

JADECLAW: CHAO-XIAN

About the Book

This book is a supplement for the pen-and-paper role-playing game Jadeclaw. Jadeclaw and its sister game Ironclaw are owned by Sanguine Publications. (<http://www.sanguine.com>) It describes the fantasy kingdom of Chao-Xian. That country is a neighbor of Zhongguo, the China-like country where Jadeclaw takes place. Calabria, the Europe-like land described in Ironclaw, is another continent in that world. Chao-Xian is based very loosely on historical Korea and named for its dynasty of Choson (1392-1897).

The book contains new lands, quests, races, spells, and monsters compatible with Ironclaw and Jadeclaw. Enjoy!

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Art Credits

I've discovered that Ken Singshow has released some of the art he did for the adventure "Five-Man Mountain", which was at one point planned as a separate booklet. With his permission, I've included these pictures with the text and may incorporate them directly into the book in a revised version. He has a gallery at <http://www.furaffinity.net/user/kensingshow/> . (Warning: The site in general is adult.) I claim no ownership rights in this art.

"Eyes": Opening Comic

Two Marten-taurs – centauroid, ferret-like folk – sit by the fire in a hut, with various blankets on and around them. Two rice bowls and a lute sit ignored beside them. One Marten, a “Pansu” sound mage/musician, is old and obviously blind. The other is an adolescent farm girl.

Pansu: You want me to cut out your eyes?

Girl: If that's what it takes to be a full Pansu... do it.

Pansu: You've been begging me for sound-magic training for months, neglecting your family's fields. Why?

Girl: I hate farming! I want to wander the country saving people from demons, not grubbing in the dirt and snow!

Pansu: I like your village. It's peaceful.

Girl: Ugh.

Pansu: You could help people at home. There's still a chance you'll receive a guardian spirit and become a Mutang shaman like your sister. [Image of a costumed dancer near a ghoulish “devil-post”, surrounded by clapping, stomping villagers.]

And if it's travel you want, you don't know what you're getting into. The coast is nice, and the dolphin towns will enjoy your music, but they have noise sharks too... [Legged, blind anthro-dolphins with spears & tridents battling sharks and killer birds.]

Cross the mountains east and you'll be where all the worst political bickering is. You'll even have to disguise yourself if you want to travel there without a male escort.

Go north and you'll get to freeze your tail off while being eaten by monsters. Is that really the life you want? Do you want to be blind just to see the world?

Girl: I won't waste my life here. I'll do whatever it takes!

Pansu: Very well. Pack. We leave at sunset. We'll go to Master Luhan, who will complete your training.

[Thinking] Could she be the one Luhan prophesied?

[Girl turns to go.]

Pansu: One more thing.

Girl: Hm?

Pansu: Someday you'll learn to recognize demons anywhere... even in yourself.

Chao-Xian

A Tale of the Northern Lands

Written By:

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Jadeclaw Rules System and Setting:

Sanguine Productions, including Chuan Lin and Jason Homgren

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Chao-Xian is the country of the "Northern Barbarians". Their land lies on a peninsula bordering the much larger nation of Zhongguo. The mountains which run through Zhongguo's Jin province sweep northwest into the peninsula of Chao-Xian, then turn west and plunge into the sea. Modern Chao-Xian has three states: Shilla and (farther north) Kayagum on the mountains' east side, and Paekche west of the mountains, facing Binghe Bay and the western desert beyond.

History

Being the Origin of the Northern Kingdom

The land of Chao-Xian was inhabited at least one thousand years ago, but the only definite records of that time are a few broken vases etched with the image of a tiger. The legend of Tan'gun tells that a dragon by that name descended long ago from Heaven to found a kingdom, creating a tiger to be his wife. All the races of Chao-Xian are said to be descended from this single couple. In appearance the people of Chao-Xian are stocky and shaggy, adapted to the cold. They rarely acknowledge that they may in fact be related to the similar races of Zhongguo.

The Ancient Era

The oldest definite inhabitants of Chao-Xian swept into the northern peninsula from what is now Zhongguo, possibly fleeing stronger rivals. At first they followed the Diamond Mountains in nomadic bands of hunters and gatherers -- almost always in a motley group of herbivores and carnivores -- and gradually the stronger bands drove the others over the Diamond Mountains to the western coast. The tribes had very little contact and only mythic records of their origins.

But all the tribes had a common problem: the land was haunted. The world itself rebelled against the newcomers, first with a series of droughts and blizzards and then with attacks by monsters. Some of the beasts which appeared were only animals with especially sharp claws and reflexes, while others seemed motivated by an unholy intelligence. The creatures preyed on travelers and even on their hunters. Memorials at two modern villages show that they were built on the site of two nomad camps attacked on the same day, as though beasts across the land had planned the assault.

The monsters' threat encouraged the people of Chao-Xian to settle and become farmers, protected at night behind wooden stockades. The greatest of the demon-killers, female shamans who used magic rituals to protect their tribes, became the leaders of the new walled towns. The shamans guarded their secrets to avoid competition, inventing a cryptic writing system. Often the shamans organized their people into hierarchies of family ranks based on loyalty and wealth. All ranks were equally protected by their cities' walls, but the high classes controlled the most land and could buy criminals and paupers as slaves.

The Castle Lords

When not fighting monsters, the castle towns turned on each other. By making

and breaking alliances they formed larger and larger domains. Eventually an ambitious wolf chieftain named Kaya declared that instead of ruling the four towns he controlled as separate, conquered territories, he would be the king of a unified state named after himself. He opened the gates of his cities to trade and amassed a combined army which soon conquered other towns. Still others joined Kaya voluntarily to see an end to the constant fighting with their neighbors.

As the new state swallowed territory and moved towards the fertile south, southern farmers began to see Kaya's owl soldiers scouting in the night. A young shaman named Shilla, a pony, convinced her village that only another alliance could keep them from conquest and enslavement. Her spirit dances became battle chants meant to cheer the farmers' militia as they trained and bless them in preparation for the coming battle. On the night Kaya's army arrived, Shilla's people were ready. A friend of the shaman leader wrote of the battle:

The alarm gong sounded and every able-bodied man and woman rushed to the northern border with spears. Under the moon, all along the hills, was a line of wolves, lynxes, and scythe-armed mantises watching the town. Seeing that the people had no intention of joining Kaya, the invaders launched a volley of arrows downhill. Suddenly a line of seven Mutang shamans sprang up along the defenders' line, with Shilla at their center, all shouting and summoning spirits. Before the arrows could strike, a wall of wind threw them back uphill at the startled men of Kaya.

Shilla's alliance drove back Kaya that night, and won more towns to its side as the northern state tried to expand. Both sides' need for more power to overcome the other made them aggressive in recruiting new people and territory. Eventually the Diamond Mountains, the cold western wall of Kaya and Shilla's states, wasn't enough to keep both sides from trying to expand into the coastal west.

In this era there were few large, permanent settlements in the west (now Paekche Province). Most of the western people avoided the mountains and stayed near the shore of Binghe Bay, with an informal council of shamans, the Shell, to resolve disputes between the many fishing villages. Word spread quickly about the two eastern states crossing the mountains. Instead of fighting or submitting to them, the Shell villagers often simply ran -- what good were crude huts stripped of valuables, if the invaders wanted tribute-paying subjects? With their delaying tactics, the difficulty of getting troops to the Shell area, and the occasional devastating raid by beach-walking dolphins and their unfamiliar magic, the Shell held out for decades as an independent state.

In time Kaya and Shilla died, but their warring states survived under each ruler's children. Repeatedly the three states made and broke treaties. One year, Shilla's relentless troops conquered half of the Shell region, and held thousands of its people hostage until the rest submitted to Shilla rule. The once-defensive Shilla state became the aggressor in a push toward Kaya. The northern defenders gave ground slowly and at great cost to Shilla. Shilla's third queen turned south for help, to the Jin province of Zhongguo. The strange foreigners brought troops and weapons to Chao-Xian by boat, since the Shilla feared to let them into their own territory. They helped Shilla to grind Kaya into

submission. Now the three states of the peninsula had become a single kingdom, but Jin broke its promise to withdraw and left three naval bases on the country's north coast. The bases' presence was easy to ignore now that the generations-long war was over.

Glory of the Shilla

The two centuries of the Shilla era were largely peaceful and prosperous. The castle towns grew in size and number, reaching populations of ten thousand or more. New artistic styles evolved from trade between the three former states and with other countries. One strange advance was the *kayagum*, a musical instrument with six strings and a body of unknown black metal. Supposedly the first example washed up on the cold northern shore and was brought to the palace by a black crane who remained there to play it. The *kayagum* or "black crane lute" was reproduced in wood and played throughout the country.

The Shilla state revived old family hierarchy with a system of bone ranks. Only the highest families, of "holy bone" or "true bone" rank and mainly consisting of pony-men, could produce heirs to the throne. Six ranks comprising a quarter of the population elected the kings and queens and could depose them when famine or disease struck the country. Most people were outside the bone rank system. Villages were ruled by local men using by a mixture of popular approval, royal appointment, and mercenaries.

To protect people from the beasts of the wilderness, the government created the Hwarang Knights. This group of noblemen's sons and daughters learned poetry and court etiquette along with combat tactics. The Hwarang legions were under direct royal control unlike the local garrisons of "oath-banner men." The legions were regularly reassigned to new areas to fight beasts and bandit gangs. The most famous unit was called the "Subdue Demon Corps" and included a few wandering monks as well as nobles.

For most of this stable era the dominant religion was not the Mutang shamanism of Shilla's founder, but an offshoot called Pureland Amita. Amitans vowed to protect the state by preserving the virtue of each individual. This meant maintaining each person's proper place in society, and helping people to attain reincarnation in a higher state.

There was plenty for a person to aspire to in another life. The king, who owned all land, granted noblemen the right to collect taxes on certain "stipend land." Nobles extracted heavy taxes (rice and bolts of cloth) from the peasants there, and built fine tile-roofed houses in the cities while farmers lived in unprotected thatch huts. Cities became places of great wealth and constant festival for all but the slaves, who were assorted criminals and debtors or their descendants. Slaves must have made up over a tenth of the population, if the boasts of nobles claiming thousands of servants are true. There was also division by race. While the lower noble families ranged from rabbits to wolves, in the countryside the fiercer races were drafted into oath-banner armies while the smaller and more peaceable ones could rarely join voluntarily.

Brigand Lynx Yi

Myo-chong, king of Shilla, celebrated the two hundredth anniversary of the unified kingdom by building the Night Flower Palace in the northern province, on a spot his geomancers had chosen to bring peace and prosperity. Construction was much delayed and finally the palace was left unfinished, as it was struck by lightning thirty

times that year!

Some of Myo-chong's subjects were displeased, and not only at the ill omen. They faced the growing greed of the noble class and, from the noblemen's perspective, the unrest and violence of the peasant and slave classes. Over the last few decades the religion of Daoism had arrived from Zhongguo, and the lower nobility and village headmen adopted and changed it. These people believed that the virtue and prosperity of Shilla lay in meritocracy, rule by an educated class chosen by national examinations instead of birth. They wished to rise in power and not be restrained by the old bone rank system. The king sought to reduce the power of the high noblemen who controlled the oath-banner armies, and allied himself with the Daoists by offering court positions to literate and intelligent commoners.

The disaster of the new palace was followed by a surge in the frequency of marauding beasts in areas long thought safe. Soon, a plague of red fever struck the northern province where many of the troublesome high nobles had their stipend land. The king declared a quarantine. The north lands suffered in isolation. Travel within the region resumed illegally, in the form of armed bands selling medicine, looting monasteries, offering prayers to desperate villages, and smuggling goods and people across the quarantine line. The oath-banner men gave up collecting taxes for the absent noblemen and requisitioned food and wealth for themselves instead. The Hwarang Knights, with the children of both high and low noblemen among them, felt abandoned by family and king and sat indecisive under bear commander Mokjong.

Yi the Lynx was a peasant who had joined the Hwarang a few months before the plague, using a forged noble pedigree. Everyone admired his skill with words and the lance. When Mokjong refused to destroy the peasant bands or to break the quarantine and the oath-banner men, Yi poisoned him. Yi then convinced other Hwarang to help restore royal authority by naming himself "Commander for Purifying the North."

Yi's Hwarang worked with some of the bandit gangs to pacify the others. Together they won the allegiance of the people by smuggling medicine and distributing it freely. The worst of the plague passed, just as a new force of Hwarang arrived from the royal capital with orders to capture the "Brigand Lynx."

When their riders approached, Yi greeted them as friends. They were loyal to King Myo-chong but, Yi explained, their first duty was to the kingdom. Yi had brought peace to the north while the king did nothing. Besides, many of the young noble Hwarang would benefit from a new, Daoist-style meritocracy, and if the rest joined Yi he would protect their positions. With both Hwarang garrisons rallied behind him and the oath-banner men divided, Yi marched on the capital. He forced the king to abdicate, proclaimed a new era of benevolent rule, and without explanation freed every slave in his home village.

Yi's Dynasty

Yi established a dynasty which remains in his family three hundred years later. Yi was a master diplomat who considered the interests of noble and commoner alike and created institutions to ensure a stable nation. He began by reforming the tax and slave codes, and conquering the old naval bases owned by Zhongguo on the northern coast. A Royal Censor was appointed with the right to criticize anyone's conduct, even the king's, without punishment. Yi's successors created the Royal Lectures, in which the king and local scholars gave public talks on scholarship and philosophy.

The royal family's love of learning was part of a larger program of keeping old social classes content. Most positions in the large bureaucracy were filled by people who had passed a rigorous series of examinations, modeled in various years on memorization of Daoist texts, composition of essays and poetry, or legal problem-solving. The tests were open to all, which pleased the common folk, but the noble families had far more time and money to prepare. The tests determined most officer positions in the army as well. This military force was placed under direct royal command and organized into North, South, East, West, and Central divisions. There were five public Royal Academies and countless lesser schools, public and private. The Yi kings treated the kingdom as three administrative provinces roughly along the old Kaya-Shilla-Shell borders, with all but the Central army overlapping two provinces so no regional official would consider it his own. By these and other strategies, the lynxes of Yi kept order and brought a gradual rise in the wealth, population, and strength of their land.

Chao-Xian Today

Today Chao-Xian's strength lies in Zhongguo's belief that its neighbors are only barbarians. Chao-Xian is easy to underestimate because of its remote location and snowy climate. But the need for independence from Zhongguo has made the people hardy, and helped them to develop unique skills like the magic of the Mutang and Pansu. The Yi Dynasty's recent attempts to build trade with Zhongguo have brought guns and other tools to Chao-Xian, adding to the wealth and power gotten from the growing trade across Binghe Bay.

Militarily, Chao-Xian is no match for all of Zhongguo, but its armies' experience with mountain fighting makes them a threat to the border provinces of Chi and Jin. The traditional Hwarang Knights and the magic of the Mutang and Pansu compliment more modern fighters. The real threat to Zhongguo may come not from Chao-Xian's soldiers but from roving bandit gangs and native monsters. Individuals from Chao-Xian can be found working as mercenaries or traders among the Zhongguoese, and every few years the royal court sends noblemen and scholars south in search of new knowledge.

Chao-Xian has been a stable monarchy for three hundred years under the Yi Dynasty. The King maintains tight control over the three provinces. He keeps the loyalty of commoners by encouraging the growth of Daoism and the belief that the testing system can reward any person of talent.

Life in Chao-Xian

Being a Description of the People's Joyous Experience

Village Life

Most of Chao-Xian's people live in farming villages of a hundred families or fewer. The country is made up mostly of hills and mountains, so these towns spring up on the south sides of hills for their favorable geomancy and protection from the cold north wind.

The races do not mingle much in villages. Wandering through the streetless

cluster of huts on the hill and the valley of fields below, one usually finds only two or three of Chao-Xian's species. Strangers attract stares and rumors. In some places no one would even be allowed to travel without some high status or urgent errand.

The huts are sturdy mud dwellings with several rooms. The kitchen is a small, low room with a cooking fire. The fire's heat flows under the floor of a tan-plastered sitting room with a few cushions. In winter the fire and the thick walls keep the house livable, but there is a constant need for grass, leaves, and other fuel. Wood goes to the house of the village headman or is sold until no trees are left near the village.

The headman acts like a low-ranking nobleman even though his rank is unofficial. Most likely he is a native who went to the cities for the government examinations and scored poorly. He was sent back home to administer his own village, which was not a terrible fate. Every six months he must have part of the rice crop or some bolts of cloth waiting for the tax riders who collect them.

For most villagers, daily life means working happily in the communal fields. Everything ultimately belongs to the king, and the headman and some higher nobles take their shares. But these farmers are generously allowed their own tools, and a small private plot that always seems the most fertile in the village. Every few years the headman reassigns the land in some fair way, never tainted by favoritism or overcrowding.

At least one hut is decorated with paints and a mask. Inside lives a Mutang shaman, a woman who entertains and protects the people with her rituals of dancing. Every festival includes her, and everyone supports her so that she can spend most of her time practicing her craft. Generally her family members farm at least part of the time.

The main food year-round is rice from the fields, served with fried bean curd and vegetables. Coastal villages have fish and toasted seaweed. One item unique to Chao-Xian is *kimchee*. Wilt cabbage in salt water, add lots of garlic, ginger and onions, pack it in a barrel with radishes and more salt, leave it to ferment, and you have a popular meal that strengthens the teeth. Ignorant foreigners gag at the rich earthy smell. For dessert there is *tdukk*, which is steamed rice flour and tangy green chrysanthemum leaves folded in a pastry with sweet beans and honey.

City Life

There are many towns and cities in Chao-Xian even though it is less densely populated than Zhongguo. The modern urban centers grew from the old castle towns built to protect people from monsters. These forts' outgrown walls still stand against the rare occasions when the surviving creatures come close enough to civilization. Mainly the walls protect people psychologically from the threat of a serious invasion by beasts, rebels or outsiders.

Noblemen make up much of the cities' population. These are people whose families control a patch of stipend land granted them on a hereditary basis by the king. They are responsible for collecting taxes from the tenant farmers there, and passing a share (typically half) of that money to the king. Tax money leaves the nobles with large profits even if they hire tax collectors to do the work. The lower nobles with the least land have thatch-roofed cottages within the city walls, while the richest have mansions with multicolored tile roofs, great courtyards and gardens open to the public, and a surprising array of side businesses and hobbies from museums and libraries to fighting arenas. Noblemen fund some of the city's merchants. There are festivals every few weeks

by families trying to outdo each other. Sometimes Mutang are brought in from the countryside for entertainment. They're cautioned only to pretend to summon spirits, as the real thing would go against the civilized, correct beliefs of Chu'ja Daoism.

Life is much more restricted for women of the noble classes. Because Chu'ja's version of Daoism teaches that a woman's duty is to obey her father and later her husband in all things, she has no independent existence. (Records note her only as "wife".) From about six years of age, noble women are required to cover all but their faces and tails in public and to avoid leaving the family house without a male relative to protect their virtue. Women are rarely taught to read or much about Daoism or anything else, and are barred from taking the national tests for political jobs. Few opportunities exist for noble women unless they run away to the countryside or their husbands and male relatives die, leaving them in charge of the household. In that case the woman is expected to marry as soon as possible so that the family will not be extinguished. This is all, of course, common sense to Chao-Xian's people, at least among the wise and educated.

As in Zhongguo, merchants are considered the lowest of the free classes because they buy and sell goods without producing anything of their own. They provide a large share of the color and excitement of the cities, by bringing in the most valuable products of the entire country and still others from Zhongguo and elsewhere. Entire city streets are devoted to wooden stalls of produce, racks of weapons, and the noise and smell of commerce. Most of the trade is in the basic products of rice (four different grades), fish, cloth, medicine, and metal tools. The fish market is especially interesting because its suppliers sometimes catch species no one has ever seen before. The new finds are advertised and auctioned off for exorbitant prices. Other stores all have their own attractions, from demonstrations of powerful medicines to the heat and scent of boiling soup in winter. In rain and cold, the merchants cover the streets with canopies strung between rooftops. (It's not as though anything interesting would happen above them.)

To patrol the marketplaces and maintain order in the rest of the city, there are many guards. Some are from one of the five oath-banner armies, and others are private security forces hired by the governors and the local noblemen. It is illegal for everyone except these licensed guards, and the weapon-dealers at their stalls, to draw weapons outdoors while inside the city. Generally the streets are orderly, but sometimes criminals have to be hauled before a court of appointed royal judges. Everyone is subject to the same law, to the extent that they can afford an educated person to plead their case.

Hermits and Wanderers

Merchants outside of the cities are generally loners. Many of them wander the roads wearing an A-frame backpack, a *jiggeh*, stuffed with spices, scrolls, religious icons, and other valuables, and own nothing else in the world. They stop in cities to buy from their stationary cousins, and in villages to sell, but can't buy much from villagers whose wealth is mostly in rice and cloth. Other merchants are more organized, and arrange to hire pack animals to carry away such things. This also means hiring guards, when the merchants can afford it.

The danger comes from bandit gangs. These typically start as lone farmers whose incompetence and immorality leaves them unable to pay their taxes and feed their families. These villains then turn to part-time travel and robbery. They recruit family members and neighbors, especially during bad harvest years, but may return happily to farming when the weather improves and planting season arrives. Once in a while an

entire village turns to thievery and travels long distances in search of food, money, or anything to sustain themselves. At this point the army is called in to restore virtue.

These processions of soldiers may be Hwarang Knights, who are on the move every few months anyway to train in different regions. Their noble status and youth make them eager customers for inns, taverns, and other services along the road. They are so proud of their role as protectors of the kingdom that after a long day's travel, they may harass a trader who looks dishonest or a pilgrim who looks like a thief. After the warriors spend an evening at a good tavern, townsfolk can persuade them to show their skills by challenging whatever corrupt officials or other villains most bother the locals. If the Hwarang are unavailable to solve a problem, the oath-banner armies may arrive instead in their much larger formations. These people are professional military men who take their jobs very seriously. But some are conscripts who reject their honorable service, and are desperate for a chance to desert and return to their fields.

Government men are always somewhere in transit. Some of these are young folk headed to the cities for education and the national examinations, or coming back in triumph or disappointment. Others are experienced officials whose job it is to visit every town in the province to make sure everyone complies with royal laws and pays their taxes. Since their visit to any given place is generally at the same time each year, rural people have learned to obey certain laws just long enough to keep the visitors happy. Most feared are the Shadow Riders, a new development, agents who are rarely seen but who enforce royal laws swiftly and severely.

Monks and priests of several denominations also ply their trade along the roads. Some are pilgrims visiting the many temples and shrines. Monks attempt to establish new monasteries to teach the people, or to practice their unorthodox beliefs in secret. Some religious sites are abandoned due to monster attack or other causes, and travelers sometimes reach their destination to find it empty, or even that there is no trace of it at all. Simply traveling and reporting on the latest news can be enough to earn a meal at inns, and a few people make a living this way if they fail at trade or thievery. More respectable are the Pansu, the blind musicians who use the power of sound to drive away evil.

Fish and Seaweed

Chao-Xian has extensive coastlines to the southwest, facing Binghe Bay, and to the north along the Shoufen Sea. The bay is within reach of most of the Shell province and of Zhongguo's Chi state. Innumerable fishing towns line this coast.

Life for these villagers is much the same as it is inland, with long, hard work for food and a little luxury. Instead of endless rice fields there are fishing boats tied to stakes in the beach, racks for salting and drying, and smokehouses for preserving food. From dawn to dusk the fishing towns are half abandoned. The boatmen row a mile or two offshore and keep almost anything caught in their nets; there is a use for everything. Fish and seaweed are eaten, the rarer shellfish and any unusual catches are sold as delicacies, and driftwood becomes fuel.

Usually the men fish while women cook or preserve food, and everyone works to repair buildings and tools. Children scour the beaches for red, white, and black shells which can be filed into thin discs and strung on necklaces. These shell strings are worth a meal or a fishhook near the shore, and more inland.

Everyone is in danger from the typhoons which sweep across the bay. Within an

hour a perfect day gives way to black skies and howling winds. Boats swamp, and loose objects become missiles. Everyone must stop work and take shelter, sometimes for days at a time. When the clouds finally vanish, entire houses are sometimes missing, and the survivors must work together to rebuild.

Fishers are in constant need of wood for boats and fires. They exchange much of their catch for wood, pottery, and other necessities found inland. Coastal towns show great creativity in making do with little outside help.

Swimmers and Brigands

Shell Province is home to the unique culture of the dolphins. These folk are adapted enough to life on land that they have legs, but are streamlined with delicate skin that dries and cracks when out of water for long. Almost all live on the shore or in the water itself. A few venture along rivers, where they can also be comfortable in warm weather. Those who stray far from water must bring it with them and are usually considered insane by their brethren. They also are almost always blind, but have the uncanny ability to "hear" the shapes, textures and even the insides of all they regard.

Living in the water of Binghe Bay is a challenge. The dolphins have built walls in the sea from wood and a type of hardy, quick-growing coral, but have little in the way of roofs or doors. There is little visible decoration, only complex carvings and textures. Nor is there fire except on above-water ledges or back on shore. The dolphins work without a schedule; day and night mean nothing but the coming and going of shoremen's boats.

Sometimes through the walls, the inhabitants hear the shrieking of noise sharks outside and either cower or venture out to kill the beasts. The monsters and smaller predatory fish are a constant threat to the life of fishermen, and not only to dolphins. Fishers of other races come in boats to harvest the sea with nets. They work in cooperation (usually) with dolphins, driving prey with sound and spears. But the sharks can overturn boats and render the sound-dependent dolphins unable to hear to help them. The occasional mass hunts, meant to kill the sharks and find their eggs, are never successful enough.

There are countless islands in the bay, most of them inhabited by anything from a single hermit to an entire village. Some islands are hideouts for pirate gangs who attack travelers and deal in stolen or illegal merchandise. Lone dolphin bandits can surprise sailors and vanish in minutes, though most of the boats they spot are just fishing vessels and have nothing valuable.

Traders and Foreigners

The boats of Binghe Bay come in many styles influenced by the cultures to the south and west as well as Zhongguo. They fly not the square sails of Zhongguo and northern rivers, but claw-shaped sails on curving masts.

Traders send expeditions from the coastal villages, across all of Binghe Bay, to the south shore. The foreigners are stubborn and alien but have fine dyes, linen, and a surprising array of imported goods to trade. Most of the products Chao-Xian offers in return are not from the coastal regions, since the foreign barbarians already have fish and shells. Instead the Binghe Bay traders sell finer things: ginseng and other herbs, exotic pottery and carvings, metals (especially copper), and sometimes slaves. Traders from the

far south do buy dried fish and meat. The sides also exchange diplomats, scholars, and magic-users. Mutang report that the southern coast is barren but spiritually peaceful.

Foreigners sometimes arrive from across the bay, with their own strange language and customs. Some are savage nomads from a desert far to the south, and the rest are half-savages from the Xi Yeren along the north shore of that desert. Both groups complain constantly about the cold, the food, and the high prices. Their presence is tolerated and even welcomed in many villages, where they are a constant source of entertainment. The royal oath-banner armies and the Hwarang consider them a disruptive influence and harass them.

There are traders by land as well. Because there are many villages and towns far from the shore, people routinely travel to and from the coast for business. The backpack peddler and caravan trader are common, but there is another kind of traveler: the ordinary person who wants to buy a curse. The inland towns, and some isolated spots, are known to have sorcerers. These secretive ones will cast spells to ruin or sicken a person's enemies, using an object connected somehow to the victim. Since the intended victim is usually a neighbor of the person who hates them so much, the victim and his family will find out about the suspicious disappearance and send someone after the attacker or the sorcerer. Bribes and threats usually bring a truce.

The Three Provinces

Being a Guide To the Kingdom's Geography

The Northern Province: Kayagum (The Lute)

Kayagum Province stretches from the western tip of Chao-Xian, in a curve along the spine of the Diamond Mountains, southeast into the lowlands. This region is the coldest on the entire continent. To survive, people wear thick hides outside and spend as much time as possible inside with a fire. Doorways are built high in anticipation of snow.

Centuries ago, Kayagum was home to the first large kingdom, Kaya. Under the unified Shilla kings it was often neglected because of its remoteness. In the absence of close royal attention, it became a haven for unorthodox monks and rogue mages from the other provinces or even Zhongguo and beyond. These people did not want visitors. The rogues' actions tended to reinforce the natives' suspicion of outsiders, even ones from elsewhere in their own province.

There are many ways to disappear in the north. Part of the reason is the geography: the Diamond Mountains and many hills, which form deep valleys, cliffs, and overhangs. There are caves everywhere in all shapes and sizes. Snow covers the land all winter and often in the spring and fall. Natives say that the shape of the land outside their villages changes, and that the more carefully a place is mapped the sooner the maps will be found wrong.

Kayagum is full of monsters. They come with storms and the night and catch people alone or asleep. Some are unnatural in their numbers, appetite, and viciousness, far beyond what one would expect such a climate to support.

Finally, travelers seem to vanish even without obvious cause. Mutang shamans

say that Kayagum is a cursed place, more disturbed even than the rest of Chao-Xian, and that the spirits they channel are often mad. Crops and weather can turn bad beyond any help the Mutang can give. Despite the hardships they face, the people of Kayagum love their land and the relative solitude they have. Fewer people live here than in the other provinces even today.

Kayagum produces some rice, but many of the fields are devoted to ginseng. This red or white root, shaped like a tailed man, is used to treat every illness and ensure a long life. Ginseng is prized everywhere and brings money to the province. So does mining. The mountains are full of copper, other metals and gems (normal and strange), and several kinds of stone. Snowfall in the mountains feeds numerous rivers, which power mills and mechanical smith's-hammers to produce metal weapons and tools. The presence of so many monsters has the upside of providing an endless supply of sturdy hides as well, some with unusual properties.

Locations:

There are many monasteries in Kayagum in a variety of styles, mostly dedicated to obscure sects of the Pureland Amita faith. Throughout the province are centuries-old "devil posts," great stone spikes carved with the shapes of monsters' heads. They stand guard near old village sites and twist the spiritual geography in ways even the Mutang don't fully understand. The posts seem protective, but the charred ruins of old villages are easily found nearby.

Zoolon is the capital city of Kayagum. It stands in a large valley, with three of the old devil posts visible on faraway hilltops. A single road threads up to the east and fades halfway to the coast. The city walls are stone studded with towers and a single gate, which is never opened at night for any reason. Inside, houses are huddled together and have interconnected halls and tunnels, some of which may lead secretly out of the city for smuggling or quick escape. *Zoolon* is a city where silence is a social virtue and everyone minds their own business. Enforcement of royal laws is lax so far from the capital, which makes the city seem a den of immorality to visitors who barge through closed doors. Those who respect people's privacy are quietly welcomed and can find information, magic, exotic medicine, and other services. Reported crime is rare, and the rest is punished discreetly at night.

While the heavy snow *Zoolon* gets each winter muffles sound and sends people indoors even more than usual, some yearly events break the silence. Peasants flock to the city for the *Lampdragon Festival* of public feasting and dancing, and throughout the winter young people carve ice sculptures and play fiercely competitive games on the ice.

Night Flower Palace was built by the last Shilla king. Because the location was poorly chosen and was infested with especially restless spirits, it was struck by lightning thirty times while under construction. It was abandoned half-finished. Since then the stone underworks and the dozens of unfurnished rooms have been many things: bandit hideouts, monasteries, trash dumps, and homes for farmers. No enterprise remains there for long, either because the site is still cursed or because people are too afraid that it is.

Hundred Wheel Grave is a red pagoda jutting from the center of a valley. The valley seems to be a pit whose sharp edges have eroded into a roughly pentagonal shape. Red plants reach from cracks in the white rocky floor which fills most of the valley. The wind here seems to whisper urgently to travelers. The pagoda predates Daoism's presence in Chao-Xian. Legend says it marks the site of the battle which killed Tan'gun, founder of

the people of Chao-Xian, and was built to placate the 108,000 people who died there. Inside the pagoda are many large, engraved stone prayer wheels which turn ceaselessly to honor the dead, even though the Grave is apparently long abandoned.

The Western Province: Paekche (The Shell)

On crossing into Paekche or Shell Province from the mountains, the first thing one notices ahead is the scent of the salty wind blowing from seaward. The breeze carries hints of the countless fishing villages spread out along the coast. It also carries clouds which, raked by the mountains, shed rain before reaching the northern regions. The wind is a key to life along the bay, as it powers the fleets of fishing and trading boats.

People in Shell Province are exposed to the greatest diversity of cultures. Contact with the desert tribes to the south has affected the local dialect and brought unusual styles of clothing and even belief systems. Sometimes an entire town will be caught up for a year in some imported fad which the local scholars and inspectors denounce as immoral and wasteful.

In general, the people pay little attention to Chao-Xian's "true" culture of Chu'ja Daoism. The national examinations and factional disputes are just a way to advance in rank and make sure the province gets royal funding for storm relief and other projects. The scholars who attend royal schools and show perfect gentlemanly conduct, go home to throw huge parties when they pass the exams. There is nothing seen hypocritical about this.

Besides the Mutang shamans, Pansu musicians also provide entertainment and magical protection. Pansu are usually wanderers instead of living in one village, and instead of bringing general blessings to the land they deal with specific threats from monsters and demons. Pansu also tell fortunes using whatever items are available, dealing cards or cracking crab shells with a hammer. Dolphin Pansu seem insane, as they claim to see invisible things but can't tell the color of their own clothes. Competition between Mutang and Pansu leads either to fights or to great song-and-dance concerts.

Locations:

The city of *Turt*, capital of Paekche, follows a river from inland to the sea's edge and beyond. Everything vertical stands at an angle to the near-continuous slope of the hillside. The city grew up from the fertile soil of the river. The noblemen who control the soil have found it profitable to keep much of the area along the banks as farmland, and only build homes and businesses in a patchwork of square plots. The city is therefore stretched out, with long areas where all the buildings are taverns or mansions or government offices. Some of the farmland is shaped into orchards where branches cover the river and the rafts that travel it. These rafts are dragged upstream with ropes held by people or beasts walking along the shore. At the mouth of the river is a huge tangle of mangrove tree roots which shelter the local dolphin population and are breeding grounds for fish.

Not to be missed in Turt is the *Great Sea Market*, where every kind of creature caught in the sea can be found on sale. Every five days an entire street fills with the vendors calling to customers and describing how hard every fish was to catch. Most of the fish, oysters, and other catches are food, a few have medicinal value, and one expensive kind (*fugu*) is either delicious or deadly depending on how well the

hallucinogenic poison is removed. Sometimes the fishmongers will take ridiculously high bids for a catch that has never been seen before, or one so big it fills a wagon. A scholar from the Sirhak School visits the market often, looking for unusual fish to study.

Chengdu Island is a bandit fortress turned legitimate. Two centuries ago a fox named Chang Pogo amassed 108 outlaws and wanderers to become pirates on Binghe Bay, preying mainly on rich travelers coming from the southern lands. When the Hwarang arrived in response to the foreigners' complaints, Chang's group hastily pledged its loyalty to the king. He received permission to levy a small tax on merchants in exchange for protecting the bay from criminals, making Chengdu Island into an informal naval base. Today around 5,000 people are packed onto Chengdu and adjacent islands, including merchants, royal inspectors, and their families. Chengdu is an armed version of a coastal fishing town. The ruling class of 108 people replaces its members by voting and values skill at fighting, strategy, and finances.

Bulgan is a city built for trade. It began as a stop for locals preparing to cross the bay, and grew in fits, especially during the wars that began and ended the Shilla Dynasty. There is a great semicircular stone wall against the bay, and the foundations of two older walls inside have become streets. The livestock market has a slaughterhouse for exporting dried meat, and a foul-smelling leather tannery. Bulgan also builds the largest, strongest ships and sells some to Chengdu Island. With blood, pitch, offal, and other filth pouring through the city's underground sewers into the bay, the water nearby has become unsafe for fishing or swimming. Mutang warn that the local spirits are reacting, *gleefully*, to the increasing output of the city, and strange things have been sighted beneath the streets.

Volcano Lake is a vast circular body of water filling the crater of a volcano. While the volcano has been dormant for centuries, it still emits heat and keeps the area surprisingly warm despite its altitude. Two villages line the crater rim on opposite sides to farm the ashy soil and fish in the strangely warm, sulfurous water. The area exports pumice stone (which floats and is good for scrubbing) as well as obsidian which is made into fine blades and ornaments elsewhere. A few local obsidian-workers sell blades and trinkets to the people who come to Volcano Lake hoping that its steam and water will cure their illnesses. Lately a cult of supposed healers has sprung up here, offering miraculous cures. They claim that a friendly god sleeps in the watery crater, and seek people to help explore the depths.

The *Blue Mine* is mainly a source of lapis lazuli, a blue semi-precious stone somewhat like jade. The entrance is beneath a huge stone overhang and forms a network of tunnels from there, one of which stops at a pure underground river. The sheltered cliff's walls and the boulders outside protect the area from wind and snow, and permit ventilation for fire. The mine is worked in late fall and winter by farmers with no other work to do. A trade village has sprung up in and near the cave; tours are offered by children who make up tales of ghosts and treasure in the mine as they go. The mine belongs to Hyesim, a bear nobleman who is usually in the village drinking and gambling with his people. He is always looking for entertaining guests and business opportunities.

The Southern Province: Mon (The Gate)

Mon Province is the most settled and populous part of the kingdom. It occupies about half of the peninsula east of the Diamond Mountains, south of Kayagum. Since it is the area closest to Zhongguo it may have been inhabited first. The kingdom of Shilla was

founded here and eventually conquered the peninsula. When the lynx Yi founded the modern dynasty, he kept Mon as the capital province and worked to improve trade and communication among the provinces.

Here are most of the country's roads and the best farmland for rice and fruit trees. The fields are relatively flat, although still nestled between hills, and are the source of food for the province and parts of Kayagum. The farms use the greatest variety of cultivation techniques due to experimentation by the Sirhak Practical School. For instance there are wooden platforms covered with dirt and left to float in streams, maintaining the proper water depth for rice despite floods and droughts. The fields are productive enough that tenant farmers often have spare food or cash crops to trade for luxuries.

In the northeast is the Shoufen Sea. While Binghe Bay across the mountains is warm and has many islands and natural harbors, the Shoufen coast is smooth and often full of drifting ice. Fishing is dangerous due to the cold, but possible, and the fishers use ice from the sea to preserve their catch and ship some of it inland. There are few storms, but a near-constant freezing wind.

A broad dirt road leads southeast from the capital city, Togol, to the land of Zhongguo (Jin Province). The road, and the P'ae River running near it, are a trade route which brings wood, books, silver, and vegetables into Chao-Xian. This border is watched closely on both sides, though Zhongguo does not consider the "northern barbarians" a great threat. Of less concern is the southern border with Zhongguo's state of Chi. The mountains in this direction are sharp and without roads, deterring thoughts of invasion from either side. The mountain-dwellers along this border have a sympathy for the hard life and meddling governments both sides share, and have been known to exchange visitors and aid.

The presence of foreign books, and the knowledge they contain, complicates Chao-Xian's language, especially in Mon Province. Since the Shilla era, the kingdom has used a standardized writing system, *han'gul*, based on old Mutang cryptic writing. This was in turn based on ancient Zhongguoese writing. Han'gul is much simpler than Zhongguo's system, as it is phonetic and uses only fifty-three signs instead of thousands. The effect is that people are more often literate in Chao-Xian than in the more "civilized" Zhongguo. But because of the texts brought from the south, scholars try to learn Zhongguo's writing as well, even though it is poor for writing Chao-Xian's spoken language. After all, proper gentlemen prefer the purer and more venerable Zhongguoese system, not the dumbed-down *han'gul* system that peasants and even women use. Translation is a lucrative job in Mon Province.

Locations:

Togol is the huge capital of the province and of the Kingdom of Chao-Xian. It is the source of all power, wealth, and learning. From the king and his ministers come the orders which maintain the social system of productive farmers, wise officials, brave warriors, and honest merchants. The city and its two rings of stone walls are studded with shrines to the royal ancestors, where incense is burned day and night to ensure the continued peace of the kingdom. The many travelers find every sort of respectable business and feel safe under the watchful eyes of the Shadow Riders and other royal inspectors. In *Togol* women are demure, even when their husbands and brothers escort them to the city's outer lake to sightsee, paint, and listen to poetry. The men concern

themselves with the world outside the home, studying for the examinations or working in the government ministries. Scholars of the tricolored factions and the Sirhak School are everywhere. Lectures in public squares and in the palace happen daily to inform and instruct the people. Outside the palace is a beautiful blue pavilion for these talks and other events, heated not by fire but by magic.

Each fall the *Day of Masks* comes to T'ogol. Everyone, male and female, is legally required to cover their faces in what was originally a day of mourning for a dead Yi king. Now the day is a holiday, and the masks are colorful and strange. Some people add costumes which make them impossible to identify, and move through the streets as strangers. A change of costume can hide a person from any responsibility for their actions, so annually there are proclamations demanding proper behavior during the festival. Everyone is involved; even the king keeps a gem-encrusted mask in his city palace for his public appearance on this day.

Twelve Thousand Peaks Palace was built by Yi's son, the second king of the dynasty. Yi himself lived in the old palace, choosing to spend the country's wealth on medicine and books, but his son found time to select a much better palace site. It stands on a plateau in the west of Mon Province, at one of the highest spots in the country, and overlooks ice-covered mountains in every direction. There are thousands of steps hacked into the stone to lead travelers to the broad blue roofs of the palace complex. The king spends about half of his time here and half in the capital city below, so the palace is equipped with messengers and stables to keep the king informed and issue proclamations. Living here are hundreds of clerks, minor noblemen whom the king wants watched, and slaves tending the hunting grounds and gardens. The palace even has a guest hall for visitors who make the climb into the mountains. People do this because the king is so harried and surrounded by his clerks, advisors, strategists, family members, staff, and sycophants in the capital that while there, he rarely is available to speak to anyone else. Reaching the mountain palace can be easier than filing the proper forms to request an audience in the capital -- despite the few odd or dishonest folk lurking along the road.

The *Burning Earth Facility* is in a salt-making village. Far from the coast, people make salt by boiling the briny water from certain ponds. At one of these, the workers saw tongues of flame coming from the earth itself. The Mutang could do nothing to calm the restless spirits, but a scholar from the Sirhak Practical School found that a fire built above a small drilled hole in this ground would burn without fuel. Since then the School has practically taken over the salt-making facility and is always ordering the workers around. There is a building with a perpetual fire in a pit, used for easy brine boiling, and another for testing mud-slathered bamboo pipes as a way of carrying the strange burning air over short distances. The scholars say their work proves the foolishness of the Mutang superstitions.

Religion

Revealing the True Beliefs of the People

Daoism

Daoism in Chao-Xian is not what the Zhongguoese think it is. It entered the country early in its history from Zhongguo, and had significant effects on the culture of

the Three Kingdoms. In all three regions Daoist mages from Zhongguo became missionaries who trained local students in their beliefs, turning them away from traditional faiths. In the Shilla kingdom Daoism was well-received, but the Daoists who went as far north as Kaya (modern Kayagum) were often rogues fleeing from Zhongguo to practice destructive magic in secret. The people of Kaya saw mainly the worst side of Daoism and rejected it. In Shell Province, Daoism was only one of many competing foreign ideas, and was accepted in a garbled form mixed with everything else. When the Yi Dynasty was established, Yi outlawed Daoism, but it flourishes again under his descendants.

Modern Daoists in Chao-Xian call Daoism their own invention and focus their teaching on the work of Chu'ja, a native "fundamentalist" who re-interpreted the *Yi-Ching* and *Book of the Way* to emphasize the Five Relationships of dutiful subjects, sons, wives, younger siblings, and friends. The Relationships are two-way, but all but the last are unequal. A ruler's duty is to protect his subjects' interests, and his subjects' duty is to obey him. All noble families keep detailed genealogical records and make sacrifices of incense to their ancestors, who watch silently over them.

Daoism can restrict people's behavior severely if practiced to the letter. Everyone is expected to be formal and quiet in public, able to sit silently for hours to hear a lecture or wait for a superior. Men must maintain their dignity at all times "without laughter at foolishness, without tears at misfortune, without running when taking shelter from the rain." Women are "Yin" subservient to the male "Yang" and must cover all but their faces and tails in public -- in theory. Only in Mon Province are such laws actually enforced, though the current king seeks stronger enforcement throughout Chao-Xian. More and more aspects of daily life are becoming subject to laws implementing Chu'ja's ideas, but despite oppression other religions still thrive. In fact, many people see no contradiction in combining belief systems and practicing whichever one seems most appropriate at the moment: Chu'ja Daoism for social decorum, Mutang to fend off demons, and Pureland Amita to give hope for the dead.

Mutang

Mutang is the religion of the shamans, or spirit dancers. Mutang dancers are almost always women. Usually their training begins at adolescence after an illness or injury, when a child's spirit is nearly lost. She wanders from home in a trance and begs from everyone in the village for food, cloth, and candles. Everyone then knows her potential, and helps to organize a ceremony to see if she can contact a guardian spirit.

By the time the townsfolk gather, the girl has recovered, but she must try to dance and play the drum for hours until she collapses, exhausted. At this point, sometimes, her spirit leaves her body and meets with a dead person's soul -- which could be any race, sex, age, and class. If she can befriend the spirit in her trance, she gains the ability to call upon it and let it possess her body, and so becomes a Mutang. The daughters and occasionally the sons of Mutang can be given the status of honorary Mutang, who help out with the ceremonies but have no particular power. True Mutang hope that their daughters will be born with the gift themselves.

Mutang spend their lives dancing, learning mystic chants and poems, and performing village ceremonies. No traditional wedding, funeral, prayer for victory in battle, or even a party is complete without a Mutang summoning her guardian spirit, leading the people in chanting and music, and providing advice. The dancers can build up

such a frenzy of movement that they draw others into the trance and give them a taste of magical power. The ceremony can be exciting and funny as the Mutang switches identities between her main spirit and those of dead bureaucrats, monks, and warriors, demanding frequent costume changes and making greedy demands for food and money as she plays the parts.

The purpose of these elaborate ceremonies is to placate the spirits of the land and of the dead. Every village, mountain, and field is full of spirits, some of which are part of the land itself. In Chao-Xian these ghosts match the terrain: cold and unforgiving. Shamans have a sense that some great evil was once done in their homeland, so terrible that the land itself was spiritually scarred, but none of them can agree on who is at fault or why. Since the land's spirits can bring storms, sickness, or ill luck, a shaman must protect the people by feeling and manipulating the spiritual part of the world.

The spirits of Chao-Xian's dead, as opposed to the older and more mysterious ghosts of the land, are generally friendly, and willing to join forces with a shaman. These are the souls of people who will one day be reborn, but for now wander the kingdom and intercede between the living and the malevolent spirits of the land. However, some of these ghosts are interested only in carrying on past feuds and wars, or have even listened too long to the spirit voices that whisper from ages past. Shamans offer guidance to dead souls to speed their journey to rebirth.

Pureland Amita

The *Pureland Amita* faith is a descendant of Mutang shamanism. Early in the Shilla era the political and religious roles of the shaman split, leaving government in the hands of kings and queens while priestesses devoted themselves to the spiritual world. Some of the faithful became monks instead of village shamans, and built monasteries throughout Chao-Xian. Today hundreds of these sites dot the map. Some are refuges from the mundane world, with little contact except for occasional government inspections. Others are schools which teach literacy and meditation to visitors, and still other sites stand abandoned and forgotten.

The Amitan religion holds that the souls whom Mutang shamans contact are those of people who are not merely waiting between lives, but are trapped in that state by their spiritual imperfection. The way to a higher station in life is not through social ambition as the Daoists teach or through trusting a shaman's ceremonies for guidance. Only contemplation of the nature of the spiritual world can bring a person to the enlightenment that ensures rebirth in a happier life. Enlightenment is a sudden and individual process.

Daoists consider Amitans arrogant and selfish. Their religion encourages children to abandon their duties to family and country in search of individual growth. If everyone became an Amitan monk, who would farm the fields and defend the border? Amitans answer that if enough people studied the scriptures, restless spirits would cease to exist and the land would be transformed into a paradise.

Pansu bards seem to follow the Amitan beliefs in meditation and spiritual perfection, but their skills are guided by a variety of beliefs. Some Pansu work closely with Mutang and the social aspect of their religion, and a few are even Daoists or madmen who believe only in their world of sound, with people and spirits equally insubstantial.

Modern Politics

Discussing Honorable Dealings of the People

Tests

The testing system determines the future of many young men, especially among the noble classes. Hundreds of government appointments become available every year, and thousands of applicants come to the five regional Royal Schools for testing.

The first tests are held in the spring. For three days applicants live in tiny cells all day and are brought out at night, when it is quiet, to spend hours writing by firelight in a huge courtyard patrolled by armed proctors. Despite the prison-like security, applicants' relatives smuggle in better food and sometimes crib notes.

Currently the tests focus on the philosophy of Chu'ja and its application to law and society. Answering the questions (all essays) requires not only fluent literacy to write moving prose, but memorization of large tracts of Chu'ja's writings. Applicants also take a lesser test of poetry composition or, for those seeking the less-prestigious military posts, strategy and tactics. Withstanding the testing process itself takes great willpower and sometimes luck. Because the tests are so competitive, stories abound of test-takers being drugged, locked in their rooms, or framed for cheating by rivals.

Most of the spring test-takers come back for more tests in the summer and fall, with everyone aware of the standings. The test judges are themselves civil servants who enjoy reading over test-takers' shoulders, sometimes aloud. In winter the final results are announced in the presence of the king and all the remaining applicants. The winners get the most important posts such as managing the treasury or the Ministry of Virtue, while others become regional or local bureaucrats.

In game terms, each day of taking the exams can be handled as a Warfare Test with fatigue damage and the search for glorious scholastic achievement!

Tricolor Factions

One problem with the bureaucratic testing system is that officials appoint other officials. Personal friendships are a factor in the grading of the tests and assignment of posts, and now there are also party rivalries. Forty years ago when a particular king died, the royal ministers of protocol were bitterly divided over the proper mourning period for the king's still-living mother. Should she mourn according to the rules for a dead son or for a dead king? The issue was crucial because it showed whether loyalty to the family or to the state was paramount. The entire bureaucracy split into two factions accusing each other of immorality and disloyalty. The winning side (the "dead king" party) controlled the testing system for fourteen years, selecting for people who agreed with their stance, before cracking in half over the rightness of the next king's decision to execute an adulterous wife.

After twenty-six more years of bickering, one faction, based mainly in the Kayagum province, now has a weak grip on power. The factions compete for the king's ear and take opposing stances on principle, which can be awkward when three parties try to answer a yes-no question. The factions have several nicknames each but are best known by the colors of their robes: red, gold, and green. Test-takers study the factions'

viewpoints and dress and write accordingly, but the Kayagum faction favors natives of that region among the people who share its views.

Because there is so much prestige attached to a government appointment, the positions have become temporary. Every few years new people are rotated through the system, which means that officials are often inexperienced. "Retired" officials try to be awarded stipend land so that they can collect a share of its produce and live on it. Often this isn't enough or the land award is only for a few years, forcing bureaucrats to become farmers again or try to become teachers or monks. Others jockey to keep their posts or win promotion, or to make their position as profitable as possible while it lasts.

Sirhak Practical School

In response to the factions' control over the testing system, a group of scholars from all three factions has broken away from the old groups after discovering its own interpretation of Chu'ja's writings. Instead of focusing on proper social relationships, these scholars speak of the need to understand the laws of nature to control it and make it serve the kingdom. The School's projects include the study of plants and captive animals, the improvement of printing techniques, and the acquisition of foreign magic. This work is done all over the kingdom in various homes, temples, and other buildings. In their studies the Sirhak scholars listen closely to experts of the Mutang and Amita faiths and consult the best smiths and Pansu to compile their knowledge.

The present king grows tired of the endless fighting among the tricolored factions, and provides some of the School's funding. The rest comes from the members themselves since they are mostly noblemen. The Sirhak School is a pathway to respect and the king's attention separate from the appointed bureaucracy. People whose families are affiliated with the School rarely seem to pass the examinations.

Hwarang Knights

These days the group is nicknamed the Hwarang Flower Knights. The age when the Hwarang were needed to unify the old three kingdoms is long past. Today most of the action against bandits and rebels is handled by the five oath-banner armies, and the Hwarang wander the country looking for trouble. They are still made up of young noblemen who have seen little of the world and are taking the opportunity to explore and show off.

Because there is little fighting, the Hwarang have emphasized the other aspects of the group's original mission: educating members in proper etiquette and literacy. Members spend time composing poetry when they are not training for combat. There are many complaints of boredom as the Hwarang look for something to do. Only the famous Subdue Demon Corps remains at the peak of discipline and fighting prowess; it is called upon to face the most dangerous uprisings and unnatural beasts.

In parts of the northern Kayagum Province, the Hwarang Knights' work is more exciting due to the numerous monsters. On the southeastern border with Zhongguo, the Hwarang are on alert for foreign incursions and suspicious travelers. There they sometimes stray into Zhongguoese territory and argue with the foreigners' patrols about the exact location of the border before withdrawing.

Slavery

A growing number of Chao-Xian's people are slaves. The condition has become inherited because the scholarly aristocracy considers slaves an "inferior breed" and at the same time fears they will attain high government positions and plot rebellion from within. Even if slaves buy or are granted their freedom, they must report their occupation and residence to the government each month so that their children can be taken by the parents' former owners. The child of a free person and a slave is also enslaved. So are farmers who repeatedly fail to pay their taxes; these people become the property of the local nobles.

In Mon Province and to a lesser extent in other provinces, most bureaucratic and army officer positions require proof of free status and the names of one's ancestors for up to four generations. This system encourages proper Daoist record-keeping and discourages people from having bastard children. In the face of slavery and exclusion from government, low-born people forge genealogies and vanish from government record, hoping to advance in society and protect their children. Even noblemen are involved in this crime when they report their children by slaves as "stillborn" and send them elsewhere to be raised without stigma.

Free commoners are forced to work as *corvee* laborers for a number of weeks each year. The nobles who control their land set the term and timing of the labor. Corvee work is not supposed to upset the farming schedule and in fact is often for projects that benefit everyone, like irrigation ditches. Still, the work is tiring and unpaid at best, and sometimes involves repairing some mansion in the middle of harvest season.

The City of Togol

Describing the Kingdom's Glorious Capital

The capital of Mon Province and of all Chao-Xian, Togol is also the country's largest city. Togol lies at the base of the Wei Shi Mountains, along the Imjin River which descends a waterfall, winds northeast, and empties into a small lake. Zhongguo's main northern trade route includes Togol, which is much easier to reach than the far side of the mountains.

Because of its great age and its combination of commerce and government, Togol's streets wind, rise, and fall through convoluted, overlapping districts. Most streets are cobblestone; some lead to wooden walkways over crowded markets and firetrap homes. The nation's powerful organizations -- tricolored factions, Sirhak, Hwarang, and army -- all have a presence here.

Chu'ja Daoist moral law is enforced most strongly in Togol. Women may not expose more than eyes or tails in public and must have male escorts. Raucous behavior is frowned upon at best and the Ministry of Virtue sometimes strays into the markets and arrests merchants for such crimes as boastfulness. Security is tight, but each group relies on its own members for protection from each other and from the Ministry of Virtue. At night the law is harder to enforce; some folk consider that a good thing.

[Insert Map drawn using this info, which is not to be printed, and the locations below.] Togol is in the northernmost part of the continent, just NE of the Wei Shi Mountains which run NW-SE. (See main Jadeclaw map.) Not shown on the map is a small river which flows from the mountains, through the city, to a small lake near the city's E edge. These give the city a water source. The river falls down a waterfall at the SW corner of the city as it leaves the mountains. The waterfall is inside the city's outer walls, which (along with the Palace) gives the city significant changes in elevation. That might mean areas which are drawn as steep hillside with stairs or switchback streets.]

Places of Interest in Togol

-Pavilion Square

A plaza at the base of the palace stairs, with an enchanted slate platform that radiates heat with a Fire Aura. For safety, all surrounding buildings are stone with tile roofs rather than thatch, but the rich nobles who live here prefer that style anyway. The Square hosts frequent public lectures on philosophy, science, and virtue, often attended or even given by the king. It is forbidden to sleep in the warm Square. Guards gamble for Square duty in winter.

-Palace

Thirty-three stairs lead up to the Palace. Inside, a warren of interconnected buildings and basements houses the king's extended family and some of his most- and least-trusted advisors. The Palace hums with activity, yet the king has trouble accomplishing anything

here and often retreats to his mountain palace. Various officers and relatives each have their own little domain in the Palace.

-Markets

Each street of markets has a theme. Customers can navigate by smells: candy, tea, vegetables, blacksmiths, books, incense. At night everything turns silent; in daylight visitors compare the noise to the nearby waterfall.

-Night Music Inn

Music in the streets after dark is illegal, so this three-story inn is soundproofed and the all-night noise stays inside. Hu the Owl brings entertainers from as far away as Calabria and collects recipes.

-Waterfall

The river plunges down a ten-pace waterfall as it descends from the mountains. Carts and rickshaws flow along the twin stone staircases, with a primitive elevator nearby. Behind the waterfall, a shallow cave shelters a Chu'ja Daoist shrine and often a few people meditating during their busy day.

-Women's Bathhouse

Women force their men to bring them to this place of scandalous laughter and chatter. More than hot baths are here: Since it is one of the few places in the city women are free to meet without escort, gossip and discussion of heretical ideas rise from the steam.

-Chung Pyung Lake

In the eastern city many people relax, paint, and study poetry when weather permits. Women come here under escort to meet away from their homes. In winter, icecutters saw the surface into squares and store it in straw-filled warehouses northeast of the lake, where the straw is least in danger of igniting the city.

-Escort Halls

It is too much trouble for men to take their women everywhere, and the women complain too much about being left home. The government grudgingly allows professional male escorts to chaperone women instead of relatives, as long as the men are of certified good character. The two escort businesses are based here; one is reputable.

-Inner Wall

The city's original wall stands five paces above the current ground level. It now has eight gates and is lightly guarded; passage is free at all times unless the guards find someone especially suspicious or annoying.

-Outer Wall

Most of the city lies within this, the newer wall, eight paces tall. The gates lack modern inventions like vertical murder-holes and double portcullises, despite Sirhak lobbying. Instead many guards patrol the ramparts, especially at night when no one is admitted without questioning. The lake interrupts the wall, which has a tower on either side.

-Foreigners' Quarter

Most inhabitants here are visitors from Zhongguo or elsewhere, and travelers from other provinces also stay here for the many inns. The cobblestone streets zigzag between dense, thatch-roofed buildings.

-Ministry of Virtue

The city guards' headquarters and courthouse. The building contains guards' quarters, an armory, a dungeon, and two large court chambers. The public is generally not allowed to attend trials; those open to the public are often held in Pavilion Square.

-Eastern Royal School

A center of scholarship for the tricolored factions and those aspiring to join them. Students from around the country live in tiny quarters in the surrounding district, which is interspersed with shops. This school is most highly regarded because of its location in the capital. Grueling tests come every spring, summer, and fall, with final standings announced in winter.

-Sirhak Library

The Sirhak scholars keep a huge book collection including Calabrese translations and their own records of native oral lore. The Sirhak seek to spread and increase knowledge of the physical world, and to gain a greater voice in government outside the faction system. The Library includes a warm lounge, a few sleeping rooms, and a mechanical workshop. Travelers can find an eager audience for foreign knowledge.

-Farmers' Quarter

Farmers are theoretically the highest social class, so the government keeps this districts' cobblestone streets surprisingly well-cleaned and repaired. The residents are rich farmers who can commute while farmhands do most of the work.

-Devil Hill

A devil post lies buried in a mound, on which is a park frequented by vagrants and criminals. The mound was built to cover this totem of primitive superstition. Rumor has it that the post was left where it stood, not so much out of respect, as because it proved impossible to budge.

ROLE-PLAYING

How To Portray a Virtuous Subject of Chao-Xian

Character Creation

Here are some suggestions on how to make a character from Chao-Xian territory. Options presented in Roman type are from *Jadeclaw*, and options presented in *italic* type are from this book.

Design Choice Suggestions for Characters

Traits	High Will
Race	Races found in Chao-Xian are Bears, Boars, Cats, Chickens, Cranes, <i>Dolphins</i> , Dogs, Dragons, Foxes, Horses, Leopards, Lynxes, <i>Mantises</i> , <i>Martins</i> , Monkeys, Oxen, <i>Owls</i> , Phoenixes, Porcupines, Qilings, Rabbits, Rats, Sheep, Swallows, Tigers, Weasels, and Wolves. (Camels, Elephants, Pandas, Snakes, Tortoises, and Yaks are rare due to the cold weather and the distance from Yindu.)
Gifts	Extra Trait of Stillness
Flaws	Barbarian (when in Zhongguo), Blind, Eerie, <i>False Genealogy</i> , Lame, Taciturn
Careers	Farmer, Functionary, <i>Hwarang Knight</i> , Lobbyist, Minister, Monk/Nun, <i>Mutang Shaman</i> , <i>Pansu Musician</i> , Scholar, <i>Shadow Rider</i> , Spirit Hunter, Sailor, Seer, <i>Water Watcher</i>
Skills	Administration, Augury, Breath-Holding, Census-Taking, Hiking, <i>Language: Chao-Xian</i> , <i>Literacy: Han'gul</i> , <i>Lore: Chu'ja Daoism</i> , Leadership, Musical Instrument: Kayagum, Observation, Poetry, Resolve, Riding, Singing, Sixth Sense, Strategy, Survival, Swimming, Tactics, Tracking, Weather Sense

New Gifts

Dischord (4 points)

Noise sharks can project a horrible screech through the water that drowns out all other sound and renders Dolphins' echolocation useless. During battle the sharks screech constantly, effectively blinding Dolphins and adding d10 to the difficulty of Pansu magic attempts. The sound comes from twin bulges on either side of the sharks' heads; a single Wound to either ruins this ability, but an attempt to hit them gives a -1 penalty to the To-Hit Roll. The noise is terrifying; hearing it for the first time in battle requires a d8 save to resist *Fear*.

Echolocation (3 points)

You can make extremely high-pitched noises which allow you to "see" by sound. You can sense the shapes and textures of objects within 20 paces, and sense 1 pace

through solid objects, clothing and flesh to find such things as concealed weapons and false walls. The range is extended to 40 paces in water. However, Echolocation does not show color or fine details like writing. Because only those with this Gift and/or Keen Ears can hear Echolocation sounds, you can speak so that those without either Gift will not hear. Spells may not be cast at ultrasonic pitch. This Gift does not give you the increased hearing in general that Keen Ears does. Only Dolphins normally have this Gift, but some practitioners of Pansu magic manage to gain it.

Poison Resistance (1 point)

Nothing you eat or drink seems to hurt you. When resisting poison or spoiled food, roll double your Body Dice, e.g. 2d8 instead of d8. Also, alcohol doesn't affect you much -- the first two drinks have no effect. Drunken Fist fighting is beyond your reach.

Scythes (2 points)

You have a long chitinous blade extending along the back of each hand for another twelve inches past the fingers. If decently groomed and sharpened, these Racial Weapons inflict d10 Damage (*Special: Slash*) and can be used to parry. A Botched attack or parry leaves them blunted (-1 penalty to use) for a week before they fully regrow. Only Mantises normally have this Gift.

Taur (2 points)

You have a centaur-like shape: a horizontal body with four feet, attached to a vertical torso with arms and hands. As with Quadruped (Jadeclaw, p. 328), your Move is doubled, but your Size increases by half instead of doubling. This Gift includes the hands that you have besides four feet. Except for breastplates, armor for you must be specially tailored. Only Martens normally have this Gift, but odd things do happen to parents and travelers in this magic-warped land.

New Flaws

Dull Nose (Rare; Moderate; -1 point)

You have a poor sense of smell. You detect nothing useful on Smell Tests (Jadeclaw, p. 117) except on an Overwhelming Success, and even then you pick up strong odors only. Most Humans would have this Flaw, but with Keen Eyes.

Swarm (Esoteric Flaw; -1 point)

You represent a group of small creatures which move and fight together. You have one less Hit Point than usual. Fill in the first circle on the character sheet. You may not have a Body Trait of more than d4, and your total size is half normal for that Body size. You may only attack one target at a time. Becoming "Unconscious" means being dispersed into a group of ineffective individuals which can be finished off completely by scoring one more Wound.

False Genealogy (Rare, Extreme; -3 points)

Your background is a carefully constructed lie. You have papers giving a false list of ancestors to justify your title as a Noble, save you from inherited slavery, or simply provide a cover identity. The papers were produced with d12 Forgery skill, should anyone study them. Your disrespect for your real ancestors, high or low, is appalling to Chu'ja Daoists. If your lie is exposed, you may face the loss of your job, your freedom, or your life.

Water-Dependent (Common, Extreme; -5 points)

You have sensitive skin that burns in bright light and flakes off painfully when left dry too long. The effect is similar to the danger of missing meals. You cannot recover Wounds by long-term healing, except by magical means, if you have not been soaked in water for at least half an hour in the last three. First aid after encounters still works. Soaked clothes -- silk robes work well -- and frequent rests in streams are important if you travel. If you do not spend at least half the day floating in water, the difficulty of any Long-Term Healing Test (Jadeclaw, p.151) is increased by one level. You are dry and itchy enough to take a -1 penalty for any scholarly or social skills such as Literacy or Persuasion, if you have not at least been able to rinse yourself down in the last few hours. Instinct insists you not pass up a bath in water that's even moderately clean and warm, possibly requiring a Will Test. Note that being soaked is often dangerous in Chao-Xian's cold weather!

Water-Loving (Common, Moderate, -3 points)

You have sensitive skin that becomes uncomfortable when left dry. If you do not spend at least half the day floating in water, the difficulty of any Long-Term Healing Test (Jadeclaw, p.151) is increased by one level. You are dry and itchy enough to take a -1 penalty for any scholarly or social skills such as Literacy or Persuasion, if you have not at least been able to rinse yourself down in the last few hours. Instinct insists you not pass up a bath in water that's even moderately clean and warm, possibly requiring a Will Test. (This Flaw is an alternative to "Water-Dependent" for merciful GMs wishing to make Dolphins more playable, and can represent individual Dolphins with unusual hardiness or a species-wide upgrade.)

Zhongguoese (Common, Moderate; -3 points)

You are a person from Zhongguo, traveling or living in Chao-Xian. No one would call you a "Barbarian," but your strange accent, clothes, and manners give you away as an ignorant foreigner. You do not know the Chao-Xian spoken language or written *han'gul* without buying them as separate skills. Living in Chao-Xian for several years is enough to justify buying off this Flaw. You will likely be respected among noblemen and scholars, though, and many of them know your language.

New Special Traits

Spirit Bond

Requirement: Must be female

You have formed a bond with a spirit, and receive guidance on subjects the spirit

understands. You can call upon this spirit to possess you, which takes a full Round of ritual and lets you use the spirit's Career and (when appropriate) Racial skills in addition to your own for the rest of this Scene. The spirit is assumed to have d8 Race and Career Dice unless the Game Host agrees otherwise. Becoming possessed requires a successful roll of your Spirit Bond Trait versus 2d12, with no penalty for multiple attempts.

The spirit you channel can be that of any dead person, of any Race, sex, or Career, but gives you almost no memory of that person's life beyond their Skills. Your appearance may change in subtle ways while in this state. Botches leave you possessed, but with the spirit fully in control (and very puzzled, without memories) for this Scene. The Game Host may choose to control you for this Scene.

Evil Spirit Bond

Requirement: Must be female

Rarely, a girl encounters a spirit from the earth itself, and struggles to contain its power and use it for people's benefit. You can call upon this spirit as with a normal Spirit Bond, but the "Career" applies to Intimidation, Resolve, Survival, and Sixth Sense. The "Race" of the spirit can be anything, and when used your appearance changes somewhat to resemble that Race (without conferring useful Gifts like Claws), with unnerving features like glowing eyes that make you decidedly Eerie. Also, you have supernatural prowess in some area; add this Trait's Dice to your choice of Body, Mind, Will, Race, or Speed while possessed. You may choose a different Trait each time.

The spirit's influence tempts you to spread chaos and destruction against everyone but your closest friends. If you Botch when trying to summon the spirit, it takes over completely for this Scene and will likely wreak havoc against everyone; the Game Host takes control. You are Unholy while possessed, whether or not the spirit is in control, and can be harmed accordingly.

New Skills

Language: Chao-Xian [Lore]

This is the Skill of speaking the common language of Chao-Xian. It is assumed that natives have this Skill at the same level as their Mind Dice without buying it. The language of Zhongguo is bought as a separate Skill.

Literacy: Han'gul [Lore]

This Skill lets you read and write the phonetic script of Chao-Xian. It is distantly related to Zhongguoese pictographs, but not closely enough to use in reading them. *Han'gul* is easier to learn than pictograph writing, so literacy is more widespread than in Zhongguo. Because of its simplicity, the difficulty of Literacy Tests involving *han'gul* is generally one level lower than for Zhongguoese writing.

Lore: Chu'ja Daoism [Lore]

This Skill involves memorizing and understanding the moral principles set forth by Chu'ja for an orderly society. The focus is on the Five Relationships of loyal subjects, sons, elder and younger brothers, husbands and wives, and friends. Chu'ja's ideas are

scattered throughout several heavily annotated books. The royal examinations test knowledge of this Skill.

New Races

"I don't notice your hide or fancy clothes. I see only you, inside."

Dolphins

(Total Cost = -6 or -4 points)

Racial Gifts: *Echolocation* (3 points); Teeth (1 point)

Racial Flaws: Blind (-5 points); *Water-Dependent* (-5 points) or *Water-Loving* (-3 points)

Racial Skills: Swimming; Fishing; Breath-Holding

Racial Weapons: Teeth

Racial Habitat: Water

Racial Senses: Listen

The blind, legged Dolphin is social and outgoing in a fleeting way. Friends come and go, so a Dolphin learns early that anyone can be a source of help and that it's best to meet many people and not become too attached to any of them. Sometimes their kind is accused of being too easily amused, and of laughing at everyone else behind their backs -- but that's because everyone else is too serious.

Dolphins are rarely seen in Zhongguo because their home is the sea. Most live in the waters of Binghe Bay or the rivers of Chao-Xian and rarely venture onto land. When they do, they wear silk and other soft clothes that stay damp well. Almost all Dolphins are blind, but have the ability to "see" by sound. They are fishermen and traders, but sometimes become *Pansu* or *Water Watchers* to protect the sea and everyone in it. They tend to have friends in surprising places, though a few are loners.

Dolphin Characters often have high Speed and Mind Traits. Suitable Gifts include an Extra Trait, Luck, and Hospitality with a religious Career. Many Dolphins have the Flaws of Capricious, Coarse, Corpulent, Gregarious, Lustful or Poverty. Their Blindness makes it nearly impossible to achieve Literacy.

[A Dolphin can be seen in the main *Ironclaw* book, heading the section on "Elementalism." The race honors the "baiji" dolphins of China, or rather China's past.]

"I never move; I make the world move beneath my feet."

Martens

(Total Cost = 2 points)

Racial Gifts: Claws (1 point); Teeth (1 point); *Taur* (2 points); Sure-Footed (1 point)

Racial Flaws: Curious (-3 points)

Racial Skills: Brawling, Climbing, Jumping, Tracking

Racial Weapons: Claws; Teeth

Racial Habitat: Forest

Racial Senses: Smell

Martins have an unusual shape: a four-footed horizontal body curving up to a vertical torso with hands and head. They are flexible enough to crawl almost completely horizontally, but normally stand on four feet.

Martins are wanderers by preference. They resent the fact that eating means farming and farming means hard, dull work, and look for excuses to hunt or travel rather than being stuck in one place all their lives. Often they seem indifferent to their work, treating it as a game or contest, but in fact their natural curiosity drives them to attack a problem from multiple angles and find solutions where others fail. The process of their work is more important to them than the end result, and they may leave tasks unfinished.

Martins are valued as traveling merchants, government inspectors, and monks. Many study modified Martial Arts or are Prodigies at entertainment or combat Skills, and have high Will and Speed Traits. Suitable Gifts include an Extra Trait of Quickness, Sensuality, or Surprise. Their Flaws often include Busy Hands, Garrulous, Showoff, or Superstitious.

"Ghosts and gods are fleeting, but a good blade is forever."

Mantises

(Total Cost = 7 points)

Racial Gifts: Armor d6 (7 points); *Scythes* (2 point)

Racial Flaws: Ill-Favored (-2 points)

Racial Weapons: *Scythes*

Racial Habitat: Plains

Racial Senses: Spot

Mantises are an oddity of Chao-Xian, a race covered in natural green armor. These chitinous outer plates are their skeleton, and include a large sickle claw on the end of each hand. Mantises in Chao-Xian are warm-blooded, and have lungs and a secondary internal skeleton. Their scythe-like arm blades are fearsome, and their faces bug-eyed and ugly. To instill further awe, some Mantises carve and paint their armor with symbols of mysterious clans and warrior societies.

Mantises have a reputation for being distant and humorless, or crude and violent. They are a product of the harsh climate and consider themselves a race apart from all others, with a need to show solidarity among themselves. For this reason their employers sometimes find themselves betrayed when a Mantis puts racial loyalty above other concerns. Despite the basic respect Mantises share, they still fight among themselves while drinking, courting, or playing. For some reason, Mantises despise Swallows as irritating weaklings.

Mantis Characters are natural warriors with Careers such as Bodyguard, Bounty-Hunter, and Mercenary, and a few are even *Hwarang Knights*. A Mantis may have the Gifts of Ambidexterity, Extra Hit Point, Robustness, and Strength, or be Coarse, a Drunkard, a Scofflaw, or Wrathful. Mantises have high Speed Traits and often low Mind.

"Who but me watches the whole world at once? Who but you can I instruct?"

Owls

(Total Cost = 1 point plus Size)

Racial Gifts: Night Vision (1 point); Flight (number of points equal to Size); Beak (1 point); Claws (1 point); Keen Ears (1 point)

Racial Flaws: Frail (-2 points); *Dull Nose* (-1 point)

Racial Skills: Stealth; Tracking; Flight

Racial Weapons: Beak; Claws

Racial Habitat: Forest

Racial Senses: Listen; Spot

An Owl rarely speaks, because most topics of daily life are not worth discussing. When Owls do converse, it is often in questions meant to instruct others as much as to inform themselves. They enjoy leading others to a new idea, even an immoral or disturbing one. To learn for themselves, Owls fly across the country and observe the travelers and townspeople. A suspicious sight might be a secret worth selling, or worth making a puzzle of it for the person who'd like to know.

Owl wings are quiet, which makes them fine nighttime scouts or secret messengers. An Owl belongs in the air, so this work is always worthwhile, but others turn to teaching at the royal academies or become monks who lead others to enlightenment. Because they prefer to be awake at night, they keep shops or guard duty at odd hours.

Owl Characters often have high Mind and Career Traits, and rarely a Body Trait above d8. They prefer Erudite or Wizard Careers. Many are Venerable, and have a Bad Reputation as spies and meddlers, or a Good Reputation as brilliant if frustrating scholars and instructors. They may be Agnostic or especially Curious as well.

New Careers

Hwarang Knight

Requirement: Gift of Nobility

You are a young nobleman trained in the arts of war and courtly behavior. Officially you serve the king, but you're mainly concerned with seeing the country and having a good time. As a Hwarang you learn about the common folk by visiting them and solving their problems. Eventually you will go off to a royal academy and study to become a scholar, or join the oath-banner armies if you enjoy the military life.

Include With: (*Weapon of choice*), *Resolve*, *Poetry*, *Etiquette*

Mutang Shaman

Requirements: *Must be female and have an Extra Trait of Spirit Bond or Evil Spirit Bond*

As a girl you felt the call of the spirits of the dead. Under the care of an older Mutang you channeled the spirit of a dead person whom you can now call upon at will. People trust you to protect them from evil spirits with your magic, but you are also needed as an entertainer. Keeping people happy in spite of danger, hard work, and boredom is an

important and difficult task -- and it can be rewarding.

Include With: Lore: Magic, Dancing, Acting, Theology (Mutang)

Water Watcher

In one of the coastal or aquatic villages of Binghe Bay, you are an influential person in the dual role of protector and mediator. Only someone willing to venture outside and do battle with noise sharks and sharpwings is qualified to lead, even if the royal bureaucrats technically hold power. You know most of the laws relevant to village life, and people come to you to settle their disputes without bothering with the courts.

Include With: Swimming, Breath-Holding, Spear or Brawling, Local Knowledge

Pansu Musician

Requirement: *the Flaw of Blind*

You are a wandering minstrel, but not just any musician; you have traded your sight for music. Where others see the physical world, you are attuned to the subtle cues of sound and touch which make you good at reading people. You command the magic of harmony and dischord, taught by a master who demanded the same sacrifice of sight that he had made, if you were not already blind. When no one needs your magic, you can predict people's future instead.

Include With: Lore: Magic, (Musical Instrument of choice), Fortune-Telling, Sixth Sense

Shadow Rider

The kingdom is corrupt and undisciplined. Slaves escape from their masters, peasants cheat on the taxes that keep Chao-Xian strong, and noblemen breed unrest with their corruption and support of false religions. You have sanction to enforce the law against anyone high or low. With your art of disguise you punish the wicked and report other suspicious conduct you wish you could punish yourself. You may be known as a Shadow Rider or have a cover identity. Beware of being judged yourself.

Include With: *Riding, (Weapon of choice), Stealth, Disguise*

*"Looking up, the cold sky and stars
 Looking down, ten thousand snowy mountains
 The dead are spirits, and the living are spirits too.
 Looking out, the fields and violent earth
 Looking in, the valley where we survive
 The world endures, and so will the marriage of these two."
 --Mutang fireside wedding ceremony*

Mutang Magic

Describing the Spiritual Magic of the Shamans

Mutang are an ancient and respected group in Chao-Xian. Originally they were the ruling class, because their power to command spirits made them masters of religious ceremonies and the saviors of people beset by monsters. Over time others took over their role as military and political leaders, but they remained influential in other ways.

Mutang magic works by calling upon spirits living in the earth -- and these spirits are not always glad to help! A shaman sees herself as an extension of the vast genealogy of Chao-Xian, part of a single great family. The earth itself, on the other hand, is a hostile force to be watched, bargained with, and suppressed for people's protection.

A large part of a Mutang's job is entertainment, not spell-casting. While it is possible to use a spell with only a few words and gestures, without penalty, it is good and proper to make a performance of magic. Even in battle, shamans try to dance while they dodge and make up elaborate chants as they cast spells. Masks and costumes are nice to have as well. The people will have more faith in the power of a spell done with style!

To use Mutang magic, the caster must be emotionally competent, without harmful Emotional status effects (Jadeclaw, p. 339) such as Demoralization and Rage. She must also be able to move; she can't normally pay the extra Magic point to cast a spell without gestures. (Elaborate routines are optional and have no game effect.)

Mutang spells are generally of the Heaven, Mountain, and Earth Natures, and focus on healing and protection.

Spirit Servant

Requirement: Mutang Shaman Career of d4 or better

Admonishment (Jadeclaw, p. 210)

Adornment (Jadeclaw, p. 210)

Conversation With Earth (Jadeclaw, p. 215)

Dào Shih's Proper Aura of Earth (Jadeclaw, p. 220)

Decrease (Jadeclaw, p. 221)

Detect Earth (Jadeclaw, p. 223)

Generative Restoration (Jadeclaw, p. 229)

Inspect Changes Magic (Jadeclaw, p. 232)

Peace (Jadeclaw, p. 236)

Aspect

[Mountain]

Cost: 3

Difficulty: 3d8

Type: Regular

Effect: Make an Aura spell affect terrain

Immediately after casting this spell, the next Aura spell that you cast in this Scene (that is, in the next five minutes) affects a circular Landscape (Jadeclaw, p. 196) around you instead. A Landscape can be leagues wide. The Aura you create typically lasts for one Scene (if Fragile or Auspicious), one hour (Proper), or one day (Imposing or Enduring). See "Geomancy" for the effects of Auras on terrain.

Call Spirit

[Heaven]

Cost: 2

Difficulty: 2d6

Type: Regular

Effect: Call on a local spirit for advice

You summon a spirit who rises from the ground, offering advice on the terrain. In this Scene you may question the spirit as a Gossip Test using your Mutang Dice only, typically versus 2d6 to learn vague information such as whether people or monsters usually live here. The spirit knows nothing specific about recent events, the exact location of a treasure, or individual people. You also gain d6 Local Knowledge for this region, but find you've forgotten it all after this Scene. Mutang sometimes need assistants for this reason.

Earthlight

[Earth]

Cost: 2

Difficulty: 2d6

Type: Regular

Effect: Summon light from the ground

With an upward motion of your arms, you draw energy from the earth. Tiny green lights like fireflies drift continuously upward to waist-level before fading, creating the equivalent of moonlight in this Landscape for the rest of this Scene.

The Master's Path

[Earth]

Cost: 2

Difficulty: 2d6

Type: Regular

Effect: Sense where an object's owner went

All things are tied to the earth. By touching an object, you get an effect similar to a Synecdoche (see *Jadeclaw*) if that object has been in someone's possession within the last month. For the next hour you sense the general direction in which any such person has traveled over land (not on water or through air) in the last month, well enough to track them to within a few Leagues. You can also identify who that person is, if you see them firsthand during this spell. The spell could for instance be used to know that a dropped knife belongs to someone who ran a short distance east before flying or otherwise vanishing from your ken. The spell is useless for objects with frequent changes of owner, such as coins.

Dutiful Earth

[Earth]

Cost: 3

Difficulty: 3d6

Type: Regular

Effect: Target gains Gift of Sure-Footed

The earth subtly reshapes under the target's feet as they walk, providing balance and traction exactly where needed. For the rest of this Scene the target gains the Gift of Sure-Footed (*Jadeclaw*, p. 49).

Spirit Wielder

Requirement: Adept of any six spells of "Spirit Servant"

Counter Wind (*Jadeclaw*, p. 217)

Create Earth (*Jadeclaw*, p. 217)

Creativity (*Jadeclaw*, p. 217)

Dào Shih's Auspicious Aura of Earth (*Jadeclaw*, p. 219)

Dào Shih's Enduring Aura of Earth (*Jadeclaw*, p. 219)

Fah Shih's Auspicious Aura of Mountain (*Jadeclaw*, p. 225)

Fah Shih's Enduring Aura of Mountain (*Jadeclaw*, p. 226)

Fah Shih's Fragile Aura of Protection (*Jadeclaw*, p. 226)

Fah Shih's Imposing Aura of Protection (*Jadeclaw*, p. 226)

Fulfillment (*Jadeclaw*, p. 229)

Know Earth (*Jadeclaw*, p. 233)

Vital Restoration (*Jadeclaw*, p. 248)

Pass Without Trace (*Jadeclaw*, p. 236)

Steadfastness (*Jadeclaw*, p. 243)

Insignificance of Wind

[Earth, Mountain, Unreal]

Cost: 3

Difficulty: 3d10

Type: Defense

Effect: Repel aerial assaults

The earth is solid and supportive, while air is insubstantial. You create a dome of translucent stone up to 20 paces wide around yourself, which lasts exactly one Round and can be sustained if you re-cast the spell within that time. The dome is insubstantial to anything except airborne objects like birds (including flying people) and arrows. Spells themselves can pass through, but not magically-created fire, lightning or other tangible effects. The dome has two Hits for purposes of being destroyed (it vanishes entirely, absorbing all damage from the attack that destroyed it), but regenerates if the spell is cast again.

Patience of Magic

[Mountain]

Cost: 3

Difficulty: 3d8

Type: Defense

Effect: Make an incoming spell affect caster later

The time is not yet right for suffering. The next spell that hits you this Round has no effect at first, but will affect you exactly one Round later. There is a bright flash around you, making it obvious that something unusual happened to the incoming spell. Spells that affect others in a Group or Cluster still affect them, and this spell does not help against indirect magical effects like a fireball that destroys the ceiling above you. This spell can be used even on helpful spells.

Ancestors' Cheer

[Heaven, Mountain]

Cost: 2

Difficulty: 2d8

Type: Regular

Effect: Silent ghosts encourage target

You call forth spirits of a person's ancestors, who hover wordlessly nearby and make gestures of approval and encouragement. The target gains d8 on their next use of any of their Race or Career skills. But any Botch they roll will leave the target with nightmares that night, giving them a Penalty on any of those skills the next day.

Devil Post Awakens

[Unreal, Thunder]

Cost: 1

Difficulty: 1d12

Type: Regular

Effect: Terrify a Group using a devil post

The exact nature of the old devil posts throughout Chao-Xian is unknown. When in sight of one, you can call upon it to unleash a terrifying roar, showers of sparks, looming shadow tendrils and so on while you pretend to command it to "consume their souls!" All targets in a Group must roll their Will, Sixth Sense, and Psychology Dice versus the spell's Effect Dice and your Acting Dice or suffer *Terror*. And there's a chance, on a Botch, that the spell will work too well...

Unbroken Spirit

[Heaven, Mountain]

Cost: 3

Difficulty: 3d8

Type: Regular

Effect: Temporarily repair a broken item

You call forth spirits that wrap around a broken object that's small enough for you to carry. The item develops a ghostly outline of what it once looked like when whole, and acts as it did before. A broken sword cuts, a broken wheel supports weight. After an hour, the apparition fades and the item returns to its broken state.

Spirit Master

Requirement: Adept of any eight spells of "Spirit Wielder"

Dào Shih's Privilege Over Earth (Jadeclaw, p. 220)

Pass Without Trace (Jadeclaw, p. 236)

Spiritual Restoration (Jadeclaw, p. 242)

Travel (Jadeclaw, p. 245)

Eater of Magic

[Mountain]

Cost: 5

Difficulty: 5d8

Type: Defense

Effect: Absorb an incoming spell

The spell sent against you would be more appropriate elsewhere, and you know how to redirect it. The next spell that hits you this Round does not affect you. Instead, it becomes a *Delayed Spell* on yourself, and you may release it later as a Magic Defense (instead of a Maneuver) against someone else. If not used in this Scene, the *Delayed Spell* is canceled. Spells that affect others in a Group or Cluster still affect them, and this spell does not help against indirect magical effects like a fireball that destroys the floor below you.

Used cleverly, this defensive spell can have other effects.

Another Clan's Adoption

[Mountain]

Cost: 6

Difficulty: 6d10

Type: Regular

Effect: Target becomes another Race

The Races of Chao-Xian descend from a common ancestor, and by reaching back to the ancient era a person can find their relation to another kind of being. For the duration of this Scene, the target (which can be the caster) physically becomes another Race of the caster's choice, replacing all racial skills and senses with the new ones. This spell takes three full Rounds to cast without interruption. The target may choose to resist with their Body, Will, and Race Dice versus 6d10. The experience is disorienting (-1 Penalty to all Tests for a few minutes) to those unfamiliar with it. Physical details including sex and coloration are at the GM's discretion.

Irrelevance of Wind

[Earth, Mountain, Unreal]

Cost: 4

Difficulty: 4d10

Type: Regular

Effect: Reflect aerial assaults

You dance and mock everything stupid enough to abandon solid ground. A dome of glowing, translucent stone up to 30 paces wide appears around you for exactly one Round. Anything connected to the ground, like a sword in someone's hand, can pass through, but flying objects and flying people bounce off! Missiles such as arrows and spells are hurled back at their source with equal strength. The dome has two Hits for purposes of being destroyed (it vanishes entirely, absorbing the last attack), but regenerates if the spell is cast again.

Patient Grave

[Heaven, Mountain]

Cost: 4

Difficulty: 4d6

Type: Delayed

Effect: Target re-rolls next Death Test

Eventually the earth claims everyone, but it can wait. The target may re-roll their next Death Test, at which time the spell ends and the Delayed Magic points are released. A target may only have one *Patient Grave* spell at any one time -- a newer casting automatically dispels an older one.

"Light is an illusion. Sound shows us the world as it really is: tangible and complex, everything part of a single song. We find discord and replace it with harmony; find a simple tune and elaborate on it." -- Pansu mantra

Pansu Magic

Describing the Harmonic Skills of the Singers

The first known Pansu was an old, blind dolphin who encountered a group of soldiers during the war between Shilla and Kaya, and was brought before the queen of Shilla as a suspicious character. The Pansu explained that he was only a fortune-teller. The queen, believing that only Mutang had the power to communicate with spirits, called the Pansu a fraud, hurled a dead *gui wu* lizard at his feet, and demanded that the blind man tell her how many *gui wu* there were. "Five," said the Pansu. The queen saw him as a fraud and ordered him executed, but the man somehow escaped. Later the *gui wu* was cut open and four eggs found inside.

Pansu Magic became the province of a dozen or so masters who wandered between villages in the Shell Province, telling fortunes, but when the Shilla and Kaya kingdoms invaded they revealed their full power, and sought more students to help develop it. Because Pansu tend to be wanderers and show a strange disdain for comfort and education, they have no formal organization, only a set of personal ties between practitioners. Sometimes Pansu are called the "Impractical School" after the Sirhak Practical School. Pansu are harassed but officially tolerated as fortune-tellers, and a few have found work with the warring bureaucratic factions and various government and private agencies.

Pansu Magic is only taught to the blind. Apparently the absence of sight helps one to appreciate sound's true importance, and even to "see" with one's ears. To use Pansu Magic, a person must be intellectually competent -- harmful Mental status effects (Jadeclaw, p. 339) such as Confused, Drunk, Incompetent, and Transfixed ruin the harmony of thought necessary to cast the spells. Because Pansu magic works with sound, by voice or on an instrument, it can only be used by making sound with at least a Normal volume. Paying the extra Magic point for quiet casting is not an option, though there are workarounds.

Most Pansu Magic is of the Wind, Thunder, Truth, Water, and Unreal Natures. It is generally used offensively and to gather information. Pansu are especially effective at fighting Unholy creatures and Vermin.

Worker of Echoes

Requirement: Pansu Career of d4 or better

Abysmal (Jadeclaw, p. 210)

Dào Shih's Proper Aura of Water (Jadeclaw, p. 221)

Fah Shih's Proper Aura of Lake (Jadeclaw, p. 228)

Fah Shih's Proper Aura of Thunder (Jadeclaw, p. 228)

Fah Shih's Proper Aura of Wind (Jadeclaw, p. 228)

Silencing (Jadeclaw, p. 242)

Turmoil (Jadeclaw, p. 246)

Kyu-Sol's Fragile Aura of Truth

[Truth]

Cost: 2

Difficulty: 2d6

Type: Regular

Effect: Caster gains an Aura of Truth (Jadeclaw, p. 252)

See "Auras" (Jadeclaw, p. 189) for how Auras work.

Kyu-Sol's Fragile Aura of Unreal

[Truth]

Cost: 2

Difficulty: 2d6

Type: Regular

Effect: Caster gains an Aura of Unreal (Jadeclaw, p. 252)

See "Auras" (Jadeclaw, p. 189) for how Auras work.

Mysterious Cry

[Thunder, Wind]

Cost: 3

Difficulty: 3d8

Type: Regular

Effect: Shout over long distances

You call out a short phrase, or a brief tune, that booms across the landscape. Everyone within 72 paces will definitely hear it, short of actual deafness. You may also extend the effect if you wish: either it carries softly everywhere within three Li, or to only one person known to you within that range.

Your Own True Song

[Wind, Unreal]

Cost: 4

Difficulty: 4d6

Type: Regular

Effect: Target is followed by music & gains Bagua Personality

You improvise a few bars of music in someone's honor, and the song continues after you stop, following the target for the rest of the Scene. The song makes pleasant traveling music. More importantly, the music is so inspiring that target gains a d6 Bagua

Personality Trait appropriate to their personality. The caster may choose any one, but the Game Host may veto an inappropriate choice such as "Stillness" for a bubbly and energetic character. A target may gain a Bagua Personality Trait different from one they already have. Unfortunately, stealth is nearly impossible under this effect!

Shattering Note

[Thunder, Wind]

Cost: 3

Difficulty: 3d6

Type: Exploding

Effect: Shatter objects for 3d6 Exploding attacks

With a piercing screech, you shatter fragile objects within 10 paces of you. Glass, delicate pottery, and anything else that would not survive being dropped breaks, sending shards flying. Anyone within 5 paces of a breaking object suffers a 3d6 Exploding Attack.

Cancel Noise

[Wind]

Cost: 4

Difficulty: 4d8

Type: Regular

Effect: Silence everyone within 15 paces

You make a sound that cuts off suddenly, and everything within 15 paces of you is silenced. No words or footsteps are heard, and spells cannot be cast without the penalty for silent casting. Other Pansu spells can't be cast at all! The effect lasts for the remainder of this Scene. Anyone within range of this spell may step outside it to make noise again, but sound won't penetrate the spell's area. The spell effect stays centered on you or on the spot where it was cast, decided by you when you cast.

Hearing the World

[Wind, Lake]

Cost: 3

Difficulty: 1d6

Type: Regular

Effect: Target gains Echolocation & 1d6 for Spot rolls

Light is an insubstantial thing, but sound is physical and can be more revealing. A target gains the Gift of Echolocation and gains 1d6 on all Spot rolls (even if the target already has Echolocation), for the next eight hours. This sense can be disconcerting to those not born with it!

Lending an Ear

[Wind]

Cost: 3

Difficulty: 3d6

Type: Persistent

Effect: Transfer your hearing to an object you leave behind

You tap at your ears and a small object such as a pebble or coin. You now hear anything near the object, which you may leave behind or carry, but not through your own ears! The object you use serves as a Synecdoche (*Jadeclaw*, p. 192) to you as long as the spell is active, and then for half as long as it lasted. Also, if someone deliberately shouts at the object, you are sent Reeling by the noise and may choose to instantly end the spell. The spell can be dismissed at any time, and wears off within a day if not cancelled. You may not use the Gift of Echolocation while using this spell, even through the object. (Yes, this spell applies to Dolphins despite their lack of external ears.)

Weaver of Sound

Requirement: Adept of any six spells of "Worker of Echoes"

Blindness of Inexperience (*Jadeclaw*, p. 212)

Dào Shih's Enduring Aura of Water (*Jadeclaw*, p. 219)

Fah Shih's Enduring Aura of Lake (*Jadeclaw*, p. 225)

Fah Shih's Enduring Aura of Thunder (*Jadeclaw*, p. 226)

Fah Shih's Enduring Aura of Wind (*Jadeclaw*, p. 226)

Fah Shih's Imposing Aura of Weakness (*Jadeclaw*, p. 227)

Fah Shih's Proper Aura of Progress (*Jadeclaw*, p. 228)

Inspect Purity Magic (*Jadeclaw*, p. 232)

Inspect Water (*Jadeclaw*, p. 232)

Misfortune of Water (*Jadeclaw*, p. 235)

Void (*Jadeclaw*, p. 248)

Waking of Winds

[Wind]

Cost: 3

Difficulty: 3d8

Type: Regular

Effect: Change the wind's direction

You call forth a song that shifts the wind in a one-League area, changing its direction for this Scene. You choose the direction when casting, including up and down, but can't change its intensity or stir a breeze in still air. This spell has saved fishermen's lives, helped win naval battles, and been used in an extremely ill-thought-out attempt to fly with a gunpowder-packed chair.

Conversation With Water

[Water]

Cost: 5

Difficulty: 5d6

Type: Regular

Effect: Gossip with the water

You can ask a body of water for information about what it may have seen or experienced. You may ask your questions verbally or silently, and the water answers in a burbling disembodied voice that others can hear.

This is basically a Gossip Test (Jadeclaw, p. 107), using your Mind Trait and Pansu Trait, which requires one Scene. The difficulty is proportional to both the purity of the water and the time in the past you are asking your questions about.

Circumstance

Difficulty

You're talking to a sacred pool. None

You're talking to a pure mountain stream. 2d4

You're talking to a pond of rice seedlings or an irrigated field. 2d6

You're talking to major lake, sea or river such as Binghe Bay. 2d8

You're talking to dirty, polluted water. 2d10

You're talking to a rain-puddle or water in a jar. 2d12

You're asking about events that happened in the last five minutes. Default

You're asking about something that happened up to a year ago. Increase Difficulty Dice by one size

You're asking about something that happened up to a hundred years ago. Increase Difficulty Dice by two sizes

You're asking about something that happened over a century ago. Increase Difficulty Dice by three sizes

If circumstances would increase the Difficulty Dice beyond 2d12, your questions cannot be answered.

Remember that the water you're gossiping with must have been present at the event you're asking about. For example, chatting with a stream about a village fifty years ago won't work if the stream had been redirected there twenty years ago from another course. The Game Host should see this as a role-playing opportunity.

Kyu-Sol's Proper Aura of Truth

[Truth]

Cost: 3

Difficulty: 3d6

Type: Regular

Effect: Caster gains an Aura of Truth (Jadeclaw, p. 252)

See "Auras" (Jadeclaw, p. 189), for how Auras work.

Kyu-Sol's Proper Aura of Unreal

[Unreal]

Cost: 3

Difficulty: 3d6

Type: Regular

Effect: Caster gains an Aura of Unreal (Jadeclaw, p. 252)

See "Auras" (Jadeclaw, p. 189), for how Auras work.

Sonic Strike

[Wind, Thunder]

Cost: 2

Difficulty: 2d10

Type: Targeting

Effect: Strike with sound for 2d10 armor-piercing damage

You make a penetrating noise that disrupts someone's internal organs. The target faces a 2d10 Damage Dice attack that ignores worn (but not natural) armor.

Dark Waves Stilled

[Heaven]

Cost: 4

Difficulty: 4d8

Type: Homing

Effect: Slay Unholy creatures in a Group

Unholy forces disrupt the innate harmony of the world, but can be destroyed by restoring that harmony. With a sound, all Unholy people, creatures or Vermin in a Group are struck for 4d8 Slaying Damage. Any target that takes at least 1 Wound is also sent Reeling.

Battle Hymn

[Thunder, Wind]

Cost: 4

Difficulty: 4d6

Type: Regular

Effect: Group gains d6 Resolve Dice

This song drives your allies to fight to their utmost, giving them d6 Resolve Dice for the duration of the Scene. The stirring anthem continues on unseen instruments.

Chorus of Still Air

[Wind]

Cost: 4

Difficulty: 4d8

Type: Regular

Effect: Trap air in a bubble

A repetitive strain of notes bounces around you, creating a bubble of trapped air that follows you. The bubble is up to five paces across. This can be used underwater to create a mobile breathing space; the air grows unbreathable after two person-hours' use, but can be re-cast without breaking the bubble. Above water, the benefit is that the still air resists wind, grows warm from body heat and can make even deadly-cold nights tolerable. In this use the bubble can be allowed to leak enough that it does not grow stale even from fire. Since air is kept out, too, the spell protects against wind-based attacks and harmful gases, but not against arrows or other solid matter.

Solid Note

[Wind, Unreal]

Cost: 3

Difficulty: 3d6

Type: Regular

Effect: Create a floating platform or wall

Waves of sound congeal to create a shimmering horizontal platform up to two paces across, hovering in midair in an unoccupied spot anywhere within reach. The platform has a spongy texture and will support most people's weight. Fast-moving objects and spells tend to pass through. The platform exists for the rest of this Scene. Alternatively, it can create a vertical wall of solid sound, about door-sized, but people can push slowly past as though moving through water.

Striker of Chords

Requirement: Adept of any six spells of "Weaver of Sound"

Admonishment (Jadeclaw, p. 210)

Controlling the Rivers (Jadeclaw, p. 215)

Dào Shih's Auspicious Aura of Water (Jadeclaw, p. 219)

Deliverance (Jadeclaw, p. 222)

Fah Shih's Auspicious Aura of Lake (Jadeclaw, p. 225)

Fah Shih's Auspicious Aura of Thunder (Jadeclaw, p. 225)

Fah Shih's Auspicious Aura of Wind (Jadeclaw, p. 225)

Fah Shih's Imposing Aura of Weakness (Jadeclaw, p. 227)

Shén Qing's Auspicious Aura of Heaven (Jadeclaw, p. 241)

Shén Qing's Enduring Aura of Truth (Jadeclaw, p. 241)

Strength of the Waterfall (Jadeclaw, p. 243)

Triumphant Conversation (Jadeclaw, p. 245)

Kyu-Sol's Imposing Aura of Truth

[Truth]

Cost: 4

Difficulty: 4d6

Type: Regular

Effect: Target gains an Aura of Truth (Jadeclaw, p. 252)

See "Auras" (Jadeclaw, p. 189), for how Auras work.

Kyu-Sol's Enduring Aura of Unreal

[Unreal]

Cost: 5

Difficulty: 5d6

Type: Regular

Effect: Caster gains an Aura of Unreal (Jadeclaw, p. 252)

See "Auras" (Jadeclaw, p. 189), for how Auras work.

Dark Waves Breaking

[Heaven]

Cost: 6

Difficulty: 6d10

Type: Regular

Effect: Destroy Unholy creatures

Unholy forces are not part of the natural order, and should not exist at all. With a sound, all Unholy creatures or Vermin in a Group are struck with the spell's Effect Dice -- and any victim suffering even one Wound vanishes instantly! People with an Unholy Aura are instead struck for 6d10 Slaying Damage and are sent Reeling if they take even one Wound.

Echo Shift

[Thunder, Unreal]

Cost: 3

Difficulty: 3d10

Type: Defense

Effect: Shuffle combat actions in time

Your bizarre song plays tricks with time itself. You cast this spell at the start of a combat Round as a Defense, and for this Round, all First-Rank Maneuvers become Third-Rank, and all Third-Rank Maneuvers become First-Rank. Actions taking place in more than one Rank are unaffected. Enemies will not have time to change their plans to compensate; hopefully you will have notified your allies.

Hearing the Intent

[Wind, Thunder, Truth]

Cost: 3

Difficulty: 3d10

Type: Defense

Effect: Predict a target's actions

You listen to a person's heartbeat and muscles at a distance, allowing you to predict where they're about to move. For this Round, you know that person's intended Maneuver before you choose yours (and can warn your allies). If the target is casting a spell, you don't know which one, but can distinguish the general school such as Daoist, Mutang or foreign. If the target suspects you're reading them, they may roll their Psychology and Acting Dice against the spell's Effect Dice to give you a false reading of their choice. Legend tells of two warriors who spent hours using this trick against each other without actually attacking.

MONEY

Advising the Traveler On Local Currency

Chao-Xian has not yet achieved a fully money-based economy. The original medium of trade was rice, stored in bushel-sized baskets and collected *en masse* by the nobility. In time a barter system evolved using ginseng and especially bolts of cloth. In the Shilla period, copper coins were issued with a value of about 3 bù-qián. Occasional bouts of coin hoarding and loans at outrageous interest make the value of these coins vary. Coins are widely available throughout Chao-Xian, but except for merchants people's wealth is mostly tied up in land, grain, and cloth. In some areas multiple varieties of coin are available, leading to haggling over the coins' true value, legality, and metal content even apart from what the traveler is actually trying to buy.

In Mon Province, especially near the Zhongguo border, merchants will exchange each nation's coins for about two-thirds their value. Elsewhere the foreign money is worthless except as a curiosity.

Names

Providing Proper Sounds To Instruct the People

Names in Chao-Xian give a family name followed by a personal name and sometimes an epithet like "Mighty" or "Half-Moon." Close to the capital, family ancestry is especially valued and one must use a family name to be shown any respect. Among wanderers and peasants, these names are rarely used. Kim, Lee, and Park are such common family names that people attach a place or adjective to each branch, e.g. "Andong Kim." Some other families are named I, Cho, Chang, Yun, Kan, Sin, and Song. Wives join their husbands' families and are barely mentioned in official genealogies.

Female names:

Ae-sook, Ahn-na, Amita, Bok-soon, Byung-soon, Chae-ok, Chan-sook, Choe, Chun-ja, Dae, Daly, Eun-bi, Eun-joo, Ha-neul, Hae-kyung, Hana, Hyo-eun, In-young, Jae-min, Jeewon, Jin-ah, Kahi, Kora-lee, Kyelim, Kyung-soon, Ma-leu-da, Maitreya, Meju, Mi-cha, Mi-na, Min, Nayen, Nu-ri, Ok-Rim, Ok-Sun, Sang-Jin, Seon-Hwa, Shin, Soo-ja, Sun, Tae-seon, Takira, Uni, Uri, Woo, Yeon, Yi-Sun, Zung-bok

Male names:

Andong, An-Kor, Ch'ae-pil, Ch'i-ho, Ch'oe, Chong-yang, Che-u, Chin-u, Chun-gun, Dae-jung, Ha-nuel, Hae-jo, Hag-u, Hang-no, Hong-jip, Hui-yon, In-hwan, In-sok, In-tak, In-yong, Jung-gun, Kang-nyon, Kap, Ki-whan, Kil-chun, Ka-jin, Ki-t'ak, Kojong, Kung-ho, Kwang-bom, Kyong-su, Kyu-sol, Lee, Mundok, Myong-un, Nam-son, Songgye, Chinul, Hyesim, Pom-do, Pom-jin, Pong-jun, Rin, Sang-ch'ol, Sang-jae, Se-ch'ang, Shih-k'ai, Shin-wa, Sun-sin, Sung-hun, Sung-man, Tok-su, Tol-sok, Tong-hwi, Un-hyong, Wi, Wen-mu, Young, Yong-hyo, Yuan, Yun-jung, Yun-sik, Yung-ho

[See back for character sheets: Hwarang, Scholar, Shadow Rider, Pansu, Mutang]

"The arrangement of armies on the battlefield mirrors the arrangement of officials in the government or people in a family. In each there is a balance of powers, support of the weak by the strong, obedience from the low to the high, and unity in a single purpose."

-Commander "Hailstorm" Cho Rin

Geomancy

Describing the Proper Alignment of Forces

People in Chao-Xian practice geomancy, the belief that geography itself has supernatural effects on living things. The physical and spiritual worlds are linked in both directions, and as people modify the physical realm they can unwittingly change less tangible things.

Some aspects of geomancy seem like common sense to outsiders. Building on the upwind side of a hill exposes a town to harsher weather, clearing quiet and scenic places for meditation makes it easier to focus the mind and spirit, and so on. Mutang have carried geomancy much farther, by applying the concept of Auras to the land. Some regions have an inherent Aura, for example "Progress" with a strength of d6. This Aura affects all living and nonliving things in the area as though it were an Inherent Aura, as long as they stay. It is always "on" unless an Aura spell wins a contest of Dice against it, and even then is only suppressed until the new Aura vanishes.

Example: If Green Blade Che-u casts "Attendant Fireball" in a region with a d6 Aura of Fire, the spell's Effect Dice (and Damage Dice) would rise from 2d10 to 2d10 & d6. Kim Kyu-sik tries to defend by casting "Dào Shih's Auspicious Aura of Water," using his Pansu Career Dice of d8 as the new Aura's strength. But the Water Aura rolls 4 versus 5 for the Fire Aura on him, and the Fire Aura remains. Kim gets burned. Note that Kim's Aura of Fire does not directly affect his vulnerability to the Attendant Fireball.

Auras and subtler spiritual effects drift across the landscape like weather, only partially predictable even by experienced Mutang. Shamans, Sirhak scholars, and others have attempted to modify local Auras by building earthworks, metal sculptures, and other seemingly decorative things, with some success. Mutang even have a magical technique for doing so. The land's "devil posts" seem to have some function in controlling these drifts.

Geomantic Auras only extend 33 paces from the ground. Their strength is usually d6 but varies.

Beasts of Chao-Xian

Warning of the Northern Kingdom's Wildlife

Most of the small animals of Zhongguo are reptiles, cold and scaly creatures unlike the furred and feathered intelligent races. For the same reason Tortoises and Snakes find Chao-Xian especially hostile, many of the country's beasts are at least partly warm-blooded to survive the weather. This difference makes them active and quick, and gives them a large appetite.

One of the original purposes of the Hwarang Knights was to hunt such creatures or drive them away from inhabited areas. While the rising population has filled many valleys that once were empty, "monsters" are still common in the wilderness. Their population seems larger than Sirhak scholars claim is plausible given apparent food supplies.

[See back for character sheets: Dawncrabs, Noise Shark, Pegmusk, Uldong, Sharpwing, Nian]

Travel

Describing the Dangers of the Hostile Earth

For all the effort its people have made to tame the wilderness, Chao-Xian is still an *interesting* place for travelers. The most obvious problem is the cold. Temperatures are comfortable in summer, harsh for much of the spring and fall, and freezing in winter. Winds are strong, especially during the frequent storms. When traveling in Chao-Xian, PCs should roll their Body Dice hourly versus d6 during cold weather, or versus d8 or even d10 for freezing weather and storms, taking any damage as Fatigue. (This adds to the usual Fatigue of travel.) Thick, dry fur or the Flaw of Corpulent offers d6 protection, and warm clothing and non-metal armor give up to d10. This rule forces wanderers to camp frequently or take shelter, especially at night when the weather is even colder. Soldiers are equipped as much for defense against cold as against weapons.

At night, there are other reasons not to be outdoors. Strange lights can be seen in the distance, and in northern Kayagum the sky itself shimmers with an aurora which is some sort of spirit. Some monsters specialize in night hunting. Their howls and the lights may be worth a Fear Test at a bad time.

Snow and ice are dangerous as well. Unseen roots trip people, and thin ice conceals ravines. Foraging Tests generally are on "Hospitable" or "Challenging" terrain in Chao-Xian, but can increase to "Wasteland" difficulty when frozen over. Footing is often treacherous, imposing a Penalty for fighting, climbing, etc. Burrowing in snow is good for soft cover (a d8 Cover Die) and can hide a person for Ambush or Hide Tests. It's easy to move quietly or track someone's footprints through snow as well. Snowballs and icicles are at hand in such weather, mainly useful as distractions. Avalanches send 4d10 Homing attacks against climbers or entire towns. Folk skilled in wilderness survival know how to make emergency shelters from snow, spot dangerous footing, and build fires protected against wind.

Binghe Bay is dangerous because of its storms and high winds. The water is reasonably warm, but extensive swimming is fatiguing. Treat the terrain as Plains (6 leagues/day at a leisurely pace, Forced March difficulty 2d10) and roll each PC's Body Dice hourly versus d6 for Fatigue. Each level of the Flaw of Corpulent effectively raises Body Dice by one size as insulation. The water of Binghe Bay is usually murky with well-stirred silt and tiny sea creatures, hence the Dolphin race's blindness and Echolocation. The dark water is worth two Penalties for those without Night Vision and one for those who have it. Echolocation is unaffected. The Shoufen Sea, on the north coast of Chao-Xian, is clear and cold -- roll Body Dice versus d10, *every five minutes* in winter. Those bold enough to search underwater may find caves and shipwrecks, perhaps with their own dangers.

Finally, the landscape itself is said to be malevolent. The poor roads, bad weather, and endless hills and mountains make it easy to get lost, but there may be spiritual forces at work as well. At the Game Host's option, the saying that often-mapped places tend to shift around may be true, and distances and directions may put a devil post, cave, or even a village where no one remembers there being one. PCs with the Flaw of Agnostic will explain everything away in mundane terms. An entire adventure can begin,

though, when people lose their way or find a place from which every living soul has vanished...

In short, all sorts of unusual situations can crop up in Chao-Xian to make even an ordinary day's travel dangerous. PCs should be encouraged to think of the challenges of fieldcraft and the tactical possibilities of fighting in a snowy, Aura-touched, haunted landscape.

Five-Man Mountain

Seeking the Source of An Ill Rain

Attention! The text that follows explains in detail an adventure involving mystery, deceit, and even violence. This section is for the purview of the Game Host *only*. Those players planning to experience the adventure must avert their eyes and must not read this section, lest they spoil their own enjoyment.

What Has Gone On Before

Chonju is a village in the northern province of Kayagum. It stands on the southern side of Five-Man Mountain, protected from the northern wind and favored by good soil and a dirt road which traders take between northern Kayagum and the southern lands. The locals, who are almost all Pandas, normally trade the ginseng they grow for rice or extra bamboo.

This year, the valuable ginseng roots aren't growing. The soil is becoming grey and muddy, and a constant cold drizzle falls. Munjong, the Mutang shaman, believed that supernatural forces are at work, but could not explain more than that there is a growing Aura of Water in the town. She had been sickly even before the trouble began, and has died from spending too much time outside practicing her craft and trying to save the town.

Meanwhile, village headman Big Beer Pijiu has found a belt made of woven copper wire, set with a diamond, while cutting wood on Five-Man Mountain. He showed it to his adopted daughter Ren, who felt uneasy about keeping it in the village and made him hide it near a devil-post on the mountain. He hopes to retrieve it for sale to wealthy travelers, then surprise the village with the money and share it with them.

How Our Heroes Came to Meet

As the story begins, the PCs arrive at Chonju Village under a pelting cold rain. The town features a traditional inn, run by a woman who spends most of her time caring for her three young children. Here are some suggested "hooks" for PCs visiting Chonju:

--Erudite, Governor, and Wizard PCs are probably just passing through between Kayagum and Mon Provinces. They may be on their way to the famous White Cloud Grotto School in Kayagum, where royal examinations are held in the north, or to the

Burning Earth Facility which lies southeast.

--Merchant PCs may arrive to buy the early ginseng crop, sell food, and relax on the road to more important markets.

--Religious PCs may be on a pilgrimage to the small monastery which lies several days' journey west from Chonju, in the Diamond Mountains, or want to investigate the local devil post or reports of unusual spiritual "weather."

--Warrior PCs may be part of a small Hwarang Knight unit looking for action or recently dismissed from Hwarang or oath-banner army service.

--Miscreant PCs may be seeking a quiet place to lie low, or a village with enough wealth to rob but not enough to be well-guarded.

--PCs from Zhongguo, created for *Jadeclaw*, can fit any of these categories. They can also be explorers gathering information for Zhongguo's government or other organizations, or wizards seeking the obscure magic of Chao-Xian.

The Beginning of the Adventure

The rain is cold and miserable under foggy skies. The Player-Characters will be eager to find the Fortunate Blue Inn, the only two-story building along the muddy trail. Inside, a Panda woman named Songsu fusses over three small, bored children (Ari, Cai and Eda), but will turn from them to offer the PCs some cushions, towels and a hot drink while they sit on the heated floor.

Talking to Innkeeper Songsu

She is a devoted mother and businesswoman who throws herself into her work. While looking for any opportunity to turn a profit by selling them local knick-knacks (wooden carvings) and food, she will also happily gossip with the PCs about their own recent adventures. For new characters, this is a good opportunity for introductions and making up appropriate backgrounds. Here are some sample responses to questions the PCs might ask:

--Who are you?

Songsu, keeper of the Fortunate Blue Inn. I care for my children and for travelers like you, and try to keep a corner of our town well-fed and well-informed about the rest of the kingdom. Now who are you? You must have stories to tell over a drink.

--What sort of people come here? Has there been anyone suspicious recently?

Traders, pilgrims, and soldiers mostly. Many people pass through, and this house is always lively -- until lately, with this awful weather. (*In a conspiratorial whisper*) I think the man who came through a month ago was a Shadow Rider. He had a sword hidden under his cloak, and he asked everyone about some Owl with a broken wing. (This is a red herring.) We've nothing to do with fugitives and unlawful acts here, and I told him so. It's a peaceful place, where the land doesn't shift around like it does out north.

--What news is there?

Day in and day out it rains. I'm afraid my children will catch cold from playing outside. Our Mutang worked herself to death trying to calm the earth, and now we have no shaman and the rain still falls. It's terrible. Our ginseng crop will be ruined at this rate, and I hadn't seen a traveler in a week before you.

--I'm a Mutang or other magic-user; can I help?

Our Mutang has returned to the earth, bless her. I don't expect you to stay permanently, but by all means please tell us if this terrible weather is something you can cure. Are the spirits angry?

The village is ordinary except for the road and the inn. A few hundred people live clustered in warm huts and spend their days in the fields. If the PCs accept Songsu's offer for a tour, she will be enthusiastic about the fine fields and huts, and the kind official who runs the village. She will also point out Five-Man Mountain, and the spring which provides water for drinking and irrigation. The water tastes a little bitter but is safe.

Meeting Big Beer Pijiu

Big Beer Pijiu is the village headman. Born in the village, he studied hard for the royal examinations but did fairly poorly and was assigned to take charge of his homeland, collecting taxes for the lord who controls it and its surroundings. He has a house with four large rooms (the largest after the inn) which he shares with his adopted daughter, the Porcupine girl Ren. If the PCs arrive, he offers to sell them the fine belt he found on the mountain. Since he doesn't have it with him, he will willingly take the PCs to the spot where he stashed it -- unless the PCs look more suspicious than the usual armed strangers. He is polite, but directs all requests for food and lodging to the inn.

Twelve-year-old Ren is either in the house or tending a patch of bamboo and vegetables behind it. She is fearful of strangers, but hesitantly approaches one of the PCs (one who needs encouragement to get involved?) and asks him to please buy the belt and take it far away -- she senses something bad about it. If Pijiu is present, he will say that she's always been afraid of ghosts and nightmares, and get a glare from her. He is uneasy about the belt himself, but that gives him all the more reason to get rid of it.

On Five-Man Mountain

On the mountain is a dark, leering devil post. Pijiu left the belt in a thicket beside it, but now it's gone! Animal tracks lead to a foul-smelling nest of uldong on a pile of twenty-foot boulders. There is one uldong per PC (more or less at the Game Host's discretion) but, as hunters would know, attacking in daylight means that most of them will be asleep, and a night attack will find half of them away to hunt. The copper belt is in plain view, but if the PCs aren't careful, it will slip between two tall boulders with too narrow a gap between to squeeze through. Depending on the PCs' knowledge they can plan a strategy for this encounter or just fight their way through, also needing a little

thought to get the belt back.

Also on the mountain is the entrance to a cave. The wind blows through the outer chamber to produce an eerie hum that can be heard at a distance. This chamber appears natural, and in the dim light from outside the PCs can see a passage leading into darkness. Pijiu is afraid to go deeper; if the PCs have convinced Ren to come, Pijiu will wait outside the cave to make sure she returns safely.

Five-Man Cave

The passage leads into a grotto of stalactites and dripping water. There is an unpleasant metallic smell from the water, which is polluted with mercury. Two natural downward passages extend east and west. Little light reaches beyond this room, so the PCs will want a light source.

In the west is a room with a slanted floor and a large stalagmite jutting up. An uldong is there, stalking a small pegmusk which wandered into its den. Leaving quietly might be a good idea, though the PCs might not want the uldong behind them! If rescued, the pegmusk will follow one of the PCs.

The eastern passage, where the stream runs, opens abruptly into a hole in a musty, smooth-walled room. A winding stairway leads up from here, but at its top the ceiling has caved in. There are flecks of paint in the broken stones, from a mural. In the smooth-walled room is a locked trunk, packed with a long woolen battle-scene tapestry. Just north of there it becomes clear that this part of the cave was built as a tomb -- the north chamber has four bodies (all foxes) resting on slabs with rusty spears. Inscriptions on the walls name them as retainers of Lord Yu "of the thirty battles," a hero of the old Kaya Kingdom. Tall iron candlesticks are placed around the bodies in a strange configuration.

The smooth-walled room also has a downward passage which is part of the cave, not the original tomb. The dirty stream makes the floor slippery. Below is a ledge overlooking a murky, smelly pool about twenty paces across. On the other side rest some boxes and a doorway arch. The water is so polluted that any swimmers must roll their Body Dice versus d10 every Round or suffer Fatigue. Swallowing any of the water means rolling 2d12. The pegmusk has enough sense to avoid swimming here. Above the water, the cavern walls are smooth, and the ceiling high above has numerous stalactites. The boxes contain money and jewelry with semiprecious blue lapis, but are locked and trapped.

On the far side the cave splits into three. The paths wind around each other with stalactites and a whistling wind that blows out candles... and at the bottom where two of the paths converge, the sound stops abruptly. Down an increasingly steep and narrow path, not even echoes can be heard...

The third path seems to stop in a wall, but actually a dark column painted with grotesque faces and symbols blocks most of the way -- part of a devil post! A Small character could squeeze past, or a d4 character making a d8 Contortionist roll, or a d6 character rolling vs. 2d8, etc. It would also be possible to dig through the stone around it. Past the column is a room containing a long-dead Mutang's bones with a few Kaya-era coins, trinkets, and a rusty jade-accented knife that may interest collectors.

Nian

The silent passageway becomes a broad shaft leading a few paces down, into a round room with dim blue light emanating from water. Most of the room below is a pungent pool ringed with stone. There is dim blue light here from fungus growing on the ceiling and in the water -- potentially valuable. The water ripples, yet no sound comes from it. On the walls are disturbing, vulgar drawings in the style of the devil-posts, telling a distorted version of the history of Kaya Kingdom and mentioning a place called Hundred-Wheel Grave as "the place where everything splits."

The cave has a narrow passageway to another, similar room, with a second pool. An underwater passage connects this pool to the first; the water is just as foul. There are tattered tapestries on the walls, a mildewed blue carpet, and tables filled with dark bottles and alchemical gear. One wall is hidden by a paper screen. At the edge of the pool, a leering devil post extends from the water through the cavern's ceiling.

And then the lights go out. The cave-fungus, torches, and magical lights all fail for at least a Round, though Echolocation would show something rustling behind the devil post. A guttural voice whispers, "I can hear you." For a Round or two, let the PCs sweat. Then the cave-fungus flares to life again (and other light sources will work), and the creature called Nian steps out from behind the devil post which is too narrow to have hidden it. Should the PCs want to talk, here is what he would say. Remember that his kind has a Dread of loud noises and will threaten anyone who makes them, if not frightened into hiding "behind" the devil post for a Round.

--Who are you?

I am Nian. I keep what's left of this weak world alive, by devouring weakness and nightmares. Often I find that the very lives of wanderers are nightmares. When I'm not busy with visitors, I strive for immortality.

--Are you poisoning the village's water?

Does the lovely smell of my pond offend you? This is a step towards immortality, my friends. Mercury and cinnabar make this water a veritable elixir of long life. With this and a powerful enough watery Aura, I will live here forever, enjoying the swimming, the company of strangers, and their delicious fear. I expect very little of the water will leak into the fields below.

--Are you causing the rain and spoiled crops in the village?

The concerns of earthly races are amusing to me, but I have no wish to destroy people when I may profit by them instead. (*If pressed*) It is possible that the Aura I have created around the mountain is causing some harm, but it is of no concern. The earthly races always adapt to a new situation, and dampness is a fine thing to adapt to.

--What about this belt?

Where did you find that? I had hoped to rid myself of it, as it was causing interference with my work by being too close to certain other artifacts. It belongs to me, but I will let you keep it. Would you like to hear the story of its owner? (He will offer to tell a blood-

curdling and mostly false account of Lord Yu's life and death.)

--You must stop whatever you're doing.

Ah, is the resonance of my Water element bothering those poor villagers? Must I give up that power for their sake? A deal, then: bring me the spiky girl who lives there. She is young and spiritually attuned, yet so vulnerable... No? And you still insist I dispel this mountain's Aura? Then, good sirs, I must ask you to leave. Now.

In a fight, Nian will use his Daoist Magic to try to drive the PCs away from his home. He may fling bottles of noxious chemicals, or hide in the foul water (to which he is immune) only to surface in either pool and attack. He must rise to breathe once a minute. If he can bring a PC to *Fear*, he will inhale deeply and convert a Wound to Fatigue. He might turn out the cave-fungus again (with a combination of a wind spell and a harmless gas that briefly inactivates it), but will be unable to dispel other light sources. He has nowhere to go and has no desire to abandon his dream of immortality, and will fight until badly hurt before surrendering and offering all his wealth to the PCs. He knows many secrets of hidden treasures and sources of illegal magic and items, and may offer these, but may deliberately lead the PCs astray if he gets only his life in return. He may be forced to pursue his immortality plans without the benefit of a Water Aura, but enforcing a promise to do so may be difficult.

Lord Yu's Crypt

Behind the paper screen in Nian's cave is a crypt containing the bones of a fox. On the floor are a copper mask and a copper breastplate. There is something Unholy about this crypt, since it has been defiled. It now has a d8 Unholy Aura, and has destabilized the area around Five-Man Mountain so that Nian could create his powerful Water Aura. A Mutang who has seen the crypt (Ren counts) will know that the belt, breastplate, and mask must be placed on Yu's body and that everyone in the crypt should pray for Yu's spirit to rest. When this is done, the Unholy Aura in the crypt vanishes, the Water Aura around the mountain is dispelled, and for the next few days the mountain radiates a palpable d6 Aura of Heaven. The rain over the village fades and a rainbow is seen.

Wrapup

The PCs will most likely kill or drive away Nian, but an alternate way of getting rid of him is possible. Nian might be willing to leave the mountain and find another place to enchant, especially if the girl Ren and/or the PCs agree to follow him and help find a suitable home. He has no plan to harm anyone in his search for immortality, though he enjoys terrifying people and does not care if he ruins his surroundings. He is also picky about finding just the right combination of suitability for a Water Aura, a lovely new pond, and the presence of a devil post. If the PCs are especially enthusiastic about helping him move, he could even offer his new home as a base of operations for them! As a follower, Nian tends to slink along behind trees and other seemingly too-small hiding places.

The way to break the spiritual disturbance at the mountain is to replace the belt. If Ren is absent when the artifacts are returned to Yu's body, a ghostly voice murmurs for the PCs to "bring one who can see." If she is brought to the crypt, the image of a handsome fox warrior appears and greets her. The ghost notices only Ren, and tells her that he will protect the village with her help. She will become a Mutang before long and call upon him. Ren is awestruck, and when Yu's ghost fades away she thanks the PCs profusely for their help.

Back in Chonju Village, the rain and clouds are gone. The villagers are happy that their crops will be saved and that the spirit of an honored warrior lives nearby. They remember nothing about Lord Yu having been buried on the mountain; he lived centuries ago. Anything found in the cave besides the warriors' artifacts is the PCs' to keep, and will cause no particular spiritual disturbance due to Yu's influence. Innkeeper Songsu owes the PCs a good meal, and Big Beer Pijiu will provide a well-written letter of introduction to other officials he knows or to any authorities the PCs might meet. The PCs have finished doing their first good deed in Chao-Xian!

Characters [Insert Charsheets]

--Innkeeper Songsu

--Big Beer Pijiu

--Ren

--Nian

Night of Masks

An Adventure of Hidden Forces At Work

Attention! The text that follows explains in detail an adventure involving mystery, deceit, and even violence. This section is for the purview of the Game Host *only*. Those players planning to experience the adventure must avert their eyes and must not read this section, lest they spoil their own enjoyment.

The Characters

King Kojong (Lynx): The official ruler of Chao-Xian, more concerned with his health and the splendor of the capital than with his people's suffering. Largely oblivious to the country's problems, but attempting lately to assert himself on minor points.

Queen Min (Lynx): An intelligent young queen who controls Kojong and wants to revamp the corrupt bureaucracy and increase her own power.

The Taewon'gun (Lynx): Kojong's father and former regent. A staunch traditionalist who opposes any significant change in the government's structure, except for regaining his place at the top. Even if this means the unfortunate death of his own son.

Quiet Che'u (Dolphin): A old Pansu who advises the king and queen. Though loyal, he recognizes the king's folly and thinks the queen's reforms are more for her own sake than the nation's.

Minister Yi Hang-no (Panda): A wealthy and corrupt nobleman using his post to steal grain from military supplies. He's being courted by the Taewon'gun to join in a rebellion.

Kumo (Fox): A woman disowned by a powerful family and possessed by an evil spirit. She lives at the palace and is not allowed to leave without escort.

What Has Gone On Before

In modern Chao-Xian there is conflict between the traditionalists obsessed with maintaining social order through Chu'ja Daoism, and the rising class of merchants, Sirhak scholars, and others left out of power. Both sides tend to ignore Chao-Xian's original Mutang and Amitan traditions as old-fashioned superstitions ill-suited to a powerful and centralized state.

Some Sirhak scholars have been trying to weaken shamans' influence over rural areas by refuting their spiritual beliefs and re-educating the common folk to seek natural explanations for supernatural events. The government bureaucracy views Mutang shamanism as a vice, and would like to take more direct control over towns and villages to ensure their proper management. Mutang have few allies except villagers and Amitan monks.

A few well-connected families dominate the government bureaucracy through factional control of the testing system and even the sale of offices. To buy their way into office, noblemen are extorting extra, illegal taxes from peasants, who are being forced into slavery or crime. Poor harvests and ominous contacts with spirits and monsters in the countryside have made matters even worse. Because the Sirhak School is one way that

noblemen have gained influence without going through the bureaucracy, commoners and the Mutang have reason to ally with the Sirhak to petition the government and fight the rampant corruption and crime.

At court this battle is being fought in miniature. The present king, Kojong, was put on the throne at the age of twelve. The boy's father, known by his title as "the Taewon'gun", ruled as regent and dominated his government. (Taewon'gun was never king, because Kojong was chosen as king from another family branch when his predecessor died heirless. The complexity of the arrangement is just one more source of rancor.) Now that Kojong is twenty, he is starting to assert himself as king, but the Taewon'gun refuses to give up power. As regent, the Taewon'gun put countless bureaucratic barriers in the king's path and kept him away from information and influence. The Taewon'gun even found a queen for the boy years ago: a ten-year-old girl named Min, expected to be harmless. Now that she is eighteen, she has proven at least as intelligent and eager for power as the regent, and she is manipulating weak-willed Kojong too. The veil of court ceremonies and useless servants has been hiding the country's deep problems from him, but now even he has been catching on.

Queen Min wants to break the power of the bureaucracy. She wants to dismantle the tricolored factions, put a hand-picked group of administrators in charge of the tests and job assignments, and make that group personally accountable to the throne. By doing so, she can blame the common people's problems on the high nobility, take some of the upper class' wealth, and redistribute it to win favor with the commoners. As part of her plan she has convinced Kojong to formally remove the Taewon'gun as regent. Still, family loyalty requires that he be kept around as an adviser unless something unfortunate happens to him.

The Taewon'gun is fuming at having been removed from power. His son is a spendthrift and a fool, and a woman is running the royal house in defiance of all morality. The Censor-General, a Pansu, is in on the conspiracy against him. That blasted dolphin criticized him for ignoring the common folk and gave the king an excuse to take away his own father's law-making authority. Now the ex-regent is working with another disaffected group, the rarely-paid oath-banner armies, to support an armed rebellion against his son and restore himself to supreme power.

An annual holiday, The Day of Masks, is coming to Togol, and everyone is making plans for the festivities.

Getting the Players Involved

Because the storyline centers around events in the royal court, the Game Host must find a way for the Player-Characters, who are most likely wandering adventurers of no great fame, to become involved. Consider the PCs' background for ideas on how they can meet the NPCs and begin to learn of their plans.

--Mutang and Pansu may have sensed a dangerous spiritual force gathering near the capital, and come to investigate. They may also have been summoned by others in their profession to do the same, or to carry a message of complaint or warning to the palace.

--Commoners may come as representatives of villages suffering from corrupt officials, crushing taxes, and famine, to demand help from the royal government.

--Spies, especially Shadow Riders, may want to investigate the causes of recent unrest

among the oath-banner armies. Some Shadow Riders may learn, through new orders, that they report to the Taewon'gun and not the king.

--Thieves and other miscreants may be hired by anyone involved, to discover others' plans and assassinate anyone on their employers' trail. For more ambitious thieves, what better opportunity for robbery than the royal palace during a festival that encourages disguises?

--Soldiers in the oath-banner armies may be called upon to deliver a message to the Taewon'gun. The five army commanders are coming to the city, and may bring their trusted lieutenants along.

--Hwarang and wandering warriors may be called for help by the soldiers, or hired as guards as the palace increases security for the coming festival.

--Noblemen may be sent by their families to investigate rumors of a new law changing the national testing system and bureaucracy, and to decide whether it would benefit them.

--Scholarly characters may be about to take an examination in the city, unaware that the officials grading them are about to be replaced (one way or another).

--Visitors from Zhongguo, especially those with unusual magical skills or education, will be welcomed as guests by the king. They may be invited to give a public lecture or attend a banquet.

How to run this adventure

This story focuses on political intrigue and influence. The Game Host and Players will have to decide what level of action and violence they prefer, and steer the adventure in a direction everyone will enjoy. If the story becomes too slow, there are various groups outside the main plot who can be brought in to add new complexity and opportunities for combat. None of the major players are above hiring a few thugs to harass PCs who become too troublesome. Unlike the previous adventure, this story is open-ended and can best be described here in outline rather than an exact sequence of scenes.

There are several major plot threats the PCs might follow, which might lead them into conflict with each other if they split up. Depending on the story's outcome, Chao-Xian's government may change significantly. The notes provided are meant to make it possible to follow the campaign wherever the PCs take it, without vetoing any action. Neither faction is clearly in the right, so the Host should be ready to deal with the moral ambiguity of the situation or help the PCs find a way to truly be heroes.

Act 1: In Togol

Players may approach this story from either of two main angles:

- The **Royal** court's attempt to transform the bureaucratic system, or
- The **Rebel** faction trying to overthrow the King

Royal:

The court is preparing for the Day of Masks, a major annual festival. King Kojong is spending lavishly and seeing many visitors in his palace in Togol, while Queen Min is beset by bureaucrats coming to her to complain about the cost. She tolerates

Kojong's behavior because it provides cover for an Edict she is writing. This law (once rubber-stamped by Kojong) will eliminate the tricolored factions' control over the bureaucracy, all at once, and replace all top-ranking officials with new graduates of the testing system. This change would radically shift who controls the entire tax system, court system, and other government departments, so there's a great deal of money and power at stake. The PCs arrive at court and are asked to handle some minor part of the festival preparations, such as overseeing the transport of food. This task leads them to find a hoard of stolen grain labeled for shipment to the army but now collecting dust. The warehouse is the private property of an employee of Minister Yi Hang-no, who denies all involvement. In fact, the Minister has taken the grain and plans to re-sell it on the black market, making him vulnerable to blackmail from both factions.

Rebel:

An agent of Minister Yi Hang-no hires the PCs to transport many bushels of grain from one warehouse to another, discreetly and at night. Supposedly this is being done because corrupt royal ministers aren't properly supplying the army. This is true, but the corruption is actually Yi's fault and the grain in question is being transferred not to, but from the army's supply.

The Taewon'gun would like to make contact secretly with the PCs through one of his agents, a seemingly unimportant and stupid tailor. The job he offers is to dress as newly-hired servants, get to an off-limits part of the palace complex, and steal Queen Min's notes on the proposed reform Edict. He wants to read them (or at least a decent forgery -- he has some idea of the content), then have them delivered to Minister Yi to make an alliance against the queen. Meanwhile, soldiers from the Central oath-banner army are arriving to demand the rations they're owed.

Act 2: Edict

Royal:

The discovery of Minister Yi's theft gives Queen Min the perfect opportunity to blame the upper nobility and the tricolored factions. She has King Kojong announce the Edict, which triggers a flood of written protests and a throng of angry officials who've abandoned preparations to administer the upcoming royal examinations. The test-taking students are angry and confused too, having shown up to earn jobs they've studied hard to get. Who will offer then the best deal, and will they get bogged down in writing essays about this very dispute, or take to the streets?

Min needs people to interview the students from whom she will select the new ministers. She can offer the best of them jobs and money to help win over their fellows. She also needs more people to keep the outgoing officials from sabotaging their records and destroying evidence of further corruption -- which she predicts will happen during the tests. If the Edict has been exposed before she can get it formally announced, that damage is done and Min will search for leaks. Evidence will point to the Taewon'gun, who is planning something more. Even the palace guards are eyeing each other suspiciously, wondering what side they're on.

Rebel:

The PCs are asked by the Taewon'gun to free Minister Yi from imprisonment in the

palace dungeon and escort him to a safe location in the city. The oath-banner soldiers outside a government warehouse discover that much of their rationed grain is missing and the rest mixed with chaff. They will riot and burn the warehouse unless the stolen grain or another supply is brought to them. The PCs' job is to make sure that they *do* riot, and that they blame the king and queen. The five army commanders are in the city, but have lost the loyalty of the troops -- especially if the PCs can physically split them up or convince one or more to condone the rioters and demand relief. The Hwarang will quell the uprising before long, as the troops are unwilling to oppose the government itself, only its policies.

Act 3: Day of Masks

Royal:

Though there is much unrest in the city between the Edict and the possible soldiers' riot, the Day of Masks is not officially canceled. The PCs must be in disguise, which is perfect for what Min has in mind. She wants them to attend tonight's royal banquet, and stage an attack on the oblivious Kjong! Not successfully, though: she wants the PCs to be "captured" by the five army commanders, who will be there and scripted to personally save the day. (She believes they are still loyal to the throne, which may not be true if PCs or NPCs have changed their minds.) She will then let the PCs escape and change disguises, while she has the Taewon'gun arrested for plotting assassination. Unfortunately, during the banquet there is another disturbance; see the Rebel section.

Rebel:

The Taewon'gun can manufacture more riots using drunken masked revelers and assassination of the students Min hopes will replace the old officials. His goal is to bring the city to such chaos that King Kjong's apathy becomes clear, forcing Kjong to reinstate the Taewon'gun as regent and require his approval for all laws. To accomplish this, the PCs are ordered to help with a plot at tonight's banquet. They are to burn one of the palace buildings or create another distraction, lure the army commanders out and kill them one by one, kidnap Queen Min, and blame the whole thing on disaffected soldiers and scholars the royal house is too weak to control.

Act 4: Conclusion

By this point, either Queen Min or the Taewon'gun will have taken power. A rescue operation and counterattack is still possible from either side. The PCs will have an opportunity to build an alliance between the ruler and any of the other groups involved: peasants, Mutang, scholars, established nobles and bureaucrats, and soldiers. The future of the common people of Chao-Xian is at stake, and with several disputes still going on, the PCs are still needed.

Even if the bureaucracy is not totally replaced, it will seek minor reforms from within to escape criticism. The tricolored factions will try to reinvent themselves and retain their grip on power even if it must be through informal, secretive influence. The oath-banner armies may end up responsible to the nobility rather than to the king, which would leave the throne with only the Hwarang for its personal military might.

The potential rewards for the PCs are rich: noble titles, land, money, or a boon for a particular town in special need of help. The PCs will have the ear of the new

government and may be called upon for help in future, but will be forbidden from discussing their involvement in the power struggle.

Additional Details

The Costumer

Many mask and costume shops have sprung up in the market district. One of the more interesting is Sa-Ahn's, run by an evil masked Viper posing as a Snake. (If anyone asks, he has a license granted by an official for whom he's performed "sservicess.") Sa-Ahn runs a small wine-shop in the soundproof back room, and is eager to trade secrets and stories. Among other things he sells are long capes with different colors on each side for a quick change.

The Grain Warehouse

The warehouse from which the army's grain is missing, where the soldiers may riot, is two stories of stone with high window-slits admitting dim light. It stands on the river, closely packed between other warehouses, low-end shops, and a dock. The building is unheated and fire is forbidden due to the explosive grain dust, to the chagrin of watchman Cold Chai-Ti. The doors are large and shoddily locked. Ladders and pulleys run between the two floors and a roof hatch. The building would be hard to wreck except by explosion, but the riot could spread to neighboring warehouses with more valuable contents.

The Banquet

The royal feast in Act 3 takes place in the "Ship Hall," which has a heated floor. Guests sit on fine wooden benches at two long tables which take up two-thirds of the room's length. The other third is a balcony with stairs like a ship's raised foredeck, with a smaller table. Guards wait behind a door to the balcony; a door between the balcony staircases leads to the kitchen, which has servants scurrying constantly in and out. The building stands in the northwest corner of the palace complex.

King Kojong, Queen Min, advisor Quiet Che'u, Minister Yi Hang-no, and the five army commanders sit at the upper table. Kojong's father the Taewon'gun sits below because the Queen "suggested" he help entertain the nobles and other folk. People are wondering about the snub. The Taewon'gun says sitting below was his idea. Dozens of noblemen and various sycophants are the main guests.

If the PCs are to make a staged attack on the King, they had best pose as kitchen staff, nobles, or entertainers. The army commanders have only knives with them, which is fine for pretending to subdue the PCs but poor when the Taewon'gun's faction attacks minutes later. They could borrow weapons from the hidden guards if they get the chance.

White Streak In the Waves

An Otter from Calabria has become one of the 108 rulers of Chengdu Island, and is in town with his son to see him perform in the royal examination. The father (Jormungand) and son ("White Streak" Lee) are respectful but distant; the son sees his ex-pirate father as a hopeless barbarian. Jormungand is fuming when he sees the PCs outside the Academy, as he's just been told he can't come in to watch. Don't they know who he is? Maybe the PCs, good honest scruffy mercenaries, could help. He'd at least like them to slip White Streak some money and food, and get word on how the boy is doing.

This event is a chance to sneak into the Academy, posing as students, teachers, or staff, and get involved with the Queen's plot to sack the bureaucrats and find new ones. The tests are being held at night in the Academy courtyard, on three consecutive nights, but the Host can adjust the schedule as necessary. White Streak is a bright, honest young man, but is in a panic over his lack of skill with the "impractical nonsense" the examination tests. Could someone perhaps remind him why he spent years obsessing over obscure points of theology? Unaided, he will fail and go home in shame. The PCs may be able to help, especially by bringing him to the Queen's attention, but doing so could put his life in danger from the anti-reform faction.

Slave of the Spirits

(This event and others involving Kumo are optional. This subplot is for GMs looking to add more complexity to the adventure, and can be introduced at the beginning or later.)

In the palace, a veiled mouse-woman presses a note in han'gul script into the PCs' hands, wrapped around several coins. The note asks the PCs to meet discreetly in a certain palace garden in an hour, with directions given.

In the garden, a lynx removes her veil, hoping to charm. Her name is Kumo, and her mute servant Uni (who delivered the note) is nearby. Kumo says she's a girl from a village in Kayagum, and that five years ago she was training to be a Mutang assistant. She was the daughter of a Mutang, but was never "called" to be one herself. A passing government official kidnapped her to be his bride. When he died before the wedding, she was made an involuntary guest at the palace, a beautiful singing slave for the court who's forbidden even to show her face. The PCs must right this injustice and free her!

Part of her story is true. She was training as an assistant shaman when she really was "called," but she was possessed by an evil earth spirit instead of an ancestral spirit. She killed the amorous bureaucrat and got caught rifling the palace library for books of spirit lore in han'gul. The King knows almost nothing about her. Queen Min is keeping her while she decides what to do with her -- it's been a year! -- and adviser Quiet Che'u suspects something bad will happen if she is killed and the spirit released.

Rescuing Kumo means sneaking her out of the city, probably on the Night of Masks. A Shadow Rider will pursue her if she's missed, and guards will check faces at the city gates. Kumo's attendant will want to come too. Kumo can offer jewels and other items stolen from the palace, and knows many things about the royal court.

If the PCs ignore her plea or betray her, she will try for revenge, undermining their plans in this adventure and escaping to wreak havoc later. She cannot leave the palace yet and uses Uni for errands in the city. She tries not to use her powers in public, but may snap.

The Quiet Singer

Quiet Che-u has been a royal adviser since the year Kjong was born. The old dolphin is no fool; he knows about the manipulation by the Taewon'gun and Min. He knows also that the country needs leadership and reform. Despite his calm facade, he's growing desperate as he watches disaster coming. He walks the streets, protected by his powerful Pansu magic, looking for anyone who might at least provide a sympathetic ear. He speaks in parables, asking what a poor gardener should do when the palace trees have moldy roots. The PCs might encounter him directly and ask for his help with whatever they're doing.

Silver Ch'i-ho, the Hwarang

"Silver" Ch'i-ho and "Gold" Ansang were idle young noblemen, best friends, and rivals. Silver grew up trying to match Gold's skills, which drove them both to train hard and join the Hwarang Knights. When only Silver was recruited by the elite Subdue Demon Corps, Gold became resentful and swore to defeat him in a duel. Lately, Silver has faced suspicious magical activity while near Gold's family lands, making him wonder if his old friend is involved and using unscrupulous means to grow stronger.

<Picture>

Body d8, Speed d10, Mind d6, Will d4

Lynx d8 *Weapons:* Claws;
Teeth *Habitat:*
Mountains *Sense Tests:* Listen

Hwarang Knight d12			
Skills (<i>with Favorite Use</i>)			
d8		d4	Acrobatics (with an audience)
d8			Climbing
		d8	Dodge (versus beasts)
	d12		Etiquette
	d12	d10	Fighting Wheel (with my Favorite Wheels)
		d8	First Aid (wounds caused by beasts)
	d12	d8	Resolve (with an audience)
	d12		Savoir-Faire
d8		d4	Stealth (outdoors by moonlight)

Gifts: Ambidexterity (2 points); Claws (1 point); Night Vision (1 point); Martial Arts: "Parry Thrown Objects" (1 point), "Cymbal Crash" (1 point); Nobility (1 point); Teeth (1 point); Wealth (5 points)

Flaws: Foe: Gold Ansang (Rare, Strong; -2 points); Heroic (-3 points); Overconfident (-3 points); Showoff (-2 points)

Armor: Brigandine (d10 & & Soak d8)

Weapons: Two Quarter-Stone Fighting Wheels (To Hit 2d10 & d12; Damage 2d8); +1 to Parry

Special "Parry Thrown Objects" (Jadeclaw, p. 160); "Cymbal Crash" (Jadeclaw, p. 163):

Abilities: Confuse foe with a Special

Maitreya, the Mutang

At the age of ten, Maitreya fell ill and wandered through the village in a daze. The spirit of Myong-an, a doctor, befriended her and helped her to understand her role as a protector. She is still young, and her family has encouraged her to travel and learn while helping others.

<Picture>

Body d6, Speed d8, Mind d10, Will d12

Fox d6 *Weapons:* Claws;
Teeth *Habitat:*
Mountains *Sense Tests:* Listen; Smell

Mutang Shaman d8

Spirit Bond d4 (Spirit: Lynx d8; Doctor d8)

Skills (*with Favorite Use*)

	d8		Acting
d6			Climbing
	d8		Dancing
	d8		Lore: Magic
d6			Sixth Sense
d6			Stealth
	d8		Theology: Mutang
d6			Tracking

Gifts: Claws (1 point); Extra Trait: d4 (4 points); Keen Ears (1 point); Increased Trait: d4 to d6 (4 points) Teeth (1 point)

Flaws: Frail (-2 points); Heroic (-3 points); Naive (-1 point); Weak (-2 points)

Armor: Cotton Armor (d4 & Soak d6)

Weapons: Half-Stone Sling (To Hit d8; Damage d8 & d4)

Spell Lists: Mutang -- Spirit Servant; Mutang -- Spirit Wielder

Magic

Points: 20 (currently 16 due to delayed *Adornment*)

Spell Casting Skills:

Aspect 3 (Adept)	Dao Shih's Proper Aura of Earth 3 (Adept)	Generative Restoration 2 (Adept)
Adornment 4 (Adept)	Detect Earth 1 (Adept)	Peace 4 (Adept)

Ka-jin, the Pansu

Ka-Jin is an Owl who lost his sight as a child. His family sought out a Pansu master and begged his help. Ka-jin became the Pansu's apprentice and soon learned to see by sound using the "Hearing the World" spell. Because of his magical training, he can fly again and no longer fears darkness. Now he wanders the land in search of people like him to train, and others who need his help.

<Picture>

Body d6, Speed d4, Mind d10, Will d8

Owl d8 *Weapons:* Beak;
Claws *Habitat:*
Forest *Sense Tests:* Listen; Spot

Pansu Musician d12

Stillness d4

		Skills (<i>with Favorite Use</i>)	
		d6	Dodge (while flying)
d8			Flight
	d12		Fortune-Telling
	d12		Lore: Magic
	d12		Musical Instrument: Kayagum
		d8	Observation (using Echolocation while flying)
	d12		Sixth Sense
d8			Stealth
d8			Tracking

Gifts: Beak (1 point); Claws (1 point); Extra Trait d4 (3 points); Flight (5 points); Hospitality (2 points); Keen Ears (1 point)

Flaws: Blind (-5 points); Dull Nose (-1 point), Frail (-2 points); Heroic (-3 points), Pacifist (Cannot kill; -1 point); Poverty (-4 points)

Armor: Cotton Armor (d4 & Soak d4)

Weapons: Quarter-Stone Staff (To Hit d4; Damage 2d6; +1 to Parry)

Spell Lists: Pansu -- Echo Worker; Pansu -- Sound Weaver

Magic

Points: 20 (but uses "Hearing the World" continuously)

Spell Casting Skills:

Abysmal 4 (Adept)	Hearing the World 3 (Adept)	Mysterious Cry 3 (Adept)
Fah Shih's Proper Aura of Wind 3 (Adept)	Kyu-Sol's Fragile Aura of Truth 2 (Adept)	Turmoil 3 (Adept)

Yuan, the Scholar

The illegitimate daughter of a poor family in Mon Province, Yuan was raised as the son of a related, noble family in the hope that she could find advancement in government service instead of marrying and being confined to a husband's house. She values her freedom, but is forced to live a lie for the chance to prove herself in the government examinations. She has heard that life might be easier for her in another province, but leaving would mean giving up the grandeur of the royal capital. What if she petitioned the Queen?

<Picture>

Body d8, Speed d6, Mind d12, Will d8

Marten d4 *Weapons:* Claws;
Teeth *Habitat:*
Forest *Sense Tests:* Listen; Spot

Functionary d10

Rebellion d4

		Skills (<i>with Favorite Use</i>)	
	d10		Administration
d4			Brawling
	d10		Bribery
	d10		Ciphering
d4			Climbing
		d8	Diplomacy (editing legal texts)
		d6	Fast-Talk (concealing secrets)
d4			Jumping
	d10	d8	Literacy: Han'gul (legal texts)
		d6	Literacy: Zhongguoese (literature)
		d10	Lore: Chu'ja Daoism (principles regarding women)
		d6	Sword (with my Favorite Sword)
d4			Tracking

Gifts: Belongings: Quarter-Stone Soft Sword (1 point); Claws (1 point); Extra Move +2 (2 points); Extra Trait d4 (3 points); Good Reputation: Versatile scholar who keeps others' secrets well (Uncommon, Moderate; 2 points) Nobility (1 point); Sure-Footed (1 point); Teeth (1 point)

Flaws: Curious (-3 points); False Genealogy (-3 points); Single-Minded (-2 points)

Armor: Cotton Armor (d4 & Soak d8)

Weapons: Quarter-Stone Soft Scholarly Sword "Queen Min" (To Hit 2d6; Damage d10 & d8)

In-Sok Chinul, the Shadow Rider

Better that he become a secret royal inspector, Chinul decided, than let someone cruel and stupid do it. Chinul is neither; in fact he makes a point of never breaking a promise or saying anything that's literally false. He uses his cover identity as a petty criminal to accumulate evidence on lowlifes who operate in cities and waste the kingdom's money. Villages he'd rather not tackle; they're too wholesome and peaceful to deserve his treatment. He rarely tells the whole truth about the scars on his hands and feet.

<Picture>

Body d8, Speed d12, Mind d10, Will d4

Lynx d6 *Weapons:* Claws;;Teeth *Habitat:* Mountain *Sense Tests:* Listen

Shadow Rider d8

Procurer d6

			Skills (<i>with Favorite Use</i>)
d6			Acrobatics
		d6	Bribery
		d6	Carousing
d6			Climbing
		d6	d8 Fast-Talk (without actually lying)
			d10 Holdout (with documents)
			d10 Intimidation (to make torture unnecessary)
			d10 Resolve (while facing criminals)
	d8		Riding
	d8		d6 Sword (against criminals)
d6	d8		Stealth
		d6	d6 Streetwise (finding evidence of crime)
	d8		Torture

Gifts: Belongings: Quarter-Stone Sword (1 point); Extra Trait: d6 (7 points); Night Vision (1 point); Teeth (1 point)

Flaws: De-clawed (-1 point); Duty (to enforce the law; -3 points); Honorable (-4 points); Morose (-1 point)

Armor: Disc Armor (d8, d4 & Soak d8)

Weapons: Quarter-Stone Sleeve Sword "Karma" (To Hit d12, d8 & d6; Damage d12 & d8)

Spell "Sleeve Sword Surprise" (Jadeclaw, p. 162): Draw and strike for Slaying

Abilities: Damage; can't strike downed foes or from behind due to Honorable

Nian

A legendary creature which emerges from behind a devil-post to terrify people and feed on their fear without actually killing them. Its hideous snakelike body is covered in shifting spikes crackling with magical energy. It has some intelligence and can speak in a guttural voice to scare people more. Its weakness are its vanity and fear of loud noises.

<Picture>

Body 2d12, Speed d10, Mind d6, Will d10

Race: Nian d10 *Weapons:* Horns; Teeth *Habitat:* Unnatural *Sense Tests:* Listen; Smell

		Skills (<i>with Favorite Use</i>)	
d10			Brawling
d10			Contortionist
d10		d10	Dodge (vs. magic)
		2d12	Intimidation (threatening to eat people)
d10		d10	Lore: Magic (when flattered about its knowledge)
		d12	Psychology (scaring people)
		2d12	Weather Sense (during the new moon)

Gifts: Barbed Spines; Horns; Ophidian; Stinger; Teeth

Flaws: Dread of loud noises; Ill-Favored; Proud; Showoff

Initiative: d10 & d6

Defenses: Dodge 3d10

Resolve: d10

Move: Dash 10 paces, Stride 2 1/2 paces

Armor: None (Soak 2d12)

Weapons: Spines & Stinger (To Hit 2d10; Damage 2d12 & d6)

Spell Lists: Unknown, but powerful

Magic Points: Unknown

Dawncrabs

These tiny creatures are a constant nuisance to farmers. They come in swarms of dozens, scrambling over each other to attack crops or an exposed leg. Treat a swarm of them as a single target; swing and you're likely to hit one or two. A swarm of dawncrabs will usually flee once a few of them have been killed.

<Picture>

Body d4, Speed d8, Mind *none*, Will d6

Race:

Dawncrabs

Weapons: Claws

Habitat: Hills

Sense Tests: Smell

Skills (with Favorite Use)

d8			Brawling
d8			Dodge
d8			Tracking

Gifts: Claws; Poison

Flaws: Swarm

Initiative: d8

Defenses: Dodge 2d8

Resolve: d6

Move: Dash 8 paces, Stride 2 paces

Armor: None (Soak d4)

Weapons: Claws (To Hit 2d8; Damage d6 & d4)

Special: Poison; Swarm: only 1/2 stone total; dies from one more Wound when

Abilities: "unconscious"

Noise Shark

Far too many noise sharks roam the waters of Binghe Bay. Their three-bladed tails thrash the sea and their prey, and their teeth can cleave metal. Sometimes they swarm in an uncoordinated feeding frenzy. Worst of all, their horrible screeching renders dolphin sound-vision and Pansu magic useless. Noise sharks lay fist-sized brown eggs which hatch in a month. Brave seafarers sometimes launch expeditions to slaughter the sharks and destroy their egg caches, but the sharks always return. Sometimes the expeditions don't.

<Picture>

Body d12, Speed d10, Mind *none*, Will d10

Race: Noise

**Shark
d8**

Weapons: Teeth

Habitat: Sea

Sense Tests: Listen

Skills (with Favorite Use)

d8		d12	Brawling (vs. prey)
d8			Dodge
d8		d12	Swimming (when not hunting)
d8		d12	Tracking (blood in the water)

Gifts: Dischord; Echolocation; Keen Ears; Strength +2; Teeth

Flaws: Blind; Wrathful

Initiative: d10

Defenses: Dodge d8

Resolve: d10

Move: Dash 10 paces, Stride 2 1/2 paces (in water)

Armor: None (Soak d12)

Weapons: Teeth (To Hit d12, d10 & d8; Damage d12 & 2d6)

Special: Dischord (blocks non-shark Echolocation, other sound, and Pansu Magic); has

Abilities: gills and cannot leave water

Pegmusk

The Pegmusk is a lizard with large eyes and sleek brown scales. It uses its feet, which are tipped with agile, blunt claws, to grab insects and fish and collect bark for bedding. Farmers and fishers train it to roam rice fields killing dawncrabs or to drive fish into nets. It's quite friendly but can do some damage if angered.

<Picture>

Body d4, Speed d8, Mind *none*, Will d6

Race: Pegmusk

d8

Weapons: Claws; Teeth *Habitat:* Hills *Sense Tests:* Spot

Skills (with Favorite Use)

d8			d6	Brawling
d8			d6	Dodge
			d6	Resolve
d8			d6	Swimming
d8			d6	Tracking

Gifts: Claws; *Poison Resistance*; Robustness +1; Teeth

Flaws: Curious; Small

Initiative: d8

Defenses: Dodge 2d8 & d6

Resolve: 2d6

Move: Dash 8 paces, Stride 2 paces

Armor: None (Soak d6)

Weapons: Claws & Teeth (To Hit 2d8 & d6; Damage d6 & d4)

Special Poison Resistance: rolls 2d6 vs. poison; Small Size: only 1/2 stone, 1 less Hit

Abilities: Point

Sharpwing

Much like Cranes, these seabirds have long beaks and elegant feathers. Their eyes, though, are mindless. Sharpwings form flocks of up to a dozen near villages and float in from the bay, to eat anything they can and befoul what they can't. They rarely attack people unless provoked by, say, seeing someone conceal their fish catch.

<Picture>

Body d8, Speed d8, Mind *none*, Will d6

Race: Sharpwing

d8

Weapons: Beak, Claws Habitat: Sea Sense Tests: Spot

		Skills (<i>with Favorite Use</i>)	
d8			Brawling
d8		d8	Dodge (vs. melee attacks)
d8		d8	Flight (over water)
d8		d4	Observation (food)
		d6	Resolve (until any companion dies or flees)
		d6	Swimming (at sea within sight of shore)
		d6	Tactics (until any companion dies or flees)

Gifts: Beak; Claws; Flight

Flaws: Frail

Initiative: d8

Defenses: Dodge 2d8

Resolve: d6

Move: Dash 8 paces, Stride 2 paces

Armor: None (Soak d6)

Weapons: Beak & Claws (To Hit 2d8; Damage d8 & d6)

Special

Abilities: Flight: Dash 16 paces, Stride 4 paces, Stall 3

Uldong

Uldong are unnatural hunters of the hills and mountains. Their hide is a dusky grey that ripples to blend in with their surroundings, and they never make a sound. They sleep on rock overhangs or hide in snowdrifts for days, becoming sluggish but recovering in minutes when they smell someone passing by. A warrior can fight one off, but uldong prefer easier prey like livestock, lone woodcutters, and children.

<Picture>

Body d10, Speed d10, Mind *none*, Will d8

Habitat: Hills

Race: Uldong d8 *Weapons: Claws, Teeth or Mountains* *Sense Tests: Smell, Spot*

Skills (with Favorite Use)

d8	d8	Brawling (vs. prey)
d8	d6	Camouflage (in snow)
d8		Resolve
	d8	Stealth (vs. prey)
d8	d6	Tracking (in snow)

Gifts: Armor d4; Claws; Teeth

Flaws: None

Initiative: d10

Defenses: Dodge d10

Resolve: 2d8

Move: Dash 10 paces, Stride 2 1/2 paces

Armor: Natural d4 (& Soak d10)

Weapons: Claws and Teeth (To Hit d10 & d8; Damage d10 & d6)