

ON THE WAY OF THE MONK

While at the Imperial Capital of Huan Wang, I was fortunate enough to witness the stunning martial display put on by the Xan Monks during the Festival of Xan. After their exhibition they joined the common folk of the city for food and tea. During this time I spoke at length with Hun Chi Lok, one of the Monks, and was able to learn about her strange and reclusive Discipline.

• DAYLEN JAGARO, HUMAN MERCHANT OF BARTERTOWN •

People focus on our martial abilities, but martial abilities are of very little importance to a Monk. The discipline we exert over our physical bodies is merely a single step along a journey to complete mastery over our minds. The Monk follows the Way of the Dragon, the spiritual path laid down by Luung long ago. Ours is a Discipline of self-mastery and of self-exploration. Our edicts are adherences to the wisdom of the dragon, the greatest of all Namegivers. We do not seek power, we do not seek land, and we do not seek mates. Our lives are dedicated to bettering ourselves as we strive toward the perfection of the dragon.

Fear and doubt, shame and regret—these are not virtues of a dragon. Greed and betrayal, avarice and gluttony—these are not virtues of a dragon. Loyalty, discipline, perseverance, honor, integrity, and righteousness are virtues of the dragon. These are the qualities for which every Monk strives.

ON THE GIFT OF LUUNG

Our founder, the great Cathay dragon, Luung, watched us lesser Namegivers stumble through our lives, searching for meaning in our short existences. He gathered a handful of those he believed to be worthy and led them high into the Dragon Spine Mountains, to a peak now known as Mount Xan. There he began teaching them the philosophies of his kind, allowing these early Monks to explore thoughts and ideas of which they had never dreamed, granting them insights into their behavior that opened their eyes, allowing them to truly see the universe for the first time. They were no longer hindered by greed and want. They were no longer crippled by lust or the desire to be desired. Luung had freed their spirits. He showed them that life was not a journey to become important, but a quest for knowledge, and a search for empathy and an understanding of the greater mysteries that existence held.

These early Monks spread the word, and soon Mount Xan became a beacon for those struggling to find purpose to their existence. In the beginning, Luung's disciples would meditate endlessly, exploring their minds in hopes of achieving the Way of the Dragon. But soon Luung chastised them for growing lazy and unhealthy. He introduced the Ways of the Animals: exercises that would teach the

Monk how to dominate his body as well as his mind. It was Luung's belief that this path would require many steps, so he chose four animals to emulate: the tiger, the panther, the crane, and the snake.

"You must first master their ways before you can learn the Way of the Dragon," he told his disciples. So the fighting styles of the Xan Monks were born.

Dragons! Do they have their claws in everything Namegivers do, learn, or experience?

—Krolok, Ork Nethermancer

ON THE FOUR ANIMALS

Through our exercises, we learn harmony of the spirit and mastery of our bodies. With this control comes self-discipline, which is the first step to enlightenment and the Way of the Dragon. Through the example of the tiger we learn strength; from the panther we learn cunning; from the crane we learn adaptability; and from the snake we learn accuracy and speed. As is the duality of nature, each of these animals also represents a True element, which we also revere: the tiger represents earth; the panther represents water; the crane represents air; and the snake represents fire. Once we have mastered these four paths, we are ready for the eternal path: the Path of the Dragon.

But we are not Beastmasters, nor are we Elementalists, though some of our kind have studied those Disciplines to see what they have to offer. You look surprised. Does the thought of a Monk pursuing other Disciplines surprise you? It is true that our path takes severe dedication and a singularity of purpose, but many of our kind seek out knowledge in all its forms; we do not close ourselves to the universe—just the opposite. Though I'm afraid a path such as yours would never do; I offer no offense, but the pursuit of material gain is the antithesis of our goal.

ON THE GREAT SCHISM

There was a time, long before the Scourge and long before our order was formed, when Luung had an apprentice: a great dragon by the Name of Ri Mao. Though the legend is unclear (and none dare presume to ask Luung about this tale), it is known that Ri Mao and Luung had a falling out. Some believe that Ri Mao demanded knowledge of power that Luung, in his infinite wisdom, knew his young apprentice was not ready for. Whatever the reason, Ri Mao left Luung's tutelage in anger.

Years later, after our temple at Mount Xan was built, Ri Mao returned, and attempted to take control. He had his own followers with him, powerful adepts, and a battle ensued. In the end, we were victorious, with the help of our great master, and Ri Mao was banished from Cathay. It is believed he fled east, to the island nation of Jih'Po. To this day, we Monks must be wary of Ri Mao's agents, who work against his former master and us.

ON COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

Many believe that the Monk is a warrior, and that we indulge in violence. This is simply not true. We are renowned for our fighting abilities, but that is not what makes the Monk who he is. It is true that we train in a large variety of weapons and learn both armed and unarmed combat. But it is not an external enemy for whom we are preparing, but rather the enemy within.

To a Monk, the ability to fight is only a side effect of his training. We do not pride ourselves on our ability to inflict pain or cause suffering. Our abilities are merely a consequence of our efforts to reach the Way of the Dragon.

The underlying philosophy is hard to grasp. Some people even think that a Monk is a sort of "advanced Namegiver," one who wants to rule over his fellow Namegivers as a demi-Passion. A strange thought for us, believe me.

—Yan Goerm, Human Monk

ON THE TRAVELS OF A MONK

There comes a time in every Monk's life when he reaches a plateau in his training. Our mountainous sanctuary offers us the chance for quiet contemplation and peaceful training, but sometimes the isolation that was designed to relieve the Monk of distractions can become an even greater distraction. There is only so much one can learn through our methods; sometimes we must leave our temple and explore the world, to abandon any naïve conceptions we may hold and to experience life first hand rather than through observation.



The lengths of these journeys vary from Monk to Monk and depend upon the individual. The Monk may go wherever his feet feel like taking him and likewise may return at any time. A Monk most often embarks upon these journeys by himself, though it has been known for Monks to journey with one, two, or even sometimes three others.

Each Monk must design for himself a purpose for these journeys. The spiritual journey for the Monk is a personal matter, and no other can tell a Monk what he is to search for or even how to know when he has found it.

Not all who venture forth on these journeys return. Most certainly some die, but we have also received messages from those who wished to remain in the outside world. We cannot blame those who give up the way of the Monk. Our way is not for everyone; it requires a great deal of sacrifice. We do not pursue any pleasure of the flesh, we do not take time to enjoy art or song, and other than this festival once a year we do not eat but meager meals.

The most common reason those who leave choose not to return is from newfound friendships, and, most commonly, love.

There have been those who have fallen victim to greed and lust, using their abilities to further their petty ambitions. When we learn of such a Monk we send ten of our kind out to hunt him down and execute him. It is a painful duty to bear but we cannot allow our

teachings to further death and destruction. Fortunately, there have only been a few cases ever known to have happened, and it has never occurred in my lifetime.

ON BECOMING A MONK

Our temple accepts any who wish to join. The journey up Mount Xan is a treacherous one, so we do not receive visitors too often. But those who are serious about joining our order and dedicating themselves to a life of self-discipline are never turned away. The war has caused a greater influx from those who have been displaced from the fighting and who wish to remove themselves from the violence. We are always open to those who seek to fill the hollowness of their souls; people like you, merchant. Please, take no offense! But there is an emptiness within you that cannot be filled with the gold you seek. I'm sorry, I do not mean to sound patronizing, but when you are ready for the answers we have to give, all you need do is find your way to our monastery.

It is said that the Monks know which apprentice is seeking enlightenment and which one is looking for a way to become an unarmed warrior only, but I doubt that they can "feel" it. It's more likely that the not-so-dedicated youngsters will quit due to the hard training and harsh lifestyle they have to lead.

—Jel Lang, Human Scout

GAME INFORMATION

The Monk is a spiritual warrior, seeking to become a better fighter not to master his opponent but to master himself. The Monk never seeks battle if it can be avoided, but once engaged is a brutal and fearsome foe, deadly with a weapon but even deadlier unarmed.

Important Attributes: Dexterity, Willpower

Karma Ritual: To perform his Karma Ritual, the Monk fights unarmed against imaginary opponents. He fights the first few duels as silent, simple exercises. In the final duel of the ritual, the Monk provides acrobatic moves, blindingly quick strikes, and an incredible display of footwork. The ritual is complete when the last imaginary foe falls.

Half-Magic: The monk may use half-magic to recognize or recall various Cathayan philosophies and the wisdom of Luung as delivered down from ancient masters. Monks also use half-magic to recognize different Cathayan schools of martial arts, including those of other Disciplines. A Monk may make Perception-based Half-Magic Tests against the Physical Defense of a Monk whose movement he has studied to identify the other Monk's dominant animals and, with higher Result Levels, his specific Techniques.

TALENTS AND ABILITIES

INITIATE

Monk Exercises: Durability (8/6), Great Leap, Melee Weapons, Missile Weapons, Throwing Weapons

FIRST CIRCLE

Discipline Talents: Avoid Blow, Inner Strength, Karma Ritual, Meditate, Unarmed Combat

NOVICE

Crane Techniques: Distract, Parry, Riposte, Second Weapon

Panther Techniques: Anticipate Blow, Kip, Silent Walk, Spot Armor Flaw

Snake Techniques: Cobra Strike, Engaging Dance, Sprint, Tiger Spring

Tiger Techniques: Acrobatic Strike, Battle Shout, Down Strike, Lion Heart

SECOND CIRCLE

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.

Discipline Talent: Swift Kick

THIRD CIRCLE

Discipline Talent: Block and Counter

FOURTH CIRCLE

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Dexterity-only Tests.

Discipline Talent: Thread Weaving [Dragon Weaving]

JOURNEYMAN

FIFTH CIRCLE

Gain Confidence: Taking 1 Strain, the adept makes a Charisma Test against a target's Social Defense. If successful, the target is completely convinced the adept and his obvious companions will not harm or deceive him in any way for the next ten minutes. Any attacks or blatant lies end this effect immediately.

Discipline Talent: Joint Lock

SIXTH CIRCLE

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Willpower-only Tests.

Discipline Talent: Disarm

SEVENTH CIRCLE

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on [Special Use] Tests.

Discipline Talent: Second Attack

EIGHTH CIRCLE

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.

Discipline Talent: Takedown

WARDEN

Crane Masteries: Mind Blade, Missile Twister, Pin

Panther Masteries: Chameleon, Eagle Eye, Rushing Attack

Snake Masteries: Critical Hit, Quick Shot, Spirit Strike

Tiger Masteries: Frenzy, Momentum Attack, Weapon Breaker

NINTH CIRCLE

Follow In: Whenever he knocks an opponent down, the adept may take 1 Strain to make an immediate Dexterity Test against his opponent's Physical Defense. If successful, he has grappled the opponent. The Test Result Level determines if he remains standing, as normal.

Karma: The adept may spend 1 Karma Point on Recovery Tests.

Discipline Talent: Great Kick

TENTH CIRCLE

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.

Recovery: The adept adds +1 Recovery Test per day.

Discipline Talent: Resist Pain

ELEVENTH CIRCLE

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social and +1 to his Spell Defense.

Discipline Talent: Phantom Strike

TWELFTH CIRCLE

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.

Initiative: The adept adds +1 to his Initiative Step.

Discipline Talent: Weapon Ward

MASTER

Dragon Excellencies: Dragonfire, Dragonscales, Karma Cancel, Regeneration

THIRTEENTH CIRCLE

Physical Perfection: The adept substitutes his Inner Strength Step for Dexterity-only, Strength-only, and Toughness-only Tests.

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Spell Defense.

Karma: The adept adds +1 to his Karma Step.

Discipline Talent: Multi-Strike

FOURTEENTH CIRCLE

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Physical Defense.

Discipline Talent: Vital Strike

FIFTEENTH CIRCLE

Defense: The adept adds +1 to his Social and +1 to his Spell Defense.

Discipline Talent: Venom

SPECIAL RULES

Per the teachings of Luung, Monks mimic the styles of the four animals—Crane, Panther, Snake, and Tiger—on the path of the dragon. Only through understanding the ways of the animals can a Monk finally understand the way of the dragon. Each of the animals embodies a different concept of physical perfection, and each is related to an element.

Crane represents the element of air. Crane techniques are based on counter attacks, redirection, and weapon play to augment the Monk's unarmed abilities.

Panther represents the element of water. Panther techniques rely on stealth, movement, and a keen perception.

Snake represents the element of fire. Snake techniques rely on speed, precision, and clever maneuvering.

Tiger represents the element of earth. Tiger techniques are aggressive and straightforward, relying on overpowering the opponent.

Finally, **Dragon** represents the element of metal. Dragon techniques are the culmination of the other four techniques, mimicking the mighty dragon through understanding of the four animals.

The ways of the animals and the dragon require the Monk to follow different rules for choosing talents when advancing in Circle:

Talent Options

Monks do not have Talent Options like most other Disciplines. Instead, they have Monk Exercises, Animal (Crane, Panther, Snake, and Tiger) Techniques, Animal Masteries, and Dragon Excellencies. These act like pools of Talent Options. Talent from these pools are learned like Talent Options, but have a different availability than normal Talent Options.

From First Circle onwards, Monks can learn Monk Exercises. Exercises represent basic training, but are also the starting point for a Monk to branch out from his focus on Unarmed Combat.

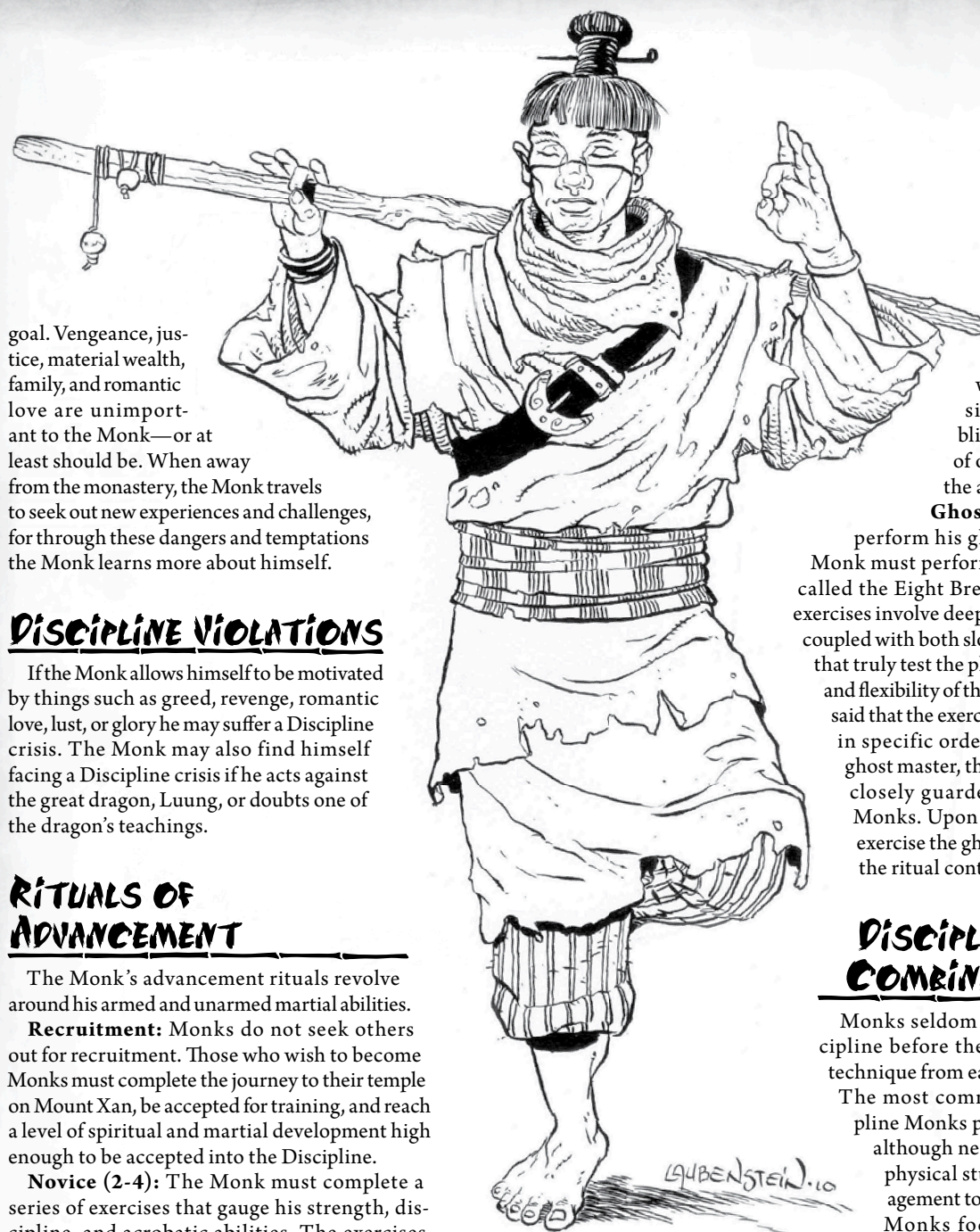
From Second Circle onwards, Animal Techniques become available. No new talents become available at Fifth Circle (as would be the case for other Disciplines), Monks continue to choose one new talent per Circle from Monk Exercises or Animal Techniques.

From Ninth Circle onwards, Animal Masteries become available to choose talents from. They represent more complex forms of the animal styles, are sometimes refinements of Techniques, sometimes more powerful general abilities along the way of the animal.

From Thirteenth Circle onwards, Dragon Excellencies become available. These are very powerful talents representing the Monk's success in understanding the dragon. However, because understanding the dragon requires understanding the animals, Dragon Excellencies can only be chosen if the Monk has studied the animals appropriately. A Monk must have chosen one Technique and one Mastery from each Animal to learn Dragon Excellencies. He can choose to do otherwise, for example leave an animal completely out of his selection, but if he does, he cannot learn Dragon Excellencies even if he reached Thirteenth Circle. He must continue choosing Animal styles.

ROLEPLAYING HINTS

Life for the Monk is a spiritual journey. Such things such as greed, revenge, or glory never motivate the Monk. For the Monk, spiritual perfection is more important than any other



goal. Vengeance, justice, material wealth, family, and romantic love are unimportant to the Monk—or at least should be. When away from the monastery, the Monk travels to seek out new experiences and challenges, for through these dangers and temptations the Monk learns more about himself.

DISCIPLINE VIOLATIONS

If the Monk allows himself to be motivated by things such as greed, revenge, romantic love, lust, or glory he may suffer a Discipline crisis. The Monk may also find himself facing a Discipline crisis if he acts against the great dragon, Luung, or doubts one of the dragon's teachings.

RITUALS OF ADVANCEMENT

The Monk's advancement rituals revolve around his armed and unarmed martial abilities.

Recruitment: Monks do not seek others out for recruitment. Those who wish to become Monks must complete the journey to their temple on Mount Xan, be accepted for training, and reach a level of spiritual and martial development high enough to be accepted into the Discipline.

Novice (2-4): The Monk must complete a series of exercises that gauge his strength, discipline, and acrobatic abilities. The exercises increase in difficulty as the adept rises in Circle.

Journeyman (5-8): The Monk must spar with several opponents simultaneously. The number of opponents increases as the adept rises in Circle.

Warden (9-12):

The Monk must spar with several opponents simultaneously while blindfolded. The number of opponents increases as the adept rises in Circle.

Ghost Master Ritual:

To perform his ghost master ritual the Monk must perform a series of exercises called the Eight Breaths of Luung. These exercises involve deep, meditative breathing coupled with both slow and fast movements that truly test the physical strength, speed, and flexibility of the monk to the limit. It is said that the exercises must be performed in specific orders for each individual ghost master, thus the details are often closely guarded secrets among the Monks. Upon completion of the last exercise the ghost master appears and the ritual continues as normal.

DISCIPLINE COMBINATIONS

Monks seldom pick up a second Discipline before they have mastered one technique from each of the four animals.

The most common secondary Discipline Monks pursue is the Beastlord, although nearly as many find their physical study of animals encouragement to become a Beastmaster. Monks focusing on swordplay often pick up the Sword Dancer Discipline, while those that strive for intellectual discipline become Wizards. Monks never follow the Thief, Merchant, or Troubadour Disciplines.