

Choe Pho



Treasures of Choe Pho Book One:

Sakya & the North

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Treasures of Choe Pho

Book One: Sakya and the North

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A New World of Fantasy...

The world of *Choe Pho* was created by the Council of Enlightenment in the hopes that the souls there could attain perfection and peace. It is also true that Choe Pho was created to serve as a refuge from the depredations of the Karma Eaters. The buddhas, despite their differences, all saw that if the souls of mortals were to have any hope of achieving true enlightenment, they would need to do so away from the machinations of the Karma Eaters. Conflict, corruption, and strife were so pervasive in the Fallen World, that the buddhas felt escape and isolation were the only means by which they could offer a worthy future to the souls in their charge.

This desire to offer the potential for enlightenment, away from the threats and games of the Karma Eaters, informed the decisions of the Council of Enlightenment, and guided their hands as they shaped the world of Choe Pho. An incredible amount of Marrow was devoted to isolating the realm from the rest of the cosmos, erecting a permanent and impenetrable border around the outer reaches of Choe Pho. Not even the buddhas of the Council, in all their power can breach this border. Just as the Karma Eaters are forever barred from the realm, the buddhas are forever trapped within.

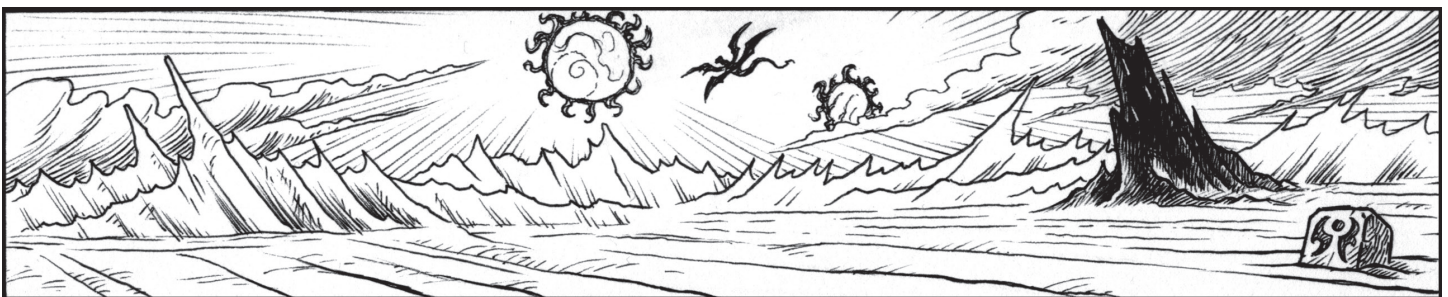
Some inhabitants of Choe Pho wonder why the buddhas crafted an imperfect world. With the power and raw Marrow at their disposal, these people reason that the buddhas should have just made the area within the realm into a

massive paradise, granting enlightenment and peace to all the souls within. Of course, such action would have been impossible, even for the Council. Enlightenment, the buddhas would say, is not theirs to give, but the soul's to pursue and discover. While this answer is certainly true, it is far from complete. Though the whole of their motivations remained sheltered from mortals, the Council of Enlightenment crafted an imperfect world, consisting of three parts: The Isle of Hope, the Plains of Marrow, and the Border Impenetrable.

This book focuses on two regions of the Isle of Hope, which is the primary population center of Choe Pho. The Isle of Hope serves as home to the Council of Enlightenment and is the birthplace of the Firstborn races. Each chapter of the book will explore the details of a different section of the Isle of Hope, as follows:

Chapter One: Sakya. This chapter provides a detailed look at the large city at the center of the Isle of Hope. Within this section, we will explore the five central temples of the Council of Enlightenment, the cosmopolitan culture of Sakya, and the governing body of the City of Harmony.

Chapter Two: The North. This chapter discusses the mountainous north, home to the tsuchigumo. In this section, we will look into the caves and mountains of the north, including the wildlife, plants, and climate of the north. Furthermore, this chapter examines the culture of the tsuchigumo who call the north home, as well as the nomads of the other Firstborn races who roam the mountainous north.





Chapter I:

Sakya

The City of Harmony

Sakya is the center of civilization on the Isle of Hope. Boasting a population of over 50,000 souls, the city itself has nearly as many Firstborn inhabitants as the rest of the Isle of Hope combined. As the Council of Enlightenment make their home atop Gosainthan just north of Sakya, many pilgrims come from across the Isle of Hope to seek audience with the buddhas in the city's shrines. Well-born, hailing from within the Plains of Marrow also commonly make pilgrimages to Sakya to seek the wisdom and acceptance of the buddhas.

Though ready access to the home shrines of the Council of Enlightenment is often the

first thing outsiders think of when thinking of Sakya, spiritual concerns and import are only a small fraction of what the city has to offer. Sakya is by far the most technologically and economically advanced settlement on the Isle of Hope. Three large bazaars are situated in the eastern, western, and southern districts of the city, along with several independent shops and trading posts scattered throughout the streets.

Though there is no firm currency in Sakya, prices for goods and services are relatively stable, whether paid in gemstone or barter. This is due to easy access to competing vendors in the city. If someone were to find themselves overcharging, they would easily be run out of business, and any vendor foolish enough to try to undercut competitors to a great extreme will quickly run out of stock and find themselves unable to easily replenish their goods.

The housing in Sakya is modest, but comfortable. Houses are typically built of

stone, earth and wood, and stand a single story high. Housing units typically consist of a social room, which sees use for family gatherings, visitors, and food preparation, and adjacent sleeping chambers. A separate lavatory is often connected to the social room as well, with water provided from one of the numerous community wells. The lavatories of Sakyan buildings all connect to the city's massive underground sewer system. In most districts of Sakya, each house will have a small courtyard with grass or a flower garden, though some parts of the northern district are too cramped for such amenities.

The streets of Sakya are typically earth or dirt, though sandstone paving can be found on the main roads leading to the bazaars and marble pavement leads from the edges of the city to the five shrines of the buddhas. Beneath these streets, the sewers are constructed of stone and mortar, and carry the waste and refuse of the city, as well as any runoff from storms or rain. The streets in all districts of Sakya are wide enough to allow two carts drawn by paired Large beasts to pass one another comfortably.

The Districts

The city of Sakya is divided into five districts, separated both by geography and by the central temples of the buddhas. Though the buddhas make their home on Gosainthan to the immediate north of the city, each buddha maintains a central temple within Sakya, which serves as the home of their dedicated studies, practices, and bureaucracies. Most people try to find housing within the district of their favored buddha, but space and availability do not always allow such luxury. The districts of Sakya are as follows:

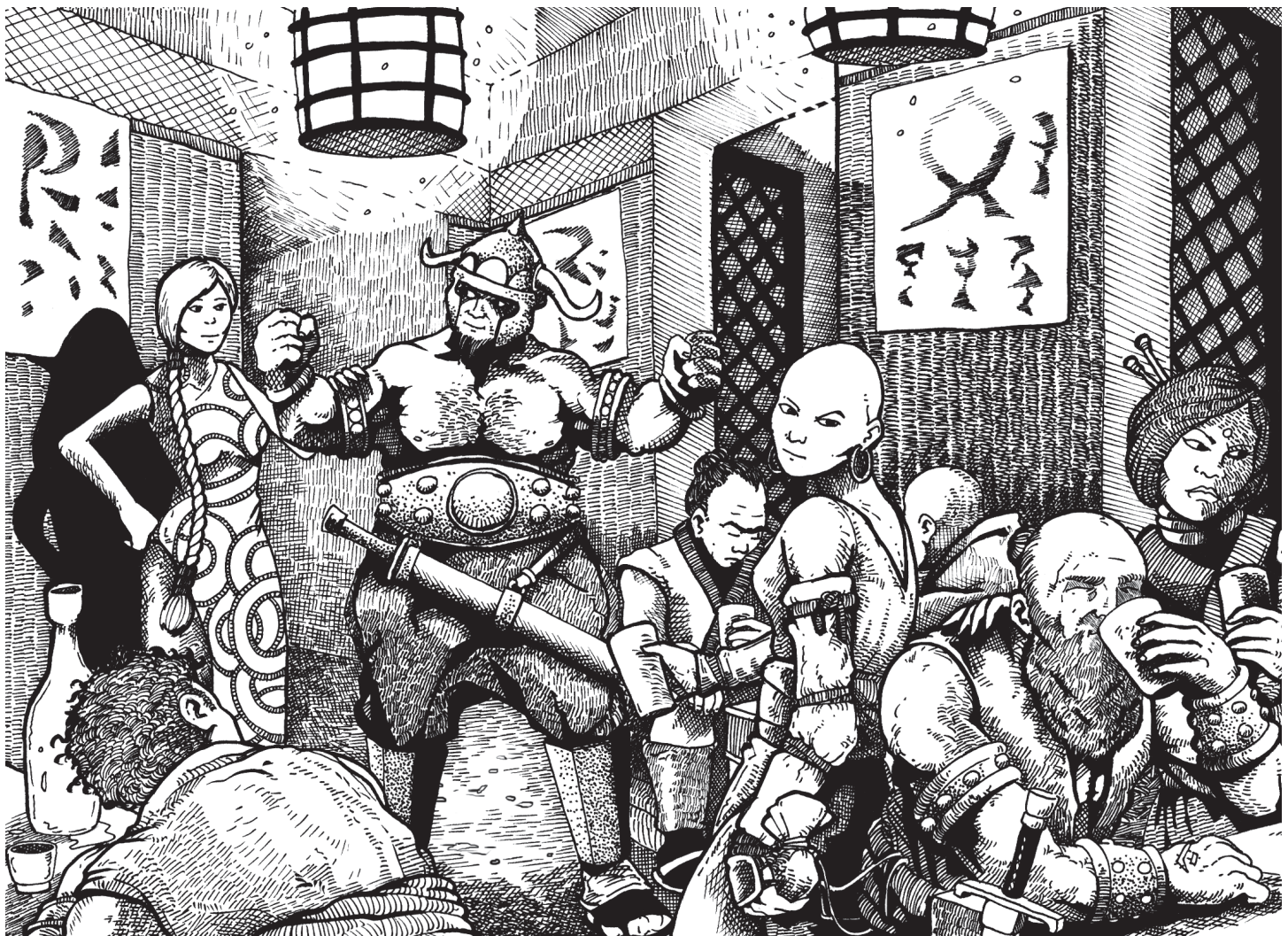
Jetsun (the northern district): Jetsun is the northernmost section of the city and is home to the central temple of Tara. Tara's multifaceted



nature is reflected in the cosmopolitan and diverse population of the northern district. People of all races and creeds can be found here, living and working side by side. If there is a downside to Jetsun, it is overcrowding, as the streets bustle with activity night and day, and the housing here is smaller than everywhere else in the city.

Central Temple: Tara's central temple is the Temple of 21 Facets, a massive building with twenty-one chambers, each dedicated to a different emanation of Tara. Tara's chief preceptors maintain the temple, processing requests for audience, and allocating resources of Tara's bureaucracy. Adventurers visiting or leaving from Sakya often visit this temple to seek wisdom and blessings before embarking on quests into the Plains of Marrow.

Shadowhome (the western district): Shadowhome fills the western portion of the city and is home to the central temple of Baarirron. The dark, corrupt nature of Baarirron and his followers permeates this district, making it easily the most dangerous part of town. Petty crime, violence, and discord are far more common here than in any other region on the Isle of Hope, and Baarirron has no intention of changing that. Many of the outcasts of the Firstborn races and the Well-born reside in Shadowhome, partially due to desperation and the fear that no one else would take them in. Though Shadowhome covers the same area as the other districts of Sakya, it is sparsely populated. Several buildings are empty and decaying, inhabited by squatters, or used as temporary settings for nefarious plots and purposes. The only section of Shadowhome that is commonly busy is the Shadowhome



bazaar, where various weapons, vices, and other tools of darkness and corruption may be acquired. Visitors to the bazaar are relatively safe (apart from the ever-present concern of theft while in the western district) but few people who do not live in Shadowhome wander beyond the bazaar's confines due to the dangers of the area.

Central Temple: Baarirron's central temple, The Cornucopia, is in the center of the western district. Like other temples, The Cornucopia hosts the highest ranking and most accomplished of those who have devoted themselves to Baarirron. Unlike other temples, however, The Cornucopia acts as a pleasure dome, bath house, and den of debauchery. Many people visit The Cornucopia to indulge in vices, relax, and have fun, with no intention of paying any sort of homage or seeking any wisdom from the temple's buddha. This suits Baarirron's purposes, as those who think themselves capable of embracing indulgence while resisting the temptations of the dark buddha serve as perfect marks for Baarirron's long con. Many warlocks began their service to Baarirron after a few seemingly innocent visits to the Cornucopia in pursuit of a good time.

Compost (the southern district): Compost is the decaying sprawl of the southern district of Sakya. Among the rotting food, refuse and

corpses of Compost stands Sepulcher, the central temple of Kalma. The southern district has few residents, most of whom are clerics and monks dedicated to the service of death and decay. However, Compost sees a much higher visiting population than one might expect. All funerary rites in Sakya are performed in Compost, and those who do choose to mourn after the death of a loved one visit Compost to engage in mourning rituals. Scavengers also frequent Compost, seeking salvageable materials to repurpose or recycle. Kalma and her adherents encourage this practice, feeling that any item that is salvageable for use is not fit to join in the sacred process of decay. These salvaged and scavenged items are then sold in the Compost bazaar, creating a thriving scavenger economy.

Central Temple: Sepulcher is the central temple of Kalma, and is inhabited by various clerics and monks whose sole purpose while at the temple is to officiate and execute funerary rites. Kalma herself rarely visits Sepulcher, as she spends most of her time sequestered in her private charnel house on Gosainthan. Only in the wake of a plague, a bloody conflict, or some other mass demise, does Kalma visit Sepulcher without being summoned. The building itself is a twisting maze of niter-encrusted stone walls, filled with bodies in various states of repose.



Only when the bodies have rotted to the bone, or when space has run out within the halls of Sepulcher, do the clerics of Kalma move the bodies from the Sepulcher into the necropolis outside.

Ogun (the eastern district): The eastern district is a vibrant, bustling area of the city, which serves as home to the central temple of Yemoja. Ogun is a verdant area filled with robust and lush plants and flowers lining every street. Celebrations and festivals frequently take place in the eastern district. Unlike the revelries of Shadowhome, these carnivals are joyful occasions filled with food, dance, song, and fertility rites. Families on the Isle of Hope seeking to conceive a child will often visit Ogun to participate in a feast or holiday, and many families who have the means to do so return when the child is expected.

The homes in Ogun are of simple construction, but boast lavish gardens and landscaping. Some of the homes in the eastern district even incorporate living plants into the construction of the walls and roofs. Social status of the residents of Ogun is often dictated by the health and beauty of the family's garden. Families with unique or creative floral arrangements are treated as a-list citizens and frequently approached for advice on gardening by their neighbors.

The eastern district bazaar is a bustling marketplace focused on the sale of food, trade goods, and other crops. If it can be herded, grown, or derived from plant or animal, it can be found in the eastern bazaar. Many farmers from across the Isle of Hope make their living under the canopy of leaves and flower petals that extends across the top of the eastern bazaar, providing shade and shelter. Trade in this district is constant, and the bazaar takes up nearly a quarter of the area of Ogun.

Central Temple: The Turquoise River serves as the central temple of Yemoja. Winding through the eastern district, this river is believed to be the source of all water on the Isle of Hope. Monks and clerics dedicated to the principles of Yemoja tend the river's banks, fish from its waters, and contemplate the nature of life, death, and rebirth. Those who seek Yemoja's audience or blessing need only approach the river's bank and speak her name. Often, she will arise from the water to offer blessings and wisdom.



Gosainthan

To the immediate north of Sakya looms Gosainthan, the massive mountain home of the Council of Enlightenment. While the buddhas take audiences within their central temples in Sakya, their private homes on Gosainthan are off limits to visitors. This mountain acts as a sanctum, retreat, and meeting area for the buddhas to discuss issues that face Choe Pho. Though Gosainthan is a safe haven, free from violence and aggression, rumors fly that the buddhas occasionally resort to violent confrontation to settle their difference. The occasional thunderous boom or flash of light from the peak of the mountain does little to quell these rumors.

Chapter II: The North The Gossamer Peaks

The north is commonly referred to as The Gossamer Peaks by the people of Sakya, due to the predominance of webbing blanketing the mountainsides due to the high population of tsuchigumo in the region. From a distance, most of the mountains of the north appear to be snow-capped, but as one gets closer to the peaks, it becomes clear that nearly two-thirds of the mountain peaks are simply covered in a thick layer of webbing. Only the tallest mountains of the north maintain snow coverage on a regular basis.

The tsuchigumo make homes in the caves, caverns and crags of the Gossamer Peaks, using these natural formations to provide shelter from the elements as well as a measure of security. The tsuchigumo ability to move across walls and ceilings as easily as the floors of these spaces allows for a three-dimensional approach

to security and décor. Most tsuchigumo lairs include not only traps and obstacles on the walls and ceilings, but also furnishings and basic creature comforts. It is not uncommon for tsuchigumo to rest in web-based hammocks attached to the ceilings of their caves, store food twenty feet up a wall, or entertain guests on every surface of the lair.

Tsuchigumo settlements range in size from a small cave inhabited by a single hermit, to massive caverns that serve as the site for a village of hundreds. These villages take the typical design aesthetic of the tsuchigumo one step further, incorporating shops, inns, and other public buildings along the walls and ceilings. These various destinations are often connected by a network of rope bridges known as the village silk. The village silk serves the same purpose as streets serve in a human settlement. This can make visits to tsuchigumo settlements rather challenging for members of other races, which suits the tsuchigumo just fine.

While the tsuchigumo are the majority population in the north, members of several other races make their home in the Gossamer Peaks. Humans and nekomata maintain several settlements in the valleys of the north, relying on trapping and trading with the tsuchigumo to maintain their economies. Relations between these villages and their tsuchigumo neighbors tend to be friendly, though on occasion conflicts will arise over some perceived slight, insult, or indiscretion. Nomads of all races also wander the north, seeking to lose themselves among the peaks and valleys of the region. While the human and nekomata settlements tend to be welcoming and hospitable to nomads, the tsuchigumo typically have little patience for such strangers in their lands. Though the tsuchigumo are rarely outright hostile, it takes very little for a nomad to provoke the displeasure of the natives of the north.



In addition to the nomads, there are also hermits of all races living among the mountains of the north. Many monks and sages seek out the solitude of the Gossamer Peaks, constructing humble huts and simple settlements to contemplate their chosen paths, seek enlightenment, or simply exist apart from the distractions and concerns of a larger community. Most of these hermits simply wish to be left alone, and the tsuchigumo of the region are generally quite happy to grant that wish.

Aside from the Firstborn races, several Well-born make their home in the north. Most of these creatures simply find the climate and terrain of the north to be most palatable, but some few have chosen the north for the solitude, cover, and security that the mountains offer. Ogres, trolls, hill giants, stone giants, and the occasional frost giant all make homes in the mountainous north. Errant undead rarely manage to travel into the north, as the terrain is exceptionally problematic for corporeal undead to navigate. Apart from the giant-kin, there are a large number of exotic beasts as well as giant versions of common beasts, who call the north their home.

Places of Note

Red Palm Monastery: Located atop the peak of Darkhorn Mountain, Red Palm Monastery is home to a group of monks who exclusively study the Way of the Red Tara. The monks who reside at Red Palm spend their days in ceaseless martial training, perfecting their bodies and purifying their minds. Due to the proximity of the monastery to the edge of the Plains of Marrow, the monks of Red Palm act as sentries, watching the border cliffs to prevent incursions from corporeal undead and other invaders from the Dead Land. The monks are generally hospitable to any travelers who pass through the area, unless those travelers include warlocks or other characters who openly serve

Baarirron. Members of all the Firstborn races can be found among the monks of Red Palm, but no Well-Born are permitted to study at the monastery.

Flagtree: The village of Flagtree is a joint human/nekomata settlement located in a large valley near the center of the Gossamer Peaks. The village is named after a patch of massive fir trees that grow out of the mountainside to the east of the village. These fir trees are warped by the near constant wind on the mountainside, creating the look of a waving flag in the branches, all of which point towards the Plains of Marrow. Boasting a population of nearly 400 sous, Flagtree is the largest non-tsuchigumo settlement in the Gossamer Peaks. The village boasts a town square, which serves as home to an open-air market. The village also contains an inn, a coppersmith's shop, a gemcutter, a library, and a sculptor's gallery. A small shrine is shared among the townspeople, allowing for contemplation, meditation, and prayer to honor any of the buddhas.

The people of Flagtree tend toward neutral good alignments. The village is a harmonious place, with little violence or scandal. The village is run by five-member council who are entrusted with keeping the peace, maintaining the water supply, and tending to the municipal buildings. The village council is elected every two years, with every adult in the village expected to vote.

The inn at Flagtree is a common stop for adventurers headed into or out of the Plains of Marrow, providing a safe haven, a place to acquire supplies and unload treasure, and a place to trade in rumors and war stories. The inn is owned and operated by a tengu woman named Kyra Starshatter. Kyra seems to have a soft spot in her heart for those who seek adventure in the Plains off Marrow, extending long-running tabs and extra amenities to those who share detailed tales of their adventures in the inn's common room.

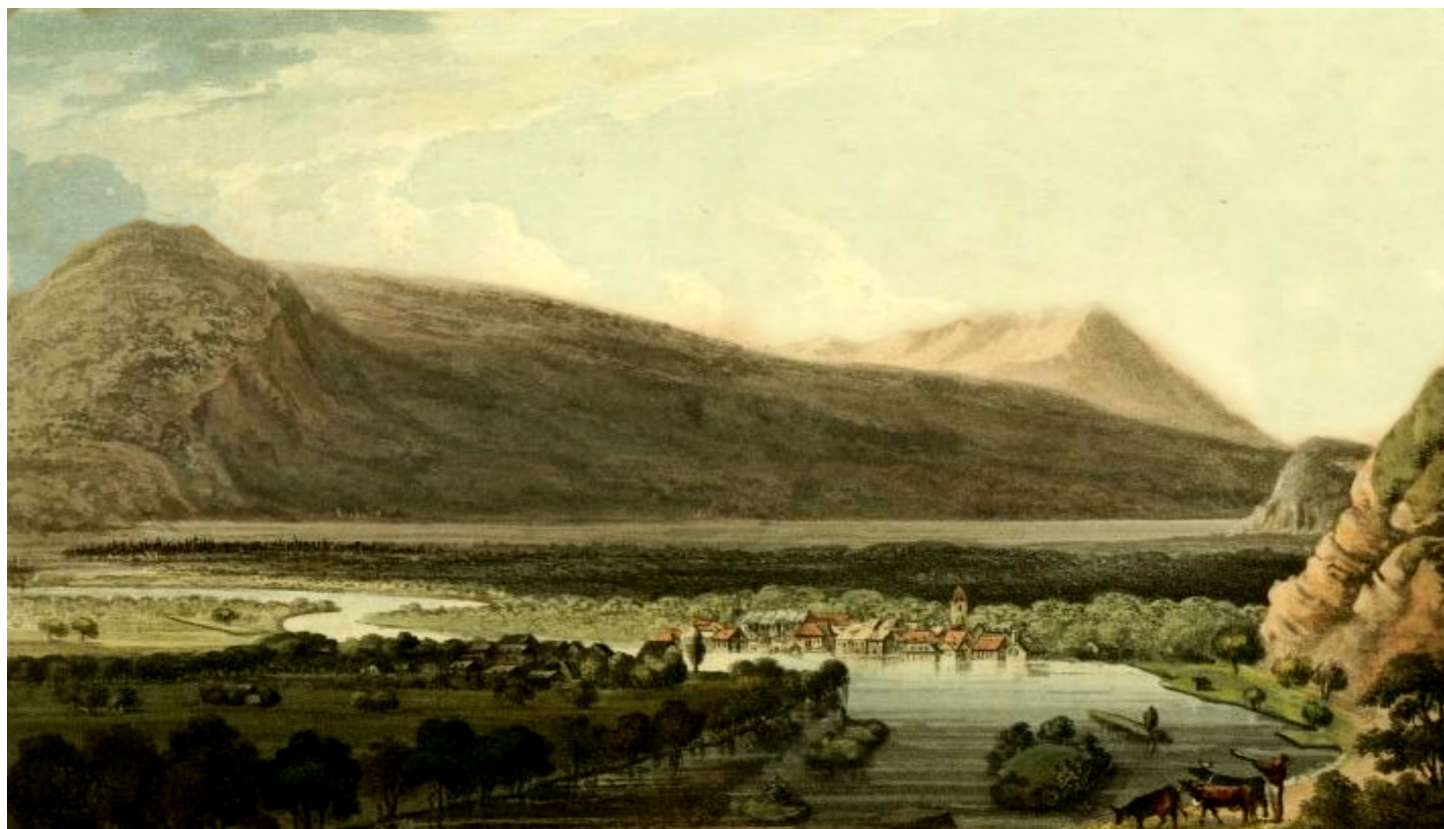
Kumonosu: The city of Kumonosu is the largest settlement in the Gossamer Peaks. Home to over 5,000 souls, this city is considered the home of the tsuchigumo people and the center of their culture. The population is overwhelmingly tsuchigumo, with only about two percent of the population belonging to other races. The city is constructed along the side of a large mountain (Mount Su) with a significant undercity, known as Downtown, placed in a cave network accessible from multiple cave mouths along the mountainside. Most non-tsuchigumo residents of Kumonosu dwell in the Downtown area, as the mountainside architecture of Uptown is not well suited to support creatures that lack the ability to move on walls and ceilings.

The deep caves of Mount Su provide ample opportunity for hunters and foragers to gather food. Rainwater collectors installed across Uptown and the Dragon Tail River, which runs near the base of Mount Su provide ready and plentiful access to water. Several young tsuchigumo work fetching water from the river for the city reservoir. Thanks to the engineering

acumen of the city planners, the reservoir is capable of delivering water to each building in Kumonosu. The basic needs of food and shelter are well met for all residents of the city.

With the basic needs of survival being of little concern, the residents of the city can spend their time focusing on artistic pursuits, monastic practice, study and the arts. There are a number of shops that specialize in trade goods, weapons, and clothing. Three inns operate Downtown, catering to visitors of all species. Kumonosu is also home to the Shinpu, a collection of tsuchigumo monks who fashion special charms, known as omamori, which offer various protections to the wearer. Shinpu monks maintain two shops, one Uptown and one Downtown, where they sell omamori to locals and travelers.

Mount Su is about a half-day's journey from the Red Palm Monastery. The artisans of Kumonosu give weapons and food to the monks of the monastery. In return, the monastery sends monks to act as security and law enforcement for the city. This arrangement



permits the tsuchigumo to keep focused on their artistic and technical pursuits, and allows the monks the opportunity to interact with the outside world. Monks acting on behalf of Kumonosu serve one-month long tours of duty, taking a cart of supplies back to Red Palm upon the completion of their stay.

The laws of Kumonosu are extremely permissive and constructed around the principle of personal freedom and sanctity. Crimes against the person or property of others make up the overwhelming majority of the law, and violence is forbidden for all visitors and residents of the city (apart from the monks on law enforcement duty), and is punishable by exile. The city maintains a small jail Uptown, which frequently sits empty.

New Monastic Tradition

The following tradition is only available to tsuchigumo characters. Though practitioners of this tradition may choose to leave Kumonosu to take up residence elsewhere (or even pursue the life of an adventurer) all monks of this tradition are trained within the city.

Way of the Shinpu

Monks of the Way of the Shinpu study the tsuchigumo art of infusing their ki into talismans known as omamori. The techniques and features gained by monks of the Way of the Shinpu are detailed below.

Bonus Proficiency

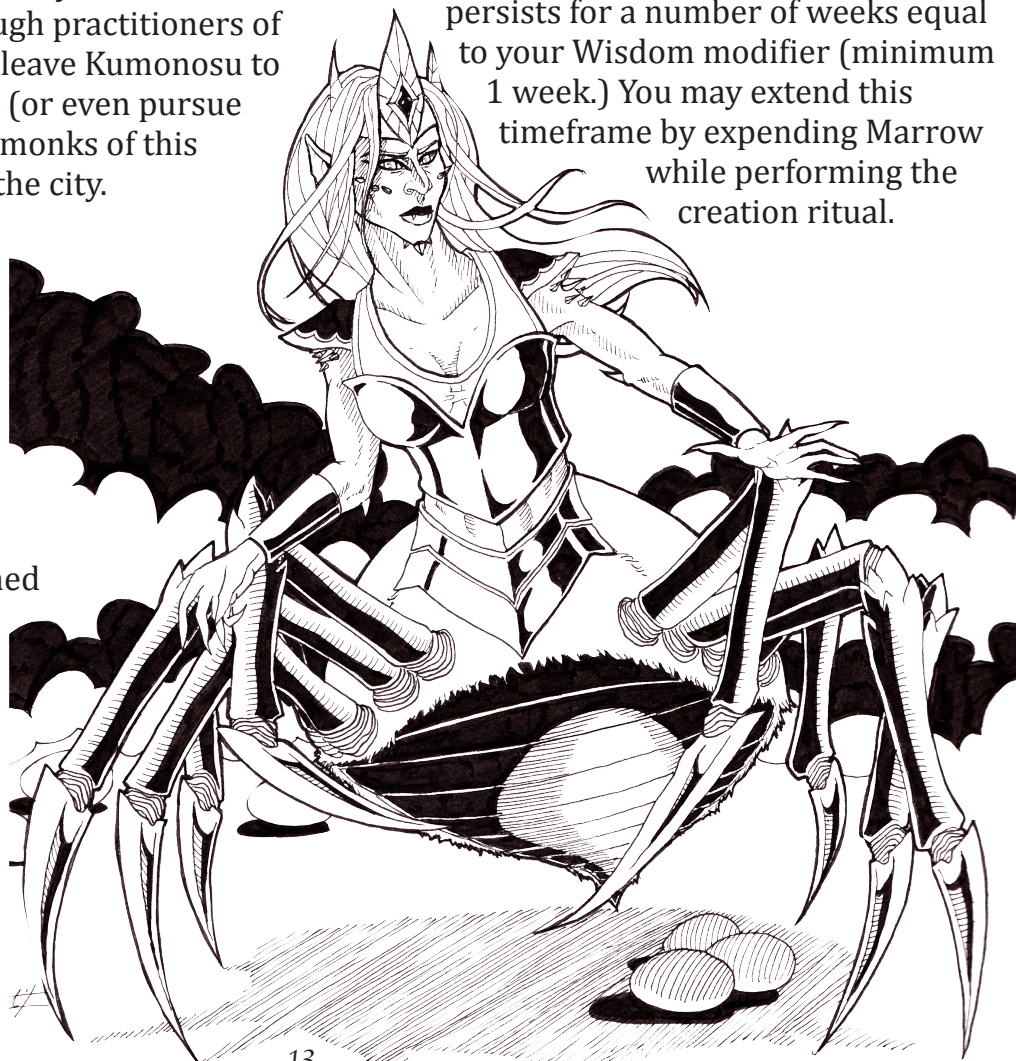
Starting when you choose this tradition at 3rd level, you gain proficiency with your choice of three sets of artisan's tools.

Table: Shoshinsha Omamori

Omamori	Effect
1	<i>Advantage on Charisma checks</i>
2	<i>Advantage on Intelligence checks.</i>
3	<i>Advantage on Wisdom checks.</i>
4	<i>Protection from evil and good.</i>
5	<i>Protection from poison.</i>
6	<i>See invisibility.</i>
7	<i>Spider climb</i>
8	<i>Zone of Truth (centered on you)</i>

Shoshinsha

Starting when you choose this tradition at 3rd level, you can infuse your ki into basic omamori. You must spend ten minutes working the materials for the omamori, such as paper, webbing, wood, and stone. At the end of your ten-minute ritual, you must expend a point of ki while holding the omamori and select one property from Table: Shoshinsha Omamori, which you infuse into the object. The property persists for a number of weeks equal to your Wisdom modifier (minimum 1 week.) You may extend this timeframe by expending Marrow while performing the creation ritual.



Each point of Marrow spent in this fashion extends the efficacy of the omamori by one week.

Characters cannot benefit from the use of more than one shoshinsha omamori at a time. Shoshinsha omamori require attunement by the user. Once the shoshinsha omamori loses efficacy, the attunement automatically ends.

Chūkantai

At 6th level, you gain the ability to infuse your ki into intermediate omamori. You must spend ten minutes working the materials for the omamori, such as paper, webbing, wood, and stone. At the end of your ten-minute ritual, you must expend 3 points of ki while holding the omamori and select one property from Table: Chūkantai Omamori, which you infuse into the object. The property persists for a number of weeks equal to your Wisdom modifier (minimum 1 week.) You may extend this timeframe by expending Marrow while performing the creation ritual. Each point of Marrow spent in this fashion extends the efficacy of the omamori by one week.

Table: Chūkantai Omamori

Omamori	Effect
1	<i>Advantage on Strength checks. +2 to melee weapon damage.</i>
2	<i>Advantage on Dexterity checks. +1 to AC.</i>
3	<i>Advantage on Constitution checks. +1d4 hit points.</i>
4	<i>This omamori holds three charges. You may spend one charge to cast web, using Constitution as your spellcasting ability. The omamori regains three charges each day at dawn.</i>
5	<i>This omamori holds three charges. You may spend one charge to cast tongues, using Wisdom as your spellcasting ability. The omamori regains three charges each day at dawn.</i>
6	<i>This omamori grants you a +1 bonus to all attack checks and saving throws.</i>

Characters cannot benefit from the use of more than one chūkantai omamori at a time. Chūkantai omamori require attunement by the user. Once the chūkantai omamori loses efficacy, the attunement automatically ends.

Focus of the Artisan

Beginning at 11th level, you can channel your ki to augment your skills. Whenever you make an ability check, saving throw or attack roll that includes your proficiency bonus, you may spend 3 ki to double your proficiency bonus for that ability check, attack roll, or saving throw. You may use this feature as long as you have sufficient ki points available to fuel it.

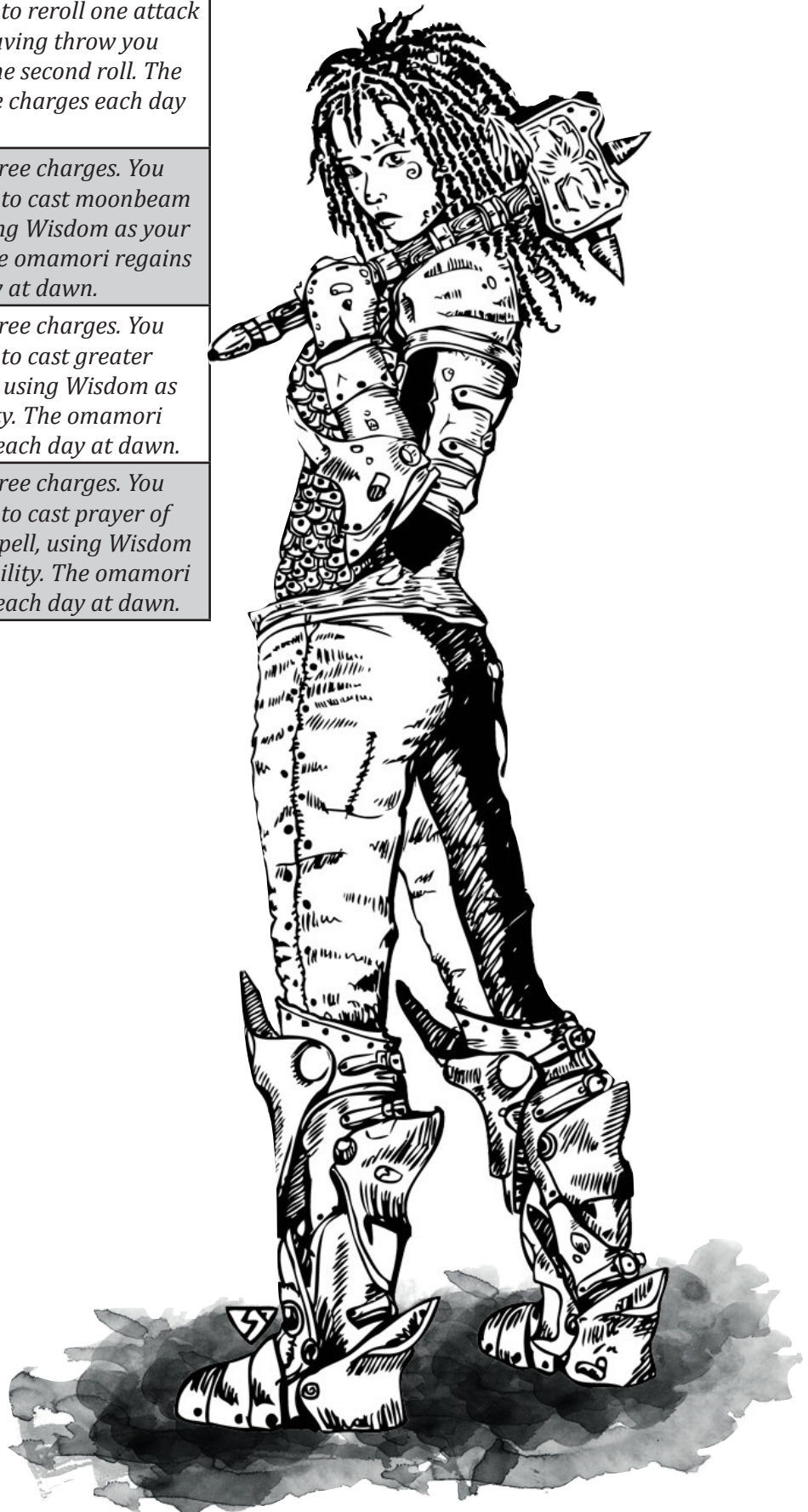
Sensei

At 17th level, you gain the ability to infuse your ki into master omamori. You must spend ten minutes working the materials for the omamori, such as paper, webbing, wood, and stone. At the end of your ten-minute ritual, you must expend 5 points of ki while holding the omamori and select one property from Table: Sensei Omamori, which you infuse into the object. The property persists for a number of weeks equal to your Wisdom modifier (minimum 1 week.) You may extend this timeframe by expending Marrow while performing the creation ritual. Each point of Marrow spent in this fashion extends the efficacy of the omamori by one week.

Characters cannot benefit from the use of more than one sensei omamori at a time. Sensei omamori require attunement by the user. Once the sensei omamori loses efficacy, the attunement automatically ends.

Table: Sensei Omamori

Omamori	Effect
1	<i>This omamori holds three charges. You may spend one charge to reroll one attack roll, ability check, or saving throw you dislike. You must use the second roll. The omamori regains three charges each day at dawn.</i>
2	<i>This omamori holds three charges. You may spend one charge to cast moonbeam as a 7th level spell, using Wisdom as your spellcasting ability. The omamori regains three charges each day at dawn.</i>
3	<i>This omamori holds three charges. You may spend one charge to cast greater invisibility on yourself, using Wisdom as your spellcasting ability. The omamori regains three charges each day at dawn.</i>
4	<i>This omamori holds three charges. You may spend one charge to cast prayer of healing as a 7th level spell, using Wisdom as your spellcasting ability. The omamori regains three charges each day at dawn.</i>





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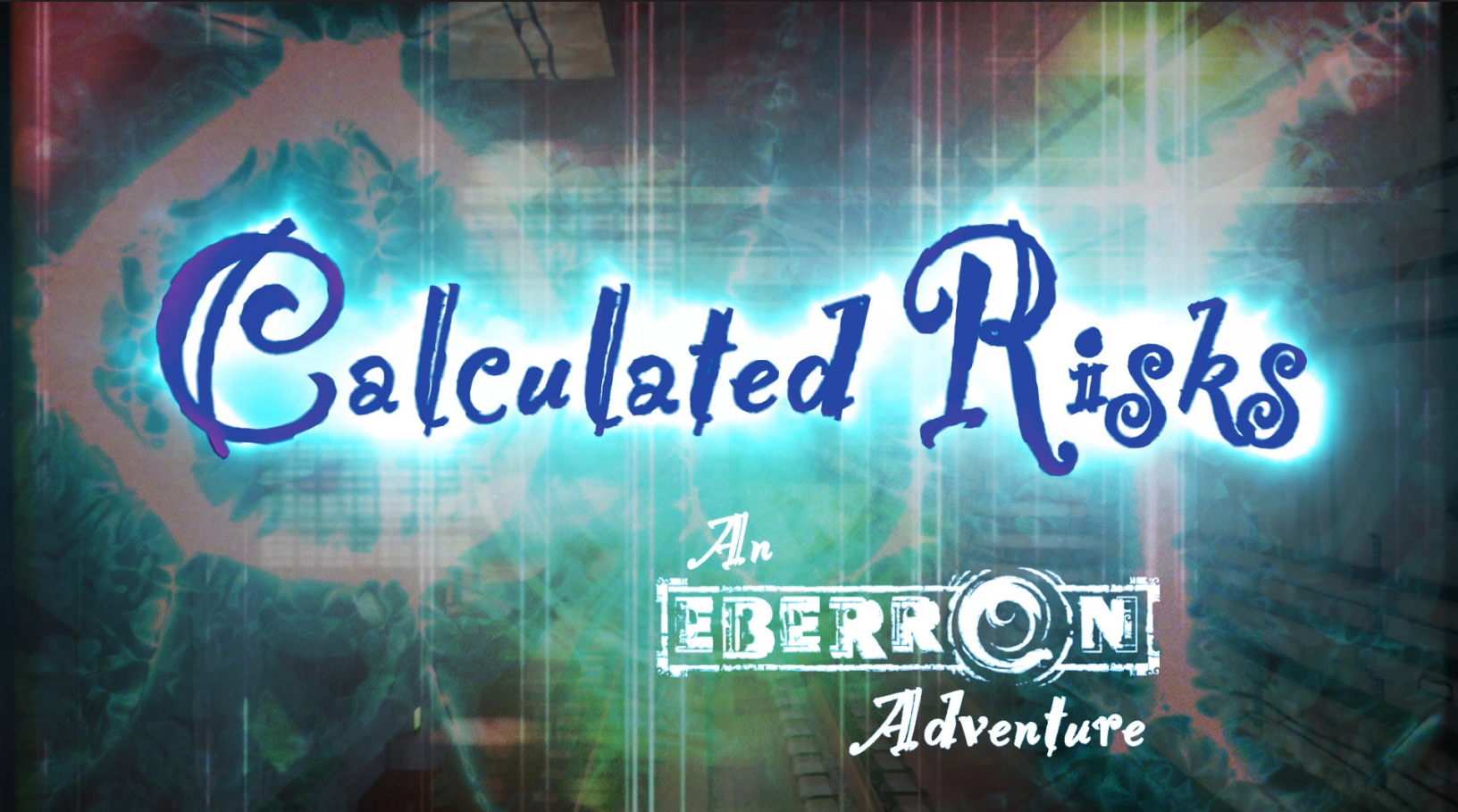
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