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PROLOGUE

Once, long before the time of our fathers and grandfathers, the land was whole.

It was a rich and abundant land, a land of rolling hills and pristine forests, and its people were many and exotic. Some arrived on ships from distant lands and chose to stay. Some were descended from the hill-folk, and could recite the names of their ancestors beyond the most ancient histories. War was not unknown, but peace was the rule: a peace born of strength and abundance.

Nowhere was the glory of that age greater than in Serpenthelm, the keep of the Dragon Clan. Forgotten sculptors fashioned its walls with such cunning that the peasantry believed them alive; a forgotten shogun forged its laws both strict and fair; forgotten masters trained its warriors in fighting techniques subtle and fierce. Even its wisest scholars wrote proudly on sheaves of gilded parchment that the strength and honour of the Dragon would endure forever....

...and then, in the span of one year—one sowing, one harvest, one terrible winter—it was all lost.

Nobody knows now what they were, demons or spirits or monsters; nobody knew then, either. They were simply the Horde, black and inhuman, and they rose in thousands and tens of thousands from beyond the northern borders, somewhere in the trackless mountains. Where they passed, nothing lived. Even the trees withered and died. There were no bodies, or survivors to bury them.

Tarrant the Elder ruled Serpenthelm in those days, and he was no coward. When he learned of the Horde threat, the

most valiant of his samurai rode forth to meet them at first light, hundreds of heroes beneath hundreds of fluttering Dragon banners. It was two weeks before the first and only warrior returned, slumped over his saddle, his dark blood caked over dozens of vicious, ragged wounds. He was quite dead. Somehow, his horse had fled far and fast enough to escape its rider's fate. Tarrant knew in that instant that the Dragon Clan's only hope of survival lay in a similar flight.

A week later, the walls of Serpenthelm—walls that had never fallen to a siege—were abandoned, and the Clan of the Dragon began its long march south. As the months of ceaseless travel passed, the great column of horses, wagons and men swelled with refugees, those who knew the proud Dragon would never flee an opponent who might be beaten. Those who chose to stay and defend their lands were honoured. Nobody ever heard from them again. Always, the scouts sent north failed to return, and always, the Dragon marched south.

At the end of the sixth month, they crossed the final ridge and saw the ocean. The Dragon had nowhere left to run.

Tarrant the Elder had, of course, foreseen this. He set his scholars to devise an escape for his people, and there had been plenty of time for argument and debate during the long march. But there was no time to build ships and nowhere to hide. The greater part of the Dragon's army had already fallen in the first disastrous ride against the Horde. Tarrant's only hope rested in a locked, silver-bound chest within his private wagon: the Serpent Orb, most ancient of the Dragon Clan's treasures and the symbol of his leadership. Some tales claimed that the Orb could summon the spirit of the Dragon itself, if the need were great enough. Few believed these tales, but the need was indeed great. As his weary people prepared for a final stand against the Horde, Tarrant passed leadership of the clan to his son, Tarrant the Younger.

Then he stood alone--to attempt the impossible, and to die. To his last moments, there were no witnesses. We know only that he succeeded. The gathered refugees heard the crash of the Dragon's fury as a terrible wall of air smashed men, horses, and wagons to the ground. Everywhere, the land seemed to writhe in agony. Many of those who survived the long and gruelling march were crushed beneath cascades of stone, or disappeared into chasms that appeared beneath their feet. The rest huddled together and prayed for deliverance.

When the quakes subsided, the survivors of the Dragon's wrath could barely move for fear. It took all of the younger Tarrant's courage to begin directing the construction of shelters from the remnants of the train. If the Horde had come upon them, they would have met with no resistance. But the Horde never came.

It was then—surveying the broken remains of his people—that Tarrant the Younger realised they were Dragon no more. It was something in the eyes of every child who had seen his home abandoned to evil; something in the stance of every warrior who knew his bravest comrades had fought, and died, rather than run away. They belonged now to the earth, not to the heavens. Yet they would still be fierce, and they would toil in their new lands with pride. Out of this humility and grim determination, the Serpent Clan—our clan—was born.

Today, if you travel north beyond the mountains, you will reach a ragged cliff overlooking a swirling, vicious channel, full of rocks and debris. On a clear day, you may glimpse the outline of the opposite shore, but more likely it will be cloaked in the mists. The Dragon's fury broke the land as well as our people, and our ancestral home lies across the impassable waters of the channel. Whether the Horde still waits on those foreign shores, none can say.

We think about it less every day. This is our home now.

Welcome to Battle Realms!

You visit this tavern in dark days, stranger. Outside, you will face the whims of bandits, raiders and warlocks; match wits with the cunning, the strong and the terrible; parley with heroes, legends and mysteries. Some of these will undoubtedly try to kill you. Why? Because I see in your eyes that you aspire to more than the life of a peasant. Dreams are dangerous, my friend; more dangerous, even, than those who wish you dead.

If you hope to survive your first night in a Wolf encampment or a Serpent bathhouse, you must learn much, and quickly. Most importantly, you must understand the natures of the Great Clans and the intrigues that have racked them, these past three hundred years. Let us speak of things as they are.

The Serpent Clan is descended from the ancient Clan of the Dragon, and has always been the dominant power in our land. With little but the skin on their backs and the will to survive, its ancestors carved a nation from these hills. Perhaps they learned to be harsh from the harshness of their toil. Their rule has always been strict and unyielding, and their fighting men—I cannot call them “warriors”—prefer hard coin to honour. There is a saying: “If you meet a bandit on the road, pay him and be rid of him. Ask a Serpent for help, and you will pay two bandits that day. Nor will you ever be rid of them.”

Harsh the Serpent may be, but at least they kept order while the Oja dynasty, those of Tarrant's blood, held the throne. That is no longer the case. Since the accursed brat Kenji murdered his father, and his brother proved too stupid to live...well, there has been no son of the Dragon on the throne for years. What was once a deadly army is now a motley collection of raiders and thieves, all trying to kill one another before a Lotus or a Wolf can finish the job. But Serpent still harbours great men with aspirations—Lords Shinja and Otomo spring to mind—and I doubt if they wish to bury their blades just yet. Except, perhaps, in each other's throats.

The Wolf Clan, too, has had its share of troubles since they arrived on our shores. They are a strange and rugged people, with their howling moonlight rituals, cryptic priestesses, and mad, brutal sports. Have you ever seen a game of Wolfball? No? Be glad of it. It involves an enormous iron ball and too many battle-frenzied Wolves, and frankly, it's more dangerous for spectators than for players. Because a Wolf knows when to duck, you see.

The Wolves once lived in relative harmony with their Serpent masters and the strange Lotus, but that was long, long ago. A dispute over mining rights, a bit of backstabbing, and suddenly there was open war between Wolf and Lotus. Serpent threw in with Lord Zymeth and his sorcerous lot, and a year later the Wolves were working as slaves in the Lotus shale mines.

Personally, I would sooner enslave a dragon to serve ale than a Wolf to break shale. It took thirty years, but the Wolf Clan revolted against their overseers with everything they had: pick-axes, sledgehammers, even their bare fists. They've slipped back into the forests now, but they can still crush a Lotus with one mighty blow from those hammers, and often do. I doubt old Grayback's war will end until he's disembowelled every Lotus in the land, but whether he can achieve such a goal... ah, that is the question, is it not?

I know little of the Lotus Clan, nor do I care to know more. They've always kept to the High Plateau, mostly because nobody else wants it. Their magic is as cruel and diseased as their hearts; sickness seems a badge of honour in their twisted world. The more powerful they are, the worse their afflictions. Except for Lord Zymeth and his terrible captains—Issyl, Koril—they seem different, somehow. Perhaps their plagues cannot consume what is no longer truly alive. Or perhaps corruption itself cannot abide the taste of such evil meat.

If you meet a Lotus in combat who bears a blade or staff with unearthly grace, slaying with the casual instincts of a spider,

be thankful that you face a mere foot soldier in their ranks. During the war against Wolf, I saw horrors such as no man might ever forget. I saw warriors with lungs so rotten that rasping machines forced air into their fevered bodies. I saw shambling monsters whose bellies crawled with writhing, hungry maggots. Once, I saw a Wolf's arm eaten away by the black, bubbling phlegm coughed up by a man you would've sworn was on his deathbed. But they do not die easily, these abominations. Imagine the beast that could survive such horrible plagues. Now ask whether your dull blade can teach fear to such a beast...

You wish to know more of the Dragon Clan? Ah, you have a taste for history, I see. The Serpent have not borne that name since the Breaking of the Land, nor do they care to hear it spoken. It represents certain... how shall I say it? Beliefs. Beliefs and principles that were forgotten long ago, yet not so long ago that their absence is not felt in the heart. No, I would not speak that name too loudly.

Yet the stories are still good for an evening's entertainment, if you have no Serpents at your table. The Dragon once trained archers who could shoot off a man's ear at three hundred paces; not like these Serpent drunkards with their muskets. Their swordsmen were no scoundrels looking for an easy mark, either. They were masters of all the arts, physical and spiritual, and could strike with mind as well as body. Some even employed the airy tricks of Kabuki in their graceful lunges and parries. It is said their samurai never knew defeat, only perfection and glory, whether in life or in death...

Ah, but who could lead us back to those days? The Dragon is gone from the hearts of the people, my friend. And it is best to speak of things as they are.



SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

Before installing Battle Realms, you may want to make sure your system meets or exceeds these specifications.

Minimum Requirements:

- PII 400 Mhz Celeron or equivalent
- Windows® 98/00/ME/XP
- 64 MB RAM
- DirectX 8 compliant 16MB VRAM 3D AGP accelerated video card
- DirectX 8 compliant sound card
- DirectX 8 or higher
- 4X CD ROM Drive
- 600 MB hard drive space
- Keyboard and Mouse

Recommended System:

- PIII 750Mhz or equivalent
- Windows® 98/00/ME/XP
- 128 MB of RAM
- DirectX 8 compliant 32MB VRAM 3D AGP accelerated video card
- DirectX 8 compliant sound card
- DirectX 8 or higher (included)
- 4X CD ROM Drive
- 600 MB hard drive space
- Keyboard and Mouse

INSTALLING THE GAME

Place the Battle Realms CD in your CD-ROM drive. When the InstallShield Wizard activates, it will ask you to choose between the Complete Installation and a Custom Installation (if InstallShield doesn't start automatically, just double-click on the icon for your CD-ROM drive, then double-click on the file, "setup.exe").

This is a crash course in all that it takes to survive in the world of Battle Realms — navigating, commanding troops, and building a prosperous clan. These concepts are covered in full detail in later sections of this manual. If you like, you can use this section to get right into Battle Realms, and then draw on the rest of this manual for reference as needed.

STARTING THE GAME

The first thing you will see upon starting Battle Realms is the main menu. To begin a single-player game, click on New Game, or choose Multiplayer to compete against other humans.

New Game

Here you have the choice of Kenji's Journey or Skirmish. Kenji's Journey puts you in the role of Kenji, Dragon Clan prince and the last of Tarrant's line, returning from shameful exile to seek his destiny. Skirmish gives you a fast battle against computer-controlled forces.

Multiplayer

Selecting Multiplayer gives you the choice of a LAN game, if you have a Local Area Network, or — if you're on-line — playing over the Internet, through GameSpy or at a specific IP address. When you choose one of these, you must first create an identity for yourself by choosing a name, skill level, clan, and a colour to identify your people.

SETTING OPTIONS

Before starting a game, you may want to choose Options to adjust the game settings — to work better with your machine, or just to get the game the way you like it.

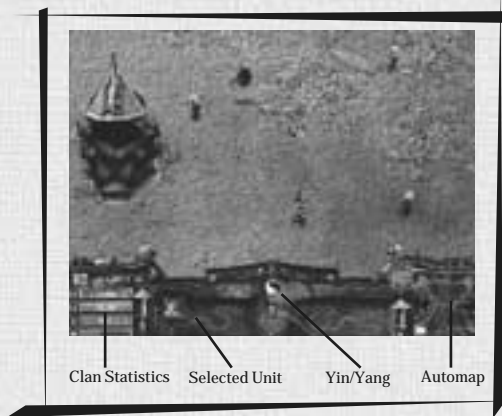
Game Settings adjusts the game experience itself, its speed and difficulty. If you uncheck the Mature option, you will no longer have to see the game's more graphic violence.

Video Options adjust the game's appearance. Resolution and Level of Detail can also affect the game's performance — lowering them may help the game to run better, if it runs slowly or haltingly on your computer.

Sound Options sets the volume you can adjust music, sound effects, and dialogue independently, or all together.

VIEWING THE WORLD

All right, so you've started a game. On your screen before you is the world of Battle Realms. Most of the screen is taken up by the 3D view of the world, showing the landscape and its inhabitants. The bottom fifth or so shows information about the world: unit and resource counts are on the left, selected units are shown in the middle, and a map of the world is on the right.



There are several ways to control your view. One is by moving the mouse cursor to the edge of the screen — the view will track over in that direction. The arrow keys (←↑→↓) will also move the view (shift+arrow keys moves it slowly), and you can click or drag on the mini-map to jump or move the view where you want it. If you hold down alt + left-button and drag, you can get a cursor that moves the view slow or fast depending on how close it is to the starting cursor location.

TAKING COMMAND

As a general rule, the left mouse button selects units, and the right mouse button tells them what to do. When you click on something with the right mouse button, the meaning is context-sensitive, which means it will do only the appropriate thing, depending on where you clicked. For example, if you have a peasant selected, right-clicking on the ground makes him walk there. Right-clicking on a rice-paddy means "harvest the rice," right-clicking a burning building means "put out the fire," and so on.

Selecting units

Left-click on a unit to select it (notice that the unit is now highlighted). You can select more than one unit. Try holding down the left button and dragging the mouse — this creates a box, and any units inside the box will be selected together. You can also select multiple units by holding down shift and left-clicking additional units. Any unit you click while holding down shift will be added to the group of selected units — or, if it's already selected, it will de-select. Additionally, double-clicking a unit will select all of that unit type in the vicinity.

Any unit or group of units can be made into a team. Hold control and press a number (e.g., control+3), and any of the units you have selected will be labelled as part of that team. You'll see a number appear next to each one if you have it right. Now you can select that same group at any time, just by pressing that number. Holding down the alt key while hitting the group number will jump you to their location on the map. Also, with a group of soldiers selected, holding shift and pressing a number will add units to the group associated with that number.

Moving Units

To move a unit, select it and then right-click on the place you want it to go. You can also right-click on the mini-map to tell a unit where to go, so you can move units around the world without scrolling the view.

If you hold down the alt key and then right-click, the unit will run instead of walk (this can sap their stamina). Double-clicking the right mouse-button has the same effect.

If you hold down the ctrl key and then right-click, the unit will execute a forced move, which means that they will ignore all units on the way to their target.

You can also queue up movement commands so a unit will walk along a given route. Select a unit, hold down the shift key, and right-click in several different places on the terrain. The unit will then walk to each point in the order you clicked them. An advanced variant of this is to queue up action commands. For example, if you select a peasant, hold shift and click on a rice field, then a well, then a Dojo, he will harvest a sack of rice, drop it off, gather a pail of water, drop it off, and then go train to be a Spearman.

You can always stop a unit in place by pressing S, cancelling all movement orders.

COMBAT

Your clansmen are always ready for battle — simply select a warrior or warriors, then right-click on an enemy unit and they will attack at once. Or you can right-click a building, and your clansmen will set about demolishing it.

But there is more to command than all-out assault. By holding the G key and right-clicking, you can designate a building, unit, or place for them to guard. Your troops will then defend it to the death.



Pressing N will tell any selected soldiers to stand their ground in a fight. They will not move, but they will attack any units that come within their range.

Pressing F and right-clicking orders a forced attack—your warriors will attack wherever you click, even an empty patch of ground.

RESOURCES

All peoples need food, shelter, and training to support them. Under the right circumstances, a shower of rain can decide a battle as effectively as a cavalry charge.



A good leader will make the fullest use of the available resources, and understand how they interrelate. Water is needed to drink, but it serves other purposes as well it can make rice grow, help thirsty warriors train, and put out fires.

In this sense, Peasants are the bedrock of any clan. While warriors and heroes gain all the glory, peasants take care of the necessities: food, water, and shelter, and serve as the raw trainees who can become warriors ... even samurai.

Peasants dwell in Peasant Huts, which produce new peasants automatically at a rate that varies with population size. They are born fastest when you have only a few units, but the bigger your clan, the slower new peasants arrive. Peasant huts are essential to your survival if you lose your last one, your clan will never grow again unless you can build a new one.

Peasants harvest the raw materials that support your clan: rice and water. To set your peasants harvesting rice, select them and right-click on a rice field and they will begin collecting rice, carrying it to the nearest hut to be stored. To collect water, the procedure is the same right-click on a pond or well, and the peasants do the rest.

Remember that rice is a living resource. Rainfall makes rice grow faster, and you can speed the growth of a rice field by having peasants water it. Select a peasant and either press W or the "Water Rice" button and right-click on a rice field or select the water rice icon in the middle window of the interface and select where you would like to water, and the peasant will take water there instead of to the huts.

HORSES

Peasants can also capture wild horses just select a peasant and right-click on a wild horse. After a few tries, the peasant should be able to capture the horse so it can be taken back to the Stables to be tamed.



(Note: if you are in the Wolf Clan, you will find horses useful in a quite different way, as food for your animal friends. Take your horses to your Wolves' Den.)

Once you have the horse trained and stabled, military units can come to the stable and train as mounted soldiers (see Training Units, below). A mounted unit can dismount again by pressing D or by selecting the Dismount button found in the middle window of the interface when the unit is selected. Anyone can mount an unattended horse, but if a tame horse is left unattended for too long, it becomes wild again.

A mounted unit has all sorts of advantages: in movement, hand-to-hand combat, and the distance they can see. Peasants can also use horses as pack animals to carry more water and rice.

BUILDING STRUCTURES

For any clan, buildings make the difference between a ragtag settlement and a mighty ruling dynasty. They have many functions, from storing resources, to training new kinds of units, to symbolising the grandeur of your chosen clan.

Your peasants are in charge of building structures. When you select a peasant, you will see icons along the bottom of your screen showing the kinds of buildings you can currently build. Move the cursor over any icon to see the building name and its cost. If you don't have enough resources to construct a building, its icon will appear greyed out.



To build a structure, select a peasant, then click one of the building icons from the list. Notice now as you move your mouse over the landscape, you'll see the clan banner if the building can be built in the present location, a ghost-image of the building will appear.

Right-click and hold the right mouse-button down and move the mouse to decide which way the building should face. You can speed up construction by assigning more peasants to the task, by selecting them and right-clicking on the building site.

You can select buildings in the same way as you select units, but only one at a time. Note that every building has a gather point — when units exit the building (say, after undergoing training) the gather point is where they go to await new orders. If a building's gather point is placed on another building, then any units emerging from that building will attempt to enter the building that the gather point is set to.

To set a building's gather point, select the building and then right-click on the landscape or another building. On a peasant hut, the gather point is where the newly ready peasant stands waiting for his first task. If you place the gather point on a rice field, peasants will emerge and immediately begin to gather rice from that field.

TRAINING UNITS

Many buildings in Battle Realms are training centres where your clansmen can go to acquire new skills.

To train a unit at any building, select the unit and move the mouse cursor over that building. You will see a message showing what the unit will become and how much the training will cost in a tool tip in the lower left. Then, simply right-click on the building. Even veteran warriors can learn new skills few have attained mastery of all the fighting disciplines.

Every unit is defined by its training history. All warriors were once untrained peasants, and the combination of training in different disciplines its unit alchemy is what distinguishes a Chemist from a Kabuki Warrior.

A peasant that receives training in areas A and B would be a different class of unit than a peasant trained in B and C. If they each trained again, so that they both had trained in A, B, and C, they would be the same class of unit again.

Training orders can be queued up. For example, if you select three Dragon Warriors and click on an Alchemist Hut, they will train one at a time there until all of them have become Samurai.

UPGRADING UNITS

Some buildings can be upgraded with superior training Techniques so that the units trained there receive extra advantages. Each building displays these techniques as icons in the information panel, greyed out until they are available. You can acquire these advantages by spending yin or yang (see "Yin and Yang," on page 20).

Individual units can also upgrade by acquiring Battle Gear at certain buildings or from certain other units, at a cost of rice and water. These may take any form from meditative disciplines or the latest in alchemical trickery. Select the unit, and toggle it on or off by pressing B, or clicking on the Battle Gear's icon. Using it may cost that warrior stamina, but the results can be well worth it.



Here we'll take a closer look at the game screen, and what each element there means.

Notice that as you move the mouse over different parts of the screen, a label pops up in the lower left corner of the game view to identify it.



Many important game commands can be accessed through both an onscreen icon and a keyboard shortcut. A full list of shortcuts can be found in Appendix A.

SELECTED UNITS

As you remember, you can select units by left-clicking on them, or left-clicking and dragging a box around them.

Selected units are highlighted by four brackets around them. You can also see two horizontal bars beneath it. The top, green, bar shows how much health the unit has left; the bottom bar, blue, shows stamina. When you select a peasant, there is a third, white, resource bar that shows how much rice or water he is carrying.



In the wide panel at the bottom of the screen, you will see an icon representing each unit you have selected, with its health and stamina bars. By clicking on one of these icons, you can select a unit by itself.

To select multiple units of the same type on the screen at the same time, double left-click on a unit.

SELECTED BUILDINGS

Buildings are selected in the same way as units. When selected, a building is highlighted, and displays a bar underneath it showing whether it is in good repair. If anyone is inside the building training, their progress is shown as a blue line.

In the panel at the bottom of the screen, the same information is displayed, as well as icons showing which Techniques are available for the building (they will be greyed out unless you have enough yin or yang to afford them).



A few special buildings show different information. A Watchtower displays a button to make the unit exit the Watchtower. Each Watchtower also has a special power which can be used when it is occupied by a unit. A Keep shows the Zen Masters, Monks, or Ninja that can be summoned, and how much it costs to summon each one. A Peasant Hut has a button to turn peasant creation on or off (note: you must always have at least one peasant hut that still generates peasants).




RESOURCE INFORMATION

At the bottom of your screen, on the left side, you will find statistics about your clan and its resources: rice, water, and people. On each line, the left-hand number shows how much of each resource you have; the right-hand number is the maximum amount you can currently store or sustain. The moving bar at the bottom shows how close you are to producing your next peasant.



EVENT WARNINGS



A small icon will pop up in the centre of the information panel, to alert you to certain events. Just click on the icon and it will take you to the location of the event. If there is more than one occurrence of the event, clicking the button again will cycle you to the next event.

-  Idle Peasant: This symbol appears whenever there is a peasant who has nothing to do.
-  Building on Fire: This appears whenever one of your buildings is on fire.
-  Combat: This appears whenever one of your clansmen is in a fight.

THE MINI-MAP

The Mini-Map is more than just a diagram of your territory. It shows where your units are in the world, and flashes an alert at the location of any event warning that occurs. You can use the mini-map to move your view around by left-clicking where you want to see or dragging the view indicator to that position. Likewise, you can tell your selected units to walk anywhere in the world, by just right-clicking on the mini-map where you want them to go.

The LOOK HERE and ATTACK HERE Map Communicators

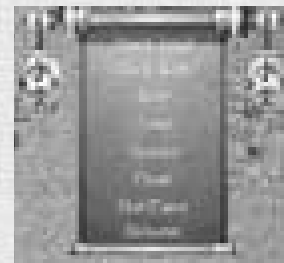
-  Clicking on this icon, then on the gamescreen or mini-map, sends a message to all allies in a multiplayer game to look at a location indicated on the mini-map
-  Clicking on this icon, then on the gamescreen or mini-map, sends a message to all allies in a multiplayer game that a battle is (or will be) occurring at that location.

YIN AND YANG

In the centre of the information panel is the yin/yang symbol. As you accumulate more yin or yang energy, it will appear to the left or right of the symbol. Yin shows as black beads to the right of the symbol; yang, as white beads to the left.

OPTIONS MENU

By clicking on the menu button at the lower left, or pressing <Esc>, you can bring up the Options menu. This allows you to Save, Load, Quick Save, and Quick Load, display your strategic Goals, or Quit the game.



You can also choose Options to bring up a menu of Game Settings, to adjust the controls, look, sound, or gameplay options.



What are Yang and Yin? More than just life and death, warm and cold, light and shadow—these definitions are far too simple. They are energies, philosophies, spiritual paths and more. Together they embody the whole universe, and as one waxes, the other wanes.

The shaded side of a mountain, the winter that presages spring, the decay that underlies all life—Yin is all these things and more. How to accumulate Yin? Promote chaos and decay. Train your clansmen to destroy and disrupt, be bold sending them forth to ravage the land, and you will be rewarded.

Bright sunlight on clear water, or the force that drives blades of grass to crack stone and seek the sun—these are elements of Yang. How to follow Yang? Promote growth and vitality, expand your clan and eliminate its enemies in the name of prosperity.

As a player you can use these energies in the service of your struggle. At the top of your information panel, you will see a Yin/Yang symbol. Yin energies will accumulate to the right of it, as black beads, and yang energies will be on the left, as white beads. At first each will come easily, but the more you have, the harder it is to accumulate.

The Dragon and Wolf clans follow the path of Yang, while Serpent and Lotus have Yin as their very essence. By your actions you can become stronger in the energies of one or the other, but not both, for you cannot embody both principles at once.

Using Yin and Yang

You will find that following either path makes you stronger, drawing allies to your side, and inspiring them to strike with greater fury in your service.

At the buildings where you train units, yin and yang can be used to further your understanding of fighting disciplines—perhaps in improved metalworking techniques for forging blades, or a mental technique for focusing chi. Likewise, your clan's Zen Masters have the ability to draw on the clan's yin or yang energy to become more powerful.

Select a hero or a building, and you will see icons showing the techniques they have available—click on the icon to activate it. Each one costs a certain amount of energy, and they will be greyed-out unless you have enough yin or yang to use them.

It is important to protect your small settlement at all costs if you lose your last peasant and peasant hut, you will have no way to make more, and the battle will be lost.

To guard against this, you must take care of your buildings. Your peasants can repair structures select a peasant and press R or the "Repair" button and right-click on a damaged building, and they will do the rest. Alternatively, selecting a single peasant will reveal a repair button in his "build menu." You can add more peasants to the job to make it go faster.

When a building is on fire, an icon will appear on the information panel to warn you click on it to be taken right there. Select your peasants, right-click on the burning building, and they will fetch water to put it out.

Constructing and manning Watchtowers is crucial to keeping your village intact. They extend your vision to provide early warning of attack, and provide a deadly vantage-point for your units with ranged attacks. Watchtowers also come equipped with a special ability that offers other combat advantages, depending on your clan. Be sure to look at the information panel when the tower is selected.

Watchtowers are almost useless without a soldier to man them. Putting a melee combatant in the tower will unlock the tower's special ability, but putting a missile user in the tower provides some deadly firepower as well. Only one soldier can go into a Watchtower, so choose wisely.



OVERVIEW OF THE CLANS

Within the borders of this broken land, three clans maintain an uneasy coexistence, fraught with tension and, at times, slavery and open war. The Wolf Clan in the northwest, the Lotus Clan high on their northern plateau, and the Serpent Clan in the fertile lowlands. And always, at least in some minds, there is the ghost of a fourth clan, the lost Dragon Clan, forefathers of the Serpent.

Despite their proximity, no three peoples could be more different. As yet there is no clear victor in this three-handed struggle; alliances and enmities are unstable, and you never know who or what might be massing on your borders. If you are to survive in this world, you must study your enemies and your friends alike: know their ways, their warriors, and their weaknesses.

DRAGON CLAN

Today the Dragon Clan is little more than a few old tales told in the village square, a subject for scholarly histories and a legacy of lost ideals. But in the time of Tarrant the Elder and his forefathers, the Dragon was a mighty shogunate where honour, discipline and fairness ruled. By taking the Dragon as their totem, this clan set themselves the highest possible ideal of wisdom, honour, and ferocity in battle.



Every member of the Dragon Clan, from the peasant to the samurai, knew his role and lived it to perfection, whether it meant toiling in the fields as the seasons turned, or training year-round and dying a glorious death in battle. Nor were they without culture, for their geisha were as unsurpassed in beauty and the gentler arts as the samurai were in battle.

When the Horde came and the land was Broken, somehow the old Dragon Clan died, and those who lived on became the Serpent. But the Dragon may come again one day, though in these times we fear even to hope for such things. Until then, we tell the old tales, we speak the words, and we remember...

DRAGON UNITS

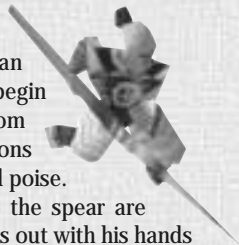


Peasant: *"Honour belongs to the lowly, as well as to the great."*

Dragon Clan peasants are a simple lot; in floppy hats and roughspun tunics, they work ceaselessly to harvest the necessities of life. Yet each knows that his toil keeps the Clan alive as surely as the bright blades of the samurai, and that he too may someday become a warrior.

Spearman: *"I am the weapon. My naginata is merely an ally."*

Dragon Clan peasants who show an aptitude for close-quarters fighting begin their training with the humble spear. From the dojo master, they learn the foundations of the martial arts: strength, speed, and poise. Opponents who pay attention only to the spear are often surprised when a Spearman lashes out with his hands and feet in sharp, accurate strikes.



The spear is not the quickest of weapons, although its reach helps when assaulting foes on higher ground. Nor is the Spearman the most skilled of fighters. However, his training is simple and adaptable, forming the basis for the more advanced techniques of the Dragon.

Stun Strike: Spearman who spend time in meditation at the Shrine may learn to strike with such speed and force as to render their opponents helpless with pain.

Whirling Spear: When the Fireworks Factory fuses black powder with a spear, the result is a whirling terror that sprays nearby foes with a shower of stinging sparks.

Archer: *"When seen by the hawk, the rabbit's life is ended. When my arrow flies, my enemy is already dead."*



Those who train as Archers of the Dragon Clan—usually peasants with a gift for hunting—must possess many talents, the least of which is incredibly keen vision. Far from being weaklings or cowards, Archers must possess great strength of arm to draw their enormous bows, and great strength of will to hold steady as the enemy bears down upon them. As long as they remain rested and calm, Archers' arrows strike with otherworldly force.

However, this deadly proficiency comes at a price. A Dragon Archer never panics or abandons his weapon, and his mighty bow makes a poor staff. Nor can he wear armour, lest it interfere with his delicate aim, or numb him to the changing winds. A lone Archer on the battlefield is in a precarious situation indeed.

Zen Arrows: At the Shrine, an archer may literally become one with his weapons. This allows him to glimpse the area surrounding his fallen arrows. However, he must remain perfectly still to maintain such focus.

Fire Arrows: The Fireworks Factory manufactures flaming arrows that quickly reduce buildings to ashes. These tiny torches are more infuriating than dangerous to the living.

Chemist: *"Let my foes perish in sulphur and smoke; for them, the underworld will hold no surprises!"*



Some peasants, though quick of mind and keen of eye, just aren't cut out for the traditional battlefield. These often become Chemists, learning to turn nature's humble herbs and minerals into healing salves and beautiful fireworks. Both talents have their wartime uses, as the Chemist devises screaming rockets to rain down upon his foes, or employs his medicines to speed the healing of nearby allies.

Chemists are eccentric lovers of pyrotechnics, not sturdy fighting men; they stand little chance in a toe-to-toe fight. Yet their unorthodox weapons and giddy, cackling enthusiasm for explosives has unnerved more than one battle-hardened Ronin, and turned the tide of more than one battle.

Mandrake Spores: Chemists who meditate at their clan's Shrine gain certain herbal secrets. This soporific powder lowers enemies' defenses, lulling them until they struggle to keep awake.

Starburst Rocket: A lone Chemist in his laboratory may craft dangerous rockets. A Chemist with a Fireworks Factory at his disposal is like a mad child in the Land of Flaming Toys.

Dragon Warrior: ***"The Dragon lives in me, tooth and claw and bone. Dare you, then, to wake a Dragon?"***

The Dragon Warrior is the purest incarnation of the Dragon's ferocious spirit. Disdaining armour, he fights bare-chested without fear, protected only by his lightning reflexes and the silver arm-guards that represent his pride and honour. His sword slices through the air and his enemies without hesitation, its tempered steel matching the steel within. Even his allies taste the courage of the Dragon and fight more fiercely when he leaps into action.



So complete is this fighter's embodiment of rage that he can project it through his blade, striking enemies from afar. Still, he prefers to defeat opponents up close. It is simply his way.

Chi Shield: By meditating at his patrons shrine, the Dragon Warrior learns to balance his anger with inner peace, thus attaining the Dragon's invulnerability to harm—for as long as he can focus on peaceful thoughts, and resist the urge to attack.

Flaming Sword: The masters of Fireworks can imbue the Dragon Warriors sword with an affinity for searing flames. In battle, his inner fire does the rest.

Kabuki Warrior: ***"Care you, good lords, for an amusing show? Allow me to show you your doom."***



The Dragon Clan has always understood combat to be an art: passionate, inventive, beautiful. None understand this better than the Kabuki Warrior, whose skills with illusion and the blade meet in a flowing aesthetic of death. He is a master at luring his opponents into deadly errors, and strikes in close with steel, or at a distance with a deadly magical powder. Yet his lust for battle never diminishes his lust for life, and his sleight-of-hand is ever a source of simple entertainment and joy to the peasantry.

Kabuki is an art of extravagant balance, and the Kabuki Warrior is a balanced combatant, quick and flexible, neither cautious nor foolhardy. Few care to face him in combat; the threat of humiliation is, perhaps, worse than the fear of death.

Stardust: Through meditation at the Shrine, the Kabuki Warrior learns the secrets of illusion; this sparkling dust leaves missile-using opponents dazzled and unable to aim accurately through its cloud.

Flash Powder: Originally a tool of the stage magician, flash powder's ability to leave enemies staggering and blind is magic enough for the battlefield.



Powder Keg Cannoneer:

"Warlocks? Ha! I eat warlocks for breakfast. And that's only to work up an appetite."

Dragon tacticians disdain firearms as crude and inflexible: foolish weapons borne only by fools. On the other hand, they have long recognised the usefulness of artillery on the battlefield. The result of this duality is the Powder Keg Cannoneer. These elite fighters spend half of their time training with their unique weapon, a small cannon that launches kegs packed with gunpowder. The other half is spent eating, for considerations of strength aside it takes a man of immense proportions to withstand the recoil of such a cannon. The very best Cannoneers are former sumo champions; one may still see them salting the ground to ward off evil spirits and ensure their safety, just as they once did in the wrestling ring.

The sight of a crew of tremendously fat men lumbering towards the battlefield has, on occasion, incited jeers and laughter from foolish opponents. The laughter stops when cannon charges begin tearing apart buildings as easily as men.

Indirect Fire: The cannon is difficult to handle accurately, even at close range. Yet, with meditation (and a double charge of gunpowder), the Cannoneer learns to fire far beyond the bounds of sight anywhere an ally can shout and be heard.

Shrapnel Keg: Cannoneers and Chemists get along quite well, and the demented geniuses of the Fireworks Factory take special delight in assembling flesh- and bone-shredding novelty.

Samurai: ***"I am the Dragon's honour, and nothing more. You are nothing at all."***



On the field of battle, there is no greater force than the Samurai. Ferocious as tigers, wise as Dragons, they are brilliant tacticians as well as supreme warriors, defending the honour of their Clan above all else. Clad in gleaming steel plate, the Samurai are masters of bow and blade, wielding both with all the power and subtlety of the ancient masters. Few can stand against such a force.

It is said that, even in death, a true Samurai never tastes defeat. When overmatched by hordes of enemies, the Samurai always chooses to disembowel himself rather than fall to an enemy's knife. Such courage releases a storm of righteousness that devastates the Samurai's enemies even as he passes serenely into the next world.

Yang Blade: At the Dragon Shrine, the Samurai's blade is blessed with the ability to perform heroic deeds, adding to the glory and mystical power of his Clan with each stroke.

Dragon Skin: The Fireworks Factory can treat a Samurai's armour so that, when he focuses his mystical powers, it renders him entirely immune to all missile weapons. However, it takes great concentration and stamina to transform steel into the Skin of the Dragon.

Geisha: ***"A soft touch and a crystal voice may inspire more men than all the banners under Heaven."***



The Geisha of the Dragon Clan are no simple courtesans. Talented musicians, graceful dancers and engaging storytellers, they keep the gentler arts of the Dragon alive even during the bloodiest wars, and remind its warriors of the fine ideals for which they struggle.

Nor are the Geisha timid or fearful of battle. In times of great need, they take the field alongside the Clan's fighting men, using their understanding of the human form and ancient mystical arts to heal even the most grievous of wounds. It is in their natures to ease suffering, not to inflict it; although agile and lithe, they cannot stand against a hardened warrior. Fortunately, there is never a shortage of fighters willing to defend them.

Sacrifice: The most ancient magic of the Geisha draws her spirit itself from her body, suffusing nearby allies with power and restoring them to perfect health. Only meditation at the Dragon Shrine grants a Geisha the wisdom and courage to perform such an awesome spell, and none have ever survived its casting.

Fire Shield: By learning the secrets of the Fireworks Factory, a Geisha may project her passion as a roiling cloud of flame about her body, scorching all those who draw near enough to do harm.

DRAGON ZEN MASTERS

Arah: *"My thoughts move, my arrows fly...one and the same."*

Arah is an archer without peer, and her skills overshadow even the Dragon Clan archers of old her arrows move with a speed, accuracy, and force that terrify her foes. Flying from the oversized longbow she carries, they punch through armour and bone like stabbing spears.

She travelled to this land from elsewhere, having met Kenji during his long exile. Somewhere in their shared past is a bond that links them, a blood debt or point of honour that led her to follow him home. A tall, slender woman, her manner is distant and cold, but for now she fights for the Dragon with all her heart and soul.

Zen Arrows: Arah has long since achieved the unity with her weapon that all Dragon archers pray for. When she wishes, she can let an arrow become an extension of her mind through which she can sense the landscape.

Garrin: *"Mud, gore, screaming horses...fight on!"*

Garrin worked his way up from stable boy to cavalry general through matchless skill and tactical brilliance, and men who served under him still speak with awe at his exploits on the battlefield. Even after he became a general and strategist he still took the field alongside his men, armed with a lance and grim determination. Garrin loves to beat the odds, and his cunning and stubbornness make the difference even against taller or higher-placed foes.

Call Horse: Garrin's years in the stables and on horseback have enabled him to summon wild horses at will. When he uses this skill, the nearest free horse will come running to him.

Kazan: *"Fat, flammable, and dangerous to know."*

Kazan is one of the four Elemental Brothers of the Serpent Clan, a monastic fighting order now scattered. Kazan the Fire Brother, however, is still very much with us, wandering the land, drinking, and lighting things on fire. In turbulent times he occasionally joins up with a travelling circus troupe, where his huge size and boisterous disposition appear less conspicuous to hostile eyes.

And in most contexts, Kazan is quite conspicuous indeed he is a huge man, enormously fat and invariably drunk on the poisonously strong brew he carries with him in a pumpkin-sized gourd. In a fight it is usually the closest thing at hand and he swings it to deadly effect. Fire is his friend and element, and as such poses little danger to him explosions and other fire can do little to harm his tough hide.

Flame Breath: Kazan's beverage of choice is flammable as well as intoxicating when provoked he'll light and spit it out, to ignite anything or anyone within reach.

Otomo: *"Fight not for me, but for the sake of your honour. Should you fall, others will remember this day as your greatest."*

When the last son of Tarrant's line died, it fell to his chief ministers to keep order in the land of these, the most beloved by the people was Otomo. Where Shinja ruled through strength and fear, Otomo inspired loyalty and bravery in his followers through fairness, wisdom and honourable behaviour.

His enemies deride him as weak and soft, but anyone who has faced him in battle knows the opposite his very presence seems to put strength into his allies. In him, it is whispered, something of the old Dragon Clan survives.

Battle Cry: At desperate moments, Otomo can call upon his warriors with a mighty cry, the very sound of which causes their blows to fall with redoubled vigour.

Tao: *"Perhaps you mistake the part for the whole."*

This enigmatic mercenary has been observed wandering the land for at least forty years, perhaps far longer. He travels alone and simply, seldom mounted, carrying only a long sword and a small sack of rice, sleeping in barns or under the stars. He is described as tall and slender, speaking little, never giving trouble. Those foolish or desperate enough to bother him have seen that he is lightning quick on both attack and defence.

He seldom enlists in any struggle for long, and may work with Serpent as well as Dragon. He claims to serve neither yin or yang, but only a balance between them. Most mysteriously, he has ties to both monk and ninja organisations, and seems to share some of both their traits.

Reversal of Fortune: Tao is deeply tuned to the balance of things. Anyone dealing harm to such a being will see a portion of it returned to them, for Tao stands at the centre of all forces and all fates.

DRAGON BUILDINGS

Training Structures

Dojo

Warriors of the Dragon spend much of their time in the dojo, learning from honourable masters to move gracefully and strike with overwhelming force. The dojo is a social centre as well as a training ground; even simple peasants gather there to watch their fighters practice.

With effort, advanced techniques may be taught to those willing to learn. The Dragon's Strength stance helps Spearmen strike with greater force, while Dragon's Heart exercises improve their overall health. Finally, the Dragon's Fire chant invigorates both mind and body, and offers advanced swordsmen an increased immunity to pain.

Trains Peasants into Spearmen, Archers into Dragon Warriors, Chemists into Kabuki Warriors, and Powder Keg Cannoneers into Samurai.

Archery Range

Of all weapons, the longbow is most useless in the hands of a raw novice, yet most deadly when fired by an expert. Here, archers practice until they can split an arrow on the target's bull's-eye. Such accuracy is needed when trying to strike down a fast-moving foe.

The secrets of Zen Accuracy help Archers to strike vital points on their enemies, causing more damage, and improved Arrow Craftsmanship means improved range. Regular Calisthenics classes can also improve the health and lifespans of the massive Powder Keg Cannoneers.

Upgrades Peasants to Archers, Spearmen to Dragon Warriors, Chemists to Powder Keg Cannoneers, and finally, Kabuki Warriors into Samurai.

Alchemist Hut

The Alchemist Hut is typically crammed with flasks, bottles, and vials of strange liquids, not to mention similar supplies of powders, gums, minerals, gems... It is a minor miracle if you can spot the Alchemist himself. An infernal oven dominates the rest of the hut, making it the least pleasant of all Dragon buildings during the summer months.

Given resources, the Alchemist can perform wonders. Rare Phosphorous Powder greatly improves the Chemist's rockets, Tempered Steel results in superior, razor-sharp blades for swordsmen, and Pressurised Kegs explode with tremendous force.

Upgrades Peasants to Chemists, Spearmen to Kabuki Warriors, and Archers to Powder Keg Cannoneers, and finally, Dragon Warriors into Samurai.

Bathhouse

The graceful design of the Bathhouse is well suited to the arts of the Geisha, who are adept in skills ranging from conversation to painting. A popular soldiers' joke claims that, of all forms of honour, the privilege of a visit to the Bathhouse is the one most worth dying for.

The talents of the Geisha require considerable study. The Art of Massage is an efficient aid to healing on the battlefield, and seamstresses may weave Spider Silk into robes that protect from slashing blades. Also, geisha-taught lessons in Meditation can improve the natural healing abilities of almost any warrior.

Upgrades Peasants to Geisha

Stables

Here, the renowned horses of the Dragon Clan are cared for and trained. The Stables Master has long experience tending these animals, and reads their moods with an accuracy bordering on telepathy. In his capable hands, today's wild stallion is tomorrow's trustworthy warhorse.

With mastery of Animal Bonding, the Stables Master can improve the sturdiness and health of his beasts. The local blacksmith can also be tremendously helpful, crafting Horseshoes that allow horses to run further before tiring and Stirrups that prevent riders from being thrown.

Dragon units that have acquired Battle Gear cannot use them while mounted, but instead gain the ability to Trample opponents in their path. They regain their old Battle Gear when they dismount.

ADVANCED BUILDINGS

Fireworks Factory

The Fireworks Factory represents the realisation of the Alchemist's life dream. Rather than a cramped, cluttered laboratory, he now works in a spacious facility stocked with every reagent imaginable. With such abundance at his disposal, the Alchemist creates all sorts of fantastic pyrotechnics, sometimes even dabbling in minor enchantments and spells. There is no warrior who cannot benefit from his fearless experimentation, but those seeking the Alchemist's wares must be prepared to pay a modicum of rice and water.

Dragon Shrine

This is a small, peaceful shrine where the warriors of the Dragon may meditate and seek the truth within. Though apparently simple, great care is taken in making every aspect of the shrine as flawless as possible, and it is polished and tended daily. It costs only a small portion of grain and water to sustain a warrior through this meditation, but the results can change the course of history.

Dragon's Monument

This intricately carved monument represents the pinnacle of the Dragon clan's artistry, as well as the ultimate expression of its warriors' courage and faith. In the fearsome Ritual of Purity, four Samurai must disembowel themselves on the pedestals surrounding the Dragon. Simultaneously, they must recite the Clan's most ancient spell in a language spoken only for this purpose. Though this Ritual has not been performed in recorded history, it is believed capable of summoning the Dragon himself.

SERPENT CLAN

BACKGROUND

Everyone expected the Dragon Clan to last forever, but on the day of the Breaking of the World, Tarrant the Younger found that his father was dead, and only the broken remnants of his realm remained. They had been defeated by an implacable enemy to whom their warrior code and their ideals meant nothing. Their finest fighting men had been cut down, and only a headlong flight and a desperate sacrifice had enabled them to survive at all. Those who survived could no longer think of themselves the same way. The Dragon Clan had died.

Tarrant the Younger made the hardest choice he ever faced. He gathered together the last of the Dragon Clan, and the remnants of half a dozen other clans that had fled the Horde, and placed them under one name and one banner. They could no longer be as proud as the dragon, but they would do what they needed to survive, using cunning where strength failed them.

Thus they became the Serpent. Many ancient traditions remained, but practiced in a different spirit. Warriors no longer fought to transcend death through honour, they fought merely to avoid death. Peasants no longer farmed for the good of a harmonious world, they toiled to advance themselves and buy ale on feast-days. Just as Dragon had become Serpent, Samurai had become Ronin. But at least the clan survived.

SERPENT UNITS

Peasant: *"Toil all night, slave all day—to rise from the muck, 'tis the only way."*

The peasants of the Serpent clan are industrious workers, no matter how menial their tasks; fear of the boot and the lash ensures their devotion to duty. Yet each secretly dreams of someday being the lord who holds the whip and shouts the orders.



Swordsman: *"Before I was given my blade, I had nothing in this wretched world. Now taste its edge, and my triumph!"*

A wise Serpent daimyo knows that ferocity and cunning are quickest to grow in the downtrodden and naturally violent. Accordingly, most of their Swordsmen are recruited from the loudest, most arrogant bullies their taverns can offer. Their experience in chaotic alehouse brawls lends them several talents, including a useful knack for dodging flying objects while running. Peasants who injure noblemen in such brawls are offered the "blade's choice:" take up a sword in the noble's service, or die by his sword at dawn.

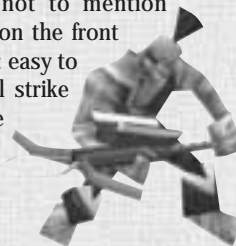
The discipline of infantry life quickly transforms these common ruffians into deadly foes. Also, they are allowed drink only after a victory, and thirsty Swordsmen fight like demons.

Mugging: Unsurprisingly, many Swordsmen have friends in the Thieves' Guild. From them, they learn to snatch precious belongings from their enemies in the heat of combat.

Glass Sword: The Metal Shop employs arcane techniques that fuse glass with steel, forging these exquisitely deadly blades. They inevitably shatter on impact, but a single brutal stroke may slice a man's torso in half.

Crossbowman: *"The sound of an enemy screaming in agony is always sweetest from a safe distance."*

Serpent tacticians view the traditional longbow as a cumbersome relic requiring excessive training, not to mention strength that would be better spent on the front lines. They much prefer the crossbow: easy to handle and quick-firing, its bolts still strike with considerable force. An effective Crossbowman's training time is measured in days, not weeks.



Crossbowmen are usually selected from the ranks of the wiry and fleet-footed: those whose natural tendency, when confronted by a beefy warrior, might be to run rather than fight. In numbers, even novice Crossbowmen can be a deadly menace to seasoned warriors.

Weakness Bolts: These darts are a favourite tool of the Thieves' Guild. They bear traces of a rare alchemical poison that brings a swift chill to the muscles, rendering enemies defenceless.

Phosphorous Bolts: These flares employ chemicals used by the Metal Shop in many other processes. They are a tremendous aid in scouting and illuminate distant targets admirably.

Musketeer: ***"What? Afraid of a little thunder, child? Hide beneath your bed, lest my thunder strike you dead."***

Musketeers are, without a doubt, the haughtiest of the Serpents fighting ranks. Proud of their costly weapons and the training it takes to fire them accurately, they tend to strut about the barracks in a way that does little to endear them to the other troops. Yet few dare to openly mock their self-important bravado. One's skill with a blade means little to a man who can kill you with a twitch of his finger, and the proud Musketeers rarely miss.

Although their guns punch through armour and flesh with frightening efficiency, they are also cumbersome and suffer from a slow rate of fire. In truth, Musketeers deserve credit for the courage it takes to reload such a weapon in the heat of battle. However, if they were more warmly regarded by the bladesmen who defend them, they would probably live longer.



Sniper Scope: Always the innovators, the artificers of the Thieves' Guild employ rare and costly glasswork in these much-prized scopes, feared especially by enemy cavalry. These scopes allow Musketeers to strike distant targets with devastating accuracy.

Blast Shot: The Metal Shop reinforces a muskets barrel with steel alloys, allowing it to fire explosive charges instead of mere shot. These can wreak havoc amongst close-packed foes.

Raider: ***"Carry away what you can and burn the rest, boys!"***

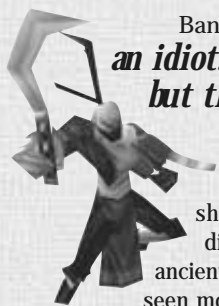
Life amongst the Serpent is not easy, and there are some who by virtue of laziness, misfortune, or general unpleasantness find no craft or trade by which to earn a living. These embittered men often become cruel Raiders, whose trademark is to pillage remote towns by night, then set them ablaze to distract pursuers. Spying out enemies through tangled forests is second nature to a Raider.

Intelligent Serpent generals find uses for such men, pressing them into service in exchange for pardoning their crimes. Brandishing torches and lanterns, they are unsuited to single combat, but matchless at reducing enemy fortresses to cinders.

Brush Fire: Raiders are vicious fighters and plunderers, but not always brilliant strategists. The cunning ones frequently become professional Thieves, learning to set brush fires in rice fields and forests that destroy precious resources and further cover their tracks.

Caltrops: The Metal Shop manufactures these wicked four-pointed stars, fashioned so that one spike always points up. Pursuers intent on revenging themselves upon Raiders, and careless of the ground beneath their feet, are likely to find themselves crippled for life.





Bandit: ***"He who sacrifices himself is an idiot. There may be honour in death, but there is far more profit in life."***

On the field of battle, there is more than one way to achieve greatness. Veteran Bandits shun the tedious practice, rigorous self-discipline, and strict honour prescribed by the ancient masters of the martial arts. Yet they have seen more death, spilled more blood, and survived more combat than all but the greatest Samurai. The secrets of their longevity: never turn your back on a breathing enemy, never fight a stronger foe, and never take prisoners.

The Bandit's swordsmanship is chaotic, unpredictable, and furious, especially when he finds himself cornered, and with his long experience in living off the land he never fails to scavenge a few ounces of food and water off a fallen foe. His skill with the crossbow is also fearsome, and he knows just where to place his shots in order to cripple his foes with pain.

Stealth: If he wishes to work a bit harder as he travels, a Bandit can make himself all but unseen as he moves.

Paralysis Darts: The Metal Shop can coat the Bandit's ammunition with a quick-acting poison. It causes no lasting harm, but swiftly induces painful, intense muscle spasms that render an enemy helpless.

Cannoneer: ***"Defeat me? Ha! You couldn't survive a blast from this beast if you were carrying it yourself."***



Where the Serpent Musketeer is arrogant and disliked by his fellow troops, the Cannoneer is respected and feared. Hauling tremendous cannons fashioned from solid tree-trunks and pig iron, these massive men of few words lumber about the battlefield stoically, though few others could even lift their burdens. These cannons fire heavy iron shot with such force that they often kill several men at once as they rip through terrified and scattering enemy ranks. Practically one-man siege engines and usually knowledgeable in the ways of masonry, lone Cannoneers have been known to demolish granite fortifications in mere minutes.

At close range, Cannoneers thrust and bash with their ponderous guns, ripping flesh and shattering bones. Yet, burdened as they are, they are unable to parry or dodge enemy strikes, and thus require infantry support to be truly effective.

Smoke Bombs: The crafty Thieves' Guild has long used small smoke bombs to generate confusion during their daring escapes. These larger versions are a recipe for battlefield chaos.

Mines: These compact explosive charges, available at the Metal Shop, are forced deep into the ground by the cannons blast, where they sleep harmlessly until wakened by the hapless footsteps of an enemy.



Ronin: ***"Life is a dark forest where beasts must kill to live. In such a wood, it is better to be a tiger than a man."***

In every age and nation, there rise men of heroic strength: those whose swords shine in the nightmares of a hundred widows, and whose martial skills are no longer quite human. So it was with the Samurai of the Dragon, and so it is with the Serpent Ronin: dark mirrors of their ancient counterparts, rejecting the Samurai's code of honour as weakness, yet honing their talents to just as keen an edge. Such men make deadly foes, on or off the field of battle.

In combat, Ronin wield a pair of razor-edged katanas, reasoning that their unholy proficiency with two blades will strike fear into those who cannot brandish one with equal force. In order to master this complex fighting style, they train only with blades, disdaining the Samurai's bow. When one of these hardened veterans perishes in battle, his accumulated ferocity and bitterness curses the very place of his death, while spurring his allies on to vengeance.

Blood Bond: The Thieves' Guild is not considered a scholarly group, but they do have access to certain volumes of dark sorceries. Using these, a strong-willed Ronin may enslave another's soul to his own. Such a Ronin finds himself invulnerable to harm, as his wounds are magically transferred to his helpless slave's flesh.

Yin Blade: When plated with certain alloys of iron and blood in the Metal Shop, the Ronin's katanas gain the ability to suck the very life force from their victims. This replenishes the health of the Ronin, and increases the mystical Yin force available to his master.

Fan Geisha: ***"Most believe we live only for the pleasure of our guests. Few realise that those guests live only at our whim."***

The Fan Geisha are, in some ways, the strongest and most resilient members of the Serpent Clan. Day after day, they must tend to the whims of the disorderly, ill-mannered Serpent army, appeasing drunks and soothing the egos of braggarts, merely in order to survive. Though beautiful, the Serpent Geisha tend towards a certain hardness of character.

They are not reluctant to enter battle; in fact, many prefer their duties on the battlefield to those in the bathhouse. Their deep knowledge of physiology and psychology allows them to efficiently heal wounds. They also wield their razor-edged, metallic fans with surprising agility and strength. These weapons may appear fragile and delicate, but often prove fatal to enemies who underestimate them; this is true of the Fan Geisha as well.

Dark Pact: The Fan Geisha are on comparatively good terms with the Thieves, in whom they find a practical outlook similar to their own. From their stolen tomes of magic, the Geisha can learn to barter with a minor demonic spirit that protects her allies from harm in exchange for a portion of their life force.

Razor Fans: The Metal Shop can weave spells around the Geisha's fans so that they do not merely spill, but actually drink their victims' blood. When these dark weapons bite into flesh, the life they consume heals the wounds of nearby allies.

Necromancer: ***"Enjoy your terror while it lasts. In my realm, you shall plead for death as you now plead for life."***

This mysterious, fiendish being must be summoned by the deepest profanity of which the Serpent are capable. He heeds mortal voices only when flattered by the construction of a Necromancer's Throne, a structure beneath which are entombed the skulls of the innocent. Afterwards, four strong-willed Ronin must submit to a ghastly ritual sacrifice, in token that the Serpents strongest bow before his might. Only after this appalling sacrifice of men and materials will the thing called the Necromancer commence his slaughter of the living.

If the Necromancer is difficult to summon, he is almost impossible to banish. Disdaining melee combat as beneath his dignity, he prefers to conjure lesser demons from the pits of the damned to slay his enemies. These ordinarily take form as fearless Spirit Warriors. He may also send such spirits into the bodies of the fallen, creating Zombies who know only the raw need to kill.

SERPENT ZEN MASTERS

Budo: *"What are you looking at?"*

Budo is a peasant overseer, a large man who is always seen with a barbed whip in his hand and a look of low cunning on his face. Early in his career he was the target of multiple accusations of torture, wanton beatings, and callous murder. Naturally the Serpent lords saw the limitless potential in this rising star.

Budo's cruelty and stupidity became a perfect tool in the hands of men like Lord Shinja. Any province where Budo was put in charge would reliably have the highest productivity and lowest crime-rate in the known world albeit also the highest rate of peasant deaths. After a while the simple threat of placing Budo in charge meant a ten percent jump in the harvest.

Slave Driver: At this point in his career, Budo doesn't have to beat people to death quite so often a mere crack of his whip sends peasants scurrying into faster action.

Shinja: *"Only strength — and the willingness to use it — can preserve us."*

Lord Oja's death left a power vacuum, and no one more eager to fill it than Lord Shinja. Were it not for the fierce personal loyalty his rival Otomo inspires, surely he would now rule the entire land with his brand of pragmatic justice and ruthless efficiency. No one loves Lord Shinja, but no one can deny that he keeps order and has helped preserve the Serpent Clan in difficult times.

In person Shinja is an undeniable force, charismatic, coldly intelligent and utterly without fear. No one has ever crossed him and lived to tell of it, beyond a babbled confession in a chamber deep beneath Serpentholm. He despises talk of the old Dragon clan, and considers honour to be a sadly obsolete concept. In all things he is a realist, and magical attacks have been known to quail and dissipate under his sceptical gaze and indomitable will.

Intimidation: Shinja's reputation for ruthless justice precedes him in battle, weakening even the strongest warriors blows. For any who strike him know that he will remember and, sooner or later, pay it back a hundredfold.

Utara: *"Share my bed, share my sorrow."*

Anyone who believes the geisha arts are a harmless business of strewing flowers and strumming tunes should meet Utara. In appearance she resembles a normal geisha of great beauty, but she incarnates the dark side of their practices she is a seductress, a poisoner, and possibly insane.

At four, Utara was orphaned by bandits and adopted by local geisha. She proved an apt pupil, delving into medicine and other arts. One day she disappeared from the bathhouse, leaving dead a dozen Serpent raiders by all accounts men not unlike those who had killed her parents. A few years later she reappeared as one of the strangest weapons in the Serpent Clan's arsenal.

Song of Sorrow: When she wishes Utara can sing a strange, keening song, born of her tragic past and thirst for revenge. None can hear it without risk to their life and sanity.

Vetkin: *"I'll fight to the death any man I can't outrun."*

Opinions about Vetkin, Lord Garrin's chief aide, fall into two camps some say he's a useless wastrel who lazes around the keep, flirting with chambermaids and admiring his tattoos in the mirror. Others claim he's the cleverest man in the province, controls all the accounts and makes himself wealthy while Lord Garrin is busy in the field.

Vetkin is a slender young man blessed with good looks, quick on his feet and well-trained in the twin *sai* he carries. He never seems to lift a finger, but each year he wins the Harvest-day foot-race. Rumours of a dark past never seem to touch him a wink and a ready smile always seem to banish any doubts about his loyalty.

Bravado: Vetkin isn't tall or strong, but his looks and charisma make him seem like a hero from the old tales. When he tries, Vetkin's dashing displays seem to suck the energy right out of his foes.

SERPENT BUILDINGS

Training Structures

Tavern

The Tavern might be the most important building in a Serpent town. Here, rowdy peasants knock down mugs of ale while boasting over conquests military, romantic, and imaginary. Swordsmen, Bandits, Raiders and ne'er-do-wells of all stripes also call the Tavern home.

Of course, not all Taverns are provisioned equally. Those that stock Fortified Ale numb the aforementioned regulars to their wounds, and regular bouts of Drunken Revelry inspire Swordsmen in particular to fight more ferociously. Finally, Darts is a favourite game of Raiders, and champions learn to fling their torches further as well.

Upgrades Peasants to Swordsmen, Crossbowmen to Bandits, Musketeers to Raiders, and Cannoneers to Ronin.

Sharpshooter's Guild

Sharpshooter's Guilds are even more dangerous than Taverns to the unwary. In the practice yard, trainees send projectiles from quarrels to cannonballs hurtling through the air in the general direction of several battered targets. It is unwise to stand anywhere nearby.

If an expert in sniping at Vital Points on the human body can be procured, Musketeers become much deadlier in combat. Rudimentary Cannon Sights improve the effective range of Cannoneers, and Steel Cannonballs increase their effectiveness against buildings and fortifications.

Upgrades Peasants to Crossbowmen, Swordsmen to Bandits, Musketeers to Cannoneers, and Raiders to Ronin.

Alchemist Hut

The Alchemist is an undesirable neighbour indeed; at any moment, day or night, his Lab may rattle with a sudden explosion or belch noxious chemical fumes into the sky. Yet the Alchemist's skills with metallurgy and gunpowder account for much of the Serpents' might.

In his spare time, the Alchemist enjoys concocting hot-burning Magnesium Torches for Raiders, or noxious Poisoned Weapons for Crossbowmen and Bandits. He may also forge Reinforced Plating for the Musketeers, giving them additional protection from both piercing and blunt impacts.

Upgrades Peasants to Musketeers, Swordsmen to Raiders, Crossbowmen to Cannoneers, and Bandits to Ronin.

Bathhouse

Though seedy, Serpent Bathhouses are not exactly brothels; neither are they particularly tidy or luxurious. They are critical to morale, however, and tend to spring up quickly in new settlements. Canny survivors in a rough world, the geisha perform their duties well.

Unusually talented geisha make invaluable allies on the field of war. An understanding of The Art of Love makes healing spells easier to cast and less draining, and superior Flexibility protects a geisha from harm. Finally, knowledge of Pressure Points is surprisingly useful in self-defence.

Upgrades Peasants to Geisha.

Stables

An orderly, well-kept Stables is a critical fixture of any army town. Here, the Master of Cavalry breaks and trains horses until they can be trusted with a soldier's life. He reliably transforms even the most reluctant wild stallions into effective battlefield allies.

The purchase of Whips and Spurs is often a wise investment, as they drive horses to push themselves well beyond the ordinary limits of exhaustion. Experience in Hobbling helps peasants to capture wild steeds without fail, and a Glue Factory offsets the expense of training new beasts.

Serpent units equipped with Battle Gear can't use it in the saddle, but are instead trained to Trample enemies while on horseback.

ADVANCED BUILDINGS

Thieves' Guild

There is no organisation in the land with more influence, or a more loyal membership, than the Guild of Thieves. Originally, the Guild operated wholly underground, and many intelligent leaders disputed rumours of its vast reach; the less intelligent often believed it a myth. The perceptive Lord Shinja was first to make contact with its upper echelons, wisely offering the Guild legal protection and legitimacy in return for military training. This is an ideal arrangement; the Guild's influence has spread throughout the army, and its soldiers have picked up some of the dirtiest tricks and deadliest secrets imaginable.

Metal Shop

The Metal Shop is at the heart of the Serpent Clan's success in warfare. Within, the most brilliant engineers and alchemists of the Clan constantly tinker with any number of new inventions, some strange and unreliable, some devastatingly practical. Fierce furnaces, ample stocks of rare and costly minerals, and sturdy steel-plated walls all add up to a safe and innovative environment in which to evolve new means of slaughter. If it slices, explodes, maims or kills, the Metal Shop can almost certainly make it deadlier.

Necromancer's Throne

The path of the Serpent is usually marked by pragmatism and moral flexibility: victory on the battlefield is proof enough that one's methods were justified. However, cold ruthlessness is also part of this mindset, and this finds its fullest expression in the construction of the Necromancer's Throne. When summoned with the blood of four Ronin, the Necromancer may consent to grant his aid to the Serpent, and is bound by the sacrifice of the Ronin to refrain from harming their allies. Otherwise, he revels in cruelty and murder, and takes particular glee in raising the bodies of the dead to slaughter their former comrades. Most agree that accepting such aid is foolhardy, but Serpent leaders shrink from little on the field of war, especially when defeat is imminent.

LOTUS CLAN

BACKGROUND

Like the Serpent, the Lotus Clan was formed from the remnants of an older clan devastated by the Horde. Long, long ago, there lived a peaceful tribe of wizards and foresters who worshiped the gods of balance and nature as symbolised by a great towering tree. They seldom knew trouble or dissent, save when a group of overzealous scholars delved too deeply into certain dark magics of rot and corruption, together called the Forbidden Path.



When the Horde came, all of that tribe died except those few renegade wizards, whose knowledge of the Yin gave them a chance to flee as their brothers died. The wizards eventually reached this land, and settled in the High Plateau, long known to be a place of strange energies. By that time they had formed themselves into a new clan, named for that intoxicating, perfumed blossom, the Lotus.

Free of all restriction, the twisted members of the Lotus Clan pursue the Forbidden Path in earnest, seeking to master death and corruption by immersing themselves in it. Their beliefs are a rotten parody of those of their forefathers — their tree is an unnatural nightmare, tended by undead, undying brothers. Their contempt for the nature-worshipping Wolf Clan may well have deep roots in their own history.

The leaders of this clan are ageless warlocks engaged in their own researches, pursuing power-hungry machinations in their councils and shadowy alliances. Ethics are a mere joke to them — power and knowledge are their ideals, and the conquest of the other clans merely a means to that end. Decades spent manipulating and subjugating the Wolf and Serpent clans have left deep bad blood and tensions in the land.

LOTUS UNITS

Peasant: *"My struggles above the earth merely delay my final sleep there."*



The peasants of the Lotus Clan are truly a strange race. Thin, wiry and pale, they perform their labour with religious fervour. Their zeal is unsurprising; they witness more dark and unholy miracles during infancy than the zealots of many other faiths glimpse in ten lifetimes.

Blade Acolyte: *"All that separates life from death is rage, hatred, and my slashing blade."*



Novices of the Forbidden Path who react to their agonising Rites of Initiation with anger and struggle are marked as the children of Lythis, dark bladesman of the Three. During their apprenticeship at Lythis' Forge, Blade Acolytes meditate upon their natural affinity for violence. This rage is focused outwardly, upon the enemies of the Lotus, and inwardly, upon their physical inadequacies. Frustration slowly and painfully reshapes them, until their elongated limbs and steely skin cause them to resemble the wicked, curved scimitars they carry. When not engaged in meditation, Acolytes may be seen sharpening, polishing, and occasionally speaking to these swords.

The Forbidden Path does not lend robust health to its practitioners, and the Blade Acolyte is less sturdy than a mundane swordsman. However, his inhuman agility and deep understanding of violent death grants him terrifying skills in combat.

Inner Strength: When empowered by Lythis's shade, the Blade Acolyte learns to contain and repair damage to his decaying body, even as he parries and thrusts at his baffled opponents.



Leaf Disciple: *"All that separates life from death is confusion, insanity, and my falling leaves."*

A Forbidden Path novice who suffers the Rites of Initiation with cold calculation and vengeful thoughts is recognised as a spiritual brother of Sehk, the Crafty One. Along the strange, disorienting paths of his Blade Garden, Leaf Disciples learn to twist and distort their minds and surroundings through sheer force of will. Such distortion is not easy, and Disciples must expend an inordinate amount of effort in study before they can even manipulate the razor-thin, paper-light leaves of the Tree of Corruption.

On the field of battle, these leaves spin and whirl about a Disciple's head like a flock of angry sparrows. With an indolent flick of his finger, he can send them whistling towards an enemy's head or cause them to slice and slash at nearby foes. Enough small cuts can bleed the strongest enemy to death, and no Disciple ever seems to run out of leaves.

Scrye Leaves: With Sehk's help, a Disciple may bind his sight to his spinning leaves, viewing his surroundings in mad, kaleidoscopic glimpses. By flinging these leaves aloft, he can briefly see vast landscapes in their metallic reflections.

Staff Adept: *"All that separates life from death is loneliness, suffering, and my iron staff."*

Those novices who pass through the Rites of Initiation with quiet, stoic hopelessness demonstrate their kinship with Tausil, the Forsaken One. These initiates endure endless, repetitive drills at the Training Grounds, repeat interminable chants in droning monotones, and maintain ceaseless and solitary vigils over the Tree of Corruption. From this existence, they gradually learn to accept emptiness as the sole truth among the distractions of life.

In combat, the Staff Adept moves quietly, with little apparent interest in his surroundings. Yet the emptiness of his soul gives him a painful awareness of—and loathing for—those who disturb his inner silence. He is utterly fearless, and is more than able to engage multiple opponents with the emotionless, technically perfect spins and flourishes of his staff. For such a frail-seeming opponent, the Staff Adept finds pain surprisingly irrelevant.

Dark Canopy: Granted Tausil's insights into nothingness, a Staff Adept may spin his weapon overhead with such flawless precision that it deflects missiles from all nearby allies.



Diseased One: ***"In my scabrous fevered skin, you see a man who belongs to Death. In your healthy flesh, I see the same."***

The Diseased One's blossoming inner corruption has overwhelmed his immune system; he is a breeding ground for every imaginable plague. An ordinary man afflicted with a tenth of the Diseased One's maladies would be dead within the hour. Yet he has learned to draw just enough vital energy from this corruption to stave off death, and so he lives in a nightmarish twilight of fevered delusions, racking pains, and his desperate, scrabbling will to live.

Lurching about the field like a drunken man, the Diseased One is a clumsy fighter at best; it is not difficult to end his tortured existence. However, as he expires, his body explodes from the sudden internal pressures of rot and decay, spreading pestilence across a wide area.

Projectile Vomit: The Diseased One can temporarily relax his control over his illnesses, spewing a stream of virulent vomit that is extremely harmful to the living.

Death Wail: By consuming the flesh and soul of a living being, the Diseased One learns the true horror of the corruption that consumes him from within. As he wails, he releases the very soul of his victim to terrify horses and sap the willpower of his enemies.

Unclean One: ***"There is no darkness in this world which has not its mirror image in my soul."***



The Unclean One has nurtured the core of evil within himself to such a level that his mortal shell cannot contain it. As a result, his body begins to manufacture great quantities of black, tarry, vitriolic goo that he must constantly struggle to expel from his lungs and stomach. Hacking, coughing, and vomiting almost constantly, these benighted souls struggle for life with every rasping breath; eating is difficult, and sleeping for more than a few minutes at a time would be fatal.

In battle, the Unclean One flings this wretched slime at opponents, searing and dissolving the flesh of those unlucky enough to be struck. Should he be dispatched, the blackness in his soul is released, blanketing the field with a hideous parody of night.

Spreading Goo: The Unclean One can exert some control over his bubbling evil, and may transform it into a viscous, sticky substance that drastically slows oncoming enemies.

Death Sentry: After eating a hapless peasant, the Unclean One can imprison its soul in the grisly remains of its skull, much as he imprisons his evil within himself. This abomination is known as a Death Sentry. The Unclean One can see distant lands through its vacant sockets, and its agony torments all those who pass nearby with wracking pains.



Infested One: ***"Am I not the kindest of parents, who feeds ten thousand children with his own tender meat?"***

The Infested One's corruption is literal indeed; his swollen belly is host to a mass of hungry maggots that devour his raw, bleeding flesh as quickly as it can heal. He lives in a state of constant suffering, yet identifies, perhaps, with his maggots; from their brutal, swarming life energy, he siphons the strength to continuously regenerate his body.

When angered, the Infested One flings writhing clots of starving maggots at his foes. These burrow into healthy flesh with terrible, swift efficiency. Upon his death, his 'children' abandon his cold, worm-eaten corpse en masse, seeking new hosts upon which to feed.

Rebirth: In the ultimate act of brotherhood with his pestilent companions, the Infested One may devour the bodies of the living, trapping their souls within him. Should the Infested One receive a fatal wound, this raw vitality regenerates his torn flesh, effectively raising him from the dead.

Famine: The act of consuming one of his own clan enables the Infested One to forcibly rip worms from his stomach and fling them across an enemy's rice fields. This is painful and costs stamina, as the worms prefer the taste of flesh and do not relinquish it easily. It is far more painful to the crops and those who depend on them.

Warlock: *"Death was once my master; now I have mastered Death."*

Students of the Forbidden Path are defined by their shortcomings: the collapsed fortitude of the Diseased, the failed self-control of the Unclean, the cannibalistic hunger of the Infested. The astute Warlock, however, has conquered all of these pitfalls and discovered how to balance the delicate dance of life, corruption and death within his soul.



No longer prey to sickness and torments, these elite sorcerers of the Forbidden Path are able to fling bolts of destruction across great distances and suck the living energy from the weak. They are mightily feared, and the mere act of opposing one drains courage from the stoutest fighter.

Despite his confidence, the Warlock has not the sturdiness of the truly healthy, and is best kept from the front lines. However, from time to time he may sap the strength of enemies close to him to regain strength.

Lythis' Dark Arson: When summoned, Lythis can make the Warlock's missiles burn with an unholy flame.

Tausil's Life Siphon: The Staff Brother can teach Warlocks to drain life from his allies to sustain himself.

Sehk's Soul Chill: The Brother of the Leaf carries the cold of the deep forest within him, and when he wishes a Warlock may share it and cast it forth at his enemies.

Master Warlock: *"I am Death."*

The end of the Forbidden Path is a mystery unknown to humankind, save for those who have tasted its fruits. The final test of a Lotus magician's skill, wisdom and strength takes place in the Master Warlock's Tower, an enchanted fortress of such evil that none but a full-fledged Warlock can set foot within its walls and hope to survive.

When two Warlocks declare that they have attained perfect understanding of the Tree of Corruption, they enter the tower together. Nobody knows what terrible wisdom is imparted there, what dread specters rise from the past, or what fantastic duels take place. Only one Warlock ever emerges from the Tower, and with him he carries the polished, grinning skull of his opponent. Thereafter, he is a near-immortal terror on the battlefield, commanding wizardries beyond imagination, swinging the skull with the force of a giant's hammer.



Though it is speculation, some guess that the true winner of the Warlock's Duel is actually the gleaming skull, not the Master Warlock; for the skull is beyond pain and death, and forever whispers the black, unknowable secrets of the grave in his captive owner's ear.

Lythis' Soul Thresher: At the Blade Brother's bidding, the Master Warlock's energy blasts can be tuned to slice not just the body, but the soul itself.

Tausil's Unlife: Though the branches are cut, the trunk may live. Tausil can teach his greatest disciples to raise his allies from the dead.

Sehk's Ephemeral Corridor: Amid the dappled shadows of the forest, distances can be illusory. Sehk can grant Master Warlocks insight into the art of teleportation.

Channeler: *"Secrets beyond both Gods and men are mine to keep; from my lips, they shall never take flight."*



The Channeler is an anomaly among the Lotus. By the laws of the Forbidden Path, Channelers are the only women allowed to rise beyond the ranks of the peasantry. Their studies are not of the Path at all, but of an even more ancient and secretive religion passed down from mother to daughter. Only those who devote themselves irrevocably to this religion ever learn its true nature, and the elder practitioners of the Forbidden Path—even the awesome Lord Zymeth—know better than to pry into its riddles, which are far older than the Lotus Clan itself.

Of all Lotus adepts, only the Channeler is able to truly mend the wounds of another. She is bonded to three raven familiars, but must snap the brittle neck of one of them in order to fuel her dark spells of regeneration. A sibling from the aviary eventually replaces the sacrificed raven, but there is invariably a period of mourning before this happens. Despite this, a Channeler's ravens will fight for her if she must stand to battle.

LOTUS ZEN MASTERS

Issyl: *"Hey mister! Want to see me do a trick?"*

Visitors to the court of the Lotus Clan will nervously wonder why a twelve-year-old child sits on their high council, clutching an oversized hourglass. They don't feel any better when they learn that this is Lord Issyl, Dean of the College of Time, one of the most powerful wizards in the world. When they realise that eyes hundreds of years old peer from the face of a nasty little boy, nausea is a common reaction.

Lord Issyl ages slowly backwards, a condition resulting from an accident 70 years ago. Despite this misfortune, his body is free from the rampant decay that plagues many who follow the Path. Time flows...interestingly...around him, and he controls it to some degree. Wounds he takes in battle knit with unnatural swiftness.

Haste: With some effort, Issyl can warp the flow of time in his allies' bodies, letting them move, attack, and recuperate much more rapidly.

Koril: *"You may think of space and distance as solid facts. I prefer a more fluid interpretation."*

By consensus, Lord Koril is believed to be the second most powerful warlock of the Lotus Clan, both magically and politically. It is also rumoured that he is by far the eldest of any of them, older even than Zymeth himself. To have survived so long in the Byzantine, deadly world of the Lotus—this bespeaks a brilliant mind and ruthless political instincts. He does not lead openly, but is always present at critical debates.

Koril is formally styled "Master of the College of Space," and pursues a species of magic distinct from but related to the Forbidden Path. Position and distance are no great trouble to him, and he is often seen at opposite ends of the land in a single day. His power is such that he seems to shimmer at all times, a trait infuriating to enemy archers.

Teleport: Koril never has to stay where he is if he doesn't want to. A wave of the hand, an exertion of mental strength, and he is elsewhere.

Soban: *"While my colleagues waste their time studying death, I have taught the very stones to live."*

Like all the highest - level Lotus warlocks, Soban's researches have taken him on a unique path. His work blends clockwork and high wizardry to produce alchemical feats like his tireless servants, the golems. He is called "Lord" as a courtesy for his accomplishments, but he holds no political sway, having always kept out of power-struggles of the Lotus elite.

Behind his back, Soban's colleagues deride him as a mere tinkerer or mechanic, but his powers are genuine. The Wolf Clan's Shale Lord hero is a result of one of his experiments gone wrong

Create Golems: With a wave of his staff, Lord Soban can call a golem from the ground, a tireless peasant labourer made of dirt and rock.

Zymeth: *"The warlocks of the Forbidden Path have conquered death itself, but I am still their Master."*

For hundreds of years, Lord Zymeth has ruled the Lotus Clan as the undisputed first among equals. He is a master manipulator and orator, using deception and threats to build coalitions and cow opponents. In his dealings with the other clans, Zymeth also uses his great longevity to powerful effect, planning schemes that span generations of Wolf or Serpent clansmen.

No one could rule the Lotus without being a wizard as well as a statesman, and Zymeth is no exception. Like most of the warlock elite he is a specialist, and his sphere is weather, the sizzling crackle of lightning or the relentless force of a summer storm.

Heavy Rain: The storm-clouds are at Zymeth's beck and call. When he wishes, he can raise the humidity around him until a rainstorm results, and then call lightning from the resulting storm.

LOTUS BUILDINGS

Training Buildings

Forge

This forge is consecrated to Lythis, the Brother whose wicked blade once trimmed the roots of the Tree of Corruption. Within, initiates forge swords from steel, moonlight, and their own blood. These weapons never break, and are said to cut the soul as easily as they slice flesh.

A Lotus smith is the keeper of many secrets. Silvered Steel is difficult to work, but results in superior weapons for the Blade Acolytes. Acolytes, the Infested, and the Diseased can all improve their sturdiness by following The Way of the Root, and Leprosy makes both Infested and Diseased Ones even more infectiously deadly.

Upgrades Peasants to Blade Acolytes, Leaf Disciples to Infested Ones, Staff Adepts to Diseased Ones, and allows Unclean Ones to become Warlocks.

Blade Garden

This dead and lifeless garden honours Sekh, who once pruned the metallic leaves of the Tree. Its razor-sharp leaves are still gathered by Leaf Disciples, who use them as missiles; others visit the garden to walk its strange, twisting paths and reflect on madness.

Sekh is the patron of magic, and mind-bending spells are worked within these walls. The Leafbite spell further hones the Tree's deadly leaves, Leafstep quickens the pace of Infested and Unclean Ones, and the Bond of Pestilence drastically multiplies the Infested One's maggots, allowing them to be hurled in larger, hungrier clumps.

Upgrades Peasants to Leaf Disciples, Blade Acolytes to Infested Ones, Staff Adepts to Unclean Ones, and allows Diseased Ones to become Warlocks.

Training Yard

The training yard is dedicated to Tausil, the original guardian of the Tree's twisted trunk. His lessons stress submission and endurance, and Staff Adepts train endlessly to perfect these qualities. Other trainees seek the focus and fortitude to withstand their inner torments.

With long effort, Staff Adepts, the Unclean, and the Diseased can develop the Strength of the Trunk, making them more resistant to injury. Staffmen can also worsen the damage they inflict by using Heavy Iron Staves, and Tausil's mages can summon a Glut of Corruption, increasing the virulence and range of the Unclean Ones' phlegmatic missiles.

Upgrades Peasants to Staff Adepts, Blade Acolytes to Diseased Ones, Leaf Disciples to Unclean Ones, and allows Infested Ones to become Warlocks.

Aviary

The Aviary is where women abandon their mundane lives to become Channelers, the only Lotus magicians capable of healing. Dozens of ravens live within its strange dome; perhaps they, too, must train before assuming their roles as the Channelers' sacrificial victims.

There is always work to do in an Aviary. Feeding Carrion to the ravens teaches them viciousness on the attack, and the construction of the Foul Nest hastens their breeding. Finally, the eerie Darksong quickens the bonding process between woman and bird, thus shortening the training time for new Channelers.

Upgrades Peasants to Channelers.

Stables

Horses are terrified of Lotus encampments, and only through hypnosis can they be coaxed into the Stables. Once inside, however, they are transformed by brutal sorceries into Shadow Steeds, violent and soulless creatures more than willing to bear the Lotus into battle. Lotus warriors with Battle Gear can't use it while mounted, but instead coax the steeds to breathe use their Infernal Breath on any foes or structures nearby.

The Lotus wizards overseeing this transformation exhibit varying degrees of skill. Superior mages craft especially searing Brimstone for these steeds to breathe out, while those who understand Horse Anatomy assemble sturdier beasts. Experienced trainers become attuned to source of their creations' power, and by deepening this Demonic Kinship they allow these beasts to draw on their Flame Breath at less of a cost to their stamina.

Special Buildings

Crypt of the Brothers

The Three Brothers of the Lotus religion may have died long ago, but they have not abandoned their people. Reports vary wildly on the location of their desecrated Crypt; perhaps the Lotus summon it at need, or perhaps the Brothers move it themselves. When it appears, one of the dread three, Lythis, Sekh or Tausil, may be summoned, at a price in Yin energy. The chosen brother rises from his uneasy rest to walk the earth in spectral form, draining stamina from his enemies to empower the faithful with grim sorceries. The Brothers have a special relationship to the Warlock and Master Warlock units, who have achieved a death-in-life akin to their own. To these mages, each brother can impart a different gift.

It is not difficult to dispatch these phantoms with sword or bow, but this merely sends them back to the grave. Dauntless, they will rise again and again, ever seeking vengeance on enemies of the Clan.

Warlock's Tower

The rank of Warlock is rarely attained by a Lotus mage; most perish along the Path, victims of an enemy's blade or their own foul diseases. For those who survive their afflictions to become full Warlocks, only one further achievement is possible: to enter the dread Warlock's Tower with another of their rank, and there confront the end of the Forbidden Path. None know what this entails, but most assume that a final duel between the two Warlocks is involved, for one always emerges with the other's polished skull as his trophy and proof that he is a true Master Warlock. This skull is not entirely devoid of life, and its relationship with the Master is an unpleasant matter to contemplate.

WOLF CLAN

BACKGROUND

The impact of the Dragon Spirit's clash with the Horde sent shockwaves for hundreds of miles and disrupted weather patterns worldwide. This became clear six months afterwards, when a fleet of wooden ships broke upon the northern shore, and a strange new clan struggled ashore. Once peaceful intentions were established on both sides, the Wolf Clan settled among the rocky hills and cold mountain streams of the northwest.

With their rough-hewn ways and druidical religion, the Wolf Clan made odd neighbours for the pragmatic, civilised Serpents. Local Serpent villagers shivered to hear animalistic howls and wild drumming from the Wolf settlements. Visitors spoke of their primitive-seeming architecture, and the warlike game of Wolfball, easily mistaken for a controlled civil war – no one without the Wolf Clan's gift for swift regeneration should attempt it. And there were stranger things glimpsed in the woods, half-man and half-animal...

When the Wolf lost its war with the Lotus, many thought it would be the end of that clan. But as slaves in the shale mines, they somehow managed to hold onto their ancient cultural identity, even as a whole generation grew up in captivity. The Lotus were not kind masters, and when the Wolf Clan rose again, decades of inhuman treatment and blood hatred were unleashed in one terrible night.

Many mysteries still surround them, from the rules (if any) to Wolfball to the rites their women practice in the full of the moon. The trauma of the war with the Lotus left deep marks on the Wolf Clan, such as a new fighting style built around bare hands, rocks, and mining implements. Through it all, their basic culture seems to have survived: a delight in nature, harmony with the seasons, and a natural wisdom rooted in balance.



WOLF CLAN UNITS

Peasant: *"The rice is my brother, the wind is my sister, and the sun is my friend. I never lack for companions."*

The peasants of the Wolf Clan are hardy and cheerful, viewing their work in the fields as less a chore than a lifestyle they quite enjoy. They spend all day working the land they love, building their strength, and keeping their families fed; what's to complain about?



Brawler: *"Swords are for wimps."*



Brawlers of the Wolf Clan believe that in combat, as in life, simplicity always triumphs over refinement. To this end, these fighters brandish enormous twin slabs of granite in battle, bashing with enough force to splinter a full-grown oak, or to rip enemies' limbs from their sockets. This unique and straightforward fighting style, like most of those now practiced by the Wolf, evolved during the slave mine revolts. No matter how vigilant the overseer, slaves in a mine cannot be prevented from owning rocks.

In fairness, the granite slab suffers from certain shortcomings as a weapon; its reach is limited, and its crushing blows are ineffective against armoured foes. Brawlers argue that an enemy afraid to fight bare-chested is hardly worth worrying about.

Zen Master Blaster: The blessing of a Druidess can inspire the Brawler to fight with unusual subtlety. This single, perfectly timed strike is best used against those enemies who are most overconfident. It can slaughter those who foolishly believe their strength to be heroic.

Hurler: *"It's a good thing this is war, not a real game. Otherwise I might get hurt."*

The origins of Wolfball are lost in the mists of time. Even those few Wolves with a taste for history know only that the sport has been played as long as anyone can remember. Famously bloody matches that took place over five hundred years ago are still avidly recounted around the campfire. Outside scholars are evenly divided on whether Wolfball evolved as a means of avoiding war, or simply waging it.



In any case, it is the most dangerous sport ever invented, involving dozens of players, wicked weapons, and an iron ball as large as a man's head, put into play by a massive two-pronged fork. Surprisingly few Wolves actually perish during the course of a game, but no foreigner has ever survived the first round of play. The very best Wolfball players take their forks to the battlefield, with which they hurl heavy granite boulders at opponents shortly before impaling them.

Lava Rock: A Druidess can enchant a Hurler's fork so that it heats ordinary stones to searing, near-molten temperatures. These brittle missiles explode when they strike the ground, spraying nearby enemies with scalding shrapnel.



Mauler: ***"I killed my Lotus master. Why did he then give me a weapon?"***

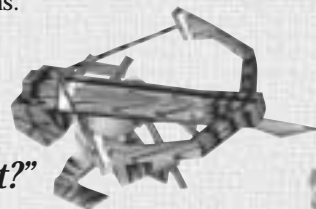
Maulers started out as prisoners among prisoners, and slaves among slaves. They were those who, in fits of rage, wounded or murdered their Lotus overseers. Such crimes would earn death from most masters. However, the Lotus understand the nature of cruelty, and knew such men would suffer more from continued service than they would from death.

Therefore, these pariahs were chained to incredibly massive stones both night and day, magically compelled to work at twice the speed of the other slaves. They slept in their chains, moving only when an

ore deposit was exhausted. The Maulers had their revenge on the day of the Wolf rebellion, when the Lotus learned that their 'prisoners' had not only developed the strength to move their boulders, but also to swing them as terrifying, bone-crushing maces. Used to dragging enormous loads, they are now surprisingly fast on their feet.

Wrecking Ball: When emboldened by a Druidess' chants, a Mauler can actually swing his boulder in a full circle, smashing and scattering foes in all directions.

Ballistaman: ***"Let's see...twist this crank, pull that lever, yank the other cord...oh, can't I just hit them with it?"***



The Wolves have always preferred the active, outdoor life, and have little interest in devising machines to help them avoid effort; thus, they are not particularly talented engineers. However, they picked up a few tricks in the slave mines, and have recently invented their own version of the footman's crossbow. Of course, like all things Wolf, size triumphs over delicacy. This massive, crank-loaded Ballista launches twenty-pound logs with enough force to crash through strong fortifications or impale three men at once.

The Ballistaman can be defensive about his weapon of choice; other Wolves often mockingly describe it as 'an enormous toy for enormous children.' The ballista has a very specific role on the battlefield: it reloads slowly, and its wielder depends on the assistance of more agile defenders to survive. Still, no missile weapon packs a bigger punch.

Totem: A Druidess crafts these small, intricate totems from blessed saplings. When fired, they embed themselves in the ground, blanketing the area with a beneficial aura that strengthens Wolves and slows their enemies. The Ballistaman must repeat a simple chant to maintain the totem's power; unfortunately, this distracts him from firing his weapon.



Sledger: ***"If it takes more than one hit, you're not doing it right."***

Often Lotus overseers would order large shale slabs broken down into manageable chunks, and this job fell to the Sledgers. Wolf Clan slaves undertook the job with gusto, as it appealed to their natural instincts — hitting something repeatedly until it fell apart. The tool of choice was an oversized hammer, and under Grayback's direction this simple job became the training ground for a secret fighting style based around single, shattering strikes.

Sledgers complain that no one understands the intellectual side of their discipline — their keen eye for structural weaknesses, and the mental focus necessary for maximum breaking power.

Stun Slam: The Stun Slam was invented by a notoriously inaccurate sledger, whose missed strikes would sometimes throw bystanders off their feet. When inspired to great force by a Druidess blessing, the Sledger can stun units for a wide area with a single blow to the earth.

Pitch Slinger: ***"Sure, I'll accept any man's honourable surrender—as long as he's willing to shake on it."***

The art of Pitch Slinging evolved as a lifesaving tactic in the mines. As the enslaved Wolves burrowed deeper into the earth, something horrible began to happen: entire mining teams would be discovered dead in the lower tunnels, their bodies unmarked by violence. At first, these deaths were attributed to subterranean demons. Only after a sceptical Lotus overseer demanded to examine these bodies by torchlight—and was disintegrated by the ensuing blast—did the Wolves realise their men had struck pockets of an odourless, poisonous gas, and that only their reliance on low-burning lanterns had saved them from the flames.

The obvious solution was to detonate these pockets of gas from a distance. Burning pitch proved the hottest and most reliable substance for the task.



Always eager to demonstrate their bravery, Wolf pitch slingers took to flinging the fiery sludge with their hands, protected only by tattered strips of cloth. These slingers are feared in combat, as much for their cheerful disregard for pain as for the agony that a fistful of flaming pitch can inflict.

Scorched Earth: Together, the Pitch Slingers and the Druidesses can extend the potency of burning pitch, so that they can lay a flaming trail as they withdraw. Nothing makes a Wolf angrier than retreating, and nothing eases the anguish better than the howls of seared pursuers.

Pack Master: ***"I have not the jaws of the Wolf, nor the ferocity, nor the speed...but I do have friends."***

The relationship of the Wolf Clan to its totem animal is far from symbolic. Certainly, clan members seek to emulate the best qualities of the wolf—strength, endurance, and loyalty—but they also worship the spirit of the Wolf, and believe themselves close kin to these quiet stalkers of the woods.

A Pack Master is something like a priest, a ranger and a combat instructor in one. He communes freely with wild wolves, speaking their language, living with them, and establishing their respect. Once a month, the Pack Master leaves his village to run with his pack beneath the full moon, usually returning with his face and hands covered in the dried blood of the kill. The Pack Master shares equally in the wolves' hunts and feasts, counting this the greatest pleasure attainable by a mere human.

In battle, the Pack Master fights with bestial strength and courage. His wolves pose a greater danger, as they stand ready to rip the throats from any who dare harm their master.

Howl: With the blessing of the Druidess, the Pack Master is granted the true voice of the Wolf. No matter how far away from his den, or how beleaguered by enemies, he can summon companions to his side as long as any remain alive.



Berserker: ***"A man taught me to fight; a wolf taught me to live."***



The Berserker is the embodiment of the Wolf warrior's ideal. Sleeping beneath the stars, abstaining from cooked meat and plant food, he yet epitomises the unique humour and humanity of the Wolf Clan.

Berserkers relish the art of storytelling, repeating their brutal tales of wood and jungle to awed listeners around a fire. They also delight in sports, and are the equal of ten men on a Wolfball court. Though bearing the shape of a man, they are said to be already a quarter wolf within.

Such a warrior is terrible to behold in battle. He invariably assaults his strongest enemy first, reasoning that courage makes a better story than cowardice, even in the event of the hero's death. A fable among the Clan claims that three enraged Berserkers once defeated a company of nearly fifty men, fifteen of whom were trampled in the others' rush to flee.

Lycanthropy: Only a Berserker has the strength and wisdom to survive a Druidess' greatest sorcery, which is simultaneously a blessing and a curse: the transformation of man into beast.

Werewolf: ***"Swords are the fangs of men, but fangs are the swords of Gods."***

The Werewolf is no longer human. Clad only in fur, rarely speaking the tongues of men, he lives apart from the rest of the Clan. Even veteran Pack Masters keep their distance from him. The reason is simple: a Werewolf does not embody the loyal, dependable spirit of the pack member, but rather the ravenous essence of the alpha wolf. Wolves who meet him in the wild recognise this terrible authority and instantly submit to his rule. Both innocent and guilty must beware the whims of this stalker; it is in his nature to kill the weak, and most mortals seem tempting and delicious prey indeed.



Though vicious, these ex-Berserkers remember their human pasts, and rarely harm those of their own Clan. However, they hate outsiders with feral intensity, and recognise no difference between war and peacetime except that the former brings more prey to their hunting grounds. No Werewolf has ever given quarter or recognised an enemy's surrender. They fight only to kill, and will not be denied their victory feasts.

Wolf's Bite: Should a Werewolf grow lonely for the company of men, he may choose to transfer his curse of lycanthropy to his prey, becoming a Berserker once more. His helpless enemy is trapped in the body of an ordinary wolf. There is no cure, and he is eventually ripped apart by the conflict between his soul and body.

Druidess: ***"All things turn with the seasons. Fear not defeat and winter, lest you fly from spring and triumph."***

The Druidesses of the Cairn stand at the heart of the Wolf Clan. They alone practice the witchcraft of their lost homeland; Wolf warriors refuse to study magic, believing that the spirit realms are best walked by those who devote their lives to wisdom and healing, not bravado and slaughter. They also pass down the stories of their clan from mother to daughter, and every Druidess knows at least a thousand tales, from rude jokes to holy fables. Thus, even though the Wolf Clan has little use for books and written lore, they know more about their own origins than even the near-immortals of the Lotus Clan.

In battle, the Druidess calls on her plant allies to entangle and slow enemies. She can also work intricate charms, imbuing Wolf fighters with superhuman abilities. However, these charms are gifts of the spirits, and she must return to a Cairn periodically in order to meditate and ask for their favour. When not fighting, or praying, Druidesses may often be found in the rice fields, which always grow faster and more abundantly in their presence.

Blessing: After praying at the Cairn, the Druidess may bless three of her warriors with great strength and prowess before she must return for further enlightenment.



WOLF CLAN ZEN MASTERS

Gaihlā: *“Tread lightly in this place, for every forest is a temple.”*

We do not know much about Gaihlā. She dwells in the deepest, oldest woodlands, and according to the tales she is a solitary arch-druidess or forest goddess, or something in-between. Hundreds of years old, she has been known to disappear for decades and live out the time as a giant oak tree. All forests and growing things are under her protection.

Despite her allegiance to life, she can be a vicious fighter, wielding a wreath of thorns against those who would threaten the forests. Her relationship with plant life is mysterious — she moves unimpeded through the densest undergrowth, and any crops thrive in her very presence.

Chant of Life: Gaihlā's powers are rooted in life and growth, the essence of yang. Her ancient druidic chant has healing power in its very sound.

Grayback: *“Hear me, sorcerers: you cannot cage the wolf.”*

Grayback emerged as the new chief in the time of the Wolf Clan's enslavement, when the old line of chieftains was dead, and the clan's very existence was threatened. The force of mind that allowed them to break their bonds was Grayback's — the covert training, the cunningly orchestrated uprising, the carefully timed messages to the Serpent. A menial slave, son of primitive hunters, he is clearly more than a match for the proudest Serpent Lord, or for Lord Zymeth himself.

The wolves themselves know Grayback's authority, sensing in his smell and body language the undisputed leader of the pack. In battle Grayback wields an enormous pickaxe, a tool that strikes with crushing force while reminding all who see it of the reason why Grayback fights on.

Lupine Rage: Grayback is a peerless battle leader. When he wishes, he can urge nearby warriors to strike with increased force.

Longtooth: *“Even the warlocks who claim to know death, cringe from my fury.”*

Even as a slave-child, Longtooth was famous for his athleticism — leaping between rocks and swimming through the treacherous underground waterways, he astonished his masters. Meanwhile he was winning a secret fame as a boxer and wrestler in the underground fighting pits and quarries. When the uprising came, those abilities were matched by a terrifying hatred and impressive generalship. His deeds of that night have placed him next in line for clan leadership.

In battle Longtooth carries a unique weapon, a heavy bladed boomerang he has learned to hurl with astonishing accuracy. Uneven battlegrounds give him a special advantage, as his athletic ability grants him a mobility others lack.

Razor-Edged Boomerang: No one knows what mineral or alloy Longtooth's boomerang is made of, but at times he can throw it with terrible force, so that it moves unimpeded through flesh, bone, and even solid walls.

The Shale Lord: *“...”*

The Shale Lord is a symbol of the Wolf Clan's enslavement, a failed magical experiment, a lonely outcast, a military asset. No one knows his real name, but he was once a Wolf Clan slave, chosen by Lord Soban as an experimental subject in his attempts to breed a better slave worker. He escaped captivity and roamed the wilderness for years — a strange stone man, faceless, voiceless, alone. When the Wolf rebelled he returned to fight at their sides, and became a hero.

In battle there is no more terrifying opponent. Naturally armoured and hugely strong, he fights with his macelike fists. No one hates the Lotus Clan more, and this rage seems to increase his strength even as he battles.

Armoured Friend: The Shale Lord can flake sheets of stone off his own body, sacrificing his own health in the process. Already man-shaped, it can serve as stone plate armour for his allies.

WOLF CLAN BUILDINGS

Training Structures

Combat Pit

The Combat Pit has been a fixture of all Wolf towns since the shale mine revolts, and is little more than a clearing in which two combatants may square off. Its layout deliberately mimics the storerooms and caverns in which enslaved Wolves once honed their fighting skills.

The flexible Combat Pit hosts a slew of different activities. Training for the Wolfball League improves the running skills of Brawlers and Hurlers, while an impromptu Fight Club can lend extra robustness to the peasantry. Ritual Grooming sessions also reduce the difficulty and cost of organised training: clean-shaven and flea-free Wolves are proud Wolves!

Upgrades Peasants to Brawlers, Hurlers to Ballistamen, Maulers to Sledgers, and Pitch Slingers to Berserkers.

Ballistics Grounds

Ballistics is a recent development in Wolf warfare, which was once marked by a proud disdain for all ranged combat. Modern Wolf strategists recognise the usefulness of distance killing; thus the invention of the Grounds, where one can see a bizarre array of stones and sandbags (in lieu of burning pitch) hurled towards makeshift targets.

With practice, any of the Wolf's ranged units can develop an Eagle's Eye talent for striking targets at long range. Other Wolves rarely take the Ballistics Grounds seriously; lighthearted games of King of the Hill teach Ballistamen, Pitch Slingers and Hurlers to make better use of any height advantages, and cocky Maulers and Brawlers often practice Dodging missiles for fun.

Upgrades Peasants to Hurlers, Brawlers to Ballistamen, Maulers to Pitch Slingers, and Sledgers to Berserkers.

Quarry

The Quarry is primarily used for strength training. Here, massive Wolf fighters learn the art of breaking shale with their bare hands, just as other (and, to a Wolf's mind, lesser) martial artists break boards. Contests are frequent and intense, and the bragging rights of the victor are much desired.

Maulers are the traditional stoneworkers of the Quarry, and can incorporate Petrified Wood into deadlier hammers for Sledgers, or form a Miner's Union and share tips on wielding boulders more effectively. A Blast Furnace is also useful, hardening the armour of Maulers, Pitch Slingers, and Sledgers against explosions.

Upgrades Peasants to Maulers, Brawlers to Sledgers, Hurlers to Pitch Slingers, and Ballistamen to Berserkers.

Vitality Garden

The Vitality Garden is an oasis of abundance, tended by the Druidesses who guide almost all non-military aspects of Wolf life. Here, they exchange wisdom regarding plants and animals, learn the names and purposes of the beneficial spirits, and prepare themselves mentally for the demands of war.

With a Forest Blessing, Druidesses may bless five warriors after each meditation at the Cairn, rather than three. Herbalists increase the healing rate of all Wolf warriors, and the cooperation of Mother Earth increases a Druidess's ability to entangle and slow her enemies in battle.

Upgrades Peasants to Druidesses.

Wolves' Den

Any foreigner who mistakes the Wolves' Den for a kennel may pay with his life: wild wolves live here by choice, and are free to roam and prey as they please. The Wolf Clan has no tradition of horseback riding, but the Pack Master finds a use here for captured steeds, as fodder for his hungry pack.

With time, the Master can train his companions to fight with more regard for their own safety, making them truly Wolves Among Sheep. Pack Masters, Berserkers and Werewolves also gather here for the Freedom's Howl, an elite ritual that increases their ferocity. Finally, Pack Masters who learn Foraging from their charges become much healthier.

Upgrades Peasants to Pack Masters.

Advanced Structures

Cairn

The Cairn is the holiest place of the Wolf Clan. A ring of rough-hewn granite stones, each inscribed with the name of a powerful Clan matriarch, surrounds a simple raised platform. On this platform, a Druidess calls on the spirits of Nature and her ancestors to imbue her blessings with magical force. Assuming that her pleas are answered, the Druidess can grant divine favours to three brave Wolf combatants before she must once again ask for the spirits' assistance. The construction of a Cairn is not to be undertaken lightly, and relatively few Wolf settlements raise one; however, where they are built, Wolves consider the ground sanctified, and forever after consider such land theirs by divine right.

Shalery

A Wolf Clan Shalery is a combination quarry and forge, where clansmen are fitted with shale armour. Shale has long been a common material in Wolf architecture, armour, and weapons, and one of the few blessings of their enslavement under the Lotus was access to this material, and the discovery that it affords some protection from Lotus magics.

The Wolf Clan's approach to bodily protection is typical of their approach to everything. Oversize plates of shale are hewn from the cliff face, shattered, then strapped to any body part they seem appropriate for. Wolf Clansmen don't mind the rough feel of it, let alone the weight, and if they did would rather die than admit it. Any discomfort merely makes up for the slight shame of asking for protection from enemy weaponry.



COMMON STRUCTURES

There are a few structures that every clan must build. All such structures fulfil similar roles, although each clan builds in its own style.

Peasant Hut

The Peasant Hut is the most basic of all buildings, offering little more than a roof to keep both rice and peasants dry. Dragon, Serpent, Lotus and Wolf Clans build their dwellings in vastly different shapes and forms, but all share similar characteristics: simplicity, practicality, and the desire to keep occupants warm and safe at the least possible expense.

Town Square

Though differing widely in appearance, Town Squares always serve the same function. Regular town meetings help to organise the peasants, improving their ability to effectively harvest and store rice. They are also critical to a community's sense of identity, increasing its storage capacity, prestige, sense of purpose, and consequent accumulation of Yin or Yang energy.

Keep

A Keep is an imposing structure, well defended from assault and relatively luxurious in its accommodations. Within, great leaders and scholars study their tomes in safety, while warriors argue over their strategies in heated tones. Heroes regularly make pilgrimages to these strongholds from afar, seeking service or employment with their wealthy lords, and are summoned forth at a cost of rice, water, and Yin or Yang energy. Monks or ninjas may also take note of your importance, and flock here to assist you — usually a maximum of four at a time.

Well

The digging of a well is a difficult, backbreaking process for the peasantry, requiring a great investment of time and resources. Once water is struck, however, the rewards are plentiful: peasants need never again trek to a river for their drink, the risk posed by fire is greatly reduced, and certain advanced engineering projects become possible.

Watchtower

Watchtowers offer several tactical advantages: further sight, greater missile range, and superior defence for warriors perched atop their platforms. In addition, each Clan's watchtowers hold unique surprises for invading enemies. These little tricks are considered Clan secrets. For instance, many have remarked that more Lotus defenders seem to descend from besieged towers than ever ascended in the first place...

UNALIGNED UNITS

There some few creatures who owe allegiance to no clan. Some are slaves with no political views, and some pledge their fealty to higher principles than petty local politics. In the latter category are the mysterious monks and ninjas, whose endless clandestine war occasionally spills over into the clan conflicts. If one side or the other feels it has a stake in your fight, you may find yourself with some unexpected allies...or enemies.

Golem

The golem is an invention of the Lotus Clan wizard Lord Soban. For years he has bent his research toward creating the perfect worker — either to relieve the enslaved Wolf Clan, or to allow for its final extermination. Mistakes like the Shale Lord preceded the creation of the golem, a being of stone and fire and secret magics. Despite its slow movements, it can work all day and night without cease, outlasting the strongest peasant.

Monk

These enigmatic men and women have lived in the land since long before the Breaking, studying their arts and training for physical perfection. As avatars of the yang-principle, they stand in silent opposition to the ninja, with whom they are eternally at war. They stand above the current political struggles, but will take a hand whenever they feel a conflict is being fought in the name of yang. They fight unarmed, depending on superb athleticism and secret barehand fighting techniques.

Zen Trance: Monks understand their bodies to a degree we can scarcely imagine; when hurt, they can enter a focused trance to rest and heal at a rapid rate.

Ninja

In the time before the Breaking, ninja were thought to be monsters from bedtime stories, black-clad men who lurked in the shadows, killing silently by blade or poison. Now we know they are real, fighting a war against the monks and occasionally taking a hand in the bloody clan wars. Little is known of their motives — they seek only to serve the dark principle of yin and its allies.

Shadow Skills: The ninja use shadows and tricks of the mind to seem to disappear into thin air, reappearing when their opponent's guard is down. Anyone but a monk would be fooled.

Zombie

For most warriors, death is a blessed relief from toil and pain—an honourable exit. Not so for the luckless zombies, victims of the Necromancer's art, who are condemned to return to the earth as his slaves. Nearly immune to most attacks, to poison or blows or blades, their eyes stare madly from decaying bodies as they stalk the battlefield. Mercifully, their bodies slowly fall to pieces over time, giving them hope of a final release from bondage. Doubtless the Necromancer is working to correct this.



The world of Battle Realms is a living landscape where the weather and the very shape of the land can make the difference between victory and defeat. Learn to use the land, or it will be used against you.

To fight effectively, you must be aware of the living world around you. The forests are beautiful, but to a general's eye they are a more than that — they slow movement, and limit archers' effectiveness. They limit line of sight, but a soldier moving through the woods disturbs the wildlife, which can give away his position.

Although the main game screen provides you with a map and a godlike perspective, you can only see what your people see, and the landscape determines much of this. A good general uses elevation to reveal enemy movements, and to conceal his own. In Battle Realms, elevation is a critical resource, just like rice or water.

A man on a hill can see farther than one in a valley, and the hills and cliffs that offer elevation also block line of sight to those below. Likewise, a soldier on horseback can see farther than one on foot, and a scout in a watchtower can see a vast distance. Build your watchtowers carefully, protect them, and destroy your opponents' towers to render them blind.

Height can be used for more than intelligence-gathering, it can be a deadly weapon. Soldiers fight better with a height advantage, whether on a hill or on horseback, although some weapons (like spears) can negate this. And a single archer in a watchtower can be deadly. If you see a round boulder on a hill, right-click it and your selected unit will give it a shove. A sizable boulder rolling downslope will crush anything in its path — men, horses, or buildings.

The world is not a static resource, it is a system. A captured horse could be used to mount troops, or to move water or rice, depending on what you need. A peasant could grow rice or train with a bow to guard it. When rain falls, what does it mean? Slower troop movements, but the rice grows faster, and fires won't catch. Perhaps water that was irrigating your crops can now be used to train warriors, or to build a shrine. Always remember that the world is alive.

CRASHES OR LOCKUP ISSUES

If you are having difficulties with crashes or lockups in Battle Realms, first be sure that your video card meets the minimum system requirements and that it is DirectX-compatible. If your card meets all requirements and problems persist, you may not have the latest drivers for your video card. These can often be downloaded directly from the manufacturers website or by contacting its technical support department. In addition, be sure to install the latest Service Pack for your version of the Windows operating system. Service Packs can be downloaded from: <http://www.microsoft.com>.

IMPROVING PERFORMANCE

If your graphics or gameplay is slow, there are number of things you can do to increase your performance. Try one or more following procedures:

- Make sure no other programs are running. Exit out of all open programs, including web browsers and MP3 players.
- On the Game Options screen, change the Video Resolution from the default of 1024x768 to either 800x600 or 640x480.
- On the Game Options screen, change Level of Detail to a lower setting.
- On the Game Options screen, mute the music.

INTERNET ISSUES

If you are experiencing problems playing Battle Realms over the Internet, make sure that you have at least a 56kbps connection to the Internet and are able to connect normally. Network congestion and high latency can produce conditions that make Battle Realms difficult to play over the Internet. If you continue to have problems playing over the Internet, you may want contact your Internet service provider. For multiplayer games with more than 4 players, it is recommended that all participants have high speed (DSL, Cable Modem, or T-1) Internet access. If your computer is behind a firewall, please refer to the readme.txt on the Battle Realms CD.



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Tony Mauro

Movement

- Alt Right-click or Double Click - Run
- Ctrl Right-click - Force move
- Shift Right-click - Queue order

Selecting Units

- Ctrl Left-click - Remove units from selection
- Shift Left-click - Add to selected units
- Ctrl 1-9 - Assign group
- 1-9 - Select group
- Alt 1-9 - Select and view group
- Shift 1-9 - Add selected units to preset group
- Ctrl 0 - Clear group of selected units
- H - Cycle through peasant huts
- I - Cycle through idle peasant alerts
- M - Cycle through combat alerts
- E - Cycle through building fire alerts

Unit Commands

- B - Toggle selected unit's battle gear
- C - Place a Combat Here marker
- D - Dismount a unit
- F - Force Attack ground, units, buildings, objects
- G - Guard location, building or unit
- L - Place a Look Here marker
- N - Stand ground
- O - Don't attack unless attacked

- R - Toggle repair cursor for peasants
- S - Stop a unit/cancel orders
- U - Cancel unit training
- W - Toggle water rice cursor for peasants
- F1-F8 - Uses Battle Gear for units 1-8, as displayed in center panel.

View Control

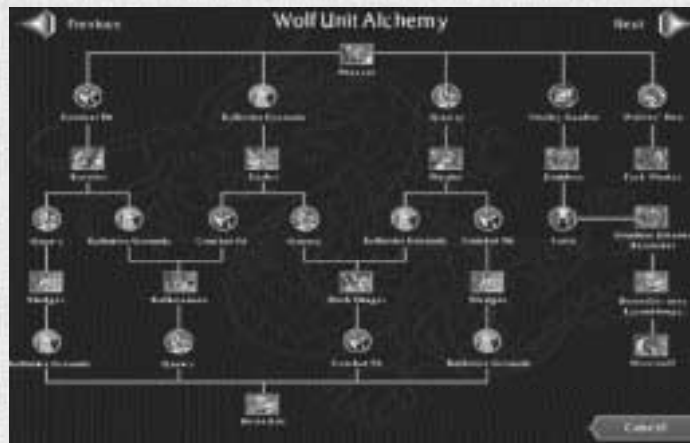
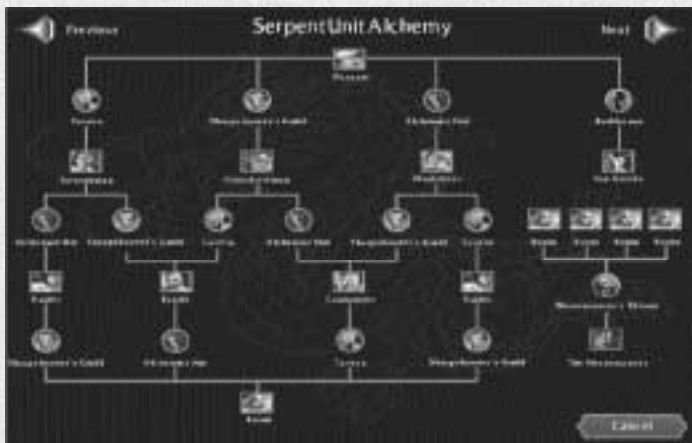
- Alt Left-click - Scroll map
- <backspace> - Go to selected object
- <left arrow> - Scroll screen left
- <right arrow> - Scroll screen right
- <up arrow> - Scroll screen up
- <down arrow> - Scroll screen down
- Ctrl Num1-Num9 - Set Location Marker
- Num1-Num9 - Go to Location Marker
- Mousewheel up/down - move between high/low camera angle

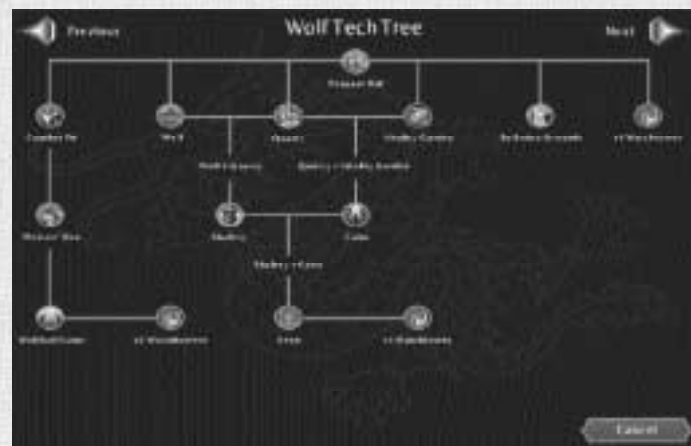
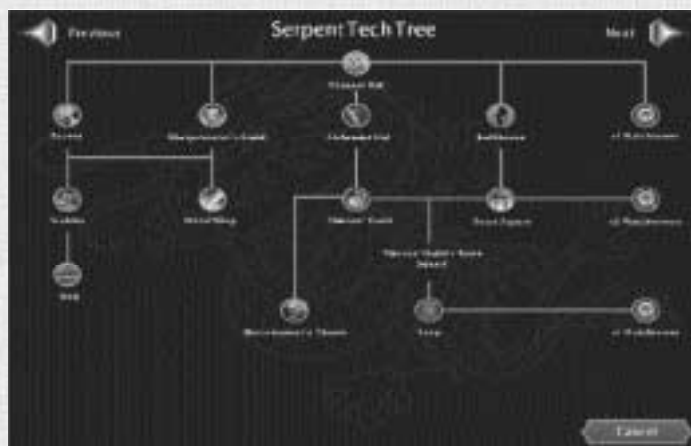
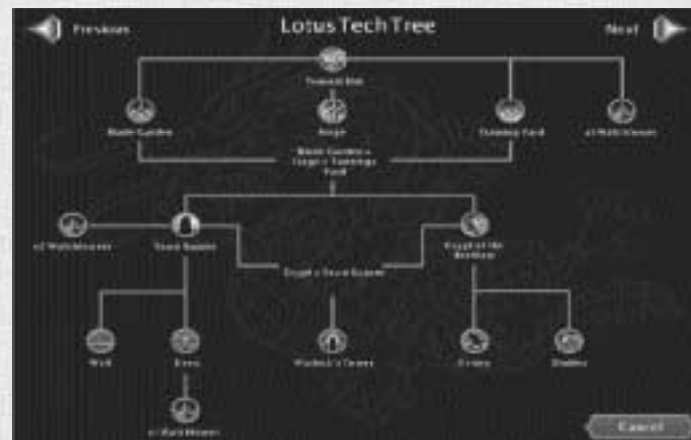
Game Settings

- <esc> - Bring up in-game options menu
- +
- - Increase volume
- - Decrease volume

Miscellaneous

- T - View tech tree
- Ctrl S - Quick save
- Ctrl L - Quick load
- <insert> - Play next music track
- <delete> - Play previous music track
- <enter> - Start chat
- <space> - Cycle through recent alert locations





[illegible]