORY (HSIA AND SHANG DYNASTIES)

Before the introduction of Buddhist, Taoist, or Confucist thought, the form and nature of the Middle Kingdom's macrocosm was still distinctly unique from Western experience. Unfortunately, the few existing written records makes historical summations of this period difficult at best. The mythical Hsia dynasty lacks archaeological evidence to confirm its existence, but it was believed to have ended somewhere near 1751 BCE. During this period, Chinese culture exhibited tribal beliefs and a scattering of ideas later codified under the succeeding dynasty. That would prove the Shang, which ruled until 1027 BCE — though these dates are best afforded a certain leeway.

The Shang Dynasty was perhaps of greater importance if only because its existence is irrefutable, and because its Emperors were slowly codifying the scattered and nebulous tribal beliefs. During this period, especially late Shang (better known as Yin) rule, ancestor worship was widespread, burial practices among the gentry and nobility included human sacrifices, astronomical data was already advanced, and notion that time was cyclical instead of linear had taken root.

The central deity was Shang Ti or the Supreme Ruler of Heaven, though he was not the creationist god of Christian or Islamic thought. He bore more in common

with Yahweh from the Old Testament as a tribal figure involved directly with the affairs of men and women. In fact, his name might also mean High Ancestor of the Ruling House as a means of legitimizing the dynasty in power. This indicates that even at the dawn of dynastic rule almost 1500 years before the birth of Christ, the Chinese nobility were already involved in ancestor worship.

There was never any inference that Shang Ti created the world, nor was he responsible for its functioning. In China there was no centralized figure judging, recording, and punishing those people who broke the dogmas of faith. Instead, Heaven rewarded and penalized people by virtue of their harmony or discord with their surroundings. Certainly Shang Ti meted out some of these verdicts, but he was not the vengeful, fire-and-brimstone god of other religions.

Two unique aspects also extant in the Middle Kingdom of this period included an almost animist quality to their faith, and their definition of the "soul." In the case of the former, China's animism does not refer to a belief in anthropomorphic figures like the Egyptian animal-headed gods or Native American totemic spirits. Instead, Chinese culture attributed the greatest spiritual beings or phenomena to human origins (through ancestor worship, for example), but there were also innumerable spirits constituting the animals, plants, rocks, waters, and even stars. There was virtually little separation between humanity and nature. They existed as part of a cosmology, integral to the world around them just as everything else was but not immune or above it.

The question of the soul is slightly trickier, if only because it relies on the principle of opposite but complimentary forces. Early Chinese thought engendered the notion of a universal dynamic created through the interplay between two opposing forces, be they light and darkness, hot and cold, male and female, etc. Scholars and philosophers under the Chou Dynasty later quantified this dynamic as the principles of yin and yang as exemplified in the *Tai Ji Tu* symbol or black and white teardrop wheel. The cosmos was a balance between these two forces (though later, the universe as manifestation of five elements — water, fire, earth, wood, and metal — took form). Just as the yin exemplified the feminine while yang signified the masculine, so too did

the yin represent the material body while the yang delineated the soul. A person was thus a mixture of these aspects, but upon death, split into the yin (the *p'o* or his or her material manifestation, which was interred in the earth), and the yang (the *hum* or his or her spiritual manifestation, which ascended towards Heaven).

THE CHOU DYNASTY

The Chou Dynasty, which ruled from 1027 to 256 BCE, does not represent specific religious outlooks as much as it does a period of tremendous change. Among the many great notables who emerged during this period were Taoist founder Lao Tzu, the philosopher Mo Tzu, the teacher and ideologist Confucius, and the great general Sun Tzu. During this period, philosophers refined the notions of yin and yang as well developed the principles of the five elements. The Chinese people also abandoned human sacrifice (mostly), while the greatest clans developed mythical genealogies with *shen* (supernatural creatures like spirits and nagas) counted as ancestors. This eventually culminated in the dissemination of ancestor cults from the nobility into all strata of life by the emergence of the Qin (or Ch'in) Dynasty.

THE THOUSAND-FOLD TZU

Lao Tzu, Hsun Tzu, Mo Tzu, Kung Fu Tzu (Confucius), Sun Tzu, Chuang Tzu, and Meng Tzu (Mencius) were the pillars China's philosophical golden age, but if it seems odd that all of them share a common name, it is only because Tzu is actually an honorary title. It simply means "master."

CONFUCIANISM

"I am a transmitter not a creator ... I believe in things of old and love them." These words, spoken by Confucius, perhaps best exemplify the utopian codices of this philosophical belief structure. More properly known as Kung Fu Tzu, he was born in 551 BC in the principality of Lu during the decline of Chou Dynasty. Little is known of his early life, save perhaps that his family, possibly once nobility, had fallen on difficult times by

Confucius's birth. Still the scholar-philosopher opened a school at the age of 22, with a focus on culture and personal virtue; it was the first catering to people outside of the nobility, with admission costing a very reasonable 10 strips of dried meat.

Long a fan of Chou conventions, Confucius studied and advocated ancient rites and customs. He believed in the traditional rules of conduct, saying that it was a person's duty to exist in harmony with his or her surroundings; the only way to properly accomplish this was to observe time-honoured customs. These rites ensured a positive dynamic on society, but relied greatly on benevolent and wise rule.

Applying this philosophy to his work, Confucius eventually became a diplomat and minister of law for Lu. Of course, given the decline of the ruling dynasty even in a Chou stronghold like Lu, Confucius came to odds with the regional governor in 497 BCE, and left. One tale claims Confucius took part in a sacrificial rite, but when denied his share of meat for the event, he became angered over the impropriety. Another story states the governor of a neighbouring state bribed Lu's governor with dancing girls. When the bribed governor ignored matters of state for these women, Confucius left in disgust. Of course both tales were merely excuses for an obviously degenerating situation. Confucius did not respect the governor, but could not well argue with him since it meant the philosopher's political and possibly real demise. Instead the event (either of them) afforded Confucius his excuse to leave the governor's employ.

Confucius spent 13 years on the road with his entourage of followers, seeking out a new post in the government. Unfortunately, corruption was rife between the failing Chou Dynasty and feuding warlords, so nobody was willing to hire a man of such strong convictions. Confucius eventually returned to Lu province at the age of 68, though he did not believe his travels were in vain. They allowed his students to glimpse the world and even earn position he did not. He died five years later, a teacher, mentor, and luminary of proper conduct. His followers compiled his teachings into the *Lun Yu*, known to the West as the *Analects of Confucius*. They became the standard for Chinese thinking, advocating societal responsibility, propriety conduct, a gentlemanly mien, and a respect for customs.

TAOISM

Another philosopher of the time is the legendary Lao Tzu, reputed founder of Taoism. According to popular myth, Lao Tzu was born an old man after his mother endured a 60-year pregnancy brought about after she witnessed a falling star. Hence Lao means “the old boy.”

For the next one hundred years (again according to myth) Lao Tzu witnessed society’s down-spiral amidst the terrible “warring states periods,” where city-states feuded on the fields of battle. Taxes sapped the finances of landowners and merchants alike, while royalty lived under the constant fear of rebellion and sedition. Disgusted with this state of affairs, Lao Tzu retreated from the world and eventually made his way to Han-Ku pass where he met with its keeper, a man called Hsin Yi. Yi, who could predict the future, recognized Lao Tzu as a man of great future importance, and asked the 160-year old philosopher to write his wisdom down before departing from society. The fruits of that effort became the *Tao Te Ching*, which translates in a number of ways including “The Book of the Way and its Power” or “Classic of the Way and Its Virtue.”

Lao Tzu then vanished, though some followers believed he achieved immortality and still lives in the world as a hermit. More recently, however, scholars think several authors contributed to the *Tao Te Ching*, and

THE TAO OF TAO

The Tao is probably one of the most difficult Chinese concepts to encapsulate properly. Some definitions rely on metaphors, such as Tao is simply the way or road, while others use riddles like “the Tao that can be spoken of is not the true Tao” (from the *Tao Te Ching*). Generally, however, the Tao has two broad forms of application in regards to Chinese thought. The first is the most basic as “the Way” or truth in relation to conduct. Elaborating on this theme in a grander sense is the Tao as a universal sense — truth through the natural processes of the cosmos. Unfortunately, neither descriptive imparts the full significance of Tao as a way of life, but then again, if philosophers describe it by what it isn’t, then how can a paragraph summarize what it is?

that it was completed around 250 BCE, approximately 350 years after its original estimates.

Regardless, Taoism is an umbrella term for many influences, from Lao Tzu to Chuang Tzu, to Yang Chu, to Lieh Tzu. It is also a catchall term for two major schools of thought, one philosophically oriented, the other religious.

Tao Chia or philosophical Taoism pursued a return to the natural state of the world, and a stronger relationship with that world in terms of conduct. It advocated such principles as flowing along the path of least resistance and achieving harmony with one’s surroundings. *Tao Chiao* or religious Taoism, however, treated the Tao as a magical experience and the avenue to gaining powers including immortality.

THE SIX SCHOOLS

Before the rise of the Qin Dynasty, six schools of thought dominated China including the Literati or Scholars (Confucianism) and the Taoists. The remaining four included the Mohists, the Legalists, the Yin-yang School, and the School of Names.

Although Mohism appeared a liberal backlash to the conservative Confucianist trend, many of its precepts were eventually assimilated into the School of Literati. Engendered by the philosopher Mo Tzu, who lived between 478 to 381 BCE, its chief tenet stated that the correct action is that which brings the greatest happiness to the most people. It advocated inalienable rights for the lower classes including prosperity and happiness, and abhorred traditions for customs’ sake.

The Legalists believed in *fa*, their central concept, which essentially meant “standard.” Initially a gauge of measures for weight, length, and volume, the Legalists extended its meaning to include the “standards” by which a ruler administered for his people. By the third century BCE, however, the philosopher Han Fei Zi advocated a system of stringent laws and punishments as a means of creating a strong state. The Legalists adopted a stance contrary to the teachings of Mohists, Confucianists, and Taoists by claiming people were inherently bad. They advocated the enforcement of strict laws through harsh discipline to curtail people’s predilection for anti-social behaviour, believing people only pursued moral virtue when forced.

The Yin-yang School was almost Taoist (in the broad strokes) in philosophy. They followed the universal principles of their namesake and studied its presence in all things as a means of understanding the cosmos; this included observing the motion of stars and the course of seasons. Seemingly contrary to the Yin-yang School philosophy was that of the School of Names. These philosophers enjoyed arguing about abstract matters and took pleasure from contradictory ideas and precepts. They placed great emphasis on names as opposed to the things themselves.

THE QUEST FOR IMMORTALITY

The Taoists have long led the quest of immortality through alchemical means. Some masters even ingested solutions to turn their innards into gold, one element associated with longevity. So strong was the belief that one legend from ninth century AD tells of diggers accidentally opening a sealed stone casket filled with silk. A man of dignified means arose from the casket, straightened his robes, and simply vanished.

At times this quest for immortality has backfired (beyond the simple poisonings from imbibing chemicals) like when Qin's First Emperor sought out immortality and spent a fortune seeking out the island of the Three Immortals, or creating embassies atop mountains to communicate with spirits. When he became enamoured with the notion of the five elements, he allowed it to influence his decisions. Black became the chief colour for garb and pennants, while the number six predominated. Hats of state were six measures high, carriages were six measures wide, and the imperial coach had six horses. The First Emperor believed that the only means to bring about the five elements was to enforce appropriate laws stringently and harshly. When the Confucians vocalized their concerns about the Qin's harsh rule, the Emperor burned their texts and buried alive their scholars.

THE QIN DYNASTY

The Chou Dynasty was long in its death throes centuries before the arrival of the Qin Dynasty, which in turn heralded the arrival of China's Imperial Age. The Qin (or Ch'in) proved a saving grace in China's history following the slow decay of the Chou and the bloody Warring States Period, even though they ruled a brief 14 years from 221 to 207 BCE. Despite this almost footnote existence in China's 2,500 years of civilization, the Qin not only united the Middle Kingdom under one rule, but China also derived her name from the Ch'in.

On a religious front, the intolerant Qin were also infamous for 213-212 BCE pogrom against scholars and their texts. Many tomes of wisdom and learning were lost thanks to Qin-sanctioned book burnings, and many scholars were buried alive except, perhaps, for Legalists and those supporting the schools of law. Thankfully Confucianists and Taoists, the only two schools that survived the coming years, managed to rescue many texts from the bonfires, though only fate knows how many pearls of wisdom were completely destroyed or still remain hidden.

THE HAN DYNASTY

The Qin fell to the Han, who, for the early years of power, were far more tolerant and surprisingly progressive when compared to their predecessors. Ruling from 206 BCE to AD 9, the Hans relied on scholars for advice ... scholars unaffiliated with the Legalists for their involvement during the violent era of the Qin. The scholars relied on the teachings of the Lu scholar, Confucius, with Emperor *Han Wen Di* (179-157 BCE) openly embracing the sage's teachings. With Han Wen Di placing Confucian scholars at the highest levels of state, the philosophy enjoyed tremendous influence and power by first century BCE.

By the millennial shift signified in the Christian calendar through Christ's birth, religious Taoism was taking root and blossoming through a developing pantheon, through Taoist cults, and through Taoist communities. Just as important, however, was the arrival of Buddhism, the third in the Chinese trinity of faith.

JET LI

Jet Li was born Li Jian-jie in mainland China in 1963. He began studying wushu at the age of eight and won five gold medals in the national championships at the age of twelve, as well as winning China's national wushu championship four times. Li was nineteen when he starred in his first movie, *Shaolin Temple*, in 1982. It was one of the earliest Hong Kong films shot on the mainland, and although it was banned in Taiwan as a result, it was a major hit elsewhere in Asia.

Li felt grossly underpaid, receiving only a state subsidy despite the success of the film. In 1988, he received an exit visa from the Chinese government and moved to California. When his exit visa expired two years later, Li returned to Hong Kong and signed a movie deal with Golden Harvest. His first film on returning to movies, *Once Upon a Time in China*, made him an even greater sensation than he had been before ... and left him feeling almost as underpaid. Li eventually fired his manager, replacing him with a man named Jim Choi.

Choi had just entered the film business, leaving behind his earlier career — allegedly selling heroin in Amsterdam for the triads (Li has denied any knowledge of Choi's background). Whatever his past, Choi backed Li in his threat to sue Golden

Harvest, and in 1992 the production company agreed to release Li from his contract. Choi immediately signed Li up for his next production, a remake of the 1967 classic *Dragon Gate Inn*, with Michelle Yeoh slated to co-star.

Before filming could begin, two men assassinated Choi as he stepped out of the elevator in his Kowloon offices. Filming was scrubbed (although an alternate remake was released that same year). His murder was never solved, although there were reports that he had been murdered by another triad for refusing to lend Li out to appear in another picture.

After Choi's death, Li signed with another production company, launching him into the busiest years of his career. Between 1993 and 1997, he starred in 13 films, including: *Fong Sai Yuk I & II*, the occasionally unintentionally humorous *Bodyguard from Beijing* (watch out for the scene where Li and his co-star shove one another out of the path of an oncoming bullet), and *Black Mask*. In 1997, Li returned to work with Tsui Hark in the role franchise that had made him a star, when he filmed *Once Upon a Time in China and America*. That year also saw Li in *Lethal Weapon 4*, which kickstarted his career in the United States.

Li has moved back to California and remarried in 1999. He has filmed two movies for 2001, *Kiss of the Dragon* and *The One*.

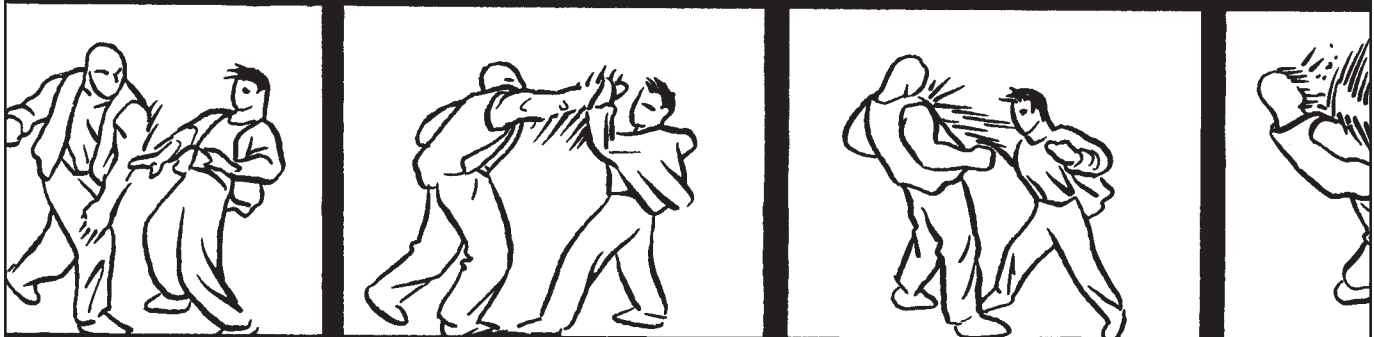
BUDDHISM

Buddhism emerged in sixth century BCE like Confucianism and Taoism, only it was born in India through a prince named Siddhartha Gotama. Siddhartha was son to Queen Maya — who dreamt of a white elephant descending into her womb when she conceived Siddhartha — and King Suddhodana — who watched his son meditate below a tree whose shade never moved throughout the day. Although the future Buddha remained secluded from the world around him, he still snuck out to witness life.

During four successive trips, Siddhartha came upon four signs; three were cloaked in the misery of old age, disease, and death, while the fourth was a wandering

ascetic who seemed at peace with his surroundings despite the obvious misery. Siddhartha renounced his belongings, his birthright, and his wife and child to become a wandering ascetic. He wandered for six years, learning at the feet of hermits, eating a grain of rice a day, lying on the burning ground with the dead, and meditating for days. All told, he realized asceticism was not the answer. Instead he sought the Middle Way, a path avoiding the extremes of pleasure and disavowal, and attained *nirvana* or an existential bliss.

From this beginning, Buddhism spread slowly across Asia while losing momentum and followers in India (although Hinduism absorbed some Buddhist tenets). It finally arrived in China first century AD, but took several centuries to take root and blossom thanks to



JET LI



the hold of Confucianism and Taoism over a culture that distrusted outsiders and non-Chinese notions. In fact, early Buddhist symbols and practices found shelter in Taoism, and people even believed it was a sect of that religious/philosophy initially. Slowly, however, Buddhism conformed to China just as China conformed to accommodate Buddhism. It began in the fourth century, following the epic Three Kingdoms Era, when north China fell to barbarian warlords and people found refuge and food in Buddhist temples.

Over subsequent decades, Buddhism found its share of supporters and adversaries, with men like Emperor Wen Di (AD 424-454; not to be confused Sui Wen Di, the title of Emperor Yang Jian of the sixth century AD or Han Wen Di) stemming Buddhism's influence and Emperor Liang Wudi (AD 502-550) encouraging its spread. Eventually Confucianism made acceptances for monotheistic Buddhism by identifying Buddha as the "dutiful son." Thus the relatively "new" religion-philosophy became the third of China's big three religions.

MOVIE MAGIC

The presence of magical adventure in Hong Kong films can be traced back to the roots of the Chinese film industry, which owes its existence to the performing troupes of the Peking Opera. The Peking Opera was a style of theatrical production featuring martial arts, acrobatics, and stylized weapon combat that originated during the Ming Dynasty (the 14th through 17th century). In 1644, the Manchu-backed Ching overthrew the Ming Emperor. Many martial arts masters who opposed the Ching (a historical fact that forms the basis for many classic kung fu films) travelled secretly through China via the Red Junks carrying Peking Opera troupes from performance to performance. This secret movement led to the spread of martial arts in China, under the guise of harmless actors.

Peking Opera stories were often tales of heroes and warriors of legend, similar in theme to the wuxia narratives of today. One of the most popular tales often presented in the Opera relied on the 16th-century novel "Journey to the West" (*Xiyouji*), attributed to Wu Cheng'en. The story, which has been re-told countless times, opens with the birth of Monkey emerging from a

stone egg. Monkey progresses from becoming the King of the Monkeys on the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, to achieving supernatural Daoist skills. Bounding through the skies on clouds, he wreaks havoc on his many visits to heaven in the vain hope of achieving ever-higher celestial office. The Monkey King eats the peaches of immortality specially grown for the banquet held by the Heavenly Queen Mother of the West, upsetting the Jade Emperor and other deities. The Buddha finally incarcerates him beneath the Mountain of the Five Elements. He is eventually released to accompany the monk Xuanzang on his quest to obtain the holy Buddhist scriptures from India; joining him are the other heroes: Pigsy, Monk Sha, and the dragon horse. Together, through many tales, they overcome 81 calamities and obstacles in the form of supernatural phenomena and monsters before reaching their goal and returning to China with the texts.

This style of legendary adventure was very popular with audiences, and the Peking Opera performers brought them with wild martial arts displays and special effects intended to emulate the magic of the stories. During production of the earliest films, the subject matter was often Peking Opera performance. It was inevitable that these kinds of stories worked their way into movies. The benefits of photography allowed for special effects not possible in a live performance.

In 1928, when Walt Disney first created Mickey Mouse, China's film industry was in its infancy, but it had already mastered a technique that used cartoons to create special effects for sword-fighting scenes. The camera crew first shot the scene between two actors. The film was then superimposed on a cartoon film showing clouds, mist, and flying swords. These films amazed audiences raised on live Peking Opera performances, and were such a big hit that they launched the mythological swordplay movie craze.

The movie responsible for this popular mania was *Hue Shao Honglian Si* (*Burning Of Red Lotus Temple*). The film pioneered a wide range of special effects indigenous to China such as flying swords, palm power, and leaping through windows by reversing the film to create the impression of levitation. At that time, film crews used crude wires to haul actors up hundreds of feet into the air so they could perform flying feats through mountains and woods. Because of its immense

popularity, the studio, Shanghai's Ming Xing Film Company, made *Burning Of Red Lotus Temple* into a series of 18 movies. Other movie production houses also jumped on the bandwagon and shot similar films. The wuxia film was now an integral part of the Chinese film industry, populated by actors who received their training in the Peking Opera Houses.

Without a doubt, however, the most popular subject for Chinese films was the life story of real-life hero Wong Fei-hung. Hundreds of films were made about his life, making him a mainstay of the Chinese film industry. These films ranged from straight historical tales, to comedies, to wild adventures bordering on wuxia in their fantastic elements.

The real Wong Fei-hung was born in the province of Kwangtung, in southern China, in 1847. His father, Wong Kay-ying, was among the fabled Ten Tigers of Kwangtung, a band of chivalrous warriors who righted wrongs in South China. Wong learned kung fu from his father's master, Luk Ah Choy, one of the masters of Hung Gar style. Wong grew to become a righteous man, steeped in Confucian philosophy, a knowledge of Chinese medicine, and prodigious kung fu skill. He wandered southern China, righting wrongs, teaching kung fu and medicine, and imparting wisdom to the people. He died in 1924 at the age of 77.

Wong Fei-hung is a larger-than-life folk legend: the embodiment of the Confucian ideal, re-interpreted from time to time to include elements of anti-colonial nationalism. He is for Chinese audiences akin to a combination of Robin Hood, Sherlock Holmes, and Wyatt Earp.

In 1949, the Yong Yao Film Company released the first of 99 black-and-white films featuring Peking Opera star Kwan Tak-hing. They planned for 108 films in the series — a very lucky number in Chinese numerology. When that goal proved impossible (due to several factors, not the least of which was the age of the principal star, who had become synonymous with the role), they stopped at 99, the nearest lucky number. So, even in film production, superstitions played a vital role.

For their source material, the producers used many legends surrounding Wong Fei-hung's life, in particular the popular novel series about Wong written by Zhu Yu-zhai. These tales were more straightforward stories about

the historical Wong, a paragon of Confucian virtue who engaged in Lone Ranger-style heroics in late 19th century Canton. Later films of the series, such as the last film, 1970's *Wong Fei-hung Bravely Crushing the Fire Formation*, tread into the realm of wuxia, with Wong combating evildoers who used magical kung fu and flew around the room on hidden wires. A truly bizarre entry in the series, *Wong Fei-hung: Combat with the Zombie in the Haunted House* was begun, but never finished.

In 1978, Jackie Chan deconstructed the Wong Fei-hung legend in *Drunken Master*, which examined the legendary figure when he was a shiftless teenager with a propensity for drinking. This allowed Chan to show off his phenomenal Joi Kuen (Drunken Boxing) skills, which he dusted off and flaunted in 1994's *Drunken Master II* (released in 2001 in the United States as *The Legend of Drunken Master*).

In 1991, kung fu superstar Jet Li re-defined the ageless hero for a new generation in Tsui Hark's *Once Upon a Time in China*. This Wong Fei-hung film not only spawned 6 sequels, but re-vitalized the kung fu film genre after the gunplay genre, typified by John Woo and his ilk, dominated Hong Kong's film industry for a decade. Wong Fei-hung's popularity remains untarnished by time.

Even Wong Fei-hung's students found popularity in films. The most famous of his pupils, a butcher named Lam Sai Wing, more popularly known as Butcher Wing, was the subject of many films, most notably *The Magnificent Butcher* starring Sammo Hung (later to star on American television in *Martial Law*) as the over-sized hero.

Wong and his students are not the only historical heroes featured in Hong Kong films, however. One hero is in fact the subject of almost as many films as Wong Fei-hung. That man is Fong Sai Yuk.

Fong Sai Yuk was a mid-nineteenth century martial arts hero in South China. Fong's mother trained him in kung fu from the time he was a child. He was such a powerful fighter that he supposedly killed a kung fu master after challenging him when he was only 14 years old. This story displayed Fong's most famous traits: a headstrong and brash nature. Some Western commentators likened him to "kung fu Billy the Kid," a hot-head individual who lived fast and died young.

From 1938 to 1972, Fong Sai Yuk was the subject of his own series of black and white films, rivalling the more popular Wong Fei-hung stories. In the early seventies, the Shaw Brothers studio re-interpreted the character, in films starring Alexander Fu Sheng and Wong Yu, bringing Fong Sai Yuk forth in gory technicolor. In the early nineties, Jet Li, who had starred as Wong Fei-hung in the first three *Once Upon a Time in China* films, starred in *The Legend of Fong Sai Yuk*, played with comedic touches reminiscent of the costume farces of the Peking Opera. The scene where Fong Sai Yuk fights Siu Lee Wan (played by Sibelle Hu) while standing on the heads of an assembled crowd, is a classic.

Unfortunately, primitive special effects limited the true magic of Hong Kong films; in 1978, for example, the year after *Star Wars*' release, Jackie Chan's *Spiritual Kung Fu* featured a comet flying through space — someone held a sparkler in front of a painted starry sky. This all changed in 1982.

Tsui Hark, who studied at the University of Texas film school, decided he wanted to make movies with similar production values to American films, but ones still distinctively Chinese in material and sensibility. Tsui looked to the wuxia stories of his childhood and scripted a tale of a warrior and a novice monk travelling through a magical land searching for the monk's sifu. He called it *Zu: Warriors from the Magic Mountain*.

Tsui had Golden Harvest Film Company fly in American special effects experts Robert Blalack (who had worked on *Star Wars*), Peter Kuran (*Star Trek: The Motion Picture*) and Tron animators Arnie Wong and John Scheele. These men, together with Tsui, created Hong Kong's first special effects house, with different departments for training, animation, make-up, and stop-motion photography. The result was a masterpiece; it was a visually stunning film, combining elements of Chinese legend with state-of-the-art special effects.

Tsui Hark did not rest on *Zu*'s relative success, however. His next film, *A Chinese Ghost Story* (1987) continued his standard of excellence in the presentation of the supernatural. Although directed by Ching Siu Tung, Tsui Hark is often credited as the film's creator, due to influence as producer, script doctor, and special effects coordinator.

A Chinese Ghost Story tells of a tax collector seeking shelter in a haunted house on a rainy evening.

There, he encounters a beautiful female ghost who falls in love with him, setting the pair at odds with her evil stepmother, a Tree Demon. A Taoist priest arrives, looking to hunt ghosts and monsters, and the mayhem ensues. This mix of wit, romance and horror proved so popular, that it spawned two sequels, an animated film, and a television series, not to mention countless imitators of varying quality. The films stretched the nascent Hong Kong special effects technicians to the edge of the envelope, producing stop-motion cadavers, giant centipedes, man-eating trees, and other monstrous images of Chinese magic and legend.

Peking Opera alumnus Yuen Biao (who, together with Sammo Hung and Jackie Chan, once comprised part of "the Seven Little Fortunes" children's troupe) became famous for his roles in fantasy films, many of which were adapted from Japanese *manga* and anime. It was intended to cash in on the Japanese appetite for science fiction and fantasy. The most famous of his ventures was *Peacock King* (1988), based on the anime series *Kujaku-o*, in which Biao played a young Buddhist monk using supernatural powers to combat a threat to Earth from outer space. The film, which contained animated spell effects, giant monsters, and over-the-top marital arts battles, was reasonably popular in Hong Kong, but far more so in Japan. The sequel, *Kid from Tibet* (1992), hosted more combat than spells, but featured Tibetan locations and impressive fire stunts to good effect.

The 1990s saw a resurgence of the wuxia genre ... a rebirth side effect of the period kung fu film sparked by *Once Upon a Time in China*. After a few years of straight fists-and-feet kung fu action films, audience appetites craved something wilder. Films such as *Kung Fu Cult Master* and the *Swordsman* series answered that need.

If one seeks a nearly-perfect representation of the wuxia genre, one need look no further than *Kung Fu Cult Master*. Based on the novel "Heaven's Sword and the Dragonslayer Saber" by noted wuxia writer Jin Yong, *Kung Fu Cult Master* retells the story of Mo Kei, a hero seeking revenge against the leaders of several kung fu sects who had caused the deaths of his parents. The movie features several secret kung fu stances used with alarming regularity by the film's characters. This includes the Great Solar Stance, taught to Mo Kei by a kung fu master with a broken back, who is chained to a giant boulder and moves by rolling around. The stance allows Kei to fly through the air and blast hordes of foes with

bolts of energy, a useful skill in large battles. Throughout the film, martial arts masters with names like Master No-Mercy and Green Bat use poison stances, palm-powder, freezing punches and, naturally, flying swords, leaping from one side of the screen to the other in a live-action comic book of wuxia action.

The *Swordsman* series are also based on the works of Jin Yong. The first film, released in 1990, was actually the weakest of the series and ruined by too many directors, like cooks, spoiling the broth. It is a fairly straightforward tale of a swordsman, Ling (played by Sam Hui) and his search for a stolen scroll. It is a good film, albeit nothing really special. With the release of the second film, *Swordsman II* in 1992, the series really soared. Replacing the role of Ling with Jet Li, the film also introduces the character of Asia the Invincible (played by Brigitte Lin), a massively powerful warrior who used the Sacred Scroll's wisdom to supernaturally castrate himself ... increasing his kung fu power in return for transforming into a woman slowly. *Swordsman II* features a squadron of ninjas that attack on flying whirling blades and throw live scorpions at their targets, and a kung fu master who uses the Essence-Absorbing Stance, imploding targets and deflating them like they are hooked up to a vacuum cleaner. The third film in the series capitalized on the runaway popularity of Brigitte Lin's Asia the Invincible. *Swordsman III: The East is Red* cranks everything over the top: the film features levitating warships, flying ninjas, and an armour-clad general who turns out to be a midget.

Despite a massive resurgence in the early 1990s that produced such notable entries as *Dragon Inn*, *Green Snake*, *Butterfly and Sword*, and *Magic Crane*, the wuxia genre largely died out by the middle of the decade. Perhaps it was apprehension and uncertainty with the 1997 hand-over of Hong Kong to China, but the fantasy trend in Hong Kong films seemed to burn itself out ... then came *Storm Riders*.

Based on a Hong Kong comic book series, *Storm Riders* was released in 1998. Casting popular young actors in a tale of heroism and romance was a brilliant move on the part of producers ... but *Storm Riders'* true excellence lies in the fact that it represents the most major leap forward in Hong Kong movie special effects since *Zu* in 1982. The film utilized computer generated imagery (CGI) not only to remove visible wires during high-flying action sequences, but to create such dazzling effects as a

fire-breathing dragon and multiple spells. The film was a major international success ... but nothing compared to the coming storm.

In 2000, Taiwanese film director Ang Lee set out to shoot his wuxia film. This film would feature top-shelf talent, and, perhaps most importantly, was intended for release in Western film markets. The film was called *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. Ang Lee gathered together a stellar cast including international superstars Chow Yun-fat (who had broken into the American film industry with movies like *The Replacement Killers*, *The Corruptor*, and *Anna and the King*) and Michelle Yeoh (who had appeared as a Chinese agent in the James Bond film *Tomorrow Never Dies*). Kung fu film pioneer Ching Pei Pei (who had starred as *The Girl With the Thunderbolt Kick*) came out of retirement to appear as a villain.

The film opened to incredible artistic acclaim. As the good reviews mounted, American audiences responded. For the first time since *Enter the Dragon* in the 1970s, a kung fu movie became a box-office smash. Over time, however, the film also received high artistic praise. To the delight and disbelief of long-time wuxia genre fans, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* was nominated for several Academy Awards, eventually winning four Oscars, including Best Foreign Film. A wuxia film was now an Oscar winner, and had grossed over \$100 million in box office receipts — the highest grossing foreign language film ever in North America. The west had caught wuxia fever.

Unfortunately, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* received poorer reception back home. In Hong Kong, Hollywood blockbusters dwarfed the Oscar winner and it did not even break into the top five films at that year's box office, according to Edko Films, the local distributor of kung fu epics. Apparently, Chinese audiences have grown up on a steady diet of kung fu films and have become somewhat blasé about characters flying and fighting their way through the air.

As long as there is a Chinese film industry, there will always be tales of airborne swordsmen, secret kung fu sects, and magic. It is a genre ingrained into the culture. Now, given the success of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, as well as the wuxia influences in such Hollywood films as *The Matrix*, perhaps we will see the continued success of those films on these shores as well.

CHAPTER TWO: CHINESE MAGIC AND MAGICIANS

This world has become blinded, as it were.
Few here see insightfully...
— Buddhism



CHINESE MAGIC AND MAGICIANS

China has a long heritage of magic and myth stretching back thousands of years to the earliest parts of its history. Some of those earliest ideas about the world's nature have stayed with the Chinese throughout their past, becoming a deep-rooted part of their cultural identity. Traditional Chinese culture influences the magic seen in Hong Kong fantasy and martial arts movies, which is often different from the fare seen in western fantasy films.

This chapter looks at the major currents of Chinese religion and philosophy and the magic associated with them. It provides a background context for understanding the Chinese emphasis on certain mystical effects and styles, and gives both the Actors and the Director ideas for magic in their next production. It also lends a story framework for the new magical game mechanics in Act III.

MAGIC & RELIGION

It is important to note the strong association between magical traditions and spiritual beliefs in Chinese culture (and most other cultures for that matter). Magical traditions do not develop in a vacuum. They are based on the earliest ideas of how the world came into being and how it exists, and those beliefs are usually tied to religion or spirituality — Confucian, Taoist, or Buddhist in the case of this chapter. Just like European magicians who formulated their lore on a combination of pagan and Christian views through the beliefs of the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, and Celts, the Chinese based theirs on their civilization's nascent periods.

Necessity dictates the material in this chapter only provides an overview of religions' base traditions and beliefs. This overview offers readers enough information for an *HKAT!* game background, not a comprehensive understanding of the religious tradition. There are many books with greater details for anyone interested in learning more about Chinese spiritual and religious beliefs and history.

ANCESTRAL DREAMS

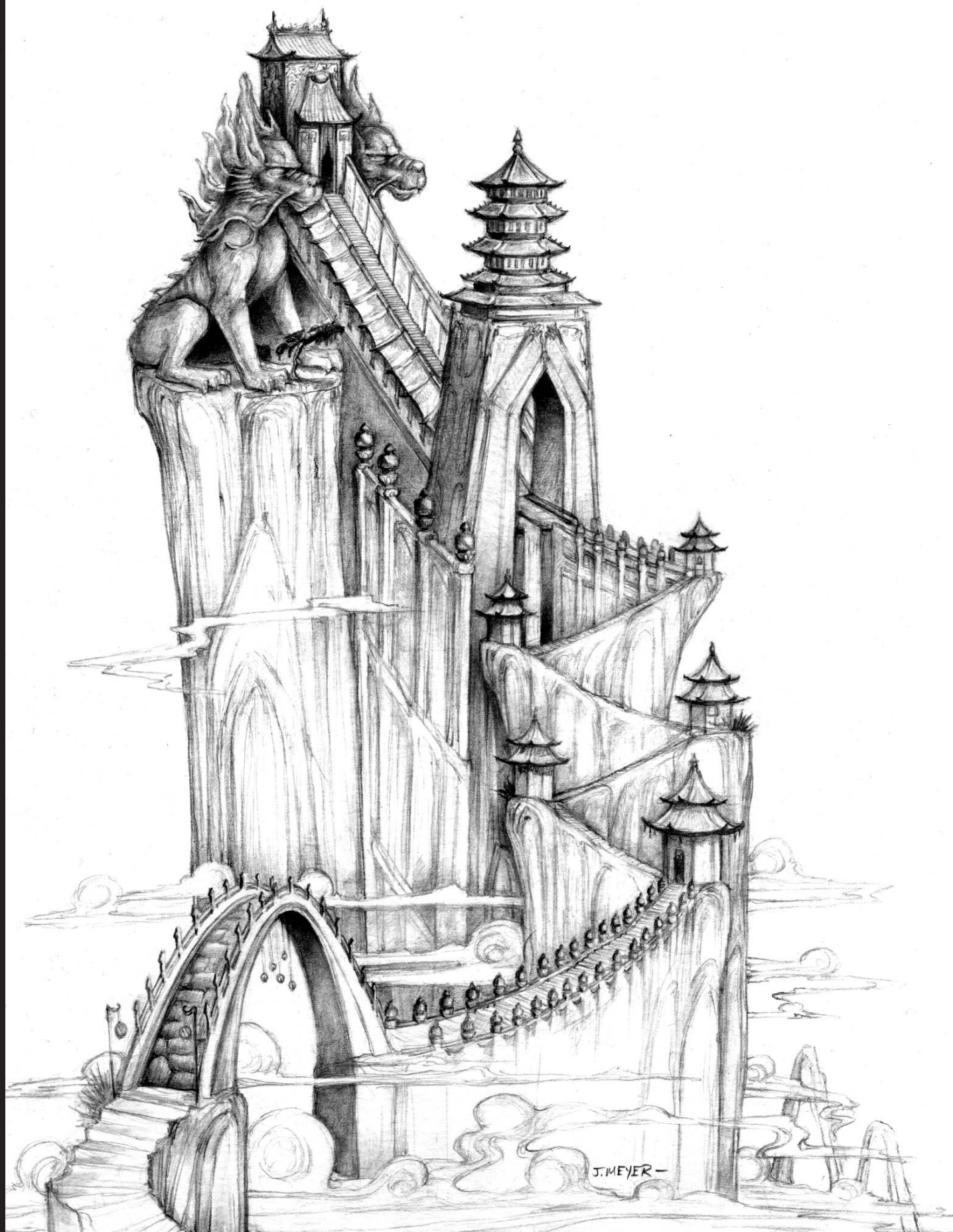
In the distant past of China, up to the time of the Chou Dynasty circa 1000 BC, magic and mysticism were the province of the wu. The wu were and are holy men and women, shamans who act as intermediaries between the physical world and the spirit world, between humanity, the gods, and numerous spirits. Most people feared and respected the powers of the wu who influenced even the emperors themselves. No emperor could rule at this time without the support of the wu and their magic. During the Chou Dynasty, the power and prestige of the wu faded with the growth of Confucianism and Taoism. They became the leaders of shadowy cults and secret societies, believed in mostly by poor, rural folk rather than educated people.

The wu are similar in many respects to shamans from cultures across the world. They can transcend ordinary reality and enter the spirit world, either by entering a trance and sending their soul from their body or by physically following specific paths to important hallowed places in the world. They also wield the many magical powers at their disposal.

INITIATION AND TRAINING

Wu are not trained in the conventional sense. The spirits and the Hierarchy of Heaven itself chooses them to become shamans. A potential wu receives a dream or vision, sending him or her on a spiritual quest. Most often this quest involves an actual journey through the world (which may touch on the ethereal realms). Sometimes, however, the initiate travels solely in spirit form through that other world while the physical body lies in a deep coma-like sleep. People may even mistake this state for death; they lay the wu out for burial or even entomb him or her before the wu returns from his or her journey, leading to stories that the wu rose from the dead or even became ghosts.

On the journey of initiation, candidates meet many challenges intended to analyze their spiritual mettle and educate them about the nature of the spirit world. The initiate studies with wise spirits and sages (usually mystical hermits), who test qualities like honor, duty,



courage, respect, and politeness in a variety of ways. Common challenges include ordeals like a spirit in the form of a beggar or wounded animal seeking help from the initiate. The initiate must banish ghosts or other malign spirits from a ruin or other haunted place, or retrieve some rare and unusual item. There are also numerous mundane tasks, such as acting as a wise master's or spirit's humble servant for a year or more.

When the candidate has completed the journey, a dragon appears and places the ideogram of a wu upon his or her forehead. It is visible only to the denizens of the spirit world and those with a measure of mystical awareness (anyone with magical powers, see page 47) and gives the wu some authority and respect in the spirit world.

THE SPIRIT KINGDOMS

Part of the wu's power came from their knowledge of and access to the Spirit Kingdoms. There are the places where various spirits dwell, and wu can petition them for aid. In the Middle Kingdom, the world of the living, there are hidden manors, caves, rivers, and the like where spirits make their homes. This includes the palaces of various dragons, situated on high mountaintops, floating among the clouds, at the bottom of a lake or sea, or in similar isolated places.

At the centre of the material world stands the Sacred Mountain, often associated with Mt. Meru or K'un-lun, the *axis mundi*. By ascending the slopes of this mountain, a wu climbs toward Heaven, where the gods dwell (see The Gods under Shen, below). The gods do not always welcome visitors, although politeness and reverence goes far with them as it does in any court. The palaces of the gods are where the peaches of immortality grow, which may be a vital ingredient for a magician seeking to create an elixir of eternal life (see Immortality, page 34).

As Heaven lies above the Middle Kingdom, so Feng-tu, the underworld, lies beneath it. This is where the souls of the dead go, and wu can visit them by separating their spirits from their bodies. The most illustrious of the dead become magistrates and generals in the underworld, while the majority labour much as they

A WU'S BEST FRIEND

Tradition expected a wu to take a companion on their spiritual journey, a trained dog capable of leading the initiate where human senses might fail. People believed dogs were sensitive to matters of the spirit world, and priests specially trained wu dogs at temples for guard duty. The Director can decide whether or not all dogs are capable of sensing and affecting spirits or just dogs specifically trained as companions to spiritual questors.

Wu dogs fight on behalf of their masters and can track spiritual footprints to guide their wu through the Spirit Kingdoms. In legend, wu sacrifice their dog companions to honour the spirits and celebrate the end of their journey. Directors may consider this the equivalent of the Sacrificial Buddy Signature Move (HKAT!, page 22). Directors may also allow a wu to keep his or her canine companion as a regular supporting character in the series.

A typical wu dog's statistics are:

Stats: Body 5, Mind 4, Soul 4 (13 Character Points)

Attributes: Features (Night Vision, 1 point), Heightened Senses (Hearing, Smell, 2 points), Natural Weapons Level 2 (teeth, 2 points), Sixth Sense (Sense Spirits, 1 point).

Defects: Marked (it's a dog, 2 BP), No Arms (2 BP), Not So Fast (2 BP), Not So Tough (1 BP), Unskilled (2 BP).

Derived Values: Attack Combat Value 4, Defense Combat Value 2, Health Points 35, Shock Value 7, Energy Points 40.

A wu dog as a regular companion costs 2 points in character creation though Directors may waive this cost if the dog does not play a significant role in the series. For an additional cost, the wu can draw Energy Points from his dog at a cost of 1 point for every 10 Energy Points the wu draws upon, up to the dog's normal maximum Energy Points.

did in life in the endless fields of Feng-tu. Some souls escape from the underworld while others apply to Ghost Magistrates for writs to return to the Middle Kingdom, either to haunt a place or to find some corpse to inhabit and animate.

Wu sometimes visit the underworld to recover the soul of a person influenced by spirits or wracked with disease; returning its lost energy restores the patient to full health. Wu can also visit the underworld and speak with the spirits of the dead and other shen, bargaining for favours or information from them.

Versions of these spirit kingdoms are also found in later Chinese magical traditions, like Taoism.

THE GODS

The most powerful shen in the world are the gods, who made the Earth and now oversee its smooth functioning. There are many, many gods in Chinese tradition, along with various ministers and functionaries of the Celestial Hierarchy. Some of the more important deities include:

TI

The White Jade Ruler and Supreme Emperor of Heaven and monarch of the gods. Ti created life and specifically controls rain and all heavenly phenomena. The Emperor is his direct surrogate on Earth, although later Chinese beliefs show Ti as more of an absentee ruler, with the Emperor as his chosen regent. He appears as either a venerable old man or a dragon.

THE QUEEN OF THE WEST

Ti's consort, associated with the underworld and death. She usually appears quite wild, with bestial traits like a beak or sharp teeth and unkempt hair. Wu often quest to learn her wisdom and to enter the Spirit Kingdoms.

CHIH-CHIANG FYU-YA

The executioner of the gods, who punishes those who have offended them, particular desecrators

SHEN

The world of the wu is full of *shen*: spirits or magical beings. Shen range in power from the gods themselves, to their ministers the dragons, to lesser nature spirits, ghosts, demons, and a host of other beings. The wu can sense and communicate with spirits, and even bend them to their will on occasion, although wise wu always deals with spirits in a firm but polite and courteous manner. The more powerful the spirit, the more deference the wu should exhibit.

Shen are normally incorporeal and often invisible to the mortal eye. Only wu and other magicians (and some extraordinary animals) can detect or interact with a spirit that does not wish to be seen. Most can assume corporeal form at will, and many can use their various powers regardless of their current form.

of temples. He is an archer with bat-like wings and a black, demonic head. His arrows never miss and usually cause terrible wasting diseases. The target's only hope is for a wu to journey to the Celestial Court and plead on the victim's behalf.

KUAN YIN

The goddess of mercy and childbirth, protector of women. She usually appears dressed in green silk, sitting on a giant lotus blossom.

LEI KUNG

The Duke of Thunder, one of Ti's many functionaries. He is a hideous black-skinned giant with sparks flashing from his eyes. Ti sometimes bids him to punish disrespectful mortals with a thunderbolt or storm.

YEN-WANG-YEH

The Judge of the Dead. He appears as an aristocrat with deep blue skin, and wears fine, dark robes. He interrogates each dead soul as it arrives and assigns it a place in the underworld. Yen-Wang-Yeh does not like ghosts lingering in the Middle Kingdom, and may send other ghosts to find and bring them back (such ghost-hunters would make interesting roles for a mystical *HKAT!* series).

The spirits exist as part of a divine hierarchy, with the gods and their chosen ministers at the peak, and the lesser and more common spirits at the base. Every spirit has its duties and its place in the world, and violations reported to the Celestial Bureaucracy may cause trouble for that spirit — giving them a good reason to ensure their indiscretions are never reported.

WU POWERS AND MAGIC

The wu are accorded many different powers because of their initiation and the knowledge they gain from the shen.

DIVINATION AND PROPHECY

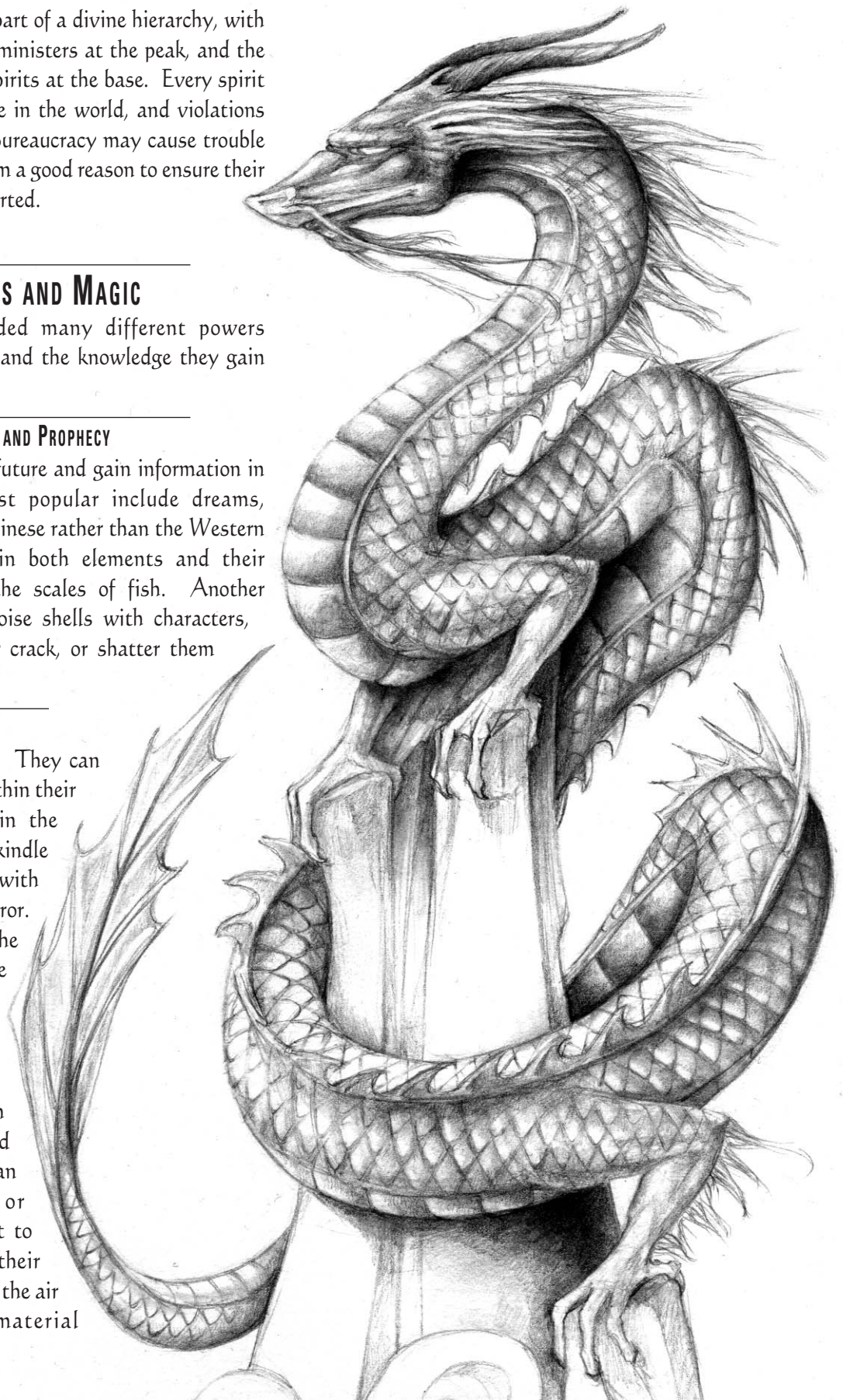
Wu can predict the future and gain information in various ways. The most popular include dreams, astrology (based on the Chinese rather than the Western system), finding omens in both elements and their associations, or reading the scales of fish. Another technique is to paint tortoise shells with characters, then heat them until they crack, or shatter them with a hot iron.

FIRE

Wu can control fire. They can generate “psychic heat” within their bodies to remain warm in the coldest climates, and they kindle the sacred fire associated with the reign of a new emperor. Dousing that flame is the same as overthrowing the emperor, so the wu carefully guard the fire.

FLYING

Wu can fly through the air, or jump from cloud to cloud. This might be an actual literal ability, or representative of their gift to send their spirits from their bodies, thus flying through the air and passing through material obstacles like ghosts.



INVISIBILITY

Like shen, wu can become invisible, unseen by the mortal eye. They may do so through illusion or influence over the mind, or by stepping into the spirit world, where mortals cannot see or hear them.

INVULNERABILITY

Many stories tell of how wu are able to walk on hot coals (or hold them in their hands), climb ladders made of swords or knives, and slash themselves with sharp blades, all without harm. In some cases, wu can dismember themselves and reattach severed parts of their body instantly (including the head). Again, this may be an ability wu have only in their spirit form.

POSSESSION

Wu can channel different spirits through their bodies, giving these creatures the means to speak and interact with the material world more easily while granting the wu some of its powers. The wu earn much of their influence and reputation through their ability to speak with the dead (and the gods).

SPIRIT SERVANTS

Wu can also command (or at least bargain with) lesser spirits, forcing them to do their bidding and using their powers to carry out various tasks.

CONFUCIANISM

The philosophy known to the West as Confucianism grew from relative obscurity to become the backbone of Chinese culture. The tenets of the philosophy were codified by a scholar named Kung fu-tse, meaning literally, "Kung the statesman-philosopher," which western explorers latinized to Confucius. He lived from approximately 551 to 470 BC in the feudal state of Lu, a portion of what is now the province of Shangtung on China's north-eastern seaboard. The factions and political intrigue created by competing warlords and their armies led to an ethos of uncertainty and fear during this time. Confucius noted the stark contrasts between the disunity and lack of harmony existing in this chaotic society and the harmony and orderliness found in nature. His philosophy sought to bridge that gap, viewing nature as the model to emulate.

Confucius considered himself a traditionalist and opposed unnecessary innovation. Inherent in creating harmony, Confucius posited, was sitting at the feet of history as a student, learning from the past. Even his philosophy was nothing new ... in his view he was only codifying that which already existed. He saw the way that history preferred order over chaos, and that the unity of nature came from a harmony of working together, rather than striving individually. Thus, the philosopher's task was to teach harmony and unity through conformity, rather than emphasizing differences or individuality. Confucius settled upon three paths for bringing about conformity: Li, or the ritualization of life; Te, or government by virtue; and Wen, or peace and co-operation.

Through ritual, diversity is focused into conformity by striving towards a common effort. Government by virtue involved revering the Emperor and the hierarchical structure of ancestry through an extended system of filial piety, and adhering to an ethical standard that suppressed any inkling of disharmony as well. The ethic of peace and cooperation involved sublimating one's individuality to emphasize the harmonious unity of government.

Confucius seemingly sought to impose ethical behaviour from the abstract, as opposed to the interior method advocated by Lao Tzu (the founder of Taoism). According to tradition, Confucius is said to have met Lao Tzu, and was not received favourably by the latter. It is more likely, however, that Lao Tzu lived after Confucius and that the *Tao Te Ching* was largely written in reaction to the philosophy of Confucius.

PHILOSOPHY

The major text of Confucianism is *The Analects*, which, like Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching*, is a series of short truisms and moral lessons. These writings concentrate upon the development of human character, since duty and moral obligation rest within each person. Thus, the more one develops his or her own unique sense of character and obligation, the more he or she is compelled to live in harmony with society. This inward dimension of Confucius' otherwise external philosophy emphasizes personal righteousness (yi), a quality of unique character

that only humans can possess and develop, which is unaffected by possible results or consequences. For someone to truly be righteous and live in harmony with society, he or she must act from within this inward quality, and not with ulterior motives. For Confucius, any desire for personal reward or benefit that acts as a motive for otherwise good-seeming acts is not truly a moral act.

Confucianism promotes an orderly life whereby a culture attempts to conform to an abstract mode of ethics, rooted in tradition. This involves each person finding his or her own role in society, and being responsible and righteous within it. Each person should seek harmony in everything whether large or small, and conform in every way by living in concordant with cosmic law and the strictures of societal hierarchies — which in turn should be patterned upon the structure of nature.

FAMILIAL BONDS & RELATIONSHIPS

The idea of filial piety (reverence for and obedience to one's ancestors) forms the roots of this framework. In the most immediate sense it means honouring one's parents, who are the heads of the family. This piety, however, includes seeking the guidance and approval of long-dead ancestors, to whom the supplicant offers prayers and offerings. In the societal sense, this obedience extends to the Emperor, who people view, quite literally, as the "father of the country", and therefore deserving of his people's adoration and love. The Emperor should be virtuous and righteous to provide an example for the people, much as a father provides an example for his children. In *The Analects*, Confucius said, "The Ruler himself should be virtuous, just, honest, and dutiful. A virtuous ruler is like the Pole-star which, by keeping its place, makes all other stars to revolve around it. As is the Ruler, so will be the subjects."

Confucius held that five relationships comprised society: Husband and wife, parent and child, elder and younger brother (or youngster), ruler and minister (or subject), and friend and friend. A country would be governed well when all the parties performed their parts within these relationships. Confucius said: "There was Tao (a way or road of righteousness) only when fathers were fathers, when sons were sons, when Rulers were Rulers, and when ministers were ministers."

VIRTUE THROUGH CONFORMITY

Above all things, Confucianism advocated order through conformity, reinforced by truly ethical and virtuous behaviour. Confucius gave tremendous impetus to education and learning, and the study of rules of right conduct with a view to their practical application. According to his teaching, man's chief end is to know and make the most of himself as a member of society. He preached to his disciples and the people the principles of good life and social harmony.

Confucius' idea of virtue was known as "Jen," and the proper understanding of his ethical doctrine chiefly depended on the implications of this notion. The direct translation of Jen manages to convey all shades of its meaning, while the nearest equivalent would be "social virtue" — all those qualities that help maintain social harmony and peace like benevolence, charity, magnanimity, sincerity, respectfulness, altruism, diligence, loving kindness, and goodness.

The nature of man, according to Confucius, is fundamentally good, but perfection of that goodness can be found in sages and saints. Every man should attempt to reach that ideal by leading a virtuous life, by possessing a very noble character, and by pursuing his duty unselfishly with sincerity and truthfulness.

MAGIC

For a Confucian, there is only room for magic that exists in nature. There is no magical system attached to the philosophy per se, but many Confucian sorcerers lean towards natural processes, such as alchemy, Feng Shui, and I Ching divination. These forms follow natural law as reflected in the cosmos, which fits within the Confucian ideal. I Ching divination is covered under the Taoism section (see I Ching, The Canons of Change on page 31)

CONFUCIAN ALCHEMY

Chinese alchemy is the mystical-scientific quest for longevity, even immortality. Unlike western alchemists who sought after the fabled Philosopher's Stone that would transmute base metals into gold, Chinese alchemists concerned themselves with reproducing one of the nine Elixirs of Immortality. These

SHAW BROTHERS

Between the 1960s and the early 1980s, Hong Kong's largest movie studio was Shaw Brothers. It was controlled by Run Run Shaw, the second of four brothers from Shanghai who owned and operated over a hundred movie theatres in mainland China in the 1920s and 1930s.

The first Shaw entry into Hong Kong was in 1934, when Shao Zuiweng, the oldest of the four Shaw brothers, moved his studio there from Shanghai. He did so for a couple of reasons: firstly, to produce Cantonese-language movies, which would be popular in the territory and abroad, and secondly, because the Chinese government was becoming increasingly hostile to the production of wuxia films, which they considered subversive and decadent. In the 1930s and 1940s, the Hong Kong film industry grew rapidly after the Kuomintang banned the making of Cantonese-language movies in Mainland China.

Following WWII, the Hong Kong film industry split along linguistic and political lines; refugees from China helped develop a Mandarin-language film industry. The Kuomintang and Communists both tried influencing the creation and content of the movies emerging from Hong Kong. It was during this period that Run Run Shaw entered the film production industry. The Shaw Brothers had had their theatre chain confiscated during WWII, and Run Run had even been imprisoned. Fortunately, he had had the foresight to convert much of his wealth

into gold and gems, which he had buried beforehand. The Shaws managed to recover the buried treasure after the war and used it to refinance their business.

In 1958, the Shaws moved to Hong Kong, where they constructed Movie Town, the largest studio complex ever built in Asia. At this studio, they churned out scores of chop-socky flicks familiar to any aficionado of badly dubbed late night movies. There are hundreds of films in the Shaw libraries, most of which have not been seen in Hong Kong itself since their initial release. They studio also produced several movies that are now considered classics, however, including *Come Drink With Me* and *The One-Armed Swordsman*. During this period, directors like Chang Cheh and Lau Kar-leung set the standards by which people would judge later films, and many of Hong Kong's biggest stars began their careers working on Shaw Brothers films.

In 1970, Raymond Chow, the head of Shaw Brothers' production, left the company to found Golden Harvest. As Golden Harvest grew, Shaw Brothers' share of the Hong Kong film market declined. People knew Shaw Bros. mostly for putting out kung fu action flicks, and there were now many kung fu television shows available for free. Fittingly enough, Shaw Brother moved into the television market, and they are still one of the foremost TV production studios in Hong Kong. As for Run Run, he was eventually knighted by Queen Elizabeth and is now Sir Run Run.

magical potions would halt someone's aging process and in some cases, grant supernatural powers similar to those possessed by spirits, demons, or gods.

Modern scientists have discovered that historical Chinese alchemy may actually have been early experiments in endocrinology and hormone therapy ... sciences only recently explored in the west with any seriousness. In China's legends, however, as well as wuxia tales, alchemical elixirs are magic potions, pure and simple. The legends tell of potions that cured diseases, bestowed enlightenment or blinding speed, or transported the drinker to the realms of the gods. Wuxia heroes should travel on great quests to secure either the elixirs or

the ingredients to make them, and the adventure should ring with the names of potions such as "The Eightfold Path Glorious Jade Blossom Elixir." For more information on Chinese alchemy, see the section on Taoist Alchemy (page 32).

FENG SHUI

Feng Shui (literally "wind and water") is a systematic practice of harmonious construction by placing the elements of one's environment in co-ordination with the forces of nature, and having special regard for a location's manifestation of Chi. Feng Shui is a mixture of several distinct sciences — Chan Hsing (astrology),

THE SHAW BROTHERS



B L U E D R A G O N , W H I T E T I G E R

Chan Hou (analysis of atmospherics), Chih Yin (analysis of sound), and Feng Chiao (analysis of the angles of winds). All of these separate disciplines combine to form Feng Shui. Practitioners divine what arrangement of man-made materials would work well within the chi flow of the surrounding environment. The flow of chi is then adjusted, altered, or focused by this arrangement, creating any desired effect, from dispelling bad luck at a location to attracting money or worldly power. A powerful Feng Shui practitioner could divert the flow of positive chi away from an enemy's home, requiring the target to engage in his own use of Feng Shui to counter the effect.

Designing homes using Feng Shui still occurs in the modern world. In the 1980s the Hong Kong Bank of China had Chinese-American architect I.M. Pei design their headquarters. Many people felt the resulting glass-and-steel skyscraper was a focus of bad chi, since it appeared to cut into the governor's residence like a knife. The governor's office hired a Feng Shui practitioner, who advised that the residence build a reflecting pond in the back yard, to reflect the bad chi back at the bank tower. It was done.

Confucian characters in wuxia tales should view all things as reflections of larger patterns. Those patterns should be interpreted as the same ones that drive the forces of nature, and of the heavens. A Confucian character is always certain of their place within the larger scheme of the cosmos.

TAOISM

Taoism is a Chinese system of mysticism and philosophy based on the *Tao Te Ching*, or "Classic of the Way and Its Virtue," written by the legendary mystic Lao Tzu. More than a thousand commentaries have been written about the *Tao Te Ching* over the centuries, and it has inspired many different branches of Taoism. The introduction of Taoism in China led to the emergence of neo-Confucianism during the Sung Dynasty and helped facilitate the introduction of Buddhism to China, possibly contributing to the development of Ch'an (Zen) Buddhism.

Fairly little is known about Lao Tzu himself; there is some debate as to whether or not he even existed. Scholars generally believe he was born in China's

southern province in the early 7th century B.C. He worked as a Custodian of the Imperial Archives of the Chou House in the city Loyang and may have known Confucius (who was about fifty years his junior). When the Chou house began to decline, Lao Tzu left his job and travelled westward, riding on a mule or donkey. Hsin Yi, the warden of the westward pass, was so impressed with Lao Tzu's enlightenment that he asked the old man to write a book to help guide him and others. Lao Tzu produced the two part *Tao Te Ching*.

Lao Tzu's enlightenment and understanding of the Tao supposedly allowed him to live for more than two hundred years; many branches of Taoism accord him status as an immortal, enlightened master (see *Immortality*, page 34).

PHILOSOPHICAL AND RELIGIOUS TAOISM

Taoism falls into two main divisions: philosophical and religious Taoism. Philosophical Taoism came first and is based on the work of Lao Tzu. It encourages people to live in harmony with the Tao and forego excessive dependence on material things in favour of enlightenment and understanding. It also inspired Taoist alchemy and magic.

Religious Taoism, which developed around the second century A.D., adds greater spiritual dimension. It features various stories of enlightened masters (Lao Tzu and others) receiving their inspiration and understand of the Tao directly from a divine source, which also grants them their titles and authority to teach the Tao to others. Both branches of Taoism are remarkably open and tolerant regarding other religions and philosophies, and there is little religious conflict surrounding Taoism.

The goal of all Taoist sects is the Tao or "the Way," which is not so much a divinity as a way of being. Lao Tzu likened the Tao to water: soft, yielding, but whose flow is capable of wearing away stone over time. He also cautioned that "the Tao that can be named is not the true Tao," meaning that the greatest truths about Taoism could not be described in words; they must be experienced by the individual seeker.

Achieving the Way involves an understanding of *wu* or "nothingness" and *wu-wei* or "non-action." Taoism

encourages followers to exist in the moment. Every action should flow effortlessly and naturally from the demands of the situation, with the least amount of effort needed to achieve the goal. A Taoist who achieves this emptiness — free from desire, extraneous thought, and resistance to what is natural — gains insight into the Tao. Taoists believe that those moving in harmony with the Tao carry the force of the universe behind their actions. Taoists practice many exercises, particularly meditation, to help achieve this enlightened state.

YIN AND YANG

A central concept of Taoism is the Chinese notion of yin and yang, that all things can be seen as a dynamic balance between two opposite, but complimentary, forces. It is shown in the famous *Tai Ji Tu* symbol or “Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate,” commonly known in the West as a yin-yang symbol. The symbol shows that the two forces flow into each other continuously, and that each contains an element of the other, creating perfect balance and harmony.

Yin is the dark aspect, associated with the feminine, cold, night, and passive forces. Yang is the light aspect, associated with the masculine, heat, day, and active forces. Note that Taoists believe that every person (regardless of gender) contains both yin and yang; the two must exist in balance for proper health and well being. When a person’s yin and yang are unbalanced, illness results.



Too much yin in the body results in pale, cold, clammy skin and equally cold and often cruel personality traits. The victim becomes glacial, distant, and catty, prone to making nasty remarks about others. Yin-imbalanced people are more subject to chills and cold, but they more easily resist the effects of heat. Men specifically may even develop female characteristics and effeminate mannerisms (common among villainous eunuchs in Chinese dramas).

Too much yang is just as unhealthy, resulting in fever, flushed, dry skin, hyperactivity, and an excessive temper coupled with an overactive libido. Yang-imbalanced people are generally hot-tempered and impulsive, giving in to their most basic instincts.

Afflicted women may even develop masculine characteristics (the most noticeable of which is growing a beard).

Yin-yang imbalance can be treated using acupuncture and moxa burning, which helps realign the flow of *chi* in the patient’s body and restore balance. The longer the condition persists, the more difficult it becomes to treat. In extreme cases, healers may rely on alchemical potions or other remedies to cure the patient.

WUXING: THE ELEMENTS

Another important Taoist expression of balance is wuxing, the five elements of fire, wood, earth, metal, and water. These elements, in whole or in combination, constitute the material world and symbolize different qualities important in Taoist alchemy and magic. By

understand these components, their relationships, and their correspondences, a magician can create any number of different effects.

The elements are associated with either yin or yang, except for earth, which is the substance of balance, containing both yin and yang in equal measure. This places the elements as part of a natural cycle, where each replaces the previous one in the cycle. One element facilitates this process while another halts it, creating multiple interacting cycles. Fire replaces metal, for example, but water facilitates the process and earth limits it. A Taoist might see this at work in a forge: fire melts the metal, but water is required to quench the molten metal and make it useful, while earth thrown on the fire extinguishes it and prevents the smith from working. These cycles underlie all Taoist alchemy and magic involving the elements.

FIRE

Fire is the element of greater yang, embodying its bright energetic aspect. Its associations include: the Sun, the planet Mars, heat, summer, the south direction, the numbers 2 and 7, the colour red, the tongue, the heart, the small intestine, the middle finger, birds (and all other feathered creatures), phoenix, hearth, growth, virtue, enlightenment, inspiration, and laughter. Fire conquers metal, but water controls the process and earth limits it.

WOOD

Wood is the element of lesser yang, connected with its qualities of growth, fertility, and liveliness. Its associations include: the planet Jupiter, wind, spring, the east direction, the numbers 3 and 8, the colour green, the eyes, the spleen, the liver, the index finger, sheep, lizards (including dragons), wheat, birth, fertility, charity, anger, doorways, and shouting. Wood conquers earth, but metal controls the process and fire limits it.

EARTH

Earth is the element of balance and "grounding." Its associations include: the planet Saturn, thunder, the centre direction, the numbers 5 and 10, the colour yellow, the mouth and lips, the heart, the stomach and spleen, the pinkie finger, desire, thought, administration, guidance, forbearance, oxen (and other strong beasts), hairless creatures, and singing. Earth conquers water, but wood controls the process and metal limits it.

METAL

Metal is the element of lesser yin, cold and unyielding, as well as sharp. Its associations include: the planet Venus, cold, autumn, the west direction, the numbers 4 and 9, the colour white (the colour of death in Asian culture), the nose, the lungs, the large intestine, the thumb, sorrow, worry, speech, dogs, tigers, and weeping. Metal conquers wood, but fire controls the process and water limits it.

WATER

Water is the element of greater yin, cool, yielding, flowing, and gentle, yet persistent. Its associations include: the Moon and the planet Mercury, rain, winter, the north direction, the numbers 1 and 6, the colour black, the ears, the ring finger, fear, hearing (and perceptiveness in general), laws (and punishment), wells, pigs, snakes, shelled animals (like tortoises, crabs, and oysters), and groaning. Water conquers fire, but earth controls the process and wood limits it.

THE TIMES OF THE ELEMENTS

In addition to their other associations, the elements are analogous with particular times of the day, the year, and the twelve-year cycle of the Chinese zodiac, as follows:

Element	Time of Day	Season	Zodiac Years
Wood	3 a.m. — 7 a.m.	Spring	1948-1959
Fire	9 a.m. — 1 p.m.	Summer	1960-1971
Earth	1 p.m. — 3 p.m.	-	1972-1983
Metal	9 a.m. — 1 p.m.	Autumn	1984-1995
Water	9 p.m. — 1 a.m.	Winter	1996-2007

The elemental correspondences appear often in Taoist (and other Chinese) sorcery. A spell invoking qualities of fire (literally or metaphorically) would include anything associated with that element: characters written in red ink, burning coals, feathers (perhaps burnt on said coals), booming laughter, invocations conducted toward the south, most likely during the day. The same is true of the other elements. More complex spells may mix and match different elements in different proportions to achieve the desired effect.

THE I CHING, THE CANNON OF CHANGES

Although not originally Taoist in origin, the *I Ching* or "Cannon of Changes" is strongly associated with Taoism and Taoist magic. The actual work dates back thousands of years but the modern *I Ching* is based on the work of King Wen, a founder of the Chou Dynasty, in 1143 B.C. He organized the basic trigrams of the *I Ching* into 64 hexagrams and assigned them their names and attributes. The *I Ching* inspired Lao Tzu in the creation of the *Tao Te Ching* and Confucius.

The *I Ching* is based on the idea of yin and yang. Diagrams are made up of broken (yin) and unbroken (yang) horizontal lines. Three lines constitute a trigram, of which there are eight, representing basic forces in nature: heaven, earth, thunder, water, mountain, wood and wind, fire, and marsh and lake. Each of the trigrams is defined, through its symbol and element. The eight trigrams of the *I Ching* are as follows:



CHIEN (FORCE)

Its element is Water. This trigram represents the dragon, a spirit who can give power: creative, endurance, or persistence. Force is associated with heaven, rulership, and in accordance with the Confucian ideal, the paternal figure.



KUN (FIELD)

Its element is Earth. It represents the field where all things are grown, the womb that gives birth to everything. It is associated with the world (the source of growth) and the maternal figure (either literal motherhood, or in the governmental sense, the minister or courtier who plays the maternal figure to the ruler's paternal image.)



CHEN (SNAKE)

Its element is Fire. It is associated with chaos, the snake echoing the kundalini spirits of Buddhism (q.v.). It is the influence of discord upon the world, from the arousal of dormant energy to the variety of plant and animal life bursting from the world.



KAN (GORGE)

Its element is Water. Kan is the spirit of rivers and streams venturing forth without hesitation or reserve. It is risk taking, like water falling into a gorge, filling it and moving on.



KEN (BOUND)

Its element is Wood. This mountain spirit fashions borders and fixes limits. It binds all things and is the finality to all events. It is associated with the Youngest Son (who is the finality of a family), as well as the Palace of the Immortals (the end of existence).



SUN (GROUND)

Sun is two unbroken lines atop an unbroken one. Its element is also Wood. It is the spirit of the wood and the wind, a subtle and gentle spirit that permeates everything. It is reflected in the creation and spreading of new seeds in the breeze, carrying them and settling them where they enter the earth and spring forth.



Li (RADIANCE)

Li is a broken line contained within two unbroken lines. Its element is Fire. It is the spirit of light, warmth, and flame, giving the power of illumination, both of sight, and of thought. It is the radiance of culture and intelligence.



Tui (OPEN)

Lastly, Tui is a broken line atop two unbroken ones. Its element is Metal. Tui governs the world of spirits and magic, allowing humans to change the way they see the world. It is freedom from constraint, cheerful interaction, and good feelings.

The eight trigrams combine to form 64 hexagrams of six lines each, each of which has a name and associated meanings. Hexagram 23 is *Po*, for example, a combination of Mountain and Earth. It represents splitting or breaking apart, and bears strong yin association.

The typical ritual for consulting the *I Ching* involves casting Chinese coins (round with a square hole in the centre; the circle represents heaven, the square the earth). The diviner casts three coins six times to yield the lines of the hexagram, which is believed to show the forces at work in the situation. The *I Ching* does not provide precise answers, only words of wisdom for the seeker to ponder. Another method of divination entails scattering the stalks of a yarrow plant, and reading the stalks in the patterns of the trigrams and hexagrams. The interpretation of these symbols reflects the patterns found in nature and the cosmos, a theme that resonates with Confucians and Taoists.

Directors looking to include *I Ching* divinations in a *HKAT!* game are recommended to find a copy of the book. Either encourage actors to cast coins (or dice, with odd numbers yin and even numbers yang) for their readings or to simply read quotes from the book at

opportune times during the production. Directors can also use the hexagrams as magical symbols, or as forewarning, or to provide clues.

TAO-KUAN: TAOIST MONASTERIES

Taoist monks dedicate their lives to finding the Way, although some enter Taoist monasteries for more practical reasons like poverty or the hope of bettering themselves. Sometimes heroes enter monasteries to hide from their enemies, particularly orphaned heroes who must be protected from the truth about their heritage until the time is right. Most monasteries do not accept known criminals, however, and a monk's desire to follow the Way must be sincere if they wish to enter a monastery.

Taoist monks live simply, as required by the Way, but they are not ascetics, nor are they required to be celibate. They typically work in the monastery's fields or perform other duties based on their seniority. The newest monks receive the lowliest (and dirtiest) jobs. Calm behaviour and *wu-wei* or non-action is expected of monks; tomfoolery and carousing are frowned upon, and can get a monk expelled if they persist. Monks wear simple blue robes and follow the signals from a drum or bell tower that usually governs the monks' day.

A Taoist monastery makes a great backdrop for a production about a group of young mystics (perhaps with an older mentor to guide them). The monastery can be endangered by hostile troops or destroyed early on in the story, giving the heroes cause for revenge and leaving them alone in the world.

TAOIST ALCHEMY

One Taoist-inspired magical art is alchemy, which can be broken down into two main areas of study. The first is *waidan* or external alchemy: The study of the properties of things, and how to bring out their hidden, magical qualities. Like ancient Western alchemy, Chinese alchemy often overlapped with the realm of science, leading to the discovery of gunpowder, fireproof cloth (made of asbestos), phosphorescent paint, and



similar inventions. More fantastic creations of alchemy include deadly poisons, fire bombs, wondrous machines, and the like. A skilled alchemist can create almost anything, given time and materials.

The alchemy of Taoist magicians is *neidan* or internal alchemy: An understanding and control of the body's flow of chi (or life force), aimed ultimately at achieving immortality. Few ever reached this lofty goal (see *The Eight Immortals* sidebar), but that did not prevent many alchemists from searching for it.

Part of internal alchemy's study involves learning to balance yin and yang, as well as treating imbalances (see *Yin and Yang*, above). Other practices include meditation (to achieve a state of *wu-wei* or non-action), strict dietary restrictions (often eating nothing more than rice and certain herbs) and breath control. Lao Tzu put particular emphasis on the ability to breathe properly, and masterful Taoists could breathe so slow and shallow that they hardly seemed to breathe at all. The art of *neidan* allowed practitioners to nourish themselves entirely on air and their own bodily fluids (by not spitting); they believed this a means of achieving immortality (or at least a long and healthy life).

TAOIST SORCERY

Taoists also practiced sorcery, casting spells and rituals to influence the material and spiritual worlds. The *Tao shih* or "Taoist doctor" is similar to a *wu* or other magician in most respects.

Magic relies on a number of ritual elements and an understanding of the forces of yin and yang as well as the five elements. Powerful *Tao shih* perform magic by substituting *mudras* (hand gestures) for various tools and symbols, but less experienced or weaker magicians must work with tools.

One of the most important magical tools in Taoism is the sword or *Ta-tao*, which represents the embodiment of the sorcerer's will. *Tao shih* and other magicians are often depicted wielding swords, particularly for banishment rituals or exorcisms in a kind of spiritual "battle." Magical swords usually have red cords tied around their hilts, and are properly wrapped and stored in red cloths. In many cases, a magician's sword may be

wood rather than metal, since it is intended primarily as a spiritual weapon and magical tool, not a practical fighting implement.

Other magical tools used by *Tao shih* include ritual robes, wands, fans (associated with the breath and the flow of chi), and musical instruments like drums and bells (to call or scare away spirits). Taoist sorcerers also create magical charms and talismans, usually by drawing the appropriate characters in red ink on yellow paper (red is associated with fire or energy while yellow is the colour of earth, a foundation for that energy). They also used paper charms, wearing, carrying, tacking them onto walls and above doorways, or burned them to release their power.

IMMORTALITY

The ultimate goal of many Taoist sorcerers is immortality, and among the greatest figures in Taoist legend were immortal beings or *hsien*. For them death is akin to a second birth; the body retains all the qualities of the living and is a chrysalis for the spirit's growing power while it develops and eventually transcends the physical body entirely. The *hsien* then obtain the blessing of Heaven and join the company of the gods. Their harmony with the Tao is so great that immortals display a wider range of fantastic powers and magic prowess (usually without the tools that mortal sorcerers require). *Hsien* can leap great distances, fly through the air, walk on water or clouds, read minds, command the elements, and wield any number of abilities in addition to their longevity and (in many stories) invulnerability.

The still-physical *hsien* are only the first of the immortals. Beyond them are the *chen-jen* or "perfect heroes," who attain true spiritual form, thus ignoring all the limitations of matter. Beyond them are the *sheng-jen* or "saints," beings of extraordinary intelligence, wisdom, and virtue who take their place in Heaven among the gods.

An immortal is one of the pinnacle Roles for Actors to play since they have tremendous powers, but equally great responsibilities. Directors looking for an over-the-top *HKAT!* production can cast the Actors as Taoist immortals fighting against demons and evil spirits while safeguarding their own enlightenment against temptation.

PA HSIEN: THE EIGHT IMMORTALS

There are eight major immortal figures in Taoist lore, each hailing from different eras of Chinese history. Depending on the production's time frame, the characters might even meet some of these luminaries; perhaps the Actors can even play them as roles. Certainly, a group of the Eight Immortals would be formidable heroes.

CHOU ERA (CIRCA 1028-800 B.C.)

CHANG-KUO LAO

An eccentric man riding backwards on a white donkey, beating a drum and chanting his own name. He can fold up his donkey like cloth and fit inside a bag. His symbol is a donkey or a drum.

CHUNG-LI CH'UAN

A great alchemist and the creator of the first alchemical Elixir of Immortality. He is known as the "King-emperor of the True Active Principle" (i.e., the yang force). His magical powers include flight and the ability to resurrect the dead. His symbol is a fan.

TANG ERA (CIRCA 618-906 A.D.)

HAN HSIANG-TZU

"The boy from the Hsiang River." Han was a wise Taoist who learned from his uncle. After entering Heaven as an immortal, he tried three times to teach his wife his wisdom so she could join him, but he failed and she pined away for him. He is usually depicted playing a flute.

HO HSIEN-KU

The only woman among the Eight Immortals (not including occasional portrayals of Lan Tsai-ho).

She was known for her generosity to the poor and her tireless stamina. Her symbol is a lotus flower.

LAN TSAI-HO

A mystical Taoist hermit and monk who wore an indigo robe and only one shoe. He travelled about as a poor street-singer; his symbol is a basket of flowers. Lan Tsai-ho is often shown as androgynous or a cross-dresser, as befits someone "between the world" of matter and spirit.

LU T'UNG-PIN

Lu "the cave visitor," learned the secrets of immortality after the fall of the Tang Dynasty. He is known for his remarkable luck and sword, which can fight on its own. Lu battled and killed a dragon with it. He later squandered his immortality on foolish pleasures, but Chung-li Ch'uan restored him to his true place in Heaven. His symbol is a basket of flowers.

TS'AO KUO-CHIU

A military leader and alchemist (who was far better at the latter than the former) and brother to an Empress. His symbol is a pair of boards or castanets and he is the patron of actors.

SUNG ERA (CIRCA 961-1279 A.D.)

LI T'IEH-KUAI

The last of the Eight Immortals was a Taoist sorcerer so skilled that he once used his own leg as firewood. His sister, however, came upon him and spoiled the spell by asking him if the fire hurt. When she did, the fire burned Li's foot off. He walked with the aid of a fire-poker, using it as a crutch thereafter. The poker or crutch is also his symbol. He carries a gourd and shrinks himself down each night to sleep inside it.

BUDDHISM

Buddhism is currently one of the most popular belief system in the world, with over 300 million worshipers. The word Buddha comes from "budhi," "to awaken." The philosophy has its origins about 2,500 years ago when Siddhata Gotama, known as the Buddha, was himself awakened (enlightened) at the age of 35. Siddhata Gotama was born into a royal family in

northern India, in 563 BC. At 29, he realized that wealth and luxury did not guarantee happiness, so he explored the different teachings, religions, and philosophies of the day, to find the key to human happiness. After six years of study and meditation he finally found "the middle path" and was enlightened. After enlightenment, the Buddha spent the remainder of his life teaching the principles of Buddhism — called the Dharma, or Truth — until his death at the age of 80.

DOGMAS OF BUDDHISM

Buddhists believe in the Four Noble Truths. They are: The truth of suffering; the truth regarding the cause of suffering; the truth regarding the cessation of suffering; and the path, the way leading to the cessation of that suffering. People suffer when life does not go their way, when their hopes are dashed, and when disappointment or tragedy strikes. People also tend to suffer when life does go their way, however. Why? Because they fear loss — loss of pleasure, wealth, family or friends. This is the truth of suffering. Wishing, wanting, and desiring are the cause of suffering. Everyone produces their own suffering by the way they think and act ... and because they produce their own suffering, it is within their power not to produce it, and not to suffer. This is the truth regarding the cessation of suffering. The way of life that does not cause suffering is the Noble 8-fold Path. It is the way of harmlessness, selflessness, and lack of desire. It is being moral in conduct and conviction as well as focussing the mind on being fully aware of personal thoughts and actions. It is developing wisdom by understanding the Four Noble Truths and by expressing compassion for others.

Buddhism's moral code is known as the Five Precepts: Not to take the life of anything living, not to take anything not freely given, to abstain from sexual misconduct and sensual overindulgence, to refrain from untrue speech, and to avoid intoxication, that is, losing mindfulness. Buddhists believe their actions are governed by Karma — the law that every cause has an effect. Our actions have results, and those results can follow us from one life to the next.

BUDDHISM AND MAGIC

Buddhists believe strongly in magic. Many tales of Buddhist Bodhisattvas (enlightened individuals) feature them using magical power. According to the most common classification, there are six main categories of magical power recorded in the Buddhist scriptures. These are celestial vision, celestial hearing, the power of knowing others' minds, the power of performing miracles, the power of knowing past lives, and the power of eradicating all defilement.

Human vision is limited to this world while celestial vision extends to all realms. It can detect the most minute detail easily, see objects far away as clearly as up close, overcome any obstruction by seeing through walls and mountains, and function with great acuity even in total darkness.

Celestial hearing, like celestial vision, is an extremely powerful sense. Those with celestial hearing can distinguish sounds clearly regardless of the distance, and understand all languages including the singing of birds and howling of animals.

The power to know others' minds is knowing precisely what someone else is thinking in a hodgepodge of ESP, telepathy, and empathy. Someone with this power can see the good and evil thoughts in others' minds as if looking through a clear lens. Not a single thought can escape detection.

Those with the power of performing miracles can alter reality at will. They can free their body from physical limitation, flying or leaping across distances without difficulty. They can also traverse fire, water, or travel through the ground with ease, or they may even become invisible. The power of performing miracles allows one to transcend the limitations of space and self.

The power of remembering past lives grants the user memory beyond memory. Practitioners can recall events from their previous incarnations as clearly as yesterday's affairs. Additionally, those with this power can perceive any other sentient beings' past as well. When someone dies, they can also foretell this person's future karmic retribution as well as their place of rebirth.

Those who can eradicate all defilement no longer suffer from afflictions. They are free of the cycles of birth and death, and the burden of being born into this world of ignorance. The above five magical powers are not unique to Buddhist practitioners — ghosts, demons, gods and fairies may all have similar powers, yet they still cannot escape reincarnation. The five magical powers are therefore not the ultimate. Only the ultimate power of eradicating all defilement can deliver one beyond the cycles of rebirth, and only Buddhist saints like the Buddha and Arhats can attain this power. Sadly, it lies beyond the reach of unenlightened mortals or spirits.

SOURCES OF MAGICAL POWER

Besides the classification of the six magical abilities mentioned above, the scriptures also quantify mystical powers according to how they were acquired. From *Da Sheng I Chang* (The Essays on Mahayana Meanings), magical powers are divided into those attained through cultivation, meditation, casting spells, or evil spirits. According to *Tsung Ching Lu* (Records from the Lineage Mirror), magic can be obtained through five methods: cultivation, meditation, spells, karma, and spirits.

CULTIVATION

The ultimate magical power comes through cultivation of the Middle Way. When one is enlightened to the Middle Way's ultimate truths, he or she can maintain the mind without thinking about the myriad objects and events encountered throughout the day. One knows all phenomena in the universe, yet one is not attached to it. Power obtained through cultivation allows the Buddhist to be totally liberated and free from the cycles of rebirth.

MEDITATION

Magical abilities can be obtained through meditation practices by concentrating on the power as it flows into the body's chakras. The chakras are the body's energy centers, each of which correspond to various glands: Muladhara (sexual), Svadhisthana (4 inches below navel), Manipura (adrenal), Anahata (thymus), Vishuddha (thyroid), Ajna (pituitary, or third eye) and Sahasrara (the crown of the head). The kundalini (or serpent energy ... another name for the body's chi) lies coiled at the base of the spine, and is awakened through meditation. It is then drawn up through the various chakra to achieve awakening.

SPELLS AND POTIONS

Spells and potions can also produce magic. This is the power of sorcerers and witches who can call upon winds and fires, and make themselves invisible by hiding under water or in the ground. This type of power is most prone to abuse as a means to harm others, and is the least approved method in Buddhist philosophy.

KARMA

As the result of their karma, some living beings may simply possess magical power as an innate function of their being. Ghosts can transport themselves through physical barriers and travel rapidly over long distances just like birds can fly in the sky and fish can live in the water. It is their karma. Different living beings possess a unique karma, not shared by others, and the result is a colorful combination of creatures with different appearances and abilities.

SPIRITS

Spirits can magically absorb cosmic energies from heaven and earth. After prolonged periods, these spirits can manifest in human form and play tricks on people. Sometimes, magicians can bind these spirits into service to use their magic on the magician's behalf. This is also a dangerous practice, given the vengeful nature of most spirits. An unbound spirit could result in great harm to a former master ... subsequently this form of magic is rarely used.

OTHER FORMS

Buddhist magicians are not always enlightened. These magicians may not have internal power of their own, but rather use objects and other methods to gain magical abilities. Examples of this include celestial calligraphy, tantra, and mudras which can amplify internal power to a sufficient level where magic is possible (a feat which comes naturally to enlightened souls and spirits).

Calligraphy is scrollwork and the painting of symbols to release magical power since the choice of ink and paper bear symbolic significance, as does the writing form. Inks come in varied colors and materials, specific to manipulating exact energies. Papers also have different hues, with each color denoting a particular governance and significance. There are also many different languages used by calligraphers, including yin and yang scripts, jade script, and heavenly script. The combination of all these elements creates paper charms that can bestow luck, protection, or health to the bearer, or can be used to repel spirits and demons (similar to a vampire's reaction to a cross in western legend).

Tantra is magic that relies on the dynamic created through male and female interaction. Right-handed Tantra focuses on symbolism, meditation, and yoga, but

SAMMO HUNG

Sammo Hung is one of the "Seven Little Fortunes", a group of actors (including Jackie Chan and Yuen Biao) who graduated from the brutal Peking Opera school. Sammo joined the Opera because he saw a group of kids training and thought it looked like fun. He soon learned better. The contract students signed bound them for a period of up to ten years and indemnified the school for anything up to and including the student's death. The school's brutality has since become legendary; beatings were common when students failed to perform up to their master's satisfaction and Sammo even starred in a movie, *Painted Faces*, that depicted the training — but it substantially downplayed the unpleasantness of the experience.

Because of his weight, Sammo's early career found him cast as a thug, falling beneath the fists and feet of action stars from Bruce Lee to Jimmy Wang Yu (star of the *One Armed Swordsman*). His excellent martial arts skills and the growing predilection of Hong Kong audiences for kung fu comedies, however, allowed him to become a star in his own right. His early roles reflect this comedic focus, with Hung starring in films like *Enter the Fat Dragon*, in which he plays a somewhat dim-witted swineherd with a Bruce Lee fixation. Naturally, Hung is given plenty of opportunities to show off his martial arts skill.

Sammo's career in front of the camera is impressive, but not as impressive as the work he has done behind it. At about the same time he was breaking into leading roles, he was also directing movies for Golden Harvest. His work during this

period includes some of the finest examples of the kung fu genre, like *The Prodigal Son*. During the early 1980s, he worked on films with Jackie Chan. These films, including *Project A*, *Wheels on Meals*, among others, helped cement Jackie's star status, but the relationship between the two became strained when Jackie became more insistent on having complete control over his work. After *Dragons Forever* in 1988, it would be ten years before they would work together again (Hung would later direct Chan in *Mr. Nice Guy*).

During the late eighties and early nineties, Sammo was pursuing some of his finest work, directing and producing movies like *Shanghai Express*, *Eastern Condors*, and *Pedicab Driver*. These movies were not commercially successful in Hong Kong, however, since the taste of the movie-going audience was shifting toward John Woo-inspired triad movies and light comedy. By 1991, Golden Harvest decided that they no longer had any use for Sammo and stopped working with him. Sammo was hurt by what he saw as Golden Harvest's ill treatment, but continued producing movies for his own company as well as working for other studios.

Hung's attempt to break into Hollywood came with the television series *Martial Law*, which ran on CBS from 1998-2000. Although well received, it did not earn high enough ratings to last. Sammo was frustrated with what he felt was the slow pace of the American entertainment industry, and so has returned to Hong Kong to make movies once again. He has talked on a number of occasions about doing another movie with Jackie Chan and Yuen Biao.

does not utilize sexual practices. That is the providence of left-handed Tantra, where the magician uses the build-up of sexual energy to power his or her mystic craft. Since procreation is the most primal and fundamental ability of mankind, Tantra can be an extremely powerful form of magic. Proponents of this art learn complicated practices to control and direct their energies; a difficult endeavor given instinct tends to override reason and training in those situations.

Lastly, the mudra are a physical extension of meditation. They are rigid, complex placements of muscles of the hands and body. By concentrating on these positions, the person in meditation can focus his or her mind more easily, channeling chi energy through the bodies and allowing the practitioners to cast spells. This form is commonly taught to monks, and various monastic orders keep their particular mudra secret. Many monasteries have even fought battles over the knowledge of secret mudras.

SAMMO HUNG



B L U E D R A G O N , W H I T E T I G E R

THE DANGERS OF MAGIC

Although magic is available to Buddhists, the scriptures warn against its over-use. Venerable Pindolabharadvaja, one the sixteen disciples named in *The Amitabha Sutra*, was barred from Nirvana because he showed off his magic. Once, when in a jubilant mood, he said to the faithful, "Do you think flying in the sky is magical? I will show you some spectacular acts." He then leaped into the sky and performed many miracles. The faithful were all impressed and praised him without ceasing, but this incident displeased the Buddha. He admonished Pindolabharadvaja, saying "My teaching uses morality to change others and compassion to save living beings. It does not use magic to impress and confuse people. You have misused magic today. As punishment, I order you to stay in this world, to work for more merits and to repent for this misbehavior before entering Nirvana."

Because the Venerable Pindolabharadvaja misused magic, he was condemned to live and suffer here in this world. The lesson was clear — magic cannot increase one's virtue or eradicate affliction. Careless use will only build more obstacles to enlightenment, and it is obvious that magic is not the solution for cycles of rebirth. Only practicing virtue is the sure and steady approach toward the Path. Buddhists see magic as possible (and at times even useful), but believe the virtues superior, even to magic.

HERO-MAGIC

Chinese myths and legends are full of the deeds of great heroes, who over cross over into the realm of the gods and immortals (see *Immortality*, page 34). This is particularly true the further back in history one goes; people often consider mythic heroes the historical figures of prehistory, when the myths of China's distant past are the only records of the time. Some ancient heroes may have actually existed, with their stories exaggerated over the years, though Directors may reveal that those stories were in fact real.

Great heroes derived their extraordinary abilities from a variety of sources. Often, they were simply intrinsic to his or her nature, particularly if the hero was partially divine in some capacity. In other cases, heroic abilities came only after long and difficult training and study,

particularly following methods like Taoist *neidan*. Heroes would follow strict regimens of meditation, diet, and exercise to unlock their inner powers. This often involves the guidance of a wise teacher, either a mortal or a *shen* like a dragon or spirit, or even an immortal *hsien* or god.

HEROIC QUALITIES

Heroes have many qualities — their special powers and abilities are only part of what makes a legendary hero. Although not all heroes possess all these qualities, they are the ideals toward which a hero should aspire.

COURAGEOUS

First and foremost, a hero must be brave. Heroes fight terrible monsters, angry gods, and powerful dragons without losing their cool. They must face danger because they are heroes, so they should never shy away from doing what needs to be done.

COURTEOUS

Heroes should also be polite and courteous to others regardless of their standing. In many Chinese myths, proper behaviour is at least as important as being able to cut a swathe through hundreds of enemy warriors. Showing the proper respect to an earthly official (much less a dragon or god) may earn the hero some respect in return.

HUMILITY

Despite their great powers, heroes should be humble about themselves and their accomplishments. A hero who boasts or acts superior will not likely earn the love of people. Many great heroes come from humble beginnings, and their early life teaches them humility even after they achieve greatness.

MIGHTY

Of course, heroes in Chinese myth and legend are usually tremendously capable. They can perform amazing feats and their skill is second to none. Some heroes are actually immortals, spirits, or demigods while others are on the road to becoming one. The rest are "only" mortal but still possess abilities that put them head and shoulders above the rest of humanity.

RIGHTEOUS

Heroes do what is right, no matter the danger or consequences. They must uphold the standards of justice, fairness, and honour. By the same token, heroes are expected to resist or rebel against unjust or unfair laws or rulers, and there are many stories about heroes defying corrupt officials or despots.

ROMANTIC

Heroic stories often have an element of romance to them, with the hero fighting for his or her love interest, often marrying after the adventure is over and the hero is ready to settle down. Many heroes perform great deeds to win the attention or affection of a love interest, or to gain the approval of the family (often a supernatural father).

UNUSUAL BIRTH AND DESTINY

A common element of heroic stories is the hero born in an unusual way or who has a childhood that marks him or her as special. A hero might have unusual parents, for example; gods or shen, like crane or fox spirits, sometimes married and had children with mortals. Such heroes may be raised by their mother alone, also a common element in the stories.

Some births are even more unusual. The hero Yü, for example, was born from the belly of a celestial horse, Gun, while his son, Chi, was born after his pregnant mother turned to stone. The stone exploded and Chi sprang out. Heroes are also commonly born with an intact caul or amniotic sac, often described as being born as "balls of flesh," which are cut open to reveal the infant hero.

A heroic child may display unusual powers or abilities from the moment of birth or in childhood. This may cause trouble for the parents and teach the child a valuable lesson in restraint and humility. Young No Cha once killed a dragon's son in a fit of pique, bringing trouble to his family. Such scenes from the hero's early childhood can create interesting "flashbacks" in a production, establishing more about the role's background and character. They are also useful for establishing important tragic elements in the role's past like the death of a parent or some misdeed for which the hero is still atoning.

KUNG FU AND FIGHTING ABILITIES

The prime ability of most legendary heroes is their prowess as warriors, either with a variety of weapons or barehanded. They are often capable of overcoming armies of ordinary foes single-handed or with a handful of few allies to help them. At the very least, they can handle small hordes of ordinary attackers on their own.

In some cases a hero's extraordinary fighting abilities are a matter of natural talent, while in other cases training is a very important part of the hero's development. This is usual in more contemporary legends when heroes are less likely to be immortals or the offspring of gods or spirits, and more likely to be "mere mortals," albeit with amazing abilities.

The training that forges heroes is rigorous, long, and usually very difficult to even begin. Most often wise masters pass their secrets on to worthy students, and usually to at least one unworthy student to provide the hero with a potential nemesis. These teachers can provide many different training scenes in a production, either as flashbacks or as part of a young hero learning and growing during the production. Masters also make great targets for a hero's enemies, and avenging a slain master is a very common motivation for heroic roles.

The secrets of Kung Fu and other esoteric training may come from other sources in addition to teachers. Arcane books or scrolls containing the wisdom of ancient masters and their secret techniques appear in stories and legends. Often, only a worthy student can understand the complex riddles and exercises described in these texts and put them to use. Stolen manuscripts can lead to the secrets falling into "the wrong hands," and heroes must either impress upon the would-be culprit to follow the right path, or they must prevent the abuse of such powerful abilities.

PHYSICAL ABILITIES

Legendary heroes have many amazing physical abilities, ranging from the human pinnacle in strength, speed, and skill to powers to rival the gods themselves like shapeshifting, flying, or immortality. The Director decides what kind of powers different roles can have in any given production. This section outlines those abilities common in the legends and stories, while Act III provides the rules necessary for an *HKAT!* production.

BREATHING AND SPITTING

The breath is connected to the flow of *chi* or life force in Chinese cosmology, and heroes and villains often have special powers related to breathing or spitting. A common technique is the ability (through a special diet) to build up a lethal gas in the body and breath it out into a killing or incapacitating cloud. Heroes may also be able to breathe pure destructive yang energy, or spit acid, poison, or even stones. Such visceral powers appear more often in the hands of cinema villains, but they are just as possible for heroes in the stories.

EXTRAORDINARY BODY

Heroes often have perfect, if not superhuman, physiques, and are able to perform amazing feats of strength, stamina, and agility. This is particularly true in the area of wielding weapons too heavy for normal people to lift or use properly, and when it comes to breaking or destroying things with a single blow (often unarmed).

INVULNERABILITY

Heroes are often more resistant to harm than normal people, in some cases virtually invulnerable by mundane standards. This may be a result of the hero's incredible speed, reflexes, and combat skill or just a preternatural toughness and ability to absorb injury or heal quickly. Heroes may regenerate due to their mastery of *chi*, or some internal alchemy, or they may know secrets of meditation and herbalism that allow them to heal more rapidly.

At the extreme end, some heroes can have limbs or even their heads severed from their bodies without any lasting harm, provided they reattach the missing limb within a few hours. With a belief in karma and reincarnation, some Chinese heroes return from the dead in a new life. Figures from the legendary past are often immortal, existing as a spirit without the need for a physical body; they are not necessarily invulnerable, however, since some immortals do die in battle. Additionally heroes often do not gain immortality until the end of a production when they attain their just reward. There is still a chance they might die during the production.

LEAPING AND FLYING

Wuxia often refers to "flying people," and legendary heroes can often either fly or leap amazingly far, clearing walls, trees, even buildings or mountaintops with

a single bound. Oftentimes, "flying" people are really just capable of running across treetops or even jumping from cloud to cloud to reach their destination. Along with the ability to fly, heroes often possess amazing balance. They can stand on the tip of a bowing pine or bamboo plant, a rope, or a steep roof peak without any difficulty whatsoever. Somewhat less extraordinary heroes can run across sand, snow, or even water without sinking.

SHAPE-CHANGING

A hero's mastery over the physical may reach its peak in his or her ability to physically transform. At the low end this involves extraordinary flexibility, the power to stretch limbs and bend and flow like water. At the high end the hero can turn into almost anything, possibly resulting in shapeshifting battles, where each combatant tries to turn into a more suitable form.

SPIRIT-SHOUT

Related to breath (see above), heroes often have amazing vocal abilities, like shouts that can shatter wood and stone, or flatten enemies.

SORCEROUS SIDEKICKS

One common element of legends where a hero does not have sorcerous abilities is that his or her friend, associate, or mentor may. This is usually a wise old man but it may be a woman (young or old), a spirit, or even a god who intervenes on the hero's behalf from time to time. This setup can simplify matters for the Director, since it puts some of the magical power in his or her hands. The Director can insert magic into the production when needed or have the omens "turn unfavorable" when big magic may interfere with a dramatic scene.

MAGIC ITEMS

In addition to their physical abilities, heroes often gain power from magical items. These items generally fall into two categories: weapons, and everything else.

Weapons are, of course, the most common, although they do not always take the forms one might expect. No Cha's signature weapon is the Bracelet of Heaven and Earth, for example, which he often hurled at his enemies

(along with a brick of gold) or White Crane's Three Precious Jade Sceptre. There are also more traditional weapons like Shen Yi's red bow and white arrows, Southern Unicorn's sword from *Storm Riders* or Lui Bai's sword Green Destiny from *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. Magical weapons are harder, sharper, and stronger than ordinary ones and often have other powers as well.

Other magic items include No Cha's wind-fire wheels that allowed him to fly swiftly through the air or Five-Fire Seven-Feather Fan that can create a powerful wind. An iron wand can reveal what is hidden, a magical herb or potion can cure sickness, while magical poisons might only possess a rare and difficult-to-obtain antidote. Note that enchanted armour is conspicuously absent; legendary heroes usually do not require it, since it only hinders their amazing acrobatics and the hero is often innately resistant to harm in some fashion regardless. Directors may wish to restrict the amount of armour (magical or otherwise) roles use in a Production to maintain flavour and style.

SHEN YI, THE DIVINE ARCHER

Shen Yi was a hero at the dawn of the world. He is often accorded the status of a god or immortal *hsien*. He became a master archer early in life and followed a strict training regime that included a diet of nothing but flowers and pure water. His skills came to the attention of Emperor Yao, who charged Shen Yi with overcoming and slaying the many monsters and demons plaguing the Middle Kingdom.

In that time there was not one sun but ten children of the gods who rested among the branches of a great tree in the distant west of the world. Only one of them passed through the sky each day, leaving the people thinking

there was only one sun. One day, the suns all decided to appear in the sky at once. Their light was blinding and their heat withered the crops and dried the land up, setting fire to the trees. The people cried out in fear. Shang Yi took his red bow and a quiver of white arrows to deal with the wayward suns. He tried reasoning with them and guiding them back to their resting place but the suns would not listen to him, so he used his bow to shoot

them out of the sky, leaving only one to carry out his duties alone. The suns that fell took the form of three-legged birds, pierced with Shen Yi's arrows.

Shen Yi overcame Fei Lien, the spirit of the wind, who carried tempests in a hide sack and unleashed them on the world. He also defeated Ho Po, the spirit of the waters, who flooded the rivers of the Middle Kingdom and caused trouble for its people. He took Ho Po's younger sister, the beautiful Heng O, to become his wife, then killed the Tung-t'ing serpent and a horde of wild boars threatening the kingdom.

Shen Yi was a brilliant architect in addition to his other gifts, and he commanded the spirits to build a majestic palace for the goddess Chin Mu. It had walls of the finest jade, beams and panelling of sweet scented woods, and ceilings of glass and precious gems. The goddess was so pleased with his work that she gifted Shen Yi with the elixir of immortality and taught him the regime he needed to prepare himself for it.

Unfortunately, Heng O discovered the elixir while Shen Yi was away on one of his many adventures and drank it herself. She became pure spirit and ascended to the Heavens to live on the Moon. When Shen Yi returned and discovered what had happened, he went to



the Emperor of Heaven himself. The White Jade Emperor appointed Shen Yi the minister of the Sun and gave him a charm to release a magical bird that would carry him there and another to visit his wife on the Moon when he wished. He went to see Heng O, who hid in shame of her actions, but Shen Yi forgave her and built her the Palace of Great Cold on the Moon. He lived in the Palace of the Lonely Park on the Sun, visiting his wife when he could. In this fashion Shen Yi embodied the yang principle and Heng O embodied the yin principle to keep the world in balance.

LI NO CHA, THE THIRD PRINCE

One of the greatest heroes of Chinese legend, Li No Cha was the third of three brothers born to Li Ching, Prime Minister of Heaven, and his wife Yin Shih. His older brothers were Chin Cha and Mu Cha.

When Yin Shih was pregnant with No Cha, a Taoist sorcerer, Chan-tang Kuan, slipped into her bedchamber and pushed something into her breast, saying "receive the gift of Heaven." Yin Shih almost immediately went into labour and gave birth shortly thereafter. The servants went running for her chamber, telling Li Ching, "Your wife has given birth to a monster!" Li Ching rushed into the room to see a glowing red ball of flesh. He cut it open with his sword and No Cha sprang out of it, dressed in red silk and wearing a golden bracelet, the Bracelet of the Horizon of Heaven and Earth, one of the blessings of the gods. Chan-tang Kuan then returned to claim No Cha as his student and disciple.

Young No Cha grew quickly; he was already six feet tall by the time he was eight years old, but he also possessed a considerable temper. When he went to bathe in a river, he caused the water to boil and the earth to shake, drawing the attention of the Dragon Emperor, who sent an emissary to uncover what was happening. He challenged No Cha, who killed him with a single blow. So the Dragon Emperor sent his son, who also challenged No Cha and died. The Dragon Emperor brought complaint against No Cha's parents for their wayward son. To protect them, No Cha cut off his own head and his death satisfied the Dragon Emperor.

No Cha's spirit still existed, however. His master Chan-tang Kuan advised No Cha to ask his mother to build a temple in his honour, so he could be reincarnated. After many requests, she did so in secret, and built the

temple some distance away from her home. Several months later, Li Ching heard about pilgrims visiting a temple that he knew nothing about. When he asked who was honoured there, the pilgrims told him "No Cha." Li Ching was filled with rage over his son's presumption. He destroyed the idols in the temple and burned it to the ground.

Still, No Cha was reincarnated through the intervention of a Taoist sorcerer, who made him a body of lotus flowers and stems. The reborn No Cha acquired a number of other magical weapons: a fiery spear, a brick of gold held in a panther skin bag, and a pair of wind-fire wheels that could carry him through the air. He fought a fierce battle with his father and older brothers before Chan-tang Kuan intervened and prevented matters from degrading further. No Cha and his family reconciled, and he went on to become a great hero.

SNORTER AND BLOWER

One adversary No Cha overcame was Ha, the Blower, who learned from a magician how to build up and maintain a noxious yellow gas in his body that killed anyone he breathed it on. One of No Cha's allies was Heng, the Snorter, who had a similar power he learned from the Taoist magician Tu O of K'un-lun. When he snorted, he gave off the song of a giant bell and his nostrils emitted two white beams of light that destroyed whatever they touched, both body and spirit.

No Cha wounded Blower in battle with his Heaven and Earth Bracelet, then his ally Huang Fei-hu (Yellow Flying Tiger) stabbed Blower in the belly with his spear, causing him to choke on his own lethal gas. Snorter died at the hands of Chin Ta-sheng, or "Golden Big Pint," who spat a piece of bezoar in his face, smashing his nose and splitting his skull.

THE BLUE DRAGON STAR

Another of No Cha's battles involved Teng Chiu-kung, the Spirit of the Blue Dragon Star and one of the chief generals of the last emperor of the Yin Dynasty, which No Cha fought against. No Cha broke the general's arm in battle with his Heaven and Earth Bracelet, but Tu Hsing-sun, a renowned sorcerer and Teng Chiu-kung's ally mended it. Then the general's daughter, Ch'an-yu took to the field to avenge her father, wielding the Five-Fire Stone against the immortal Yang

Chien. A celestial dog bit her in the neck, however, and forced her to flee, but Tu Hsing-sun also healed her wound. Ch'an-yu was eventually kidnapped and married to one of the enemy, and she convinced her father to switch sides in the battle.

No Cha also used his magical bracelet to defeat Feng Lin, a star god who belched black smoke from his nostrils. He also overcame Feng Lin's master Chang Kuei-fang, who called out to No Cha three times in battle to sunder his hun and p'o, the two halves of his spirit, and thus destroy him. No Cha, however, assumed the form of a lotus, which has no hun or p'o, and so was not affected. He defeated Chang Kuei-fang as well.

THE RED SAND BATTLE

In another battle of succession in China, Hsien-weng, the Ancient Immortal of the South Pole, challenged Chang Shao in battle. Chang Shao rode his deer into the fray and struck at Hsien-weng's head with his sword, but the White Crane Youth blocked the blow with his Three Precious Jade Scepter. Chang continued his attack, but was dismounted and disarmed. He threw handfuls of hot sand at Hsien-weng, who blew them away with his Five-Fire Seven-Feather Fan. Chang scattered hot sand over all the enemy army, but Hsien-weng blew the sand away again and the White Crane Youth struck Chang with his sceptre to bring him down.

THOUSAND-LI EYE AND FAVORABLE-WIND EAR

Once there were two brothers, favourites of the Emperor Chou Wang. They were named Kao Ming and Kao Chio, also known as Ch'ien-li Yen (Thousand-li Eye) and Shun-feng Erh (Favorable-wind Ear). Thousand-li Eye was tall, with a blue face, flaming eyes, and teeth like a rhinoceros. Favorable-wind Ear had greenish skin, two horns atop his head, a red beard, and teeth as sharp as sword blades. Together the brothers served under General Yuan Hung, a monkey who assumed human form to serve the Emperor. They made an almost unbeatable force, scattering men before them on the battlefield. What is more, the brothers lived up to their names. Thousand-li Eye could see things happening a thousand li away (a li is about a third of a mile) while Favorable-wind Ear could hear things from a similar distance.

Yang Chien, one of the leaders of the opposing army, consulted with the sorcerer Yu-ting Chen-jen to

discover if there was any way to defeat the brothers. He learned that Kao Ming and Kao Chio were actually the spirits of two trees, a peach and a pomegranate, growing on the slopes of Ch'i-pán Shan, the Chessboard Mountain. Yu-ting Chen-jen warned Yang Chien, however, that the two brothers would see and hear him if Yang Chien attempted to tell his army; so Yu-ting Chen-jen advised him to have men wave brightly coloured flags and beat on drums to distract the brothers when he explained the plan.

Yang Chien did just this and sent men to pull up the roots of the two trees and destroy the shrines built to them on the mountain. After this was done, Kao Ming and Kao Chio were surprised by an ambush while scouting out the enemy army and slain in battle.

THE MUSICAL T'IENT BROTHERS

In the time of the Tang Dynasty there lived three brothers: T'ien Yuan-shuai, T'ien Hung, and T'ien Chih-pao. All three were talented musicians, so much so that they earned the attention of Emperor Hsuan Tsung, who appointed them his imperial music masters. Their music was so beautiful that clouds stopped moving in the sky and flowers opened their petals early just to hear it. The brothers even cured the Emperor of a sickness with their music, drawing him from his fevered sleep with their beautiful sounds and soothing his suffering body.

When the plague spread throughout the kingdom, the priests and magicians of the imperial court turned to the T'ien brothers for aid. They built a great "spirit boat" in the midst of the kingdom and called hundreds upon hundreds of spirits to beat drums and bells to draw out the demons responsible for the disease. When the demons came to investigate the racket, the brothers and their allies captured and expelled them, ending the plague.

FONG SAI YUK

Fong Sai Yuk is a more recent Chinese hero, from the 18th century, renown for his martial arts prowess; small surprise since his mother was also a renowned Kung Fu artist who taught him everything she knew (and also overcame the one foe who ever defeated Fong in combat). Fong was a master swordsman and unarmed fighter, immortalized (among other places) by Jet Li in the movies *Fong Sai Yuk* and *Fong Sai Yuk 2*.

CHAPTER THREE: MAGIC IN HKAT!

He, truly, is supreme in battle,
Who would conquer himself alone,
Rather than he who would conquer in battle
A thousand, thousand men.

— Buddhism



MAGIC IN HKAT!

Hong Kong action movies explore many varied genres where magic often plays an important role. The rules for *Sword Fu*, *Wire Fu: Attack*, and *Wire Fu: Movement* in the *HKAT!* core rulebook offer a simple basis for magical effects in an *HKAT!* production but they do not provide the far-reaching variety of effects possible through the various Chinese magical practices. Presented here is a more flexible method of emulating the fantastic on-screen magic seen in so many Hong Kong movies.

It should be noted, however, that this system requires more dynamic thinking to create certain magical effects. If the GM or player would prefer a more rigidly structured system, we recommend using the *Wire Fu/Sword Fu* rules in the core book and interpreting the actions with a magical flair. For example, *Wire Fu* Abilities such as *Blinding Flare*, *Burning*, *Foot of the Dragon*, and *Pyrotechnics* can take an ordinary attack like a punch and turn it into an explosive strike of mystical energy.

MAGIC

ATTRIBUTE TYPE: Role Only
COST: 6 Points/Level
RELEVANT STAT: Soul

The role can manipulate magical energies, creating incredible mystical effects that defy the laws of rational thought. In most situations, the character's magic is an expression of the character's religion (i.e.: Taoism — page 28, Confucianism — page 24, Buddhism — page 35). Each Level gives the character three spells, equal in Rank to the caster's Level in Magic. Each Spell Rank provides the spell with one Magical Ability.

SPELL CASTING

To successfully cast a spell, the character must spend a number of Energy Points equal to the spell's Rank and must succeed in a Soul Stat check. Some spells may also require that the character make a successful Attack Combat roll (to hit the target with a spell component, for example). More importantly, however, the spell should reflect the religious beliefs of the caster. A Taoist monk,

for example, might cast a spell by nailing the target with a scroll, while a wu could call upon the spirits using a ritual drum. The spell casting is the stripped down framework of the mechanics; the flair itself comes from the beliefs fueling the magic (suggestions are discussed under *Magical Limitations*).

- LEVEL 1** The character has 3 Rank 1 Spells.
- LEVEL 2** The character has 6 Rank 2 Spells.
- LEVEL 3** The character has 9 Rank 3 Spells.
- LEVEL 4** The character has 12 Rank 4 Spells.
- LEVEL 5** The character has 15 Rank 5 Spells.
- LEVEL 6** The character has 18 Rank 6 Spells.

MAGICAL ABILITIES

DAMAGE

The magic the character wields is designed to inflict damage on the target. The magical effect requires a successful Attack Combat check to strike the target. For each *Magical Ability: Damage* the character assigns to the effect, the attack inflicts an additional 4 points of damage.

Conversely, the magical effect protects the character from harm, shielding him or her from 4 points of damage each time the player assigns this Ability to his or her character. Lastly, the character can use this effect to heal damage inflicted on him, her, or an ally. For each *Magical Ability: Damage* the character gives the effect, the character heals 4 points of damage.

PROBABILITY

The magic alters the probabilities of success and failure. Each time the character assigns this Ability to a magical effect, it can increase the character's or target's chance of success by a -1 bonus or decrease an opponent's chance of success at a task with a +1 penalty.

SPECIAL EFFECT

The magic provides the character with a special power, such as the ability to walk on water, leap from mountain top to mountain top, travel to another dimension, become invisible, etc. The GM and player determine the exact game mechanic function of each *Special Effect* when creating the spell, but as in all situations, the GM is the final arbiter (including on the *Special Effect's Rank*).

There are three ranks of Special Effects:

MINOR EFFECT

Minor Special Effects do not require significant magic to accomplish, and might include such things as leaping 100 feet, running as fast as a deer, or having an eagle's eyesight. These simple effects count as one Magical Ability.

MAJOR EFFECTS

Major Special Effects push the boundaries of reality and allow the caster to accomplish truly spectacular feats like becoming invisible or flying. Major Special Effects count as three Magical Abilities.

EXTREME EFFECTS

Extreme Special Effects break the laws of reality, permitting the caster to travel to alternate dimensions or teleport. Extreme Effects count as five Magical Abilities.

PRIMAL EFFECTS

Primal Special Effects involve magic that completely shatter reality, and are reserved for GM plot devices in the development of a production. For example, a spell that transforms a woman into a lotus blossom or gets Jeff all the nectar he wants would be a Primal Special Effect.

MAGIC LIMITATIONS

It is unlikely that most magicians are capable of casting powerful spells with ease. Thus, many focus their will and ability through various methods that inherently limit their freedom when casting the spell. Each Magic Limitation provides the caster with an additional Magical Ability that can be added to a spell.

GESTURES

The caster must gesture to invoke the spell. If the caster is bound, in any way, he or she can not cast the spell.

INVOCATIONS

The caster must utter a verbal incantation clearly to cast the spell. If prevented or interrupted, the spell fails.

SCROLL/SCRIPTURE

The spell requires either a scroll or small scripture with holy/mystical writing. The paper is usually consumed by the magic, releasing the energies stored in the text. It often requires special inks and skill to properly

prepare these types of spells. Without the scroll/scripture, the effect fails.

ELIXIR

The spell caster must imbibe a specially prepared potion that provides him or her with the ability to unlock the necessary magical energies.

OTHER COMPONENTS

The spell requires other special components such as blood, feathers, incense, tea leaves, etc. As with Scroll/Scriptures, the components are usually consumed by the spell. Without the components, the spell fails.

SAMPLE SPELLS

Following are a some sample spells that players and GMs can use in their productions.

RANK 1 SPELLS

BLADE OF TUI

This powerful blood-magic allows the character to sheath a sword in magical flame.

SPELL RANK: 1

EFFECT: By cutting him or herself and spreading the blood on a bladed weapon (Other Components), the character can cover the blade in magical flame, which increases the blade's damage by 8 points (Damage x2).

FLAMING PALMS

After slapping his or her hands together, the character can project a burst of flames at his or her target.

SPELL RANK: 1

EFFECT: When the character smacks his or her hands together (Gestures), he or she projects a burst of flame at a target, inflicting 8 points of damage (Damage x2) plus the attacker's Attack Combat Value.

GIFT OF TUI

The character can sense the magical energies emanating from enchanted items.

SPELL RANK: 1

EFFECT: After a series of complex hand movements (Gestures) and a brief prayer (Invocations), the character

can sense magical energies that items of other enchantments emit. This does include the ability to sense if a person has a mystical resonance, such as being possessed by a demon, a magician, a ghost, etc. (Major Special Effect).

RANK 2 SPELLS

CLOAK OF TUN

This spell turns one person invisible.

SPELL RANK: 2

EFFECT: When cast on a specially prepared cloak (Other Components), the wearer becomes invisible to sight (Major Special Effect).

LAM YEN DAO'S RIGHTEOUS DEMON FIST

This spell, designed by the great demon hunter Lam Yen Dao, strikes at nether-foes with a bolt of pure Chi.

SPELL RANK: 2

EFFECT: When the character twists his or her fingers into the appropriate symbols (Gestures), and shouts "Righteous Demon Fist" (Invocations), he or she launches a Chi bolt at the target, inflicting 16 points of damage (Damage x4) plus the character's Attack Combat Value.

THE SHIELD OF HSAIO KU

This spell creates a shield of glowing energy that protects the character from harm.

SPELL RANK: 1

EFFECT: After a complex series of hand movements (Gestures), a small, glowing shield protects the character from 12 points of damage (Damage x3).

RANK 3 SPELLS

AGELESS WHISPERS

This spell allows the character to contact one of his or her ancestors for information.

SPELL RANK: 3

EFFECT: The character must prepare a scroll (Scroll/Scripture) with his or her (deceased) ancestor's full name on it (Other Components). When the character

destroys the scroll, the ancestor appears and answers any question as truthfully as possible (if the ancestor knows the answer, and provided it has accurate information). As a spirit, however, the ancestor can almost certainly provide some useful information (Extreme Special Effect).

FLIGHT OF CRANES

This is a secret move of the Southern Gate of Wu Dang style of Kung Fu, whose practitioners actually gain the ability to fly — after allowing the spirit of the crane to enter their minds.

SPELL RANK: 3

EFFECT: The character can fly for one scene (Major Effect)

SAAN TIU MO (MOUNTAIN DANCING)

By imbibing a specially prepared potion, the character can travel very quickly through amazing leaps. This spell derives its name from the appearance of the traveler leaping from mountain to mountain.

SPELL RANK: 3

EFFECT: After drinking the potion (Elixir), the character can make incredible leaps, effectively tripling his or her movement speed (Minor Special Effect). It also provides the character with a -3 bonus on any Acrobatics Skill checks (Probability x3)

RANK 4 SPELLS

BANISH TUI

This spell inhibits another spell caster's ability to work magic.

SPELL RANK: 3

EFFECT: The character throws a scroll (Scroll/Scripture) at his or her opponent, who suffers a +4 penalty (Probabilities x4) to casting spells.

HEART OF THE DRAGON

This spell allows the caster to heal massive damage to his or her body.

SPELL RANK: 4

EFFECT: The caster heals 16 points of damage (Damage x4).

YUEN WOO-PING

Hong Kong action movies often hire directors specifically for fight scenes. This director is expected to choreograph the scenes for best dramatic effect and to stage stunts safely, while ensuring that the combat sequences remain convincing. Yuen Woo-ping has filled many roles in the movies he has worked on — acting, directing, and producing — but he is best known as an action director. Woo-ping is a master of his art, and his work appears in films made on both sides of the Pacific.

Yuen Woo-ping was born in Guangzhou in 1945, the oldest son in a family of 12. The Yuen clan all studied Peking Opera under the tutelage of their father, Yuen Siu Tin (who should not be confused with Yu Jim Yuen, the sifu of the Seven Little Fortunes). Yuen Siu Tin was a regular in the cast of the Wong Fei Hong series of films, and he introduced his son to the producers. Woo-ping appeared in some minor roles in movies in the early 1970's, and worked as a fight director for Ng See Yuen (no relation) and Golden Harvest.

When Ng See Yuen formed his own production company, he asked Woo-ping to direct for him. Ng See Yuen decided to cast Jackie Chan in movies over the objections of his distributors — Jackie was seen as a failure at the time, just one more in a long line of unsuccessful Bruce Lee imitators. The resulting movie, *Snake in the Eagle's Shadow*, launched Jackie's career and the comedy/Kung Fu genre. The

three worked together again the next year to create *Drunken Master*. Yuen Siu Tin was cast in both films as Jackie's master.

Woo-ping went on to direct and produce several movies, but his best-known films in Hong Kong are the ones he made with Jet Li. He directed the fight sequences in *QUATIC II* and the two men worked together on several other films, including *Last Hero in China*, *Tai Chi* (distributed in North America under the title *Twin Warriors*), *Fist of Legend*, and *Black Mask*. *Fist of Legend* displays Woo-ping's versatility, with the movie careening through martial arts styles, from Japanese-style locks and holds to wing chun to almost anything else.

Following *Black Mask*, Woo-ping worked in television for a few years before the Wachowski brothers hired him to direct the fight choreography for *The Matrix*. Woo-ping spent four months before filming, training the cast in martial arts and planning the fight sequences. The result was electrifying, and has been imitated in several copycat movies. Since then, Woo-ping has worked as the action director for *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*.

Yuen Woo-ping is currently the fight director for sequels to some his best-known movies, including *Black Mask 2: City of Masks* and *The Matrix Reloaded*. The latter has caused him (like so many other Hong Kong luminaries) significant frustration and it is not clear whether he will continue working in Hollywood in the future.

RANK 5 SPELLS

SPIRIT BANE

This spell allows the caster to dispel or even destroy a spirit.

SPELL RANK: 5

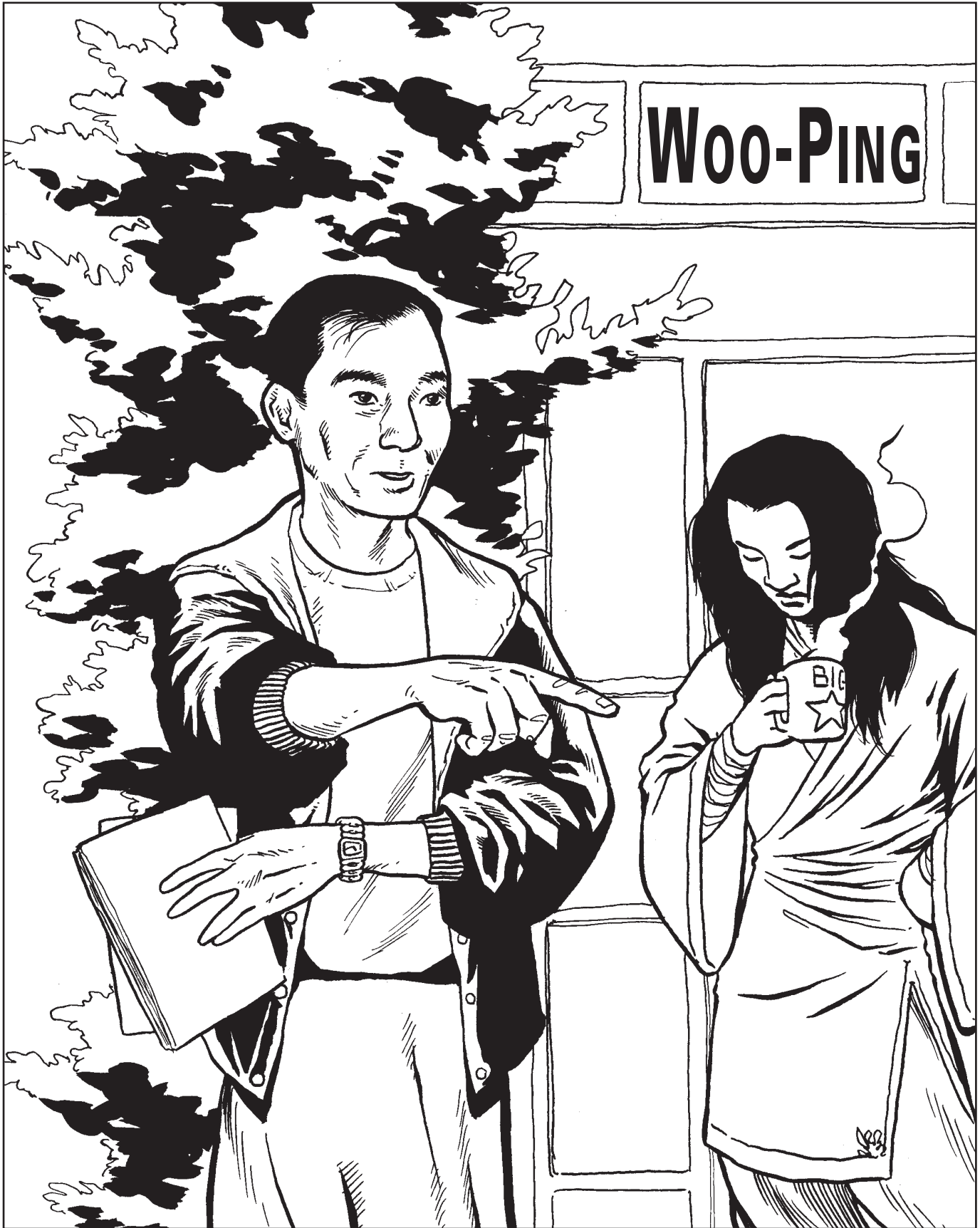
EFFECT: The caster throws a scroll (Scroll/Scripture) at a spirit, immediately forcing it to make a Soul Stat check. If it succeeds, it must flee the area immediately. If it fails the Soul Stat check, it is destroyed or otherwise banished from the earthly plane (Extreme Special Effect).

STATURE OF THE MASTER

This spell allows the character to grow to the size of a giant.

SPELL RANK: 5

EFFECT: After uttering a long prayer (Invocation), the character grows in height, gaining 4 points of protection from damage (Damage) and gaining a -3 bonus on all Body-related Stat checks (Probabilities x3) as well as inflicting an additional 8 points of damage with any physical attacks (Damage x2).



RANK 6 SPELLS

SPECTRAL BONDS OF LEE LUNG

This spell creates a powerful web capable of holding many foes in place, but it requires planning to be effective.

SPELL RANK: 6

EFFECT: The caster must prepare an area for the spell. Preparations include pouring a powerful potion on the ground (Elixir) while uttering a potent prayer (Invocations). Once completed, spectral, invisible tendrils spread from the ground, filling a large area. The tendrils manifest and trap any foe entering the area, wrapping the character tight (no defense roll permitted). The victim (or his or her allies) must inflict 20 points of damage to break free of the tendrils (Extreme Special Effect). Any attempt to attack the tendrils is hindered by the fact that the character is wrapped tight, imposing a +3 penalty to (Probabilities x3) the characters' Attack rolls. Characters not incased by the tendrils, however, do not suffer any penalty though they may accidentally harm a trapped character in their attempt to free him or her (GM discretion).

NEW ATTRIBUTES

Characters in wuxia films traditionally display abilities that strain the boundaries of credibility. Productions can simulate many of those capabilities using the basic rules from *HKAT!*, but this sourcebook includes some additional abilities Game Masters may allow roles to purchase. The GM, as always, is the final arbiter on which Ability is available to roles in a given movie. Wuxia films vary according to how greatly they bend reality from barely exceeding the strictures of physics to something just short of full-fledged magic; the Abilities of a given role should reflect the tone of the film.

GUN FU ABILITIES

It is recommended the GM allow characters to use the following Gun Fu Abilities with ranged weapons during a wuxia-style movie: Arsenal, Deadeye, John Woo Special, Quick Trigger Finger, and Steady Hand.

DEADLY RAIN

The character may make a ranged attack using normally harmless items such as pebbles, drops of water,

chopsticks, or sewing needles. The damage is equal to the character's Combat Value.

SWORD FU ABILITIES

BLOCK MISSILE WEAPON

The character can parry or even catch a ranged weapon. This Ability allows the character to substitute Kung Fu: Defense (if the character parries with his or her bare hands) or Melee Defense (to parry with a sword) for their Ranged Defense skill. Characters may choose to catch ranged weapons by making a Kung Fu: Defense roll at a +2 penalty. Success means that the character has caught the weapon. If the character has the Counterstrike Ability, they may immediately attack their opponent with the weapon.

SLASH WITH THE WIND

The character may strike with such force that it wounds enemies at a distance. The attack can be used at a range of 50 meters. Each additional level of the Ability extends the maximum range 10x (to Medium for the first additional level, and to Long for the second additional level).

DISMEMBER

The character's weapon is so sharp and deadly that it often slices the limbs off enemies in battle. When the character rolls 2 ("snake eyes") while fighting a Walk-on, he or she severs one of the opponent's limbs. Walk-ons may survive this (at the GMs discretion) but they cannot continue the fight. Against a named character, roll one die and compare the results with the following table:

DICE ROLL	DAMAGE MODIFIER
1-3	Triple Damage
4-5	Quadruple Damage
6	Quadruple Damage and Limb Loss

This replaces the normal critical damage roll.

SIGNATURE WEAPON

The character possesses a signature weapon, with which he or she gains a -2 bonus to attacks. This bonus only applies when using the signature weapon — other weapons of the same type gain no benefit.

SHATTER WEAPON

This attack focuses the blow so precisely that it can shatter or break opponent's weapons. The character must successfully strike an enemy's weapon — it is considered a Called Shot with a +2 penalty to the Attack roll (the defender may still make a normal Defense roll). The attack inflicts no damage against the opponent. The attacker makes a Body Stat check to shatter or break the defender's weapon. The defender may attempt a Defense roll at a +2 penalty to prevent his or her weapon from shattering.

SCHOOL FAMILIARITY

This character has an encyclopaedic knowledge of various martial arts schools. This includes, but is not limited to, knowing their most common attack forms, the school's location, the masters' identities, and so forth. These characters are immune to the effects of Unusual Style. If someone with School Familiarity can observe a character for three rounds of combat, he or she may make a Mind-based Kung Fu (Attack or Defence — player's choice) Skill check to determine the identity of the opponent's master and their Sword Fu or Wire Fu Abilities.

UNUSUAL STYLE

Some forms of kung fu are so unusual that opponents who never faced it before cannot fight it effectively. Alternately, the character may use a unique weapon instead. Regardless, the character's fighting style is hard to counter until opponents learn to adapt to the style. When facing a character with an unusual style for the first time, opponents suffer a +1 penalty to all Attack and Defense rolls. This penalty lasts until they make a successful Mind-based Kung Fu: Attacks roll (for an unusual style) or Melee Attacks roll (for an unusual weapon) at a +2 penalty. Once the opponent succeeds, he or she no longer endures a penalty against that particular style.

SWORD FU DISABILITIES

STYLE WEAKNESS

The character's fighting style is inferior, and cannot effectively defend against certain attacks. He or she suffers a +1 penalty while defending against High, Middle, or Low attacks (player's choice).

WIRE FU ABILITIES: ATTACKS

ARIAL ATTACK

The character can leap through the air and launch an attack or a series of attacks against the opponent's head. He or she may use this ability when normally declaring his or her attack. The strike takes no penalty on the Attack roll and the opponent may only strike Low in the same round.

BLOCK FU POWER

This attack allows the character to disrupt the flow of energies through a person's body. This Ability's effect prevents the victim from using a Gun Fu, Sword Fu, or Wire Fu Ability specified by the attacker, but he or she must know the victim has the Ability in the first place. When hit by a Block Fu Power attack, the victim must make a Soul Stat check or lose access to the specified Ability. The defender makes the check with a +1 penalty for every 6 points of damage (round up) that the attack normally delivers. The attack does no damage, regardless if the victim makes the Soul Stat roll. The effect lasts for the duration of one scene.

COUNTERSTRIKE

If the character successfully blocks a punch, he or she may counter with a Light Strike at a +2 penalty (in addition to all other modifiers). For the counterstrike to succeed, the Defense roll must be greater than the attacker's Margin of Success.

TWO BODIES, ONE SOUL

Two fighters who are so synchronized to each other's movements that they may do battle as one. Both roles must possess this Ability for it to be effective. When fighting as "one soul," the characters must take identical actions, even if they attack different opponents, but must do the same thing in every other way (i.e. they must use the same Abilities, they must both attack High, etc.). They also act on the same Initiative as well, using the better of the two rolls. If they attack the same target, their victim receives a +2 penalty on all Defense rolls.

TRANSFER INNER ENERGY

Someone with this ability may rob or lend life force from another character through contact. Instead of inflicting damage while using this Ability, the character

may absorb or donate an equivalent number of Energy Points regardless whether the victim is willing or not (but if they are, there is no need to roll to make contact). If the victim has no Energy Points remaining, he or she loses Health Points instead (the attacker gains one Energy Point per Health Point lost in this fashion). A character may not increase his or her Energy Point total above his or her normal maximum through this power.

PROJECT CHI

This ability allows the character to add Energy Points to increase the damage inflicted by a successful strike. Every 2 Energy Points invested increases the Damage by 1, but the attacker must declare the expenditure before making the attack roll. A successful hit knocks the target back by 1 metre for every 6 Energy Points used.

A character may also use this ability defensively, reducing the damage from this Ability's attack by 1 point for every 2 Energy Points invested. This may only be accomplished if the attacker has used Project Chi — it is ineffective against a normal strike. If the defender sacrifices enough Energy Points to reduce the damage to 0, every 2 points invested beyond that amount inflicts 1 point of damage against the attacker.

WHIRLWIND ATTACK

The character becomes a whirling, chaotic dervish of arms and legs. For each level in this Ability, the character may make one additional attack against a different opponent without penalty. When using this Ability, the character may not attack a single opponent in the same round more than once.

WIRE FU: MOVEMENT ABILITIES

DISC FLIGHT

The character can hurl a large disc, shuriken, manhole cover, or similar-sized object into the air and stand on it while it is in flight without it crashing into the ground. Only one person may stand on the object at a time. The character can steer the disc, fight, or perform any other activity they would normally conduct while it is in flight. The object remains aloft for 1 round per level in this ability and travels 3x the character's normal leaping distance during that time.

DRUNKEN BOXING

The character can fight after imbibing large amounts of alcohol — in fact, the alcohol makes them more effective. Each drink the character subsumes (the GM determines what constitutes a drink, but as a guideline assume the character can consume one drink per round) gives him or her a -1 bonus on all Defense rolls. There is a risk to heavy drinking, however. For each additional drink after the first, the character must make a Body Stat check at a +1 penalty (i.e. +1 for the second, +2 for the third, etc.) or pass out.

INVISIBILITY

The character cannot be seen, even when moving. This may be literal invisibility but is more often a combination of stealth, camouflage, and hiding in shadows. Characters with the Blindfighting Ability are aware of the character's presence if he or she is within two metres.

PERFECT STEALTH

The character may only move at half-speed when using this ability, but makes absolutely no noise when doing so. A character with Blindfighting suffers normal penalties when fighting a character using this ability.

UNYIELDING STANCE

This chi-related stance (usually a low horse-stance) is so unyielding that an attack's energy can pass right through the character and be transmitted to an object behind him or her. The character must have a solid (and strong) object behind him or her to use this ability. If an opponent successfully attacks the character, 5 points of damage strikes the object instead. Any excess above those 5 points affects the character. Should the object break, however (GMs discretion), the blow hurls the character backwards 1 metre for every 5 points of damage inflicted by the opponent.

WHIRLWIND DODGE

After successfully defending against an attack, the character may make a Body-based Kung Fu: Defense roll. If successful, the defending character moves behind the attacker and launches his or her next attack from behind.

CHAPTER FOUR: SAMPLE ADVENTURES

There is no greater sin than desire,
no greater curse than discontent,
no greater misfortune than wanting something for oneself.
Therefore he who knows that enough is enough
will always have enough.
— Taoism



GLORIOUS CRUSADES FOR THE RIGHTEOUS

The following five script skeletons are intended to provide the Game Master with the loose framework for adventures. Although there is no suggested costs for Role Packages or Movie Budget, Game Masters should consider making these Big Budget or Blockbuster films (see *HKAT!*, page 40 for more information). Still, this is all dependent on the GM's production and the feel he or she is trying to capture.

THE WINTER QUEEN SCRIPT SYNOPSIS

This tale begins in a remote region of the empire. For hundreds of years, the realm has been static, even decadent. Its borders were set for centuries and there has been no dynamism or energy to drive the people to great deeds. The ascension of a new emperor to the throne has changed all of that. Young and full of new ideas, he inspires his people to regain the glories of the past, including territories and possessions lost for many generations.

In one region of the empire, the noble lord Tan Dazhong has heeded the emperor's call and plans to reclaim lands once held by his ancestors. He assembles his advisors, troops, and agents, informing them of his plan to re-annex these lands in the name of the emperor. They all agree that such a plan is a good one and support his decision wholeheartedly. They prepare for the reclamation, and the great undertaking begins.

Lord Tan places his daughter Ting in charge of the operation. She is an accomplished swordswoman and enjoys the respect and admiration of her underlings. When she arrives at the former site of the Tan clan's holdings in the region, she finds that a tribe of nomads has settled there. They want nothing to do with the empire and defend "their" property with great fierceness. The early part of Ting's efforts involves dealing with the nomads and their claim to the land.

While on an expedition against the nomads, Ting encounters an attractive young man. He does not speak but seems intrigued by Ting's presence and aids her by showing her the location of nomad encampments. The

man's help facilitates the reclamation greatly and Ting cannot help but feel a growing attraction for him. Over time, he aids her in several more instances, but never speaks to her. Ting's advisors warn against further involvement with this person. Nevertheless, she is strangely drawn to him and seeks him out.

Eventually, matters turn for the worse. With the nomads defeated, unrest arises within the ranks of the Tan's agents. Soldiers and advisors suddenly turn on Ting and there are attempts to kill her. The priest Zongxian tells her this is punishment for becoming involved with the young man. Ting does not understand, but Zongxian explains the young man is not a mortal being like herself. He is a nature spirit, and by accepting his aid, Ting has entered into an unknowing pact with the shen of the area, who now feel they can act freely within the Tan's reclaimed lands. Only by seeking out the spirits' lord and negotiating can the unrest end.

Together with Zongxian and several other companions, Tan Ting heads into the wilds of the new lands and seeks out the spirits' lord, the mysterious Winter Queen. She must then enter the spirit realm and negotiate — or do battle — with the Queen and her minions if her efforts are to succeed.

CASTING CALL

TAN TING

The daughter of Tan Dazhong and a skilled warrior; her father places her in charge of reclaiming lost lands in the name of empire.

ZONGXIAN

An aged priest, he is wise in the ways of the spirit world and is the first person to recognize that the mysterious young man is in fact a ghost.

QIU WANYING

Ting's closest friend and confidante, she is an older woman also trained in the ways of the sword.

WANG XUAN

A middle-aged warrior who has served Lord Tan for many years. He questions his master's willingness to indulge Ting's desire to become a swordswoman but does everything he can to ensure her safety.

HU BANG

A young peasant who acts as a courier for Ting. He wants to become a great warrior and approaches Ting and Wanying to train him, much to the chagrin of Wang Xuan.

MOVIE SETS

LORD TAN'S COURT

Here the elder Tan informs his daughter of his desire to reclaim lost lands in the name of the emperor. The court is also home to a fighting arena, where Ting displays her prowess as a warrior when members of the clan object to Lord Tan's choice in Ting as the mission's leader.

THE OVERGROWN ROAD

This road connects the Tan domains with the lost territories to the south. Many of its stones have disappeared, as have its milestones and other markers. Yet, it still serves well enough to direct the party toward their goal. Along the way, the group encounters a band of armed nomads who attack to defend "their" lands — the first evidence that the reclamation is not as simple a matter as some might believe.

THE OLD MANSE

Eventually, the party comes upon the ruins of an old manse used by the Tan clan in ages past. The building is rickety and overgrown, but it houses several nomads, who attack Ting and her entourage. The manse's wood has thoroughly rotted and its stones are loose. Consequently, it does not handle damage well. Any kicks or hits against it — as well as bodies thrown in its vicinity — will result in a slow but spectacular collapse.

THE JUNGLE

The old Tan lands are mostly covered with a huge and untamed jungle. In addition to the mighty stands of trees, there are several ponds and waterways, where small bands of nomads have taken up residence. The battle against these people (or attempts to negotiate with them) occurs amid the tall trees and vines of this area.

THE CRYSTAL CAVE

While travelling with her entourage, Ting finds a strange cave that wells up out of the ground without warning. It is made of a strange crystalline material, but

upon approaching, Ting rouses an attractive young man who seems to have been sleeping within it. He smiles at Ting and beckons her to follow him. Without speaking, he takes her to several locales within the jungle, including the site of a large nomadic encampment — exactly what she needs to know to complete her mission.

NOMAD ENCAMPMENT

Here Ting and her party either battle or negotiate with the leader of the jungle nomads, An Ho. An is a warlike individual who detests the "decadence" of the empire. Yet, he is also a reasonable man who will negotiate if treated with the proper respect. If given appropriate concessions (such as allowing his people to roam as nomads during certain months), he will agree not to harm Tan clan members who eventually take up residence in this area. If not, he and his band will fight ably in an attempt to drive away the Tan forever.

TAN HEADQUARTERS

After a celebration heralding the conclusion of either negotiations with the nomads or a successful battle against them, an unexplained fight breaks out among Ting's retainers. These men seem intent on killing one another regardless the consequences. They use the environment to their advantage, jumping on tables, hiding behind crates, and otherwise keeping themselves out of reach. When finally defeated, they return to their senses and cannot recall their actions; this is the first sign that something unusual is happening.

ON THE ROAD

While overseeing the repair of the old overgrown road, a gang of Ting's retainers attacks her and her entourage. They behave much like the men at the headquarters, which is to say they seem intent on acting violently for no obvious reason. Unlike the previous attackers, this second group are better trained and are therefore more of a challenge to defeat. Yet, they too do not understand what has come over them or why they acted as they did. This final clue enables Zongxian to deduce the existence of nature spirits on the Tan lands.

THE SPIRIT WORLD

Once in the Crystal Cave, Ting and her retinue enter the Spirit World, where everything appears as a distorted reflection of the normal world. There are trees

and animals here, but they are somehow warped and twisted, at least by mortal accounts. The same is true of its "human" inhabitants, who take offense at the violation of their realm. They will defend themselves, unless Ting shows the proper respect toward them, as Zongxian advises. If so, the inhabitants bring the mortals to the court of the Winter Queen. Otherwise, the heroes must fight their way to there, amid an environment totally alien to them.

EXTRAS

THE WINTER QUEEN

Haughty and proud, the Queen is the ruler of the spirit realm in this part of the world and has nothing but contempt for the mortals invading her domain.

THE WINTER PRINCE

This is the son of the Queen, who took an interest in Ting and precipitated the means by which his mother has become involved in mortal affairs.

AN HO

The jungle nomad leader is interested primarily in protecting his people, but he also bears a grudge against the empire, believing it is an interloper in the affairs of his own society.

NOMAD WARRIORS

They lack proper training and weapons but possess great numbers, thereby posing a significant threat to the unwary.

TAN CLAN ATTACKERS

These warriors have been possessed by spirits and use their skills to wreak havoc — and possible death — upon their friends and allies.

SPIRIT WARRIORS

These are the spirit realm's soldiers who defend their Queen with both magical weapons and magical powers. They are extremely difficult opponents, and most mortals immediately regret facing them on their home turf.

DENOUEMENT

The adventure's ultimate confrontation occurs within the Winter Queen's court. The Queen accepts Ting and her entourage as ambassadors from the mortal world. She explains first that Ting has entered into a pact with her son, the Winter Prince, by accepting his aid in finding the jungle nomads. If Ting protests that the Prince did not speak, the Queen laughs at her, explaining that many spirits cannot communicate with mortals through the use of mere words. Since Ting accepted his help, she opened the way for the Queen to claim dominion over the Tan lands.

Of course, the Queen admits, this may seem unfair. Being a wise and just ruler, however, she gives the mortals a chance to regain claim to their lands without harassment from the spirit realm. To do this, the mortals must face an equal number of spirit warriors in combat. If the mortals can defeat them, the Queen agrees to leave the mortals in peace. If they cannot, they must leave and never return again.

The battle takes place in a field outside the court. This being the spirit realm, the environment is strange and unfamiliar to the mortals, which the spirit warriors use to their advantage. They also use their magic to place the heroes in a difficult situation. Once Ting and her entourage realize they too can manipulate the spirit realm's weird magic, and thus environment, however, they should be able to face the spirit warriors on equal footing.

If Ting is victorious, the Queen abides by her agreement and says she and her spirits will never harass the Tan again. If Ting loses, she and her clan must never return here or they will face the wrath of the Queen. The Winter Prince apologizes for inadvertently involving Ting in this matter and hopes she will think fondly of him despite all that has happened.

SHATTERED EMPIRE SCRIPT SYNOPSIS

The story begins in an ancient and vast empire, one ruled justly and wisely for untold generations. Nevertheless, rot has set in, with courtiers and military leaders taking advantage of the weakening central government. The aged emperor, although pious and well regarded, is not as vigorous as he once was. His advisors isolate him from his people and insulate him against the harsh realities of the times.

Of course, Emperor Weiguo is resourceful and intelligent. He realizes that not all is well in his kingdom. When word reaches the capital that a peasant rebellion has erupted in the far-off Yushan Province, he does not accept what his advisors tell him — namely that the peasants collaborate with the vicious Zhanyi nomads who have threatened the empire for years. Emperor Weiguo wants to learn the truth, which is why he secretly dispatches a small group of trusted servants to report on the rebellion and rectify it before it is too late.

The servants make their way to Yushan Province covertly, but are nevertheless attacked by mysterious assailants, suggesting that someone at the court knows of their activities. When they finally reach Yushan, they find that its governor, General Jang Kuo, is ruthlessly suppressing the rebellion, thereby turning the province into a war zone. Yushan is a shambles and only Jang's military discipline keeps it from collapsing into total anarchy.

The investigation reveals a different truth than Jang's claims. The peasants do not support the Zhanyi nomads but fear them. They appealed to Jang for aid but received no help. When they took up arms to defend themselves, the governor accused them of sedition since peasants may not lawfully bear arms even in defense. Worse still, there is evidence that Jang uses the rebellion as an excuse to build up his power base in Yushan to make a bid for the throne himself.

The group must find proof of General Jang's misdeeds before it is too late. Opposing them are the governor's battle-hardened troops, as well as his allies among the Zhanyi nomads and at the imperial court. Jang believes he has arrayed a vast network of supporters to his cause and that nothing can stand in his way, least of all a

small band of heroes. Unfortunately, he did not count on his daughter's honour and betrayal; she unexpectedly aids the group against her father's treason. Only by working together with the peasants can the heroes foil General Jang's plot and restore peace to the empire.

CASTING CALL

SHU CHONGXUAN

An up-and-coming member of the Emperor's Imperial Guard; selected for his loyalty and integrity.

WEN BAOJIA

An older veteran of the guard asked by the emperor to keep an eye on the young Shu.

DING YUHUI

A Taoist priest skilled in the arts of geomancy and investigation.

QI XIAO

A hulking, but good-natured soldier whose great size is matched only by his devotion to the cause of good.

JANG QIANGWEI

General Jang's honourable daughter, who is a powerful warrior in her own right.

LI FANG

A peasant leader, who will do anything to save his people from the horrors of General Jang's abuse of power.

MOVIE SETS

THE IMPERIAL PALACE

Here Emperor Weiguo summons the heroes and privately expresses his concern about the peasant rebellion and the empire's future.

DESERT ROAD

While the heroes make their way to Yushan Province, a band of masked assailants sent by Jang's supporters in the imperial court attacks the group. The assailants are well-trained soldiers who intend to kill the heroes before they can reach Yushan and learn the truth of the general's treason. The assailants fight to the death and reveal nothing of their purpose or their master.

ANG LEE

Unlike other actors, directors, and producers profiled in this book, Ang Lee does not have a long-standing connection to the wuxia genre. He was born in Taiwan in 1958, and moved to the United States in 1978, where he studied film in Chicago and in New York. His filmmaking career started when he entered two scripts into a contest sponsored by the Taiwanese government. The scripts won the first and second prize, and he was able to hook up with an American production company run by James Shamus (who would later work as the lead screenwriter for *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*). Those scripts, *Pushing Hands* and *The Wedding Banquet*, established Lee in the art house movie scene. Following *Eat Drink Man Woman*, he was offered the opportunity to direct *Sense and Sensibility*.

Ang Lee directed two more English-language films before creating a movie in the style of the films he enjoyed as a child. *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* was adapted from the fourth part of a five-part novel series written by Wang Lu Du.

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon was deliberately written and filmed for an international audience. This is clear from the very beginning — most wuxia films start out early with a fight, to create a sense of action. In fact, the movie is really a romantic drama, with the emotional lives of each of the characters revolving around a troubled relationship. The title of the movie is meant to evoke those problems — *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* refers to the passions that each character conceals

from those around them. The story is driven by each of the character's attempts to change their situation, and one by one, they frustrate one another so that in the end, nobody achieves what they sought.

Lee deliberately recreated the tone of the Shaw Brothers movies by filming it in Mandarin, requiring Chow Yun-Fat and Michelle Yeoh to learn another language while they prepared for their roles. In fact, Michelle Yeoh insisted the script be fixed three days before she had to film any scene, so that she would have time to memorize the pronunciation of her lines. From the perspective of Asian audiences, this effort was not entirely successful since the Cantonese-speakers in the film retained a noticeable accent. Adding to the language oddities, the film's script was written in English, translated into Mandarin for filming, then translated back into English to produce the subtitles and achieve the proper "international subtitle" feel.

Rather than being uniquely Chinese, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* became an international film, set in China but not really tied to any one culture, time, or place. It is probably what made it the first wuxia film to have any mass appeal with Western audiences (unless you count John Carpenter's *Big Trouble in Little China*, perhaps), receiving four Academy Awards including Best Foreign Film, but it was not particularly successful with Asian audiences. Nevertheless, its success suggests that Hong Kong's influence over Hollywood will only increase in the coming years, no matter how difficult individual filmmakers find the transition.

MILITARY CHECKPOINT

When the group arrives at Yushan Province, the border guards ask them for their identities and harass them. Even after the heroes show their imperial warrants, the guards mock them and challenge them to contests of strength. The guards believe themselves invincible and resent the idea that anyone has been sent to spy on their leader, General Jang.

JANG'S CAMP

The heroes visit General Jang in his camp and learn of both the Zhanyi raids and the peasant rebellion. While investigating the matter further, they encounter heavy resistance from Jang and his lieutenants, all of whom are incensed that the emperor should "spy" on their activities here. When a group of soldiers tries to eliminate the heroes, Jang Qiangwei, the general's daughter, comes to the characters' aid. After the battle she suggests they pay a visit to a peasant village to learn the truth.

ANG LEE



PEASANT VILLAGE

Here the heroes meet Li Fang and discover why the common people “revolted” against General Jang’s rule. They also discover that the Zhanyi nomad raids only began recently and are not as widespread as Jang’s reports to the emperor implied.

ZHANYI FRONTIER

In this rocky desert, the heroes encounter a band of Zhanyi nomads, who attack the characters in overwhelming numbers (or the GM can solve this peacefully with the nomads requesting the heroes’ help). Their goal is to capture or escort the heroes to their leader, Dewi Khan. The khan has an alliance with General Jang but believes the treasonous governor untrustworthy. He hopes the heroes can shed some light on this matter.

DEWI KHAN’S CAMP

The Zhanyi leader questions the group and their intentions for him and his people. If treated with respect and honesty, the khan agrees to aid the heroes against General Jang. He reveals the general’s original plan, namely to raid Yushan enough to inspire a peasant “revolt” that would secure him the power he needed to claim the throne. The khan believes that Jang intends to destroy his people once he has the opportunity, and Zhanyi leader will do anything to prevent that from happening — even if it means allying with imperial agents like the heroes.

BORDER POST

Together with Zhanyi warriors, the heroes must battle a group of Jang’s troops to enter the province and make their way to the general’s camp once more.

JANG’S CAMP, PART II

The general’s military camp is the site of a huge pitched battle between the heroes (and their Zhanyi and peasant allies) against General Jang’s troops. The camp itself is a large walled structure with numerous tents, makeshift buildings, and crates. There are also a large number of horses and carts in the area, as well as racks of weapons and other equipment. The focus of this battle is to demoralize the troops and find Jang before he escapes. Unfortunately, the latter task is impossible since Jang fights his way out of the camp just ahead of the heroes. They must follow him into the mountains on horseback to reach him.

MOUNTAIN PASS

While on horseback, the heroes must contend with General Jang’s personal guard, who attempt to knock them from their animals and over the steep cliffs of the mountain. This battle should be fast and tense, since the guards are superb horsemen who use their skills to the utmost effect.

EXTRAS

JANG KUO

A powerful and cunning opponent, General Jang is one of the greatest swordsmen in the entire empire and he uses his abilities to destroy anyone standing in his way.

DEWI KHAN

The leader of the Zhanyi nomads, the khan is a good-hearted man who only wants his people to be left in peace — which is why he made a deal with Jang in the first place.

JIN CAI

The leader of Jang’s guards, he is fiercely devoted to his master and will gladly defend him to the death.

YUSHAN SOLDIERS

These war-hardened veterans are difficult opponents who lack grace and speed but possess incredible power in battle.

JANG’S GUARDS

Craftier than ordinary soldiers, these trained horsemen prefer to fight mounted than on their own two feet.

MASKED ASSAILANTS

Good warriors with a wide field of fighting styles, they are only slightly less effective than Jang’s personal guards are.

ZHANYI NOMADS

Lacking discipline and finesse, these horse nomads are nevertheless fine warriors who are equally at home on horseback or on the ground.

DENOUEMENT

The final confrontation between General Jang and the emperor's agents occurs high in the craggy mountains of Yushan Province. For years, Jang has used these mountains as training grounds for his troops, so they are intimately familiar with its terrain and locales. They use its cliffs, caves, and terrain to their advantage, as does Jang, who is a wily and skilled guerrilla fighter. They use hit and run tactics against the heroes, appearing only briefly and dealing enough damage to weaken their enemies without placing themselves at risk. Amid the terrain are hidden caches of weapons, which even the heroes may use to their advantage.

Inevitably, the cat and mouse game of seeking Jang will tire the heroes. When they have suffered enough damage in this fashion (or if they manage to find him), Jang faces them in a straight fight. He uses every skill at his disposal, as well as his superior knowledge of the environment, to fight the agents. His primary interest is in victory, not honour. Consequently, Jang is not opposed to using dirty tricks or his minions to gain an advantage in combat.

In the end, though, Jang makes his stand in a clearing surrounded by a series of caves. He tries pushing the heroes toward a cliff face while keeping his own back to the caves. His goal is to send the agents hurtling off the mountain, while giving himself the opportunity to escape into the caves if necessary. The cave system is extremely cramped and narrow. If the Game Master so chooses, General Jang can escape, establishing the possibility for a sequel. If the GM does not wish to use this option, the heroes must either prevent Jang from entering the cave system or defeat him within its claustrophobic confines.

THE SWORD OF VALOUR SCRIPT SYNOPSIS

The land suffers under the brutal rule of a demon-ridden emperor while the common people cry out for release from his increasingly insane edicts. Unfortunately, the emperor is as paranoid as he is power-mad, fearing that the gods themselves will call forth a saviour to end his deranged rule. On the advice of his eunuch advisors, he has taken numerous magical precautions against any who might rise against him. Thus, the emperor believes his tyranny is secure and continues to mock the Mandate of Heaven, which he should be upholding.

When Tan Guoxiong, a *xia* warrior trained at the Lifang Monastery, returns to his village after years away from home, the village headman begs him to end the people's suffering. Tan is moved by their plight and agrees, but will not face the emperor until he has obtained the legendary Sword of Valour. In the hands of a swordsman whose heart is pure and skills without par, the sword is a reputedly deadly weapon against even the darkest sorcery. Sadly, it has not been seen since it was lost centuries ago at the Battle of Zhujiang.

Tan sets out on a quest to find the sword and end the emperor's unjust rule. Along the way, he acquires several companions, each of whom provides him with much needed assistance. Unfortunately, the emperor's magic allows him to learn of Tan's plans. He then sends agents to stop the hero and his allies before they acquire the sword and threaten his iron grip on the nation.

CASTING CALL

TAN GUOXIONG

A valiant *xia* warrior trained in the ancient ways of the Lifang Monastery

WULONG

A young peasant boy who wishes to learn the ways of swordplay from Tan.

NI CHENGHAO

A gambler and vagabond who joins Tan to avoid arrest for theft; a rogue with a heart of gold.

SHU TING

A young woman who disguises herself as a boy named Peng so she can accompany Tan.

WANG YUN

A self-proclaimed "minstrel" whose singing is so terrible that it frightens animals and men alike.

MOVIE SETS

INN OF THE SEVEN LANTERNS

A roadside tavern on the way to the capital city. Its patrons cross social strata; everyone from rich merchants to low class travellers frequents here. Of course, the wealthiest patrons dine in an area separate from the common riffraff, where they can listen to the music of caged songbirds. The inn has two levels and numerous private booths, separated by screens. Illuminating the entire inn are seven large oil lanterns hanging from huge chains above the tavern's central area. Tables, chairs, crates, and a winding staircase provide plenty of opportunities for combat when the inn's guards try to capture Ni Chenghao for stealing money from a corpulent merchant.

VILLAGE OF YINGSHAN

A small peasant village where Imperial soldiers and tax collectors are harassing the inhabitants. Since no one else stands up to them, Peng (the disguised Shu Ting) does so, taking full advantage of the forest surrounding the village. Built near the base of a mountain, the villagers have carved stone steps leading to a shrine of the gods.

THE BRIDGE

Spanning a mighty river is an elaborately built bridge where travellers often tarry to enjoy the beautiful view. Here Wang Yun has run afoul of a gang of thugs who do not appreciate his musical "talents." The bridge is constructed from large wooden beams and possesses several large lanterns to light the way at night.

THE LIBRARY

This ancient repository of knowledge holds the key to finding the Sword of Valour. Amid its scrolls, manuscripts, and attendants, agents of the emperor battle

to gain the secrets for themselves — even if they must destroy the library to do it. Large shelves, wheeled trolleys, and reading tables offer numerous opportunities to prevent these agents from achieving their evil ends.

THE RUINED MONASTERY

This monastery is the final resting-place of the Sword of Valour. Its last abbot constructed numerous tricks and traps to confound the unworthy seeking the weapon. A series of pits, rickety planks and fast-moving blades protect the sword from those unfit to wield it. Naturally, the emperor's agents follow Tan into the monastery — with predictable results.

THE IMPERIAL CITY

The emperor's agents and soldiers fight from fortified positions to protect his palace from unlawful entry. They use a variety of tactics, including incendiary devices, to prevent Tan and his companions from breaching the Imperial Palace's sanctity.

EXTRAS

THE EMPEROR

Evil to the core, this power-hungry despot entreaties demons to gain magical and martial prowess.

ZHOU WEI

A conniving eunuch warrior and advisor to the emperor who leads the opposition to Tan Guoxiong's quest.

IMPERIAL GUARDS

Well-trained agents of tyranny.

THUGS

Common toughs lacking either courage or true martial skills.

DENOUEMENT

The final battle unfolds within the emperor's palace, before the very throne where he unjustly rules the kingdom. The throne room is large and ornately decorated, with large columns and several daises upon which sit stone-carved furniture such as chairs. A half-dozen arches lead into the room, most of which access the guard chambers staffed with the emperor's finest and

most loyal warriors. The emperor makes his last stand here, using his magic and demon-enhanced fighting abilities to challenge Tan and his companions.

Because the Sword of Valour can end the emperor's reign of terror, he stops at nothing to defeat the heroes. He throws wave after wave of soldiers at the characters, while striking at them in the most dishonourable ways possible. He uses hit and run tactics, weaving through the rows of columns in the throne room. In the end, the emperor fights savagely and to the death, for he neither expects nor gives mercy to those who challenge him in his inner sanctum.

TEMPLE WAR SCRIPT SYNOPSIS

Hu Cheng is a devout old abbot who has led the White Crane monastery for as long as anyone can remember. Taking in orphans and abandoned children, Hu trains his young charges in meditation and good work in the hope of raising honourable and productive members of the kingdom. He also trains them in the unique fighting style passed down from the monastery's founders to its current head. The secrets of the White Crane Style are much coveted by Hu's rivals, including Law Wu of the Leaping Tiger sect.

Law stops at nothing to uncover Hu's secrets. He corrupts the abbot's star pupil, Yin Dawei, who is on the verge of learning the inmost mysteries of White Crane style. When Hu realizes his student is under Law's spell, however, he threatens to cast him out of the monastery before he becomes a true master. In a rage, Yin kills Hu and allows Law's monks to overrun the White Crane monastery. The monks scatter to the four winds, the secrets of White Crane lost with Hu's death.

Two of Hu's surviving students, Cheng Shihao and Liu Yousheng, vow to avenge their master's death and somehow recover the secrets of the White Crane style. Gathering a band of followers from among other survivors, they work their way toward the Leaping Tiger's stronghold and their final confrontation with Law and his corrupt servant.

CASTING CALL

CHENG SHIHAO

The eldest of Hu's surviving students, he feels resentment that his dead master overlooked him in favour of Yin.

LIU YOUSHENG

The youngest of the survivors, he hopes to prove himself in the eyes of Cheng, whom he admires almost as much as he did Hu.

HUIFENG

A Taoist *sifu* the students encounter on their travels, he offers to help the young men contact Hu's spirit and regain the secrets of the White Crane style.

WANG AN

A former member of the Leaping Tiger sect, cast out because he disagreed with Law's desire to seek temporal gain through the use of violence.

MOVIE SETS

THE WHITE CRANE MONASTERY

This mountaintop abbey is home to dozens of monks and students. Its central room is large, with an open roof that allows sunlight to illuminate its many-pillared expanse. Large screens, prayer wheels, and gongs are scattered throughout the chamber, as are weapons used in training. The monastery is walled and has numerous catwalks and balconies from which to survey the surrounding countryside.

THE CRYSTAL POOL

This Taoist shrine is situated deep in the forest and is home to Huifeng. Students of the Leaping Tiger sect attack the priest, pushing him into the pool's clear waters and desecrating the holy ground with their fighting.

THE MERCHANT CARAVAN

This collection of wagons, horses, crates, and other containers travels along the road to the cities of the nearby valley. It is a convenient way for the heroes to approach the lair of the Leaping Tiger sect. Along the way, bandits attack the caravan, prompting Wang An to reveal himself from among the travellers.

LAU KAR-LEUNG

Lau Kar-leung (sometimes credited as Liu Jia-liang in Shaw Brothers' Mandarin-language films) is one of the legendary directors from the era when Shaw Brothers controlled the Hong Kong film industry.

Lau's father was a student of "Butcher" Lam, the most famous disciple of Wong Fei-hong. Lau Sr. played his own sifu in the 99-movie Wong Fei Hong series. Producers also planned for a chain of movies centred on the character of Butcher Lam, but they only made one, in which Lau Kar-leung co-starred. Lau appeared in many Shaw films during the 50s and 60s before moving behind the camera, first as a fight choreographer and then later as a director.

Lau's work with Shaw Brothers includes several films now considered classics. *The Spiritual Boxer*, for instance, was one of the first kung fu comedies. Spiritual boxing is an art where the fighters invoke specific deities to grant them invulnerability and enhanced fighting arts. The movie features a character who fakes these abilities when his master is too drunk to perform.

Kar-leung also created a new version of the Wong Fei-hung legend with *Challenge of the Masters*, in 1976. Previous films had always portrayed Fei-hung as a master in the prime of his life. Kar-leung instead chose to depict him as a young man just beginning his training. He also cast his "brother," Lau Kar Fei, in the role (the two men are not actually related, but studio publicity suggested

the opposite), a character approach that Jackie Chan in *Drunken Master* and Tsui Hark in *Once Upon a Time in China* would later adopt. Kar-leung was still producing some of his best work when the Shaw Brothers abandoned movies for television.

Lau Kar-leung seemed set for a comeback in the early 90s. He filmed *Pedicab Driver* with Sammo Hung, and was selected by Jackie Chan to direct *Drunken Master II*, which Chan intended as a fundraiser for the Hong Kong Director's guild. Lau appears in the film, and is most noted for the scene when Jackie and he duel beneath a train.

Unfortunately, Jackie and Lau clashed over the use of martial arts in the film (Lau insisted that Jackie limit himself to the proper techniques used in drunken boxing) and Jackie dismissed him from the film (although Lau Kar-leung retained sole directorial credit). Lau Kar-leung has always seen the movies as a way to document and preserve real martial arts traditions, and was a stickler for accuracy in the fight scenes. Some of his most successful work, like *36th Chamber of Shaolin*, avoids the typical plot structure of the martial arts film to focus almost exclusively on the training process that monks were forced to follow.

Stung by the turn of events, Lau attempted to make a sequel without Jackie, but it was not particularly successful. Following *Drunken Master III*, Lau Kar-leung retired again from filmmaking. He survived a recent bout with cancer and still lives in Hong Kong with his wife and two daughters.

THE CITY IN THE VALLEY

A bustling trade city whose citizenry lives in fear of Law's Leaping Tiger monks. Its main square, complete with open-air bazaar, is the site of a confrontation between Hu's surviving students and the traitorous Yin.

THE LAIR OF THE LEAPING TIGER SECT

Hidden deep within a cavern in the valley, the sect's disciples have learned to fight in the dark. They use the narrow passageways, low ceilings, and dim light to their advantage, defending their master from Cheng and Liu. Here and there, torches illuminate the shadowy caves. Rocks of various sizes litter the floor as well.

EXTRAS

LAW WU

The perverse leader of the Leaping Tiger sect, he believes that martial prowess naturally leads to conquest and self-aggrandizement, not personal enlightenment.

YIN DAWEI

As power hungry as his dark master, Yin is headstrong and impatient for the riches Law promised him for his part in destroying the White Crane monastery.

KAR LEUNG



B L U E D R A G O N , W H I T E T I G E R

LEAPING TIGER MONKS

Trained in the brutal style of Law's school, these belligerent pupils make up in intensity what they lack in finesse.

BANDITS

These sword-wielding thieves lack discipline but are numerous enough to make them deadly foes, even for trained martial artists.

DENOUEMENT

Law's inner sanctum is a vast cave, complete with a seemingly bottomless abyss at its centre. The evil master of the Leaping Tiger sect has decorated this cave in perverse mockery of the White Crane's central chamber, complete with enormous screens and training weapons along its walls.

When confronted, Law mocks his opponents and sends lesser disciples against the heroes. They all attempt to trick the characters into fighting near the pit where they hope to fling them. Once defeated, Law himself engages his enemies. He takes full advantage of cave's irregular shape and shadowy corners. He draws opponents into tight corners and occasionally disappears into the darkness. He then uses surprise to gain the upper hand.

In the end, Law makes his last stand near the abyss at the centre of the cave. He dares the heroes to fight him near its lip, laughing at those who do not approach him. His years of training in this room, as well as his natural nimbleness, give him the edge here — a fact he hopes will prevent his own demise.

THE TOMB OF GUOLONG SCRIPT SYNOPSIS

The kingdom is in a state of civil war with rival factions attempting to lay claim to the throne. The fighting has laid waste to numerous villages and created chaos unseen in hundreds of years. Consequently, the warlord Lei Baojia seeks any solution to end the fighting and establish himself as emperor. On the advice of a witch, Lei decides that the simplest way to secure his rule

is to obtain the mighty artifacts resting within the tomb of the legendary ruler, Guolong.

Guolong was a vicious despot obsessed with obtaining immortality for himself and becoming as powerful as the very gods. Consequently, he built a vast tomb for himself on the Plains of Fire. By constructing the tomb according to the instructions found in ancient writings, Guolong believed he would rise from the dead more powerful than he was in life. His servants constructed artificial rivers of mercury, fire, and acid, as well as deadly traps and other protections. An eternal flame burned as a testament to his earthly greatness ... and eventual return.

Lei sends a collection of his most skilled warriors and servants to enter the tomb, recover the treasures that lie within, and return to him. He believes the vast wealth and mighty weapons buried with the long-dead tyrant will tilt the civil war in his favour. Little does he realize that his rival, Xiao Cheng, has the same idea and has sent his own warriors into the tomb. Of course, both groups will be surprised when they discover that Guolong achieved his immortality and now rules over a kingdom of the dead within the ancient structure.

CASTING CALL

ZHU ANGUO

The experienced warrior Lei selects to lead the expedition into the tomb.

LIN BIHAI

Zhu's headstrong lieutenant, who is obsessed with seeing order established in the kingdom after years of fighting.

TING

An enigmatic female magician who advised Lei to seek out Guolong's tomb; she is an expert on Guolong's tenure of rule.

XUAN

Ting's daughter and an aspiring sorceress herself, she secretly longs to become a swordswoman and fight for Lei on the battlefield.

CHENG XIN

An inexperienced warrior whom Ting chose because she believes the mission's success somehow requires his presence.

MOVIE SETS

BATTLE ON THE PLAINS

The forces of Lei and Xiao collide on these vast plains, with each side trying to gain the advantage in the ongoing civil war. The flat and seemingly mundane environment means that the combatants must rely solely on their raw skills to see them through the battle.

THE WALLS

Huge, thick stone walls protect Guolong's tomb. Entering the complex requires finding a way over them. Unfortunately, the sheer wall face contains numerous spring-loaded and magical traps against climbing. The heroes must find a way to overcome the walls without actually touching their surface for any length of time. Solutions include flying over or passing through the walls like ghosts.

THE ANTECHAMBER

The tomb's entrance betrays signs of recent human visitation. It is also guarded by a collection of mechanical soldiers wielding swords of the utmost sharpness. These soldiers are remarkably adept at movement, despite their nature. They attack with vigour and use the chamber's stone pillars and large urns as shields during combat.

THE RIVER OF FIRE

Venturing deeper into the tomb requires the heroes cross a huge river of fire blocking their path. There is no bridge across the river, but a series of hanging metal chains can serve nimble climbers well. Anyone using the chains, however, finds himself or herself under attack by poisonous darts that shoot from the walls.

THE ORRERY

This room contains a gigantic metal representation of the stars and planets. Powered by an unknown energy source, it spins and whirls with great speed. Xiao's party of warriors ambushes the heroes in this room. The

ensuing battle takes place amid the orrery's moving parts, whose great gears and appendages present both opportunities for the skilled and dangers for the unwary.

THE GEYSERS

This room has several holes in the floor interspersed at regular intervals. In sequence, they spout boiling water to block advances deeper into the tomb complex.

EXTRAS

GUOLONG

This ancient tyrant sought immortality and achieved it — but only within the confines of his tomb.

HUANG ZOU

Leader of Xiao's rival expedition, Huang is a fearless warrior who can withstand significant pain before succumbing to its effects.

XIAO'S WARRIORS

Generic soldiers in the service of Xiao Cheng.

MECHANICAL SOLDIERS

Clockwork guardians of Guolong's tomb.

DEAD WARRIORS

These ghostly warriors serve Guolong as his personal guard and defend his inner sanctum from disturbance.

DENOUEMENT

The final battle takes place within Guolong's final resting-place. The supposedly dead despot rises from his sarcophagus and orders his dead warriors to fight on his behalf. He then uses sorcery to smite anyone who approaches him or his fabled treasury of gold, gems, and magical weapons. Guolong scoffs at anyone desecrating his tomb and vows that he will one day free himself from this prison and reclaim the kingdom that is rightfully his.

Guolong's room contains tattered tapestries, large urns, and a central eternal flame, fed by the artificial river of fire snaking its way through the complex. The dead warriors fight in a fairly straightforward fashion, but are

nimble enough to perform feats of prodigious skill if necessary. Guolong is even more impressive, using his combination of unmatched swordsmanship and sorcery to defend his tomb from the heroes. The characters can permanently destroy him only by tricking or pushing him into the eternal flame, where his undead body will burn to ash instantly. Of course, the same fate awaits any mortal who does the same — a tactic Guolong attempts to use.

If Huang Zou survived until this point, he and his warriors aid the heroes in defeating the ghost tyrant, and agree to help bring peace to the kingdom after years of civil war. The riches and magic within the tomb are indeed great and could well aid Lei or anyone else in ending the fighting once and for all.

THE MISTAKEN BRIDE SCRIPT SYNOPSIS

The minor lord Song Junde seeks an alliance with a powerful mandarin, Qin Jianmin, to protect his lands and people from the depredations of the sinister Deng Kuo, another mighty lord. Song hopes to effect this alliance by marrying off his youngest daughter, Meizhu, to Qin's eldest son, Shilong. Song believes the marriage will unite the two houses and protect his lands and people from cruel tyrants like Deng.

Unfortunately, Meizhu has other ideas. For months, Deng has wooed her in secret and she has finally succumbed to his evil charms. Meizhu believes she loves Deng and wishes to marry him rather than Qin Shilong, as her father wishes. She has contacted Deng and told him the itinerary of the wedding caravan taking her to Qin's domain.

Deng takes advantage of this information, sending his troops to attack the caravan and "kidnap" Meizhu and her sister, Lizhen, who is acting as her chaperone. Lizhen is older and less comely than Meizhu, which is why she has not yet married. Deng's troops disguise themselves as bandits to keep their master's involvement a secret until he can marry Meizhu and gain a legitimate claim to Song's lands through her. Her protectors among the caravan guards must rescue her and convince her of Deng's ignoble intentions before it is too late.

CASTING CALL

WENG DAZHONG

Captain of Lord Song's guards and the sworn protector of Meizhu, he will stop at nothing to restore his good name after the young woman is kidnapped.

LU BOHAO

An young but skilled member of the guard detail, he hopes to earn a name for himself in Lord Song's service.

KONG YUN

An aged sword master living out his last days as a guard in Lord Song's retinue, his once-great skills have deteriorated over time (starting when mysterious assailants murdered his wife years ago).

SONG LIZHEN

Meizhu's elder sister may lack beauty, but she is a puissant warrior who has trained secretly to protect her sibling from harm.

MOVIE SETS

THE WEDDING CARAVAN

This collection of horse-drawn wagons carries Meizhu's dowry and personal effects. Over two-dozen retainers and soldiers attend it, all of whom are to accompany the young woman until she reaches Lord Qin's domain. The attacking "bandits," however, outnumber the caravan's defenders two to one. They are well trained and use a variety of weapons, fighting both on foot and from horseback. They attempt to stop the caravan from advancing, but will fight alongside while moving if necessary. Their goal is to capture Meizhu and Lizhen and return them to Deng's castle. What does not help this situation is that Meizhu wants to be captured, and will slip away during the confusion of battle to join up with the bandits.

PEASANT VILLAGE

This rural community lives in fear of Deng so some of its inhabitants attempt to curry favour with him by attacking anyone looking for Lord Song's daughter(s). The village is small and consists of two dozen wooden

buildings, including a tavern where travellers may rest. The tavern also houses cutthroats in Deng's employ. They supplement the peasant rabble who would challenge the heroes.

MOUNTAIN CLIFFS

Deng's lair is located high in the mountains. The heroes can gain entry by climbing narrow ledges carved into the cliff face. Guard posts are scattered along the way, each holding a pair of guards who will fight to the death to protect their master.

DENG'S CASTLE

The halls of Deng's forbidding lair are magnificently furnished, with beautiful hanging rugs, incense holders, and ornaments located throughout. The walls are made of stone and the high ceilings include large wooden beams for support. Guards are scattered throughout the castle, with more appearing the closer heroes are to the dungeon or Deng's apartments.

DUNGEON

This is where Lizhen, if she was captured, is incarcerated; Meizhu is not here, however. Carved from rock, the dungeon corridors are narrow and uneven. The cells are likewise small and contain only the barest necessities. Guards and prisoners are the only inhabitants in this dark and dank pit of despair.

EXTRAS

DENG KUO

An evil warrior with overarching ambition, he is a master of swordplay and manipulation, having convinced Meizhu that he truly loves her. He is also responsible for the death of Kong Yun's wife years ago; she spurned his advances and infuriated this arrogant man.

SONG MEIZHU

Pampered and beautiful, Meizhu is also incredibly naïve to believe that Deng loves her for anything more than her father's lands.

DENG'S SOLDIERS

Well trained and discipline, they fight fanatically for their master.

PEASANTS

Unskilled and easily frightened, they fight from fear of Deng rather than loyalty.

CUTTHROATS

Hired killers, they accomplish Deng's dirty work when his soldiers would be too conspicuous.

DENOUEMENT

The final confrontation with Deng and his soldiers occurs on the ornate balconies of his castle. They overlook the valley below and are very high above the ground. Deng uses the balconies to survey his domain, as well as impress the gullible Meizhu with his wealth and power. When the heroes arrive, Deng is making preparations for their wedding, along with several soldiers and a holy man. Meizhu is also present, as is Lizhen, if she was captured.

Deng and his soldiers fight fiercely to protect Meizhu. They also do not want any hero reaching her for fear he or she may persuade Meizhu to leave Deng. Until the heroes can convince her otherwise, Meizhu assumes Deng is an honourable and trustworthy man and fights against the heroes and even her sister (whom she assumes is jealous). Of course, her opinion of Deng changes if the battle does not go well for him. He seizes Meizhu and uses her as a hostage to save himself should the characters gain the upper hand. At this point the foolish young woman realizes her error and joins the heroes in battling Deng.

CHAPTER FIVE: SAMPLE CHARACTERS

Once upon a time, I Chuang Tzu, dreamt I was a butterfly,
fluttering hither and thither, to all intents and purposes a butterfly.

I was conscious only of following my fancies as a butterfly,
and was unconscious of my individuality as a man.

Suddenly, I waked, and there I lay, myself again.

Now I do not know whether I was then a man dreaming I was a butterfly,
or whether I am now a butterfly dreaming I am a man.

— Taoism



HEROES AND ROGUES

The following characters are NPCs designed for wuxia epics, whether as role companions, fellow heroes, mentors, or potential rivals. Game Masters can tweak these characters' Stats as necessary for their production, or use them as written.

CHEN DEHUA

Body 5 Mind 3 Soul 5
Health Points 70 Energy Points 40
Attack Combat Value 4 Defense Combat Value 2
Star Power 13

ATTRIBUTES

Damn Healthy! 2, Highly Skilled 3, Lightning Quick 2, Sword Fu 2 (Blind Fighting), Wire Fu 1

DEFECTS

Moral Code 1, Wanted 2

SKILLS

Acrobatics (Jumps) 2, Climbing (Free Climbing) 1, Kung Fu: Attacks (Strikes) 1, Kung Fu: Holds (Holds) 1, Melee Attack (Sword) 3, Melee Defense (Sword) 2, Performing Arts (Public Speaking) 1, Sleight of Hand (Stage Magic) 2, Stealth (Silent Movement) 1

APPEARANCE

Chen Dehua is small and wiry, but his small frame masks a remarkable resilience. His face is round and pleasant and his eyes reveal a glint of his puckish sense of humour. He keeps his hair short and utilitarian, and wears simple clothing that does not interfere with his ability to move gracefully. Aside from a small bag (containing his few possessions) and a strip of cloth (with which he covers his eyes while fighting), he carries only his father's sword at his side — a constant reminder of his vow to end Lord Fang's tyranny.

CHARACTER

Chen Dehua is the only son of Chen Desheng, a renowned swordsman and hero of the common people. The elder Chen fought against injustice for many years and trained his son in the secrets of his unique fighting style. He also taught Dehua the strong moral code by which he himself lived. Sadly, a corrupt official named Lord Tang took offense to Chen Desheng's vocal oppositions and set a trap for the popular man. Tang's men killed the elder Chen, but not before his son obtained his father's sword — and an undying hatred for the evil official.

Chen Dehua fled into the wilderness to train himself for his eventual fight against Tang. With each passing day, he became more adept at his father's blind fighting techniques. He also followed in his father's footsteps by defending the peasant folk whenever Lord Tang's men harassed them or treated them unjustly. Meanwhile, Tang has used his influence to brand Chen a brigand and a rebel against imperial rule. The penalty for his trumped-up crimes is death, which is why the young man cannot rest easily.

Now, Chen travels throughout the countryside, aiding the oppressed common people and honing his skills. He never remains long in one place for fear that Lord Tang will vent his ire on the peasants he has sworn to protect. Even so, he has not surrendered to despair, and is certain the day will come when he can strike back at Lord Tang and avenge his father's death.

YI LILING

Body 4 Mind 5 Soul 5
Health Points 45 Energy Points 60
Attack Combat Value 4 Defense Combat Value 2
Star Power 14

ATTRIBUTES

Art of Distraction 1, Energy Bonus 1, Extra Defenses 1, Highly Skilled 2, Wire Fu: Attacks 1, Wire Fu: Movement (Cat's Balance, Leaping) 2

BRIGITTE LIN CHING HSIA

If Chiang Pei Pei (Jade Fox in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*) was the Queen of Wuxia in the 1960's Brigitte Lin assumed that mantle in the 1980s. She appeared in approximately 100 films, but her best-known roles are all in modern wuxia classics like *Zu*, *The Bride With White Hair*, *Dragon Inn*, and *Swordsman II*.

Brigitte Lin Ching Hsia was born in Taiwan in 1954 and has had two film careers (so far). Her first was in Taiwan, where she was discovered at the age of eighteen. She starred in many romantic movies before personal problems forced her to move to California for a few years.

When Brigitte returned to filmmaking, she went to Hong Kong instead of Taiwan. Her career shifted away from the romantic movies and she appeared in everything from madcap comedies (*Boys Are Easy*), to Jackie Chan films (*Police Story*), to the downright bizarre (*Pink Force Commando*).

Brigitte's most famous role is probably the gender-bending Asia the Invincible in the Tsui Hark-produced *Swordsman 2*. Her character, General Fong, the leader of the Sun Moon clan, is forming an alliance between his followers and a band of Japanese

ninjas. In a quest to gain spiritual power, Fong follows the dictates of the Sacred Scroll and castrates himself, beginning his slow transformation into a woman. As he transforms into a she, Fong falls in love with Jet Li's character. At the end of the film, unable to fight Li, she leaps off a cliff to her apparent death (but in reality sets up the sequel, where she in fact survived).

Her role in *The Bride With White Hair* (and its inferior sequel) is somewhat similar in its sexual ambiguity. In this film, Lin plays a woman raised by wolves and now beholden to the Supreme Cult. Once again, she falls in love with an enemy, a member of the Wu Tang clan played by Leslie Cheung. After the clan is slaughtered, Lin's lover blames her (wrongly) for the massacre, whereupon her hair turns white and she gains witchy powers.

Her last movies were made in 1994 with art house favourite Wong Kar-wai — the nearly incomprehensible *Ashes of Time*, in which she plays a split male/female personality, Murong Yin/Murong Yang, and *Chungking Express*. Shortly following the film's completion, she married Esprit executive Michael Xing and retired from film. She currently lives in San Francisco.

DEFECTS

Skeleton in the Closet 2

SKILLS

Acrobatics (Balance) 2, Cultural Arts (Literature) 2, Disguise (Costumes) 3, Kung Fu: Attacks (Wrestling) 2, Kung Fu: Defense (Wrestling) 2, Law (Civil) 1, Lock-Picking (Mechanical) 2, Performing Arts (Acting) 1, Riding (Horse) 2, Visual Arts (Painting) 2,

APPEARANCE

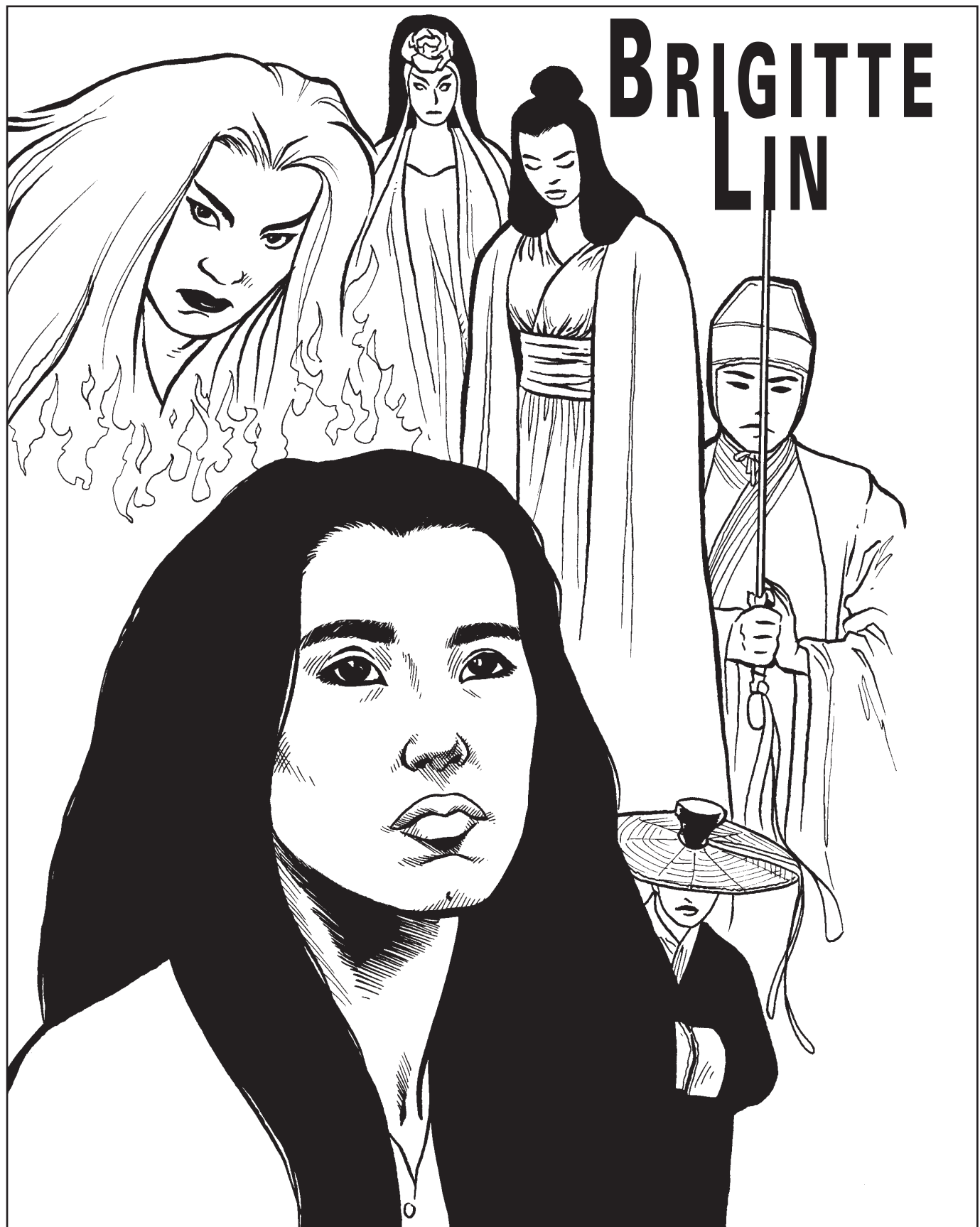
Yi Liling is obviously a proper young woman of good stock and excellent upbringing. She typically dresses in long, ornate robes made from the finest silks and other expensive materials. She wears her hair long, accentuating it with numerous gold combs and other

ornaments. Liling carries herself nobly, as befits a young woman of her station.

When she assumes her secret role as an investigator of wrongdoing at the imperial court, she disguises herself in dark, flowing robes. She wears a mask to cover her womanly features and her skills as an actress to disguise her otherwise remarkable voice. Liling carries nothing with her in this guise for fear that any possessions might inadvertently reveal her identity and shame her family.

CHARACTER

Yi Liling grew up in the lap of luxury. Her father is an important official in the court of the emperor. Consequently, she was born to a life filled with social gatherings, gossip, and intrigue. Yet, she found this life



extremely unfulfilling and longed for something beyond the expectation of an arranged marriage to a man she hardly knew. She sought out an old woman who taught her the rudiments of self-defense, which Liling has mastered on her own. She also used her intimate knowledge of the imperial court to move about its precincts without others knowing.

During her nightly sojourns, Liling stumbled upon evidence of a plot against the emperor. At first, she was uncertain of the plot's veracity, but she now knows it is both real and headed by the emperor's newest, and youngest, wife. The scheming concubine hopes to overthrow the emperor and place her son on the throne instead.

Of course, Liling cannot allow this to happen. Unfortunately, no one believes her tale of conspiracy. Worse still, she cannot act openly for fear of dishonouring her noble father, whose old fashioned ways would not countenance his daughter's behaviour. Liling now spends her time gathering evidence and allies in what will eventually become a showdown between herself and the emperor's duplicitous bride.

JUNREN

Body 3 Mind 6 Soul 6
Health Points 45 Energy Points 80
Attack Combat Value 3 Defense Combat Value 1
Star Power 15

ATTRIBUTES

Energy Bonus 2, Extra Defenses 2, Focused 1, Highly Skilled 2, Magic 4, Meditation 2, Wire Fu: Movement (Feather Foot, Water-Walking) 2

DEFECTS

Inept Combat 2

SKILLS

Cultural Arts (History) 3, Interrogation (Psychological) 2, Kung Fu: Defense (Holds) 2, Medical (Acupuncture) 3, Sleight of Hand (Stage Magic) 4, Stealth (Concealment) 2, Way of the Taoist (Creatures) 5, Wilderness Survival (Forest) 2

APPEARANCE

Junren looks every bit the dishevelled *sifu* that people expect of him. His bald head and clean-shaven face are the only evidence of the great discipline and devotion that characterizes his austere lifestyle. He dresses in tattered, almost ragged, clothing and wears sandals. A thin rope belt girds his waist and he carries a small bag filled with ritual paraphernalia and other devotional items. Junren also carries a staff with him at all times. Despite beliefs to the contrary, this wooden walking stick is just that; the old man is quite inept in combat situations and only knows enough to defend himself against attacks by would-be assailants.

CHARACTER

Junren is a mysterious old man living in the forests and woodlands of the realm. He has been there so long that few remember a time when he was not around. He rarely stays in a single locale for more than a few months at a time. He believes that his calling as a Taoist *sifu* requires him to travel regularly and attend the spirits and supernatural beings inhabiting the countryside. Consequently, Junren can be found almost anywhere, although he prefers to remain near the dark forests he has known for so long.

Junren's goals are simple: Reconcile mortals with the will of the divine and protect these same mortals from the depredations of those beings who defy Heaven for the sake of power. He offers his skills as a priest, teacher, and exorcist to anyone who needs them regardless of their station — provided they genuinely need his aid. In return, he only asks for food, a place to stay, and a promise not to neglect the proper rites and practices demanded by Heaven.

Recently, Junren has encountered difficulties in his endeavours in the form of a powerful spirit calling itself the Jade Lion. The Jade Lion seems to have developed an unnatural interest in the old man and continues to bedevil him, despite Junren's best efforts to lay the spirit to rest. Junren fears that the Jade Lion is somehow connected with crimes of his ancestors, but he has been unable to determine the truth thus far. For now, he does his best to keep the spirit at bay, all the while continuing his itinerant practices. He hopes that somehow he will learn the secret of the Jade Lion and resolve his own problems, just as he has done for so many others over the years.

OUYANG BIMING

Body 6 Mind 3 Soul 4
 Health Points 50 Energy Points 35
 Attack Combat Value 4 Defense Combat Value 2
 Star Power 13

ATTRIBUTES

Extra Attacks 1, Extra Defenses 2, Focused Damage 1, Lightning Quick 1, Wire Fu 1

DEFECTS

Marked 1, Phobia (Water) 1

SKILLS

Acrobatics (Jumps) 1, Gambling (Mah Jong) 3, Kung Fu: Attacks (Strikes) 2, Kung Fu: Defense (Strikes) 1

APPEARANCE

Ouyang Biming is an unassuming man with a mischievous grin and twinkle in his eyes. He wears his hair short, in a style reminiscent to that of monks, but it is ragged and unkempt. His clothing likewise reflects a disdain for the day-to-day realities of grooming. Nevertheless, he does not look like a vagrant or destitute wayfarer so much as a roguish ne'er-do-well, and the sort of man one would expect to find in gambling parlours and roadside inns. He carries very little of value with him — unless he has enjoyed a good run at the mah jong table, in which case Biming is likely carrying a pouch of coins with him. He carries no weapons, preferring to rely on his sturdy hands and feet for defense.

CHARACTER

Ouyang Biming is an outcast monk from the powerful and well-regarded Golden Crane monastery. Although the Ouyang clan is wealthy and influential in the kingdom, its elders were unable to convince the monastery's abbot to keep the rebellious young man in its ranks. He showed little regard for tradition and even less respect for his superiors. Consequently, they threw him out, but not before he received the Golden Crane tattoo on his chest, much to the regret of the abbot — who sees Biming as an utter failure as a martial arts student.

Since being cast out, Biming has wandered the kingdom, earning a small keep as a gambler and occasional bodyguard for merchant caravans. Although not as well trained as his monastery brethren, Biming has shown a greater aptitude for unarmed fighting than the abbot would admit. On several occasions, he has used his skills to good effect, protecting the innocent (and not-so-innocent) from individuals wishing to do them harm.

Biming's greatest problem at the present time is that he has no direction or goals. He enjoys his vagabond existence, finding it a welcome change of pace from his years in the monastery (never mind his youth under the thumb of domineering clan elders). Yet, he looks ahead no farther than tomorrow and his concerns are ephemeral. Should he find something — or someone — to believe in, there is little doubt that Ouyang Biming could become a powerful warrior worthy of the traditions of both his clan and his former monastery.

The following adventure outlines are reprinted from *HKAT's* first edition sourcebook, *Film Festival #1*. They are presented to inspire GMs and provide ideas for magically charged *HKAT!* adventures. GMs must create the role packages for player characters as well as developing stats for the extras, but the following adventure seeds provide a fast outline to some high-octane wuxia gaming.

FIVE FISTS OF KUNG FU

This is period film focuses on the revenge of several different heroes against the tyranny of the Ching Dynasty. Most of the action will centre on the characters meeting each other, which means that not all characters will be involved right away. Make sure that your players are amenable to this style of play before you proceed with this film.

The main character is an Orphaned Kung Fu Hero whose parents are murdered in the prologue to the film. Following the destruction of the Shaolin Temple, the Manchus begin hunting down any monks who escaped as well as their sympathizers. One of these is the Hero's father. You should use a narrative format describing the brutal murder of his or her parents at the hands of Mu Ka, a former Shaolin monk who helped the Emperor destroy the temple and is now hunting down the survivors.

When the film opens, the Hero is now fully grown and a master of Kung Fu. He is walking the Earth, having adventures, and defending the weak. Along his journey, he will meet the Wandering Swordsman (whose village was destroyed by Gui Yong Khan, one of the Overlords in the Ching Dynasty), the Cowardly Thief (who has turned to stealing since the oppressive taxes and tributes have virtually bankrupted his family), and the Aspiring Kung Fu Brothers/ Sisters (who have been taught the basics of Kung Fu and now are seeking a new master since Gui Yong Khan killed him).

After the group gets together, they should realize that they have a common enemy and that they should team up to defeat it. They will run into Mu Ka, which

will certainly give the Hero cause to take revenge, and subsequently they will encounter Gui Yong Khan. Since they all have a reason to hate these two nefarious villains, there should be cause for some great Kung Fu fighting and heroic struggles to liberate the oppressed citizens of China.

PLAYER CHARACTER ROLES

ORPHANED KUNG FU HERO

At the age of just 8, your parents were murdered by Mu Ka for being associated with the now outlawed and destroyed Shaolin Temple. You swore revenge, but that was many years ago. Since then, you have grown up and learned Kung Fu. You wander China defending the weak and upholding justice. You are dedicated to the cause of the people and to fighting injustice where ever he finds it.

WANDERING SWORDSMAN

Two years ago, Gui Yong Khan's army destroyed your village. Your beloved wife was killed in the massacre, as were your children. Your have sworn to kill Khan for this, but have been unable to locate him since. There are reports of his army everywhere, but you never seems to be able to locate his unit. You have been wandering in search of him, striking a few choice blows at the Manchu government along the way

COWARDLY THIEF

You have been forced into a life of stealing to feed yourself. The oppressive taxes and tributes have left you with nothing, so you steal what you have to. You hate the Manchus and long to see them overthrown, but you are not a pillar of courage. When a good fight comes along, you prefer to be somewhere else. Your role in the film is to provide some comical relief in an otherwise grim tale of vengeance.

ASPIRING KUNG FU BROTHERS/SISTERS

This is actually two roles. Two players should play these siblings. They were training in the art of Kung Fu when Gui Yong Khan learned that a refugee Shaolin monk (their master) was teaching Kung Fu in his region. He took a small detachment of soldiers with him, found the siblings' master, killed him, and then burned their town to the ground. The two of characters escaped and have been on the run ever since. They are seeking a new master so that they can complete their Kung Fu training. They are completely loyal to each other above all things, and long to become great heroes.

IMPORTANT EXTRAS

MU KA

Importance: Supporting Character

As a Shaolin monk, Mu Ka was an utter failure. He excelled at Kung Fu, and quickly became one of its most masterful practitioners. Unfortunately, he never learned the respect for life and the ideals of the monastery. Instead, he was obsessed with power.

When the emperor's soldiers destroyed the Shaolin Temple and killed most of the monks, Mu Ka saw an opportunity. He had managed to escape the destruction of the temple, and he sought out Gui Yong Khan and told him that others had escaped as well. He offered to help the empire hunt these refugees down in exchange for his life and new service in the Ching Dynasty. Khan agreed, and Mu Ka set about systematically killing every Shaolin monk he could find. As a reward for his years of faithful service, he recently became a regional governor. He is an insipid and traitorous man, who cares only for his own comfort and advancement, but he is also a master of Snake Style Kung-Fu and a deadly opponent.

SEI PEI (EVIL EUNUCH)

Importance: Speaking Part

Sei Pei is one of Mu Ka's thugs. He rules over a small town that is very near Mu Ka's estate. He revels in his power and enjoys making the peasants bow down to him. He keeps order by employing one of Mu Ka's better thugs to beat the daylights out of anyone who protests, resists, or refuses to pay his or her taxes. As soon as things start to go badly, Sei Pei will run to warn Mu Ka.

FU (MANCHU ENFORCER)

Importance: Speaking Part

Fu is the heavy that plays enforcer for Sei Pei. When he thinks about his work, which isn't often, he enjoys beating people up. He is a student of Mu Ka, and therefore, a practitioner of Snake Style Kung Fu. His main function in the plot is to serve as a slightly more difficult obstacle than the soldiers have to date, and to demonstrate the oppressive nature of the Manchu government.

GUI YONG KHAN

Importance: Lead Role

Gui Yong Khan is the evil Chinese overlord who is responsible for the hell that our heroes lives have become. He is ruthless and oppressive, and he cares little for the people that he is supposed to be ruling. He finds them to be ignorant and disorderly. If they would trust the government, things would be better, he thinks. Instead, they make trouble. Therefore, he taxes them heavily since the empire needs the money and poor people are less able to form an army. Secretly, Khan is hoping for an appointment to the royal court. He feels that if he can keep the masses sufficiently quelled and bring in much needed cash for the empire, he can receive such an appointment.

Khan fights with a spear with his offhand, which he uses to block and thrust, and a steel chain whip in his strong hand to sting and disarm his opponents. He is a master of armed combat, and a deadly opponent.

KEY ACTION SCENES

1 — PROLOGUE

The prologue to the film featuring the death of the Orphaned Hero's parents should be played out. Obviously, the character will be too young to fight, but you should narratively describe what happens so that the character will have the proper motivation and have the premise of the film set squarely in his or her mind. If you prefer, create the character's parents and fight out the scene, making sure that the parents die horribly at the hands of Mu Ka. This should be easy since the parents would be Speaking Parts, at best.

2 — 20 YEARS LATER...

After the murder scene, let the players know that it is 20 years later. The Orphaned Hero will be wandering and come upon a caravan that is being attacked by a well-armed group of bandits. The Wandering Swordsman has been hired to protect the caravan, but he is outnumbered. The hero should jump in to help when things start getting messy. Keep this scene short as you still have other characters to introduce.

3 — TIME FOR A HANGING

Assuming that the Orphaned Hero joins the caravan, when it reaches town the next scene occurs. If he doesn't, have the Swordsman and the Orphaned Hero meet by chance a month or so later in a small town. Here, the Cowardly Thief is about to be hung for stealing. This is an opportunity for the Thief's player to give a speech about the oppressive government and his unfair treatment on his way to the gallows. This should give both of the other characters enough motivation to rescue him. There is only a small garrison of soldiers here, which should make it easy on the players. Again, once the combat starts, keep it short and sweet — there are still two more players waiting to jump in.

4 — ENTER GUI YONG KHAN

Shortly after leaving the town, the intrepid band of heroes comes upon the Aspiring Kung Fu Siblings. They are under attack from a group of Gui Yong Khan's

soldiers who have been hunting them down since they escaped from the destruction of their master. They are hopelessly outnumbered and may be in real trouble if the other characters do not assist them, which shouldn't be a problem given the characters' feelings about Khan and his men. You might let this fight go on a little longer than the previous ones since you now have everybody involved.

5 — MANCHU TYRANNY

The characters come to another town where they find Sei Pei in charge. Be sure to have a few instances of the oppression of the local government to demonstrate the Manchu government's tyranny. As soon as the characters begin making trouble, Sei Pei confronts them, and eventually challenges one of them (preferably the Orphaned Hero or the Cowardly Thief) to fight his enforcer, Fu. If Fu is defeated, Sei Pei orders the garrison to attack the characters. He then beats a hasty retreat to warn Mu Ka of the trouble. Throw as many soldiers at the players as you must to ensure Sei Pei's escape.

6 — THROW DOWN, SHOW DOWN

After the battle, the villagers tell the heroes that the regional governor will be angry and take it out on them. They inform the characters that Mu Ka is the governor, and he lives in a huge estate not far away, leading the players to attack Mu Ka's estate. This should be an all out battle with hordes and hordes of soldiers defending the estate against the heroes. Sei Pei will be present as a target as well. Finally, the scene should feature a dramatic battle between the Orphaned Hero and Mu Ka with the former taking revenge for the murder of his parents.

7 — THE BOSS BATTLE

Before Mu Ka dies, his last words are that the characters are doomed because Gui Yong Khan is coming for a visit with a full detachment of soldiers as escort. Mu Ka is certain that the players are doomed as a result. This should set up the final battle. The players will have time for a montage sequence wherein they ready themselves for an attack, fortify the estate, sharpen their weapons, etc. When Gui Yong Khan arrives, an even bigger battle than the previous one occurs. The Wandering Swordsman, and

perhaps the Siblings will get a chance to take revenge upon the evil overlord. In the end, Khan should be defeated and the characters satisfied with their vengeance.

Alternatively, you could have the climactic battle occur with Mu Ka, and set up a sequel wherein Gui Yong Khan comes looking for the characters to take revenge and restore order. If you do this, upgrade Mu Ka's importance to Lead Role. Alternatively, you could run the film as scripted, but have Gui Yong Khan escape, and return to haunt the characters in a sequel. It's up to you.

MAGIC HUNTER

In ancient times, The Buddha imprisoned the mischievous Monkey King beneath the Mount of Five Fingers, as punishment for his defiance. Now, in 1997, the Monkey King has escaped to Earth, wreaking chaos in his wake. The Celestial court dispatches an Immortal to re-capture the naughty little monkey.

In Hong Kong, the Monkey King's mischief attracts the attention of a Cop, wise in the ancient Taoist magic, and his straight-laced partner. The police and the Immortal must attempt to curtail the Monkey King, and return him to the Immortal world.

Unbeknownst to all, however, the Monkey King is not the only creature that escaped from its imprisonment....

PLAYER CHARACTER ROLES

THE MONKEY KING

You are the legendary Monkey King, a mischievous demi-god of Chinese legend. You have escaped from being imprisoned for several thousand years (The Buddha has no sense of humour!), and have travelled to Hong Kong — Party Time!!!

The Monkey King's has incredible luck — the Role should have the Director's Friend Attribute.

IMMORTAL HUNTER

You are an Immortal, dispatched by the Celestial court of the Jade Emperor to hunt down and capture the escaped Monkey King. The mortal world is no place for his magical mischief.

MAGIC COP

You are a member of the Royal Hong Kong Police, but you were once a wandering Taoist priest. You still uses Taoist magic to help crack cases, and because of this, you find yourself embroiled in the more "unusual" cases, given to you by the Superintendent. Your partner is a sceptic, which you find amusing.

NO-NONSENSE COP

You are the "Magic Cop's" partner. You don't believe in any of that Hocus-Pocus — you haven't seen anything that couldn't be logically explained. There are only two things that you believe in: the law and your gun.

IMPORTANT EXTRAS

GUEI JI JUE (HORRIFIC SPIDER-DEMON)

Importance: Lead Role

Guei Ji Jue is a spider-demon, who crept out, unseen, into the Mortal world during the Monkey King's escape. Now on the loose in Hong Kong, he is killing people and transforming them into mindless zombies.

With every murder, Guei Ji Jue grows in power and size. By the time the players confront him in the finale, he will be an evil-looking black spider, some 20 feet high.

DESICCATED ZOMBIES

Importance: Walk-On

The victims of Guei Ji Jue rise from the dead within a day, becoming mindless zombies who attack anything living.

KEY ACTION SCENES

1 — A SIMPLE MISUNDERSTANDING

The opening sequence features the Monkey King getting into a "misunderstanding" with some Triad thugs (they apparently don't have a sense of humour, either). During the street fight, the Magic Cop and the Nonsense Cop show up, responding to the disturbance. The Monkey King should escape while the Cops are busy with the Triads.

2 — ARRIVAL IN HONG KONG

The Immortal arrives in Hong Kong. This should be good for some "stranger in a strange land" humour — after all, what does an ancient Chinese Immortal know about the modern world? To give the Immortal something to do, have him interrupt a robbery at a convenience store. This should give him a chance to kick some ass (once he realizes what's going on, of course).

3 — THE DEAD SHALL RISE

The Cops investigate a murder. A family's flat in a public housing complex in Tsim Sha Tsui has been trashed, and each member of the family has been drained of blood. The corpses are withered and desiccated, with large puncture wounds that look like they were made by fangs — BIG fangs.

Suddenly, the corpses animate and begin to attack the police. During the fight, the Immortal arrives (his magic senses led him to the Cop, not the Monkey King). The players will have to team up and beat some zombie butt!

4 — FIND THE MONKEY KING

The Immortal knows that the zombies don't fit the Monkey King's style, but he suspects that he may be connected somehow. Using his magic senses, the Immortal can locate the Monkey King. He is at Po-Lin Monastery on Lantau Island causing all sorts of trouble for the tourists, the monks, etc. Give the Monkey King a chance to mess with some stuff at the Monastery before the Cops and the Immortal arrive.

A fight will ensue between the players, with the Cops and the Immortal trying to capture the Monkey King, with amusing results as the battle rages across the normally placid Monastery.

5 — A SPIDER IN KOWLOON

As the battle wanes, the Cops receive a call over their radios announcing that the Police are fighting what appear to be zombies that are continually pouring out of the Walled City in Kowloon. The Immortal will join the Cops, rightfully assuming that whatever is responsible for the zombies is holed up inside the Walled City. The Monkey King, if captured, will also come (if he is not yet captured, he will volunteer to come and help anyway — he'll not stand for someone else getting him in trouble, and besides, helping out may weigh in his favour with the Celestial court).

At the Walled City, the surrounding cops are mowing down zombies, but to no avail. The players will have to turn the tide here.

After a few turns of zombie-bashing, Guei Ji Jue with burst forth from the Walled City and start slaughtering cops and generally wreaking havoc in classic Giant Monster fashion. The players will have to put an end to the demonic spider and save the day. If the Immortal can manage to shackle Guei Ji Jue, he can capture instead of kill him. He might even consider letting the Monkey King go free, if the demi-god helped to defeat the spider. Of course, the Monkey King will have to promise not to cause trouble....

DRAGONKNIGHTS

Five generations ago, an order known as the Dragonknights rose to do battle with a demon that threatened to destroy the world. The Dragonknights found that the demon was too powerful for their Kung Fu to overcome, so they sought out a magical artifact known as the Doomsword, and drew upon its power to defeat the hellspawn. The demon proved too powerful to kill, so they imprisoned it within a stone, and split the Doomsword into five pieces so that no one would be able

to release the demon. The Dragonknights went their separate ways, each taking a piece of the Doomsword into their protection.

It is now five generations later, and the Dragonknights are betrayed. One of their own, Kwon Li Fei, has gone mad. He initially sought a way to steal some of the demon's power because he was getting too old to fight. He succeeded, somewhat, in draining a portion of it, and now he lusts for more. Kwon knows that the only way to get all of the demon's power, is to use part of the Doomsword in the rite. He, however, was entrusted with the demon's stone, and not a piece of the sword, so he knows that he will have to turn on his brethren to accomplish his mad plot.

The player's characters are the students of one of the ageing Dragonknights, although they do not know of his glorious past. He is only known to them as Master, and has taught them well in the ways of Kung Fu. The story begins during a massive electrical storm, and their Master is in the nearby village visiting the local priest.

PLAYER CHARACTER ROLES

BRAVE YOUNG STUDENT

Nothing scares you. You have the ability to look upon the fantastic, and smile. Perhaps it is because it intrigues you. You have gone so far as to learn some tricks to impress your fellow students, but you have never seen anything that you would consider "supernatural." You have heard of the glorious feats that masters of Kung Fu can accomplish, and strive to become one.

DISOBEDIENT YOUNG STUDENT

You aren't here by choice. Your parents sold you to the Master when you were young. He says he saw something great in you. Like a cherry blossom before it blooms. Yeah right! You can't abide by all the rules, and tend to sneak out at night to go to the nearby village.

ECCENTRIC YOUNG STUDENT

You have a certain way of doing things, and it is not always the way others like to see it done. You are very meticulous about what you do, and you do not like to see anything you do go wrong. Others, including the Master, say you take too long planning. Maybe that is why you never seem to win a fight.

FAVOURITE YOUNG STUDENT

Others call you a bootlicker — you just see it as capitalizing on an opportunity. The Master likes you the best, and you try to be the best student. He has taught you well and is priming you to move up to apprentice status. You are the "leader" of the rest of the students. He has also let you in on a few secrets of the order. You don't understand them, but he has given them to you to ponder.

IMPORTANT EXTRAS

KWON LI FEI

Importance: Lead Role

Kwon is the fallen Dragonknight. He was entrusted with the Demonstone, and has been seduced by the demon held within it. He thinks that with the magic rite, he may siphon off the demon's power and add it to his own. Kwon Li Fei is not stupid. He is insane, but not stupid. He has no problems retreating, and will stop at nothing to get the power of the demon.

MASTER, LOTUS, AND JADE

Importance: Speaking Part

Master and Lotus are two of the last three Dragonknights, and as such both know the history of that fabled group of warriors. Lotus lives in the Human Province where she runs a school much like the one Master does. Master runs the school that the characters

are attending. Jade wanders the countryside, in the hopes that if something should befall his comrades, his piece will never be found. He has been chased to Master's school after being lulled into a trap by Kwon. All are steadfast in their sacred duty to protect the pieces of the Doomsword, but they will not let anyone know that they have them unless all is lost. True and noble, these are stalwart pillars of iron will.

SAN LO

Importance: Supporting Character

San Lo is the right hand man of Kwon. He will follow Kwon's orders to the letter, even putting his own life in danger to accomplish them. San is, however, somewhat of a coward, and will send the guards in to do the work he does not think he can accomplish. He is especially afraid of what might happen to him if he should fail in a mission, and will lay in ambush after a defeat rather than running for the hills outright.

KEY ACTION SCENES

1 — ENTER JADE, EXIT JADE

The opening scene should be in the school, at the end of the lightning storm in the plot synopsis. An older man (Jade) is blown through the front doors, followed shortly by another man (Kwon Li Fei), who precedes to attack Jade. If the characters choose to get involved, Kwon will fight them as well, but his main target will be the older man whom he intends to kill. At this point, the characters don't stand a chance against Kwon, they can hit him, but cannot hurt him physically. The older man, who should die, has a strange mark on his right forearm. One of the characters might notice that the mark is the same one that the Master has on his arm. The man's dying request is for the students to seek out their master and tell him that Jade is dead, and Kwon Li Fei seeks the Dragon's Eye.

PIECES OF THE DOOMSWORD

There are four magical objects that when combined, will create the Doomsword.

1 — THE EYE OF THE DRAGON

This will make that which is invisible, or not of this world, appear in its true form. This piece is protected by the player's Master, but he will give (or slip) it to the characters.

2 — THE DRAGON'S TOOTH

This is built into a temple pillar in a village not far from where Lotus's house is. Only a holy man may remove it from the pillar, so it has no one to guard it. If used as a weapon, it has the ability to hurt spirits, or those protected by magic.

3 — THE DRAGON'S CLAW

A vicious boomerang style weapon that always comes back to the person who threw it. It has a nasty serrated blade on it, but will not harm the person who wields it. This is the piece that Lotus has under her protection.

4 — THE HEART OF THE DRAGON

This is a small, red stone that, when worn in a ring or necklace, will increase its bearer's fighting/magical power. After each use, however, it has to be soaked in the blood of its bearer for 10 days, or it will lose all of its power (but will remain part of the Doomsword.). This stone was in the ring that Kwon took from Jade.

Obviously, the characters will try to acquire these pieces before Kwon or his forces can get their hands on them. Kwon only needs one of the pieces (the ring) to complete the rite, but he will try to get them all, because the more pieces he has, the more power he may steal from the demon. The effects of the number of pieces at the rite is up to the director.

THE DOOMSWORD

All of the specific powers of the Doomsword are not defined, so if you want to create a sequel, you may give the Doomsword whatever additional abilities you wish to. The Doomsword does possess the ability to drain its target of Energy Points, and store it (attack as normal, but instead of damage, the sword may drain Energy Points rather than Health Points). The wielder may use the captured Energy as if it were his/her/its personal Energy Points. Aside from that, the powers of the sword are largely a function of the plot and the creativity of the director.

2 — THE SEARCH FOR LOTUS

There needs to be a scene where the characters find their Master. He will demand to see the body of the man who was attacked. When they return, the body is gone. The Master will demand to know where Jade's ring is, but it is not there (Kwon has it). The Master will explain that this dead man, a woman named Lotus, and he are the last three of an ancient order known as the Dragonknights. He will send his students to find Lotus, to help protect her, if they can, from Kwon. He knows it will take Kwon some time to build up his power for another attack, but insists that the students hurry, for Kwon has strong forces under his command. Herefuses to go, however, instead saying only that Lotus will explain things in more detail. The Master will slip the Dragon's Eye (see page 84) to one of the player characters in secret, hoping to keep it from Kwon Li Fei. The player characters will then travel to Hunan, where Lotus lives.

3 — NEW KUNG FU

The scene with Lotus. Shortly after the arrival of the characters, she will explain the history of the Dragonknights, and the legacy of the Doomsword (see the intro).

Kwon's forces attack to get the Dragon's Claw from Lotus. The characters should notice throughout the battle that she is using a style of Kung Fu that they have

never seen before, and the results of it are devastating to the bad guys. If she lives through the battle, she might still lose the Dragon's Claw to the invaders. She will offer to teach the students her Kung Fu if they will take up the battle in her stead (she is, after all, very old and without the Dragon's Claw....) If she dies, she may or may not lose the Dragon's Claw (pending player character action), but the Dragon's Eye will reveal her spirit and she will teach them Dragonknight Kung Fu.

4 — RETRIEVE THE DRAGON'S TOOTH

A force of Kwon's men, led by San Lo, is sent to get the Dragon's Tooth (see page 84). Lotus, or the Master, (or both), will tell the characters of the location where the artifact is hidden, and they will arrive coincidentally just as Kwon's men arrive. This sequence should incorporate all the elements of fighting in the streets of a village, including knocked-over carts, screaming peasants (whom San Lo will attack to try to divert the player's efforts), and mass destruction.

5 — GRAND FINALE

The grand finale will take place at Kwon's palace. The characters should show up just as Kwon is beginning the rite to steal the demon's power. Kwon will continue the rite, while San Lo and a host of guards attempt to kill the players.

The characters hopefully can overcome the lackeys and San Lo, but to defeat Kwon is another matter.

- If Kwon completes the rite, he will be stunned for a combat round while he receives the power from the demon and then will proceed to kill everyone at the battle including his own people. The Doomsword is the character's only hope to defeat him.

- If the rite is interrupted, the characters will have to deal with Kwon in an all out battle. You may choose to make the Doomsword necessary to do this or not, depending on how well the players are doing in the battle.

THE MIGHTY HEROES

This is an epic superhero flick with the players taking on the roles of four masked avengers who (as superheroes are wont to do) appear out of nowhere, save the day, and then disappear into the shadows. At the time of the opening of the film, all of the characters are well-known heroes in Hong Kong. Their exploits are more or less known, and the police have come to rely on them to help solve their more unusual crimes. This case is, of course, no exception.

Kung Fu Master has been retired for a few years. He no longer adventures and will have to be called back into service. He will be reluctant, but the proper motivation will present itself, namely in the form of Xi Xu, an evil undead wizard who dreams of becoming the next Emperor of China. To do this, Xi Xu requires the Amulet of Ku, an evil artifact that is broken into three parts, which will sustain and reinforce his vile magical power. When assembled, it is a round jade amulet with the I Ching Hexagram, Ku, inscribed upon it.

The heroes will have to fight off his legions of undead monsters, personal bodyguards, and try to keep him from getting the three pieces of the Amulet of Ku, or he will take China by storm and Hong Kong too. This film should feature heroes wearing masks and capes and performing all sorts of ridiculous feats of wire-fu. In addition, the villains of the film are monsters in the horror genre, so they should be described in a frightening and disgusting manner. To do this in the proper Hong Kong Cinema tradition, you should describe the deaths of the monsters and their innocent victims in the most graphic and visceral tones possible.

PLAYER CHARACTER ROLES

LIGHTNING MAN (OR WOMAN)

You are a super-hero who has learned to harness the power of raw lightning. You believe that criminals are evil and a threat to society as a whole. You have sworn to make them pay for the social destruction that they cause. Therefore, you are a little hot-headed when confronted

with crime, and you believe that no punishment is too stiff for those that would undermine the values of society. Hence, you can be lethal and brusque. You have only a slim tolerance for those that don't share your views. In your secret identity, you are a chef at a small restaurant.

EAGLE CLAW

You have only recently joined the super-hero gig. All your life, you have worshipped the great hero, Kung Fu Master. When he retired, you were devastated at first. Then you decided that you would have to replace him. You spent years training with the great masters around the world to learn to be the best kung fu fighter in the world. You learned many secrets and have at last emerged as Kung Fu Master's replacement, Eagle Claw. Your motivations are to serve the people, protect the weak, help the innocent, and punish injustice. You are about as idealistic as they come and are very serious.

You long to meet the great Kung Fu Master, but since his identity was a secret, you have no idea how to contact him. Still, it would be perhaps the greatest honour of your life to fight side by side with him.

You are independently wealthy, and therefore dedicate most of your time to fighting crime.

DRAGON KING (OR QUEEN)

You are an avatar of one of the great dragons. You have been imbued with its power so that you may help keep order in the world. Your mission is to fight the forces of chaos and assist people in keeping their lives orderly and just. You are a paragon of law and justice. For this reason, you assist the Hong Kong Police whenever they ask. As they are the human agents of order and law, you see them as allies in the war against chaos.

You don't speak often, and when you do, it is in riddles and vagaries. Everything you say is filled with deeper meanings and hidden wisdom. Further, you never lie. Everything you say is the truth, though you have been known to shroud the true meaning of what you say to accomplish your ends.

KUNG FU MASTER

You are the greatest hero that Hong Kong has known in the last 50 years or so. Or rather you were. Ten years ago, you decided you had grown old and tired. There were other, younger heroes on the scene, and so you decided that the world did not need you anymore. You retired and now dedicate your time to meditation and to teaching kung fu to those you deem worthy. In fact, you once taught the man who "replaced" you, Eagle Claw, though he does not know that it was you who taught him.

The police still know how to find you (you are friends with Lieutenant Chang), and they occasionally call on you for assistance. You always refuse to come out of retirement, though you do sometimes offer advice.

You have, among your possessions, one of the pieces of the Amulet of Ku. When Xi Xu's minions steal the first piece, Chang comes to you and begs for your assistance. You know in your heart that he will come for the piece that you have, but you have become a little soft in your old age, and refuse to help out of a curmudgeonly denial of the danger. Xi Xu's forces attack your school, however, and kill your students and steal the portion of the amulet. You realize what a fool you have been, and return to action to assist the other Mighty Heroes in stopping the evil Xi Xu.

IMPORTANT EXTRAS

LIEUTENANT CHANG

Importance: Speaking Part

Lieutenant Chang is a Hong Kong Cop. He generally gets the nasty cases, and recently, owing to his connections with the Mighty Heroes, he gets the weird ones too. He generally does the best that a normal human can do, and when it is clear that the police aren't qualified for the job, he tries to contact the Mighty Heroes. He knows how to get to Dragon King, but he finds him unnerving and prefers to work with the others. Thus, he goes on the news and suggests that if Lightning Man or Eagle Claw were involved, the police might clear things

up much faster. This usually results in a visit to police headquarters by at least one of the superhuman trio.

He remains friends with Kung Fu Master. When he was a beat cop, the great hero assisted him on a few cases (and consequently, Chang moved up the ranks quickly). Occasionally, he gets desperate enough to beg the older man to once more don the mask and cloak of his former identity, but to date, he has had no success. More often, he calls the old master for advice, and he visits him socially a few times a year.

Chang is a good cop who hates relying on the assistance of masked vigilantes, but he is also a pragmatist who sees that the cops simply cannot handle the kinds of problems that he calls the Mighty Heroes in on. He is tough and resourceful and someone who commands respect.

Xi Xu

Importance: Lead Role

Xi Xu is an ancient, undead evil wizard, recently awakened by a fanatical group of evil cultists. He repaid them for reviving him by stealing their life essence, turning them into Thrashing Ghouls, and making them his slaves.

After a survey of current events and the political situation, he decided that China needs a new Emperor, and he's just the man for the job. He has a problem, however. His unlife is tentative at best. His body begins to decompose again after one week, and this effect is accelerated by taking damage. He must consume a special elixir to stay "alive" or his body will moulder away to rot and dust again. Unfortunately, he has a solution to this little problem. If he can lay his hands on the Amulet of Ku, its evil power will sustain his unlife indefinitely. So, he is madly trying to gather the three pieces together, reassemble them, and use the power of the amulet to live forever so that he can rule China.

Xi Xu is hideously ugly. His body looks like a partially decomposed corpse, and his skin is pasty white. Furthermore, he can detach pieces of his body which become animate and fight independently of him. Each of

these body parts retains all of his stats and specialties within the limitations of what they are. A severed hand could not kick, but it could punch or grapple. His head could only head butt to attack, but it could also cast spells that didn't require gestures. The body parts decay and moulder away after one scene, but Xi Xu can regrow them by casting the appropriate spell. In addition, because he is evil and undead, Xi Xu cannot be affected by Posedowns.

Xi Xu is extremely evil, and he will stop at nothing to achieve his ends. He is a horrifying, hideous, and dangerous foe. Xi Xu has a large number of horrifying powers that he can deploy against the heroes. He is capable of draining people of their life essence and then turning them into Thrashing Ghouls. He can bestow some of his power upon a Thrashing Ghoul to make a superior ghoul he calls Kestrel (see below). He can also create the magical elixirs that he needs to sustain his life.

More horrifying are the powers he can employ directly against the players. As mentioned above, he can anatomically separate himself, grow replacement body parts, and is not affected by Posedowns. He has another nasty power called the Chi Drain. By touching a character, he can steal their Energy Points. This has the effect of withering the victim so that they look old and haggard (no reduction in stats but for the Energy Points). If he chooses to Grapple and can maintain the hold, he can suck 20 points of Energy per round.

Once Xi Xu gets the Amulet of Ku, he cannot be killed until it is again broken into three (or more) parts. He recovers all damage that he takes at the end of every turn.

Finally, he has a magical air chariot. This chariot is the size of a small house and is pulled by two giant skeletal birds. These birds have been infused with Xi Xu's magic, and they cannot be destroyed until he dies. Once that happens, they turn to dust and the chariot crashes to the earth. Xi Xu has masked the chariot with an invisibility spell so that it cannot be seen from the ground.

KESTREL

Importance: Supporting Character

Kestrel is more a description than a name for this creature. It is, for lack of a better term, Xi Xu's right hand man. Kestrel is made from a Thrashing Ghoul that Xi Xu saw as having the most potential and is imbued with more power than the others. It has a pair of decaying leathery wings that enable it to fly. It has the same sharpened talon-like fingers for attacks and is much more fierce.

Kestrel leads all of the attacks that Xi Xu's forces make. The evil wizard himself waits in the shadows, revealing himself only if it is necessary to act to insure success. If Kestrel is ever destroyed Xi Xu will make another one.

THRASHING GHOULS

Importance: Walk-On

These are hideous undead creatures under the control of Xi Xu..

CHARLEY HO

Importance: Walk-On

Charley is the pretentious, rich, and moronic art collector that owns the last piece of the Amulet of Ku. When approached by the characters, he refuses to give it over to them, or even listen to reason. Shortly after the encounter, Xi Xu's minions attack, and Charley is cut down like the mook that he is.

KEY ACTION SCENES

1 — A VISIT TO THE MUSEUM

In the film's opening sequence, Xi Xu's agents attack the Hong Kong Museum of Art where the first piece of the Amulet is on display. If a player is playing Lieutenant Chang, have him arrive on the scene as

Kestrel and the Thrashing Ghouls are slaughtering cops, realize he is overmatched, and pray for some form of supernatural help. Otherwise, just have him there with the rest of the above as written.

Lightning Man's restaurant is across the street, Eagle Claw is on patrol, and Dragon King is drawn to the disturbance by the chaos. They should all arrive in dramatic slow motion scenes with lots of "oohs" and "aahs" from the fearful bystanders and cops.

Give the characters time to whup some ass on the Thrashing Ghouls, but either Kestrel (or Xi Xu if one of the players engages Kestrel) escapes with the fraction of the amulet. This will be unknown to the characters until, after the battle, Lt. Chang discovers that it is the only thing taken from the museum.

2 — KUNG FU MASTER

A non-action scene, really, Chang visits Kung Fu Master and tries to persuade him to help them. The player should refuse (see his character notes), but this scene should set up the relationship between the two, as well as establish the guilt that Kung Fu Master will feel later.

Meanwhile, after doing some research, one of the characters, most likely Dragon King, will discover that these monsters are, according to legend, the minions of Xi Xu, an evil undead wizard, supposedly killed over 500 years ago.

3 — KUNG FU MASTER'S GUILT

Back to the action, Xi Xu's forces attack Kung Fu Master's school seemingly materializing out of the sky. If possible, Kestrel will engage the old master while Xi Xu sneaks in and steals the next piece of the amulet. This should be a dramatic scene with students and staff getting killed in the most graphic and visceral manners possible. Once the bad guys have the amulet piece (and everyone but Kung Fu Master is dead) they break off the attack, leaving the hero alone with the carnage and his guilt.

4 — COMBINING FORCES

Kung Fu Master, of course, joins the other Mighty Heroes. He knows the secrets of the Amulet of Ku and what can be done with it. Anyone with appropriate Skills may make a Stat check to do the research to find out that Xi Xu once tried to make himself Emperor before he was defeated.

This should lead them to Charley Ho, an art collector who holds the last piece of the amulet. Among his many flaws is stupidity. He doesn't believe the characters when they try to warn him, nor does he believe in the magical properties of the amulet. He refuses to listen to reason, and finally throws them out of his posh, penthouse apartment, calling the police if necessary.

Shortly after this, Xi Xu's monsters attack the apartment (again seeming to materialize out of the sky) and kill Charley. The characters can get up to the apartment in time to fight the undead creatures, but Xi Xu should escape with the final piece of the amulet. This should be a massive fight scene in enclosed quarters with lots of nifty pieces of art and artifacts to be destroyed and someone or something getting thrown out a window.

5 — BATTLE IN THE SKY

If someone makes a Way of the Taoist Skill check, he or she may unearth the legend of Xi Xu's air chariot (putting together the legend and the monsters materializing out of the sky). The characters will have to get a plane or some other way of getting up to it, where they will find the evil barge flying towards Beijing. They'll have to attack the air chariot, fight off the hordes of monsters, and defeat the evil Xi Xu in the biggest battle of the film. When Xi Xu is killed, all of his monsters crumble and decay.

6 — DENOUEMENT

Once Xi Xu is killed, however, the giant, skeletal birds turns to dust, and the air chariot begins crashing to the Earth. The characters will have to find some way of stopping it from obliterating a good section of Hong Kong and still get off without being killed themselves.

GHOST SHIP

This is a Bizarre Fantasy film set in the South China Sea around Hong Kong at the turn of the century. During this time, Hong Kong, as a British holding, was a centre for European operations in China. The great colonial powers — the English, the Germans, the French, and the Americans were busy preparing to carve China into individual holdings for their respective nations. It was not a good time to be Chinese. The Chinese were treated as second-class citizens in their own nation, there either to serve their colonial masters or lured away with promises of the “Gold Mountain” that was America.

During the spring of 1897, a growing number of ships flying the flags of the colonial powers fell under attack and were sunk. This epidemic of piracy greatly concerned the English in particular, whose responsibility it was to patrol the waters around Hong Kong, making them safe for Western vessels.

Even more disturbing were the few accounts from eyewitnesses present on Chinese vessels that were close to several of the incidences. The Chinese crews spoke of a shipwreck rising from the ocean floor — a Ghost Ship, exacting it's vengeance upon the hapless *gwailo* vessels, and then sinking again, returning to it's watery grave.

To the English governor of Hong Kong, this was obviously an “attempt by the Chinamen to cover for the actions of a pirate, out of some misbegotten sense of patriotism.” He quickly dispatched the HMS Repulse and her crew to track down and destroy the most famous pirate vessel in the South China Sea — the Sea Dragon (Hoi Lullg), to put an end to these attacks.

The crew of the Sea Dragon have heard of these attacks as well, and have heard of the plans of the Repulse. Knowing that they are not the ones responsible, the crew decides to find out who has been sinking colonial vessels, and making life difficult for an “honest” band of pirates.

PLAYER CHARACTER ROLES

DASHING PIRATE CAPTAIN

You are the captain of the pirate vessel Sea Dragon. You and your crew were once simply fishermen, but life under the colonials in Hong Kong was harsh, and restrictions against Chinese plying their own trades forced you into the life of a pirate. You rob merchant vessels, and smuggle the goods into Hong Kong and other Chinese cities, selling them at prices much lower than they would have to pay to obtain the goods legally (if, in fact, they could get them at all). You are an honourable man, a dashing swordsman, and a popular captain.

FIRST MATE

You are the second-in-command of the Sea Dragon. Before turning to a life of piracy, you were a Harbour Pilot in Hong Kong. It was your job to bring all vessels safely into the port. After the English took over, they provided their own pilots. You signed on with the Sea Dragon, and soon her captain became your friend. You are the best navigator and pilot on the vessel, and your skills quickly led to your appointment as First Mate.

DRUNKEN SAILOR

You fell asleep on a boat once ... and here you are. Turns out that it was the Sea Dragon, and that they could use a hand. Well, a pirate's life is not half bad — it keeps you in wine, at least. You act as the ship's cook most of the time, but you're pretty good in a fight, as long as you can “prepare” yourself beforehand.

PIRATES

You are a member of the crew of the pirate ship Sea Dragon. Your captain is a fair man, who robs from the rich *gwailo* that are slowly strangling China. You are well fed, clothed, and given a purpose in life — all this and you get a chance to fight back against the colonials!

IMPORTANT EXTRAS

CAPTAIN BERNARD HASTINGS-SMYTHE, R.N.

Importance: Supporting Character

Captain Hastings-Smythe is the commanding officer of the HMS Repulse, the Royal Naval vessel dispatched to hunt down the Sea Dragon, and thereby put an end to all of this piracy. Hastings-Smythe is a whip-smart, straight-laced, by-the-book officer, who runs his crew hard and his ship harder. He will single-mindedly pursue his duty above all else, barring extraordinary circumstances.

CAPTAIN WU XIAEFENG

Importance: Lead Role

Captain Wu is the ghost captain of the Yangtse Kiang, a Chinese ship that was destroyed by the colonial navy. All hands were lost when the ship went to the bottom of the sea. Driven to take vengeance, the Yangtse Kiang arises from her sea grave, manned by a crew of dead seamen, striking against the forces holding China down.

KEY ACTION SEQUENCES

1 — FLEEING THE PORT

The film opens with the crew of the Sea Dragon, having heard of the plan to hold them responsible for the sinkings, making a daring escape from the port of Hong Kong. The escape begins as a fight on the docks with various members of the Settlement Police. Then, once the players have successfully fought their way onto the ship, a ship to ship battle with the HMS Defiant, a frigate that guards the harbour.

2 — FIGHTING FOR YOUR CLAIM

The players then begin to hunt the seas for the cause of the sinkings. The ship comes upon the wreckage of a merchant vessel, being picked over by a gang of scurvy

pirates. The pirates assume that the Sea Dragon is there to jump their claim, and attempt to attack. Their vessel is pitiful, with no cannons, so they will attempt to board and take the Sea Dragon by force. The fight can take place on board the Sea Dragon, the Pirate's junk, or the wreckage of the merchant vessel.

The pirates hold a survivor of the merchant vessel, an English sailor named John. He will describe to the players what happened, if asked. He will tell of a great, ghostly whale that rammed his ship, and then sunk beneath the waves. He will describe the vessel's tattered sails billowing in the wind and the feeling of fear and awe that came over him during the attack.

3 — THE HUNT CONTINUES

The players suddenly spot a sail on the horizon — it is the Repulse! The Repulse will attempt to close and board the Sea Dragon, capturing the ship and its crew for a public trial. There is a very good chance that this might occur if the players are unlucky. At some point during the attack, a duel should occur between the Dashing Captain and Captain Bernard Hastings-Smythe — a real swashbuckling affair, with swinging mast-ropes, belaying pins, and martial arts madness.

4 — THE DEEP RISING

With the battle between the Sea Dragon and the Repulse coming to an end, without warning, a huge ghostly vessel rises to the surface near the ships and joins the battle. The ghost ship rams the Sea Dragon, ripping a massive hole in her side. The crew of the Yangtse Kiang swarm the decks and begin attacking sailors from both vessels. The players can see the name of the vessel in Chinese on the side of the vessel. A player might recognize the name of the ship as one that sank about 10 years earlier.

The players will have to fight against the dead pirates who stand against them, possibly siding with the crew of the Repulse. How do the characters survive the day, against the English navy who is intent on bringing them in to stand trial, against sailors who are already dead, and with their boating quickly taking on water?

A

Adventures, Chapter Four: Sample	55
Ageless Whispers	49
Alchemy, Confucian	25
Alchemy, Taoist	32
Ancestral Dreams	19
Ancient Proverbs	3
Ang Lee	60
Arial Attack	53
Attributes, New	52

B

Banish Tui	49
Birth and Destiny, Unusual	41
Blade of Tui	48
Block Fu Power	53
Block Missile Weapon	52
Blower, Snorter and	44
Blue Dragon Star, The	44
Breathing and Spitting	42
Brigitte Lin Ching Hsia	74
Buddhism	12
Buddhism	35
Buddhism and Magic	36
Buddhism, Dogmas of	36

C

Cannon of Changes, The I Ching,	31
Chang-Kuo Lao	35
Chapter Five: Sample Characters	72
Chapter Four: Sample Adventures	55
Chapter One: History of Wuxia and Magic	4
Chapter Three: Magic in HKAT!	46
Chapter Two: Chinese Magic and Magicians	18
Characters, Chapter Five: Sample	72
Chen	31
Chen Dehua	73
Chien	31
Chih-Chiang Fyu-Ya	22
Chinese Magic and Magicians, Chapter Two:	18
Ching Hsia, Brigitte Lin	74
Chou Dynasty	9
Chou Era	35
Chung-Li Ch'uan	35
Cloak of Tun	49
Confucian Alchemy	25
Confucianism	9
Confucianism	24
Counter Strike	53
Courageous	40
Courteous	40
Cultivation	37

D

Damage	47
Dangers of Magic, The	40
Deadly Rain	52
Destiny, Unusual Birth and	41
Disc Flight	54
Dismember	52
Divination and Prophecy	23
Divine Archer, Shen Yi, The	43
Dogmas of Buddhism	36
Dragon Knights	82
Drunken Boxing	54

E

Earth	30
Eight Immortals, Pa Hsien: The	35
Elements, The Times of the	30
Elements, Wuxing: The	29
Elixir	48
Everything in Cycles	5
Extraordinary Body	42

F

Familial Bonds and Relationships	25
Feng Shui	26
Fighting Abilities, Kung Fu	41
Fire	23
Fire	30
Five Fists of Kung Fu	78
Flaming Palms	48
Flight of Cranes	49
Flying	23
Flying, Leaping and	42
Fong Sai Yuk	45

G

Gestures	48
Ghost Ship	90
Gift of Tui	48
Gods, The	22
Gun Fu Abilities	52

H

Han Dynasty, The	11
Han Hsiang-Tzu	35
Hark, Tsui	6
Heart of the Dragon	49
Hero-Magic	40
Heroic Qualities	40
History of Wuxia and Magic, Chapter One:	4
History: The Wave of Motion	8

S

Saan Tiu Mo	49
Sammo Hung	38
Sample Adventures, Chapter Four:	55
Sample Characters, Chapter Five:	72
Sample Spells	48
School Familiarity	53
Scripture, Scroll/	48
Scroll/Scripture	48
Shang Dynasties, Pre-History: Hsia and	8
Shape-Shifting	42
Shatter Empire	59
Shatter Weapon	53
Shaw Brothers	26
Shen	22
Shen Yi, The Divine Archer	43
Shield of Hsaio Ku, The	49
Sidekicks, Sorcerous	42
Signature Weapon	52
Six Schools, The	10
Slash with the Wind	52
Snorter and Blower	44
Sorcerous Sidekicks	42
Sorcery, Taoist	34
Sources of Magical Power	37
Special Effect	47
Spectral Bonds of Lee Lung	52
Spell Casting	47
Spells and Potions	37
Spells, Sample	48
Spirit Bane	50
Spirit Kingdoms	21
Spirit Servants	24
Spirit-Shout	42
Spirits	37
Spitting, Breathing and	42
Stature of the Master	50
Style Weakness	53
Sun	31
Sung Era	35
Sword Fu Abilities	52
Sword Fu Disabilities	53
Sword of Valour, The	63

T

Tang Era	35
Tao of Tao, The	10
Tao-Kuan: Taoist Monasteries	32
Taoism	10
Taoism	28

Taoism, Philosophical and Religious	28
Taoist Alchemy	32
Taoist Monasteries, Tao-Kuan:	32
Taoist Sorcery	34
Temple War	65
Third Prince, Li No Cha, The	44
Thousand-Fold Tzu, The	9
Thousand-li Eye and Favourable-wind Ear	45
Ti	22
Times of the Elements, The	30
Tomb of Guolong, The	68
Transfer Inner Energy	53
Ts'ao Kuo-chiu	35
Tsui Hark	6
Tui	32
Two Bodies, One Soul	53
Tzu, The Thousand-Fold	9

U

Unusual Birth and Destiny	41
Unusual Style	53
Unyielding Stance	54

W

Water	30
Wave of Motion, History: The	8
Whirlwind Attack	54
Whirlwind Dodge	54
Winter Queen, The	56
Wire Fu: Attack Abilities	53
Wire Fu: Movement Abilities	54
Woo-ping, Yuen	50
Wood	30
Wu Powers and Magic	23
Wu's Best Friend, A	21
Wuxia and Magic, Chapter One: History of	4
Wuxing: The Elements	29
Xia	5
Yen-Wang-Yeh	22
Yi Liling	73
Yin and Yang	29
Yuen Woo-ping	50